

Research Paper

The Development and Implementation of a Psycho-Social and Cultural Intervention for Cross-region Brides of Rural Haryana

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ABSTRACT

The present study reports the development and effectiveness of a Psycho-social and Cultural intervention that was designed to enhance the well-being of cross-region brides of rural Haryana. It aimed at increasing their familiarity with Haryanvi cultural values and tradition (language, food habits, and dressing style), and their awareness of their strengths and potential, thereby enhancing their well-being levels. This was a seven-day intervention with individual and group activities, educational and entertainment sessions. The study was conducted in two phases, with a pilot (n=20) followed by the main study (n=47). The results showed a statistically significant impact of the intervention on life satisfaction ($t = -2.37$; $p < .01$), quality of life ($t = 4.39$; $p < .01$), happiness ($t = -2.74$; $p < .01$), and on the cultural ($t = -2.75$; $p < .01$) and social dimension ($t = 3.00$; $p < .01$) of well-being of the participants.

Keywords: *Cross-region Brides, Haryana, Haryanvi culture, Psycho-social and cultural intervention, Well-Being*

Socio-cultural factors have been long recognized as significant drivers of an individual's well-being (Ward & Kennedy, 1996; Ruiz-Beltran & Kamau, 2001; Holden, McGregor, Blanks & Mahaffey; 2012; Yolal, Gursoy, Uysal, Kim & Karacaoğlu, 2016). In the context of Indian society, the role of such factors is best exemplified by the phenomenon of cross-regional marriages. Such marriages are characterized by the groom and his family seeking out a bride from other states usually by paying a go-between or a middle-man (Mukherjee, 2013), and are currently rampant across Northern and North-western Indian states (Mishra, 2013).

The present work is situated within the context of the North Indian state of Haryana that has been grappling with a scenario of "scarce women" and "surplus men" (Srinivasan & Li, 2017, p.1). Haryana's demographic trend of 879 females per 1000 males has primarily been the result of a strong preference for the male child and the consequent abortion of female fetuses (Census, 2011). As a consequence, men of marriageable age are facing a crisis in finding local brides. To ensure continuity of their family line, many Haryanvi men are

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Received: February 7, 2019; Revision Received: February 28, 2019; Accepted: March 8, 2019

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resorting to cross-regional marriages that transcend the boundaries of language, region and culture, and sometimes that of caste, religion and economic status (Mishra, 2017). In contrast to the conventionally arranged marriages in India, where the bride is familiar with the broad cultural environment of her marital home, the cross-region brides migrate to a culturally different and geographically distant land.

Moving to a new place and in the process losing their social capital back home, often not being allowed to visit their maternal home due to fears that they may run away never to return, coupled with the stress of adapting to a new culture has implications for the well-being of these women (Singh, Dangi & Bandyopadhyay, under review). This stress of adapting to a culture different from one's native culture is referred to as acculturative stress (Berry, 2005), while acculturation is defined as "...a process of culture change and adaption or maladaptation that stem from contact with culturally different people, groups and social influences" (Hou, Nazroo, Banks & Marshall, 2019, p. 3). The stress of adapting to the new culture has been found to be accompanied by lowered psychological and physical well-being, feelings of being relegated to the fringes of society, and subsequent experience of loneliness (Berry & Kim, 1998). In this context, it can be asserted that these married migrant women are living in a situation of multiple disadvantages. In addition to the patriarchal nature of Indian society, they are also subject to disrespect, non-acceptance, and often violence in the new culture, and encounter difficulties in adapting to the cultural and social norms of the new state. Besides, as is known, the burden of adjusting to one's marital life falls heavily on the married woman, more so in the rural agrarian families (Mukherjee, 2013). These have repercussions for their well-being.

