Gender and ICTs

Findings from Gender Network Project

Presented by:

Rajib Nandi

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Gender as an Inclusionary Imperative

A Seminar on Gender and ICTs

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Gender & ICTs: Gender Network

◆ A study had been carried out under Gender Network project to investigate the impact of reforms on female employment in the ICT and ICT enabled sectors (Phase 2).

◆ It was found that the nature and extent of gender differentiation in the wake of the new technological changes that are sweeping through the region are likely to be complex.

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Gender and ICTs: the Studies

Taking clues from the earlier study, G.N. Project undertook studies to investigate the gendered impact of ICTs in selected countries of the region. The basic thrust of the work has been to assess the differential impact, if any, of some on-going innovative ICT projects, on men and women.

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Gender and ICTs: the Studies

In India two such ICT projects were studied and evaluated from a gender angle.

- **Akshaya Project** in Kerala.

- **Computer Learning Centre** of the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi.

Rationale of the Study

◆ It is generally assumed that the changes brought about by the ICT revolution will be gender neutral.

◆ To assess to what extent the assumption of 'gender neutrality' was correct.

◆ If not, then what was the exact nature and extent of the gender differentiated impact of the ICT projects on the ground.

Gender Impact Analysis of Project Akshaya in Kerala

Akshaya Project Background

- Project of Kerala IT Mission, piloted in Malappuram District. 2002. Objective: To promote E-literacy and IT entrepreneurship. To be rolled out in all other districts of the state in due course.

- About Malappuram : Population : 36 Lakhs, 6 Lakhs households (Census 2001), varied agro-climatic zones, a 'backward' district ; 70% of the population is Muslim; high rate of Gulf migration.

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Akshaya Project Background

- Project was designed by a group of professionals and senior bureaucrats; Heavy involvement of the local panchayats in the beginning stages.

- 2000 applications were received for starting 'Akshaya Centres'; 635 were selected after interviews. Substantial financial and technical support from the state government in the first phase (e-literacy), to be tapered out in the second phase which was supposed to concentrate on development of e-commerce.

- The project was implicitly assumed to be 'gender neutral'.

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Research Design

A combination of Akshaya project data, questionnaire surveys (trainees and entrepreneurs); Case studies; Key Informant interviews.

Akshaya entrepreneurs:

- *Basic data*: Collected from the district Headquarters on all 634 entrepreneurs. Subsequently each of the selected entrepreneurs was contacted individually.

- *Questionnaire survey:* Carried out in June-Sept, 2004 on a representative sample of 40 entrepreneurs.

Research Design

Akshaya entrepreneurs:

• *Detailed case studies* of several women entrepreneurs carried out over a period of twelve months, some being interviewed more than once over the period .

Akshaya trainees:

• *Questionnaire survey:* 400 trainees (10 each from each of the 40 Centres in the Entrepreneur sample) surveyed on a range of issues.

Key Informant Interviews: carried out with selected officials, members of local communities, Panchayat members and coordinators.

Findings

- Close to 60% of the 'trainees' in most centres were women.

- Akshaya allowed (predominantly Muslim) women to come out of their houses.

- Most women entrepreneurs perceiving working in the ICT sector as prestigious.

- Very high degree of enthusiasm among some women entrepreneurs.

- Men entrepreneurs perceived project benefits differently from women entrepreneurs.

Women Specific Problems

- Women entrepreneurs had a much higher incidence of indebtedness (bank loans), since most had little access to family resources.

- Women had to close up early in the evening due to reasons of personal 'safety' and concerns about people 'talking'.

- Women had to come late for opening the centres due to domestic responsibilities, thereby losing potential business at both ends.

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Women Specific Problems

- Women entrepreneurs reported that they had problems attending fortnightly meetings.

- Women had to depend on other family members --- mostly female members like one's mother --- to look after domestic household needs.

- Women had to cope with uncooperative male officials and colleagues.

Women Specific Problems

- Some women were forced to submit collaterals by unscrupulous bank officials.

- Women had to deal with dwindling moral support from husband and family when business started floundering in the second phase.

- Generally having to deal with criticisms from the community.

Policy Implications -
A General Observation

Some women, not all, demonstrated extra ordinary motivation and entrepreneurial potential. However, they have had to struggle a great deal more than their male counterparts. With marginal effort, the Akshaya project could have provided the support these women needed. These women could have served as role models for all women with similar ambitions and abilities in this region.

