

Recreational Spaces in a Village in Central India – An Evaluation through “Transect Walk”

Singh, A.J., Giri, M.Y., Raut, A., Sophiya, K., Dambhare, D., Jakasania, A.

Introduction

A transect walk is usually carried out as a part of group exercise and requires transecting or walking across a community. It is a tool which is used for describing and showing the location and distribution of resources, features, landscape, main land uses along a given transect which is usually between two landmarks in a community. Participants of a transect walk have the opportunity to witness and explore various diversities within the community through sheer observation (Episcopal Relief and Development, 2023). The ‘transect walk’ is a qualitative tool and technique which uses participatory research and action. This tool can be easily adopted and replicated at the community level.

Objective

The objective of the study was to enhance the knowledge of undergraduate medical students regarding the community participation through a Participatory Research Action Tool such as a transect walk.

Methodology

Every year, when the first year undergraduate medical students are enrolled in the institution, they are taken to one of the villages for a “Social Service Camp” which is a community immersion programme for students.(MGIMS, Sevagram). The entire batch was divided into five groups.

All groups were asked to participate in the transect walk, starting from different landmarks in the village and each group was asked to explore one aspect in the village. One group was asked to observe and identify recreational spaces in the village. They were also asked to speak and get to know from community members regarding the same. This exercise was undertaken as a part of the students’ camp curriculum during Social Service Camp. The students actively participated in the transect walk and recorded their observations. One hour later, all the groups gathered and the respective group members summarised and presented their observations to the larger group.

Result

Recreational spaces were useful for community gathering such as celebration of local festivals as well as for conducting other health related programme. The group visited school, temples, panchayat (village council) and places where people gather to interact and socialize with others. The students started the walk from the main hall where they were staying and their daily sessions were being held. They first went to the school. The school premises were usually used for the cultural activities concerning the school students and also for conducting other programmes in accordance with school health activities. The group also suggested that the premises can be used for any Annual Health Day programme wherein the school students can act as agents of change in their respective community. The group then visited a temple where people usually gather to celebrate festivals and other common cultural programmes.

Community Medicine, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram, India

Corresponding author: Dr. Mohnish Yuvrajgir Giri
Email: mohnishgiri028@gmail.com

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The weekly market was put up outside the temple, where the local produce of the village was being sold by the vendors. On their way back the group also found an open field where mass gathering and cultural events take place. The village also had a community hall which was dedicated to Lord Buddha (Buddha Vihar). The people also celebrate many festivals and birthdays of late famous leaders in the community hall. The group then came across the office of the Village Council (The Gram Panchayat) which is considered as one of the most important place in the village as most of the important discussions with regards to village and many important official rules and decisions for the village usually take place here. The Village Council is considered as a rural self-governance in most villages in India. The group concluded their walk at the Birsa Munda Statue which was also used for the celebration of local festivities.

Discussion

The students were able to learn how to interact with the community through the participatory research and action tool. They were able to evaluate the recreational spaces

of village with the help of community participation. In the end they able to chart out their course in the transect walk and were able to identify the various recreational spaces within the village.

Conclusion

The transect walk approach offered active student-centred learning with minimal resources and time requirements. Such participatory tools through community immersions programs should be encouraged to impart experiential and real life learning experiences.

References

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