In their research on the across-state brides of Haryana, Singh et al. (under review) found that these married migrant women experienced greater psychological distress, lower levels of life satisfaction and quality of life, and encountered acculturative stress, as opposed to the local Haryanvi brides who had a better psychological health status. Besides this psychological investigation, Indian sociologists (example – Kaur, 2008; Ahlawat, 2009, 2016; Chaudhry & Mohan, 2011; Mishra, 2016; 2017) have also brought to light – through their ethnographic studies - the constraints faced by these brides in their culturally different marital family. In Ahlawat's (2016) field investigations on long-distance brides in Haryana, for example, 30% of the participants reported being victims of domestic violence. Moreover, many of the cross-region brides of her study were from a lower socio-economic status including a lower caste, as opposed to the local Haryanvi brides, and were thus considered to be of a lower status. Furthermore, they were even found to lack bargaining power with regards to the amount of household and agricultural work they were required to do. Their in-laws considered them to be 'a purchased commodity', who could be made to do as much work as their marital family deemed fit. The investigator also observed major differences in the treatment meted out to the cross-region bride as compared to the non-migrant brides within the same family. Further, Ahlawat (2016), as well as Singh et al. (under review), found that while the local women have the support of their immediate and extended family, the cross-region brides lack such support. This makes them more vulnerable in their marital home. The non-acceptance and 'othering' of the across-state brides become more apparent when one pays closer attention to the language used by the locals to describe them. In Haryanvi parlance they are often described as *mol ki* (purchased brides) or *paro* (brides from far) (Mishra, 2016). In sum, although these cross-regional marriages are now widely prevalent in Haryana, they are considered to be unconventional. Moreover, unlike the respect the local community gives to

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the local marriages and local brides, these unconventional marriages and cross-region brides are not honored in the same way (Kukreja & Kumar, 2013).

From a psychological perspective, it is not only important to gain a nuanced understanding of their experiences and difficulties as a cross-region bride, but also important to develop measures that will help them to deal with the acculturative stress. Community-based interventions are one way to address this need. Internationally, interventions have been developed and validated to nurture the psychological well-being of particular immigrant groups (example, Bemak & Chung, 2000; Barcellos, Carvalho, Smith & Yoong, 2016; Kavathe, Islam, Zanowiak, Wyatt, Singh & Northridge, 2018; Whitt-Glover, Price & Odum, 2018). Some of these interventions summarize the efforts to enhance the psychological well-being of the immigrants from a cultural, psychological and a social point of view (Roberts, 2000). The community-based interventions ensure that the target communities themselves are empowered to find sustainable and effective solutions. The central idea behind all such intervention schemes for migrants and immigrants is to enable them to deal with the psychological stress, to acquire the skills required to communicate effectively in the local language, and to establish strong interpersonal relationships within the new cultural context (Cushner & Brislin, 1996). However, there are insufficient intervention studies on migrants in India, especially within the context of marriage migration in Haryana. Furthermore, the interventions developed for immigrant populations are not directly applicable to the Indian context. Moreover, within India herself there are regional differences in terms of cultural and social norms, language, festivities, food habits and attire. Also, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no such interventions specifically developed for cross-region brides have been reported in the empirical literature.

In view of this existing gap in the psychological literature and the need for addressing the well-being of these married migrant women, the present research aimed at developing a psycho-social and cultural intervention. The theoretical model that underlies this intervention is the 'cultural learning model'. It hypothesizes that the cultural adaptation of the migrant takes place through their acquisition of culture-specific skills that are native to the new culture. This enables them to gain a strong foothold in the new cultural milieu (Ward, 2001).

Cast within the above context, the objective of the present intervention was to increase the familiarity of the participants with Haryanvi cultural values and tradition (language, food-habits, dressing style), and to make them aware of their strengths and potential, thereby increasing their well-being. It was hypothesized that the well-being of the married migrant women will be enhanced through the intervention.