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Policy Implications -
Some Specific Measures

What are some specific measures that could have been taken within the ambit of the Akshaya project?

- A forum for venting their special problems, and chalking out solutions with the help of Akshaya officials?

- Utilizing the agency of the Panchayat coordinators ?

- More substantive involvement of the Panchayats ?

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Policy Implications -
Some General Lessons

- That distributional impact of supposedly 'neutral' project are not necessarily neutral;

- That proper coordination of projects is a must if there are many projects vying for the same space;

- That monitoring of gender and class impact of projects should be built into all project designs where homogeneity of the target population cannot be assumed.

- Sensible efforts for correcting gender imbalances on the ground need a blending of different kinds of knowledge, insights and expertise.

- Are "gender specific programs" the only solution to the 'gender' problem?

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Habitat Learning Centre

Gendered Impact of Computer Literacy on Disadvantaged Children & Adolescents

Aims of the study

To analyse the impact of computer exposure to children from disadvantaged households in Delhi with special reference to gender differences of such impact.

Impact assessment methods

➢Standard psychometric measures of
- •Creativity
- •Attention span
- •Self esteem

➢Questionnaire based interview
- • Socio-economic background of the household

- • Educational background

- • Parents education

➢NGO Evaluation
- •Size

- •Gender sensitivity

- •Sustainability

- •Attitude towards computer training

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Pilot and Main Study

Pilot study :

- Before / After comparison of 12 children from ISST-CC
- 7 psychometric tests

Main study :

- Control group of 148 children (without Computer Training)

Versus

   Experimental group of 129 children (with Computer Training)

- 3 psychometric tests

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Gender Distribution of Main Sample

Gender	Control	Experiment	Total
Male	70 (47.29)	65 (50.38)	135 (48.74)
Female	78 (52.70)	64 (49.61)	142 (51.26)
Total	148 (100.0)	129 (100.0)	277 (100.0)
Inference	Samples are sex matched P>0.05		