METHODOLOGY

This work was conducted in two phases: a pilot and the main study. The objective of the pilot study was to test the feasibility and efficacy of the developed intervention. In both these phases, the intervention comprised of seven sessions that were conducted for a week. It comprised of ice-breaking exercises (Sachs & Zumfelde, 1998), cultural awareness training sessions (Schinke, Orlandi, Botvin, Gilchrist, Trimble, & Locklear, 1988; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010), creative assignments (Ying, 1999) and self-reflection exercises (Malgady, Rogler, & Costantino, 1990). These were adapted for usage in the context of rural Haryana. Individual sessions, group sessions, educative sessions and entertainment of the day were the broad activities conducted in each day of the intervention program. These included rapport-building activities, competitive exercises, role-playing,

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situational exercises, culture-focused activities, short videos, sharing of personal experiences, group discussions, self-focused exercises, interactive educational sessions, and recreational activities. The intervention was based on three broad themes: cultural and social (interpersonal) awareness, and psychological well-being, and the sessions for each of these themes were designed in accordance with the needs of the migrant women and the difficulties they were facing since their marriage in Haryana. The development and design of the intervention was greatly facilitated by two previous field studies conducted by the authors on married migrant women of rural Haryana (Singh & Dangi, 2011; Singh et al., under review).

THE PILOT STUDY

Participants

Twenty migrant women living in *Kansala* (n=11) and *Humanyunpur* (n=9) villages of the Rohtak district of Haryana were a part of this study. Only willing and consenting women were included as participants. They hailed from the states of West Bengal (55%), Tripura (15%), Orissa (10%), Himachal Pradesh (10%), Maharashtra (5%), and Bihar (5%). Their mean age was 19.20 years ($\sigma = 2.26$), and among them, 40% were below 18 years, while 60% were above 18 years of age. With regards to their duration of marriage, 65% had been married for more than a year, while 35% had been married for less than a year. Further, 60% of the participants were literates, while 40 % were uneducated.

Procedure

The first step upon arrival in the study area was to seek out the married migrant women in those areas, with the help from a local contact. Then the mother-in-law or husband of the women who were willing and consenting to be a part of this study was taken into confidence so that they would allow their daughter-in-law or wife to be a part of this program for seven days.

Pre and post-testing were conducted on the first and last day respectively. The pilot study spanned for a total of 14 days (7 days x 2 villages). Group as well as individual sessions were arranged for all the seven days. The average duration for each day was around 2 to 3 hours, and before concluding the intervention session every day, the participants were requested to provide their feedback and suggestions for improving the session. Further, refreshments were provided to all the participants at the end of each day.

Measures

The pre and post-testing booklets comprised of relevant items pooled from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) (two items) and the World Health Organization Quality of Life questionnaire (WHOQOL Group, 1998) (one item), and two items related to the social and one item related to the cultural dimension. A similar method of extracting and using relevant items from standardized measures has been used in previous studies (e.g. Fulford, Johnson, & Carver, 2008). The items related to social and cultural dimensions were framed on the basis of the experience gained from previous field investigations (Singh & Dangi, 2011; Singh et al., under review). These items included: 'difficulty in understanding and speaking Haryanvi dialect' (cultural dimension, where a higher score indicates poorer adjustment to the new culture); 'having trouble in being part of Haryanvi society', and 'having trouble in adapting smoothly to ways of life in the Haryanvi society' (social dimension, where a higher score indicates poorer adjustment to the new society). The items used from the standardized measures were translated to Hindi following the standard procedure of test translation. Firstly, two bilingual experts translated the original English version of these items into Hindi. The Hindi versions were then back-translated into

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English to verify their content similarity with the original items and to ensure that the translated scale was indeed a true copy of the original scale. After resolving the discrepancies, the translated versions were re-verified. Among the other tools used for data collection were a socio-demographic information sheet and a semi-structured interview schedule.

The Main Study

Based on the observations made during the pilot study, coupled with the suggestions given by the participants, certain modifications were made to the intervention before using it in the main study. For instance, a few more relevant questions were added to the questionnaire used for pre and post testing. A creative assignment was planned in the main study (Day one), based on the feedback of the participants. Upon realizing the significant role, the attitude and behavior of the mother-in-law has on the daughters-in-law well-being, one of the sessions of the main study (Day four) was designed to include both the participants and their mothers-in-law. Furthermore, in the pilot study, it was observed that the participants enjoyed humor based story-telling, hence, in one session of the main study (Day five), the participants were asked to share humorous life experiences.

Participants

The main study comprised of 47 married migrant women living in *Madina* (n=14) village of Rohtak district, *Chara* (n=18) village of Jhajjar district, *Bhusana* (n=7) and *Chidana* (n=8) village of Sonapat district of Haryana. Only willing and consenting women were made a part of the study. Their mean age was 18.89 years ($\sigma = 2.40$), and 51.06% of the participants were below 18 years, while 48.94% were above 18 years. With regards to their literacy status, 44.68% of them were not educated, and 36.17% of them had studied till matriculation, and 19.15% chose not to respond to this question. The participants belonged to the states of West Bengal (34.04%), Assam (17.02%), Orissa (14.89%), Bihar (12.77%), Uttarakhand (8.51%), Himachal Pradesh (6.38%), Maharashtra (2.13%), Kerala (2.1), and Uttar Pradesh (2.13%). With regards to their duration of marriage, 61.70% had been married for less than a year, while 38.30% had been married for more than a year.

Measures

The pre-post testing booklet used in the main study had eleven items as opposed to the 6-item questionnaire used in the pilot study. Five new items were added to the main study based on their relevance to the research, and observations made during the pilot study. The new items included one item for the cultural dimension ('feeling burden of Haryanvi tradition'), and two each for QOL and happiness (Subjective Happiness Scale of Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). The items from the standardized measures were translated in Hindi following the standard method of test translation. A socio-demographic information sheet and semi-structured interview schedule were the other tools used for data collection.

Procedure

An outline of the activities and exercises for each of the seven days is mentioned in Table 2.

Table 2. The Intervention

| Day & Theme | Individual Activities | Group Activities | Educational Session | Entertainment of the Day |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------|--|
| Day One: Introductory Session | Individual sessions were held with those women who were found to | The researcher (second author) gave the participants an overview of the program. Being a | ---- | A creative assignment was planned for them in which they were encouraged to identify |

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| | <p>be visibly uncomfortable in opening up with the group. After rapport establishment, pre-testing was conducted. The pre-testing questionnaire was administered verbally to all the participants.</p> | <p>group and community-based approach, it was essential to break the ice and make each participant comfortable with the researcher as well as with the other group members. Rapport was established by spending considerable time with them and encouraging them to open up. They were then requested to introduce themselves to the entire group.</p> | | <p>an area of interest from their daily household activities (example: cooking, rangolimaking, stitching, embroidery making). They were provided with the raw materials needed for executing the task chosen by them and were asked to work on it and present it before the group on the last day of the intervention.</p> |
| <p>Day two: Cultural awareness session. The objective of this session was to foster their awareness about Haryanvi culture –its language, food habits and the attire traditionally worn by rural Haryanvi women.</p> | <p>Language- A set of language-related questions were asked on how many languages they could speak, their difficulty in comprehending and speaking in Haryanvi dialect, the differences and similarities they could find between their native tongue and Haryanvi language. Food- This centered on questions exploring their familiarity with Haryanvi food, and the similarities and differences in the cuisine, and food habits of Haryana and their native place. Dressing style- Here the focus was on exploring their familiarity with the attire worn by Haryanvi women, with a specific emphasis on their views regarding the <i>ghunghat</i> (the veil worn by women,</p> | <p>Language-The participants were divided into two groups - one group comprised of women married for a year or less and the other group comprised of women married for more than a year. Both the groups were shown 50 images of basic objects that one comes across in everyday life (e.g. fan, butter, gate, fodder, and pond) and were asked to name them in Haryanvi. This was done to help them learn the basic Haryanvi terminology of everyday things. Rewards such as wallets, bangles, earrings and the like were distributed to the women providing correct answers. Food- Participants had to pick one chit from a box containing a list of ten Haryanvi dishes (<i>seeth, churma, saag</i>) and had to explain the steps for preparing the dish. The objective was to</p> | <p>It was emphasized that having been married into a Haryanvi family, they would gradually need to adapt to Haryanvi culture. To start with, they could try and learn a few Haryanvi phrases and sentences relevant to their day to day communication. Besides, in Haryanvi culture food holds a position of great importance and since it is a prevailing belief in North India that the way to the husband’s heart is through his stomach, they could try learning some Haryanvi dishes, especially those which are popular during the festive season. It was conveyed that the above transformation and adaptation to the new culture would take time and might feel stressful. However, they were encouraged</p> | <p>The married migrant women who had been living in Haryana since a few years were encouraged to share their success stories with the other group members.</p> |