Gender distribution

Distribution of groups
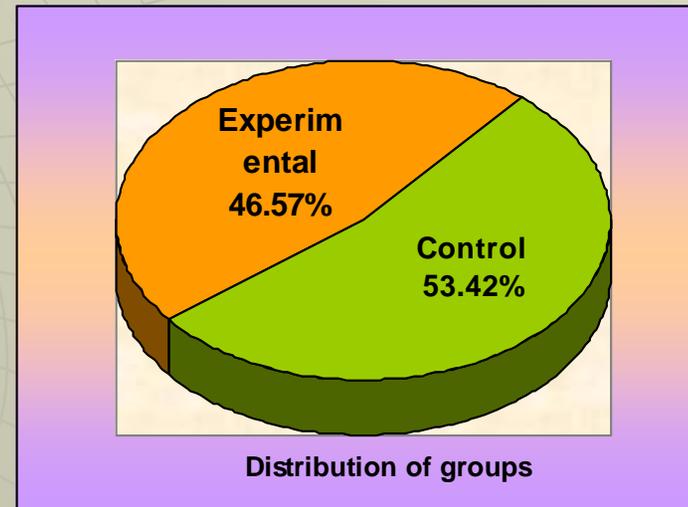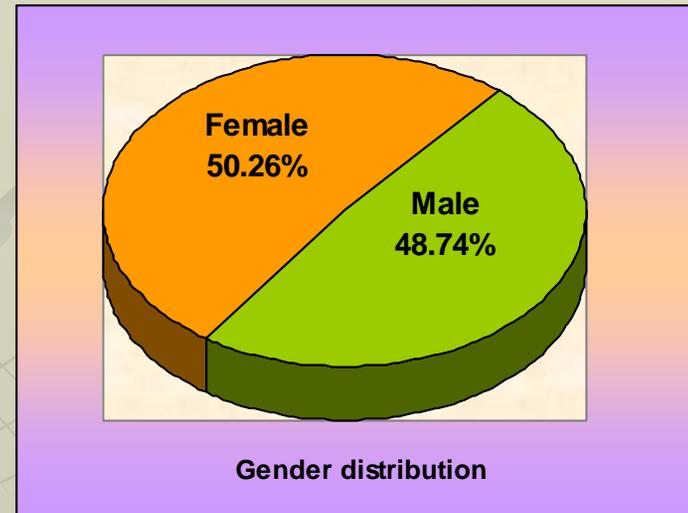
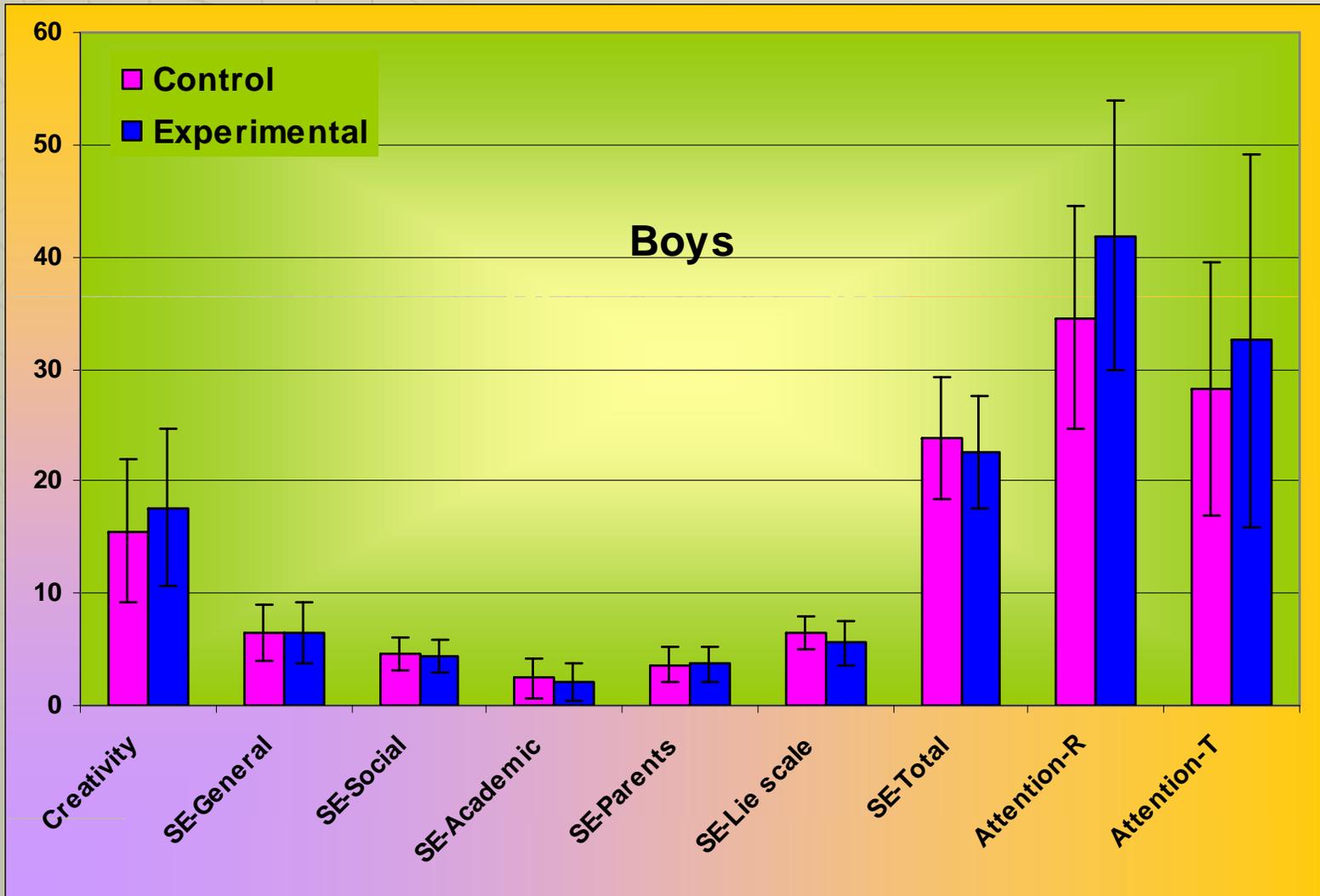# Psychometric Tests

◆ Seven tests for the pilot, three for the sample

◆ Self esteem SEI *(Battle 1981)*

- General
- Social
- Academic
- Parental
- Lie scale