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| | primarily in Northern and Western India, to cover their head and often face). | widen their food-related knowledge of Haryana. Dressing style- The participants were encouraged to share their views on the prevailing Haryanvi custom of wearing a <i>ghunghat</i> . | to take it up as a challenge. | |
| Day three: Cultural awareness session The focus of this session was on increasing their familiarity with the prevailing Haryanvi customs, traditions, festivals and folk songs. | A set of culture-based questions framed with the help of experts familiar with the culture of Haryana were used. One question sought, for example, information on whether the participant has ever attended a Haryanvi wedding and the similarities and differences she has observed in such a wedding with that of a wedding in her own culture. | Videos of Haryanvi songs (like <i>meranaudandi ka bijana</i> and <i>merachunarmangaa de</i>) were played and participants were requested to listen to the songs and explain what they could comprehend. They were also encouraged to sing any Haryanvi song and explain its meaning to the other participants. | The motivational message imparted to the participants was based on the large number of similarities they had identified between their native and host culture. They were told that if they could focus on those facets of their own culture that was acceptable in Haryanvi culture, then it would facilitate their integration into the new culture while ensuring that they do not feel alienated from their own culture. | The participants were asked to choose any activity they were comfortable performing (example – singing, dancing, and sharing jokes) and were requested to perform their selected activity either in Haryanvi language or in their native language. The purpose was to help them unwind and strengthen the bond amongst the women. |
| Day 4: Social (Interpersonal) Awareness The theme for day 4 was social (interpersonal) awareness, with a focus on the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. | Thirty-four mothers-in-law participated in this activity. The researcher interacted with the mothers-in-law individually to get an insight into their reasons for choosing cross-border brides. Each session lasted for about 30-45 minutes. | A video clip of a Haryanvi song being sung by an older woman was used as the instrument for delivering a social message to the participating mothers-in-law. Through it, they were reminded of their authoritative position in the family, and their experiences as a daughter-in-law. A key message of this video was that one must respect and treat one's daughter-in-law as one would treat one's daughter. At the end of this | It aimed at sensitizing the mothers-in-law of the problems being encountered by their migrant daughters-in-law. This session was addressed by <i>anganwadi</i> workers (who were informed beforehand about the nature of this session and what was expected of them), as they are respected by all the rural women, hold a position of influence in the village and most importantly, are | |

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| | | session, all the mothers-in-law were encouraged to deliver a message to the participating mothers-in-law and married migrant women, on ways to enhance positive interactions within the family. | aware of the social make-up of the village. | |
| <p>Day five: Psychological awareness session</p> <p>The theme for the fifth day was ‘developing insight’, in which the objective was to help the participants realize that they have the psychological resources to manage and overcome their daily hurdles in the new culture.</p> | <p>The presentation of a case vignette was planned for this day, in which a hypothetical situation of a woman named ‘Bimla’ was presented. She was presented as a cross-border bride married into a Haryanvi family. The vignette covered several problems plaguing Bimla such as sadness, anxiety, low self-esteem, being subject to misconduct and disrespect in the new culture, harsh criticism from her in-laws, unfulfilled desires, lack of love and respect from her mother-in-law, and difficulties in adjusting to the new culture. The women were asked to give reasons for Bimla’s problems and recommend measures for the same and to suggest any recreational activity that would uplift Bimla’s mood. The objective of this session was to help the women</p> | <p>Interactive solution-oriented group-discussion (pertaining to Bimla’s problems) was held. All the participants were asked to deliver a message to motivate Bimla.</p> | <p>With the help of brief pictorial stories, the participants were conveyed that it is not always possible to change external conditions, and that under such circumstances one has to change one’s attitude and perception toward the situation in order to minimize its impact on their well-being (for example – reappraising the situation as challenging rather than stressful).</p> | <p>Each participant was asked to share humorous life experiences.</p> |

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| | develop an insight into their potential for overcoming situations that threaten their well-being. | | | |
| <p>Day six: Psychological awareness session</p> <p>The theme for day six was to 'identify one's strength'.</p> | <p>In this session, each participant was asked about the positive qualities they feel they possess as a daughter-in-law, and the qualities they feel an ideal daughter-in-law should possess. Further, they were asked to suggest changes one should bring in oneself to become an ideal daughter-in-law.</p> | <p>This session comprised of a role-playing activity in which one participant enacted the role of the mother-in-law and the other performed the role of the daughter-in-law. They enacted various situations of daily interaction between a mother and a daughter-in-law.</p> | <p>Brief pictorial stories with a focus on self-reliance were shown to the participants. The importance of recognizing one's strengths was highlighted thereafter. Further, the researcher emphasized that all individuals have strengths as well as shortcomings, however, in the face of challenging situations one needs to focus on and utilize one's strengths. The significance of positive thinking was also emphasized.</p> | <p>Participants were asked to sing the Haryanvi songs (<i>meranaadandi ka bijana</i> and <i>merachunarmangaa de</i>) they had been shown on the third day of the intervention.</p> |
| <p>Day seven:</p> | <p>To gauge the effectiveness of the intervention, post-testing was done. The booklet used during pre-testing was re-administered to the participants. In addition, they were asked four more questions to elicit their perception toward the intervention. The participants were requested to provide suggestions to improve the program.</p> | <p>They were also asked to present their creative assignment (for which material had been provided on Day-1) which was followed by distribution of rewards to the participants (three in each village) with the most creative task.</p> | -- | <p>The participants were requested to deliver any social message that they wanted to; it could be addressed to the migrant or non-migrant women, their in-laws or society at large</p> |

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RESULTS

The Pilot Study: In the pilot study, descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test were run using SPSS-17. The results of the paired t-test showed a statistically significant impact of the intervention on the psychological dimensions of life satisfaction ($t=3.29; p<.001$), and quality of life ($t=1.81; p<.05$), and the cultural dimension ($t=-2.24 ; p<.05$) as well. However, the social dimension did not show any improvement. Hence, in the main study efforts were made to address the same.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation and t-values of the participants before and after the intervention (Pilot study)

| Dimension | Pre-test scores(n=20) | | Post-test scores(n=20) | | t-values |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Cultural | 2.60 | 1.35 | 2.10 | 0.55 | 2.24* |
| Social | 3.00 | 1.01 | 3.10 | 0.95 | -0.52 |
| Psychological: Life satisfaction | 2.90 | 1.03 | 3.48 | 0.85 | -3.29** |
| Quality of Life | 2.35 | 1.18 | 2.90 | 1.02 | -1.81* |

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The Main Study: This study followed a multi-method approach with the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. For quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test were run using SPSS-17 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Mean, standard deviation and t-values of the participants before and after the intervention (Main study)

| Dimension | Pre-test scores(n=47) | | Post-test scores(n=47) | | t-values |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Cultural | 2.67 | 1.21 | 2.31 | 1.26 | 2.75** |
| Social | 3.63 | 1.07 | 3.28 | 0.87 | 3.00** |
| Psychological: Life satisfaction | 2.57 | 0.98 | 2.88 | 0.91 | -2.37** |
| Quality of Life | 2.40 | 1.20 | 2.80 | 0.95 | -4.39** |
| Happiness | 2.64 | 0.91 | 2.89 | 0.88 | -2.74** |

Note. ** $p < 0.01$

The results of the paired t-test showed a statistically significant impact of the developed intervention on the psychological dimensions of life satisfaction ($t= -2.37; p<.01$), quality of life ($t= 4.39; p<.01$), and happiness ($t= -2.74; p<.01$), and the cultural ($t= -2.75; p<.01$) as well as social dimensions ($t=3.00; p<.01$).

Apart from the analysis of the pre and post-test results, the effectiveness of the intervention was also evaluated through a set of four questions that were analyzed through content analysis.

Table 4. Questions used for assessing the effectiveness of the Intervention and the percentage of respondents in each of the response categories

| Response Options | On the basis of what you have learnt in this program, do you believe you can help other migrant women? | There has been no significant change in my life in the last seven days. | The things that I saw and learnt will help me in improving my life. | I feel such programs cannot bring improvement in the lives of married migrant women. |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| | % of respondents | % of respondents | % of respondents | % of respondents |
| Strongly Disagree | 4.2 | 44.6 | 4.3 | 40.4 |
| Disagree | 6.3 | 29.7 | 12.7 | 38.3 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 12.7 | 10.6 | 17.1 | 10.6 |
| Agree | 31.9 | 10.6 | 34.1 | 6.4 |
| Strongly agree | 44.6 | 4.2 | 31.9 | 4.3 |

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The results of the content analysis showed that the majority of the participants (44.6%) held a strong conviction that their participation in this program would help them improve the condition of other migrant women.

Further, the majority of them (44.6%) strongly disagreed that there had been no change in their life during the course of the intervention. They reported that they felt positive changes in their lifestyle and well-being and that their participation in this program showed them a way to be happy in Haryana. The women also reported that the intervention showed them a way to help other migrant women in their villages, in case they reported experiencing difficulties in adjusting to the new culture. Some even said that they had started enjoying their daily life activities since their participation in this intervention. Majority of them (34.1%) also seemed positive about the role of the knowledge acquired from the intervention in bringing improvements in their life in particular, and about the potential of such interventions in improving the lives of married migrant women in general (40.4%). However, there were some respondents who were of the opinion that their problems cannot be solved by such interventions. In this context, a participant said that society should accept them happily (*“samaz ko hume khusi khusi apnana chahiye”*). Upon further questioning, it was found that 28.4% of the participants considered societal support to be critical for bringing improvements in their lives. Family (31.3%) and government (9%) were the other forms of support they considered to be important. With regards to the latter one of them said that the government should start some pension schemes for them as well, so that they get some respect in their family (*“Sarkar ko humare liye bhi koi pension scheme chalene chahiye taki humari bhi pariwar mein izzat badhjiy”*), while another participant opined that the government should take care of them and punish those who ill-treat them (*“Sarkar ko humara mukhy rupse dhyan rakhna chahiye aur koi pershan kare ushko ushkis ajabhidy”*). With respect to family support, one participant said that family members should understand if they have brought them from such a distant place then it is their responsibility to look after them. Further, their mother-in-law should respect them equally and treat them as their own daughter (*“Parivarwalo ko samjana chahiye yadi parivar wale itne dur sylykar ay hai to ye hunkafarz banta hai ke who unko dhan gsyarakhe”, “Saas-sasur ko barabar ka darjadetehuy hume bhi apni beti ketar ahrakhna chahiye”*). Thus, the women are aware of the institutional, familial and societal support that needs to be extended to them for ensuring their rights and respect in the new culture.

Overall, the findings of the content analysis (see Table 4) showed that the intervention was appreciated by most of the participants. The statistically significant outcome, in addition to the feedback given by the participants, provides preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of this intervention in enhancing the psychological well-being of the participants, and in increasing their familiarity with Haryanvi culture and society.

DISCUSSION

Arranged cross-regional marriages are not unique to Haryana alone. Several female-deficit states of India have been witnessing the trend of their local men marrying women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This phenomenon reflects the widespread gender discrimination that has been prevalent in Indian society. Haryana has been the worst hit by this gender imbalance and the trend of ‘across-state marriages’ in this state has been documented since the 1980s (Kaur, 2010).

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Media reports and researches from sociological, economic and demographic perspectives on this phenomenon have been plentiful, with a focus on the repercussions of such a long-distance migration on the women. Under such circumstances, the significance of an intervention designed to enhance the well-being of this target group, can hardly be undermined. Besides, as mentioned previously, there has been a lack of sufficient attention to this target group within the psychological literature.

In light of the existing gaps, the present work was directed towards the development and delivery of an intervention for improving the well-being level of the cross-regional brides in Haryana. Haryanvi culture, language, food-habits, traditional attire, and social norms are alien to them. Bhugra (2004) suggested that if such is the case, then the individual feels isolated from the new culture and lacks acceptance by the majority. Consequently, the person experiences a lack of social support, feels rejected, alienated and experiences a decline in their self-esteem. Matsumoto, LeRoux, Ratzlaff, Uchida, Chu, & Araki (2001) examined the factors which influence intercultural adjustment, and found a wide range of such variables, including but not limited to - knowledge of the new culture, proficiency in comprehending and speaking the new language, ethnocentrism, social support, cultural similarity, and one's self-construal. One's knowledge of the new culture and familiarity with the language has consistently emerged as leading contributors to adjustment, apart from one's level of ethnocentrism. Many intercultural training interventions, in fact, focus on language skills and knowledge training. The underlying assumption is that if the immigrant or the migrant is familiar with important aspects of the new culture and can speak and understand the local language, the individual's adjustment to the new culture will be smoother.

Along similar lines, the objective of the present intervention was to help the married migrant women acquire familiarity with the key aspects of Haryanvi culture, and to develop an insight into their potential, thereby enhancing their well-being. It focused on cultural, social and psychological dimensions of adjustment and the findings suggest that the intervention was able to achieve the desired outcome. There was a significant impact of the intervention on their life satisfaction, quality of life, happiness, and on the cultural, as well as social dimensions of their well-being, each of which showed an improvement in post-testing. Moreover, the intervention had shown efficacy at the pilot stage itself, except for the social dimension. Thereafter, relevant modifications were made before administering it in the main study, which spanned for 28 days (7 days x 4 villages). It yielded statistically significant results for all the dimensions, in the main study. Further, the feedback of majority of the participants also suggested that it had been efficacious in its objective.

However, the value of the study is not limited to the effectiveness of the intervention alone. In the course of this work, another significant finding emerged that demands attention - majority of the migrant wives were from the state of West Bengal (55% in the pilot and 34.04% in the main study). Previous studies have also documented a higher proportion of Bengali brides in Haryana and other Indian states, as compared to women from other communities (Mukherjee, 2013). So prevalent was this trend in her field studies that Kaur (2010, p.16) described it as the "Bengali bridal Diaspora". A socio-psychological analysis - both at the source (West Bengal) and destination (states to which they are migrating), can help to develop a better understanding of this pattern and its psychological ramifications.

Another significant finding was that many of the participants were aware of the responsibility that the government, society and their in-laws have towards them. However there seemed to

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be a general helplessness on how to secure their basic rights and dignity in the new culture and household. Interventions directed towards capacity-building and empowerment of these women can be one way out.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As part of the present research, follow-up testing was not conducted. However, it could have helped in examining if the impact of the intervention was a sustainable one. Further, the limited sample size in the main study (n=47) is another limitation. Besides, the adaptation of the intervention to suit the local Haryanvi context limits its generalizability to other contexts. The latter limitation can, however, be addressed if researchers from other areas with sufficient knowledge of the local conditions adapt this intervention to suit their local context. Thereafter, the effectiveness of the intervention in other cultural and social set-ups within India can be determined.

In order to address the first two limitations, future studies in Haryana with larger sample size, using follow-up testing in addition to pre-post testing, should be conducted to help ascertain the effectiveness of the developed intervention. If evidence of its effectiveness is obtained derived from multiple research studies, that can lead to advocacy efforts to implement the intervention on a large-scale throughout Haryana. The *anganwadi* workers, *panchayat* leaders, NGOs and social workers, of the various districts in the state, can be approached for their help in running the program on a yearly basis. Furthermore, if feasible the *anganwadi* and social workers and representatives of NGOs can also be trained extensively to conduct the intervention modules themselves. The call for such an initiative is in line with the other role of psychologists - that of an agent of social change.

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Acknowledgements

This research is based on the PhD thesis of the second author who was the primary field investigator for this work. The third author is a Junior Research Fellow and acknowledges the UGC for its generous support in sponsoring her research fellowship. All the authors express their gratitude to the participants who made the research possible.

Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Singh. K, Dangi. S & Bandyopadhyay. S (2019). The Development and Implementation of a Psycho-Social and Cultural Intervention for Cross-region Brides of Rural Haryana. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(1), 649-664. DIP:18.01.072/20190701, DOI:10.25215/0701.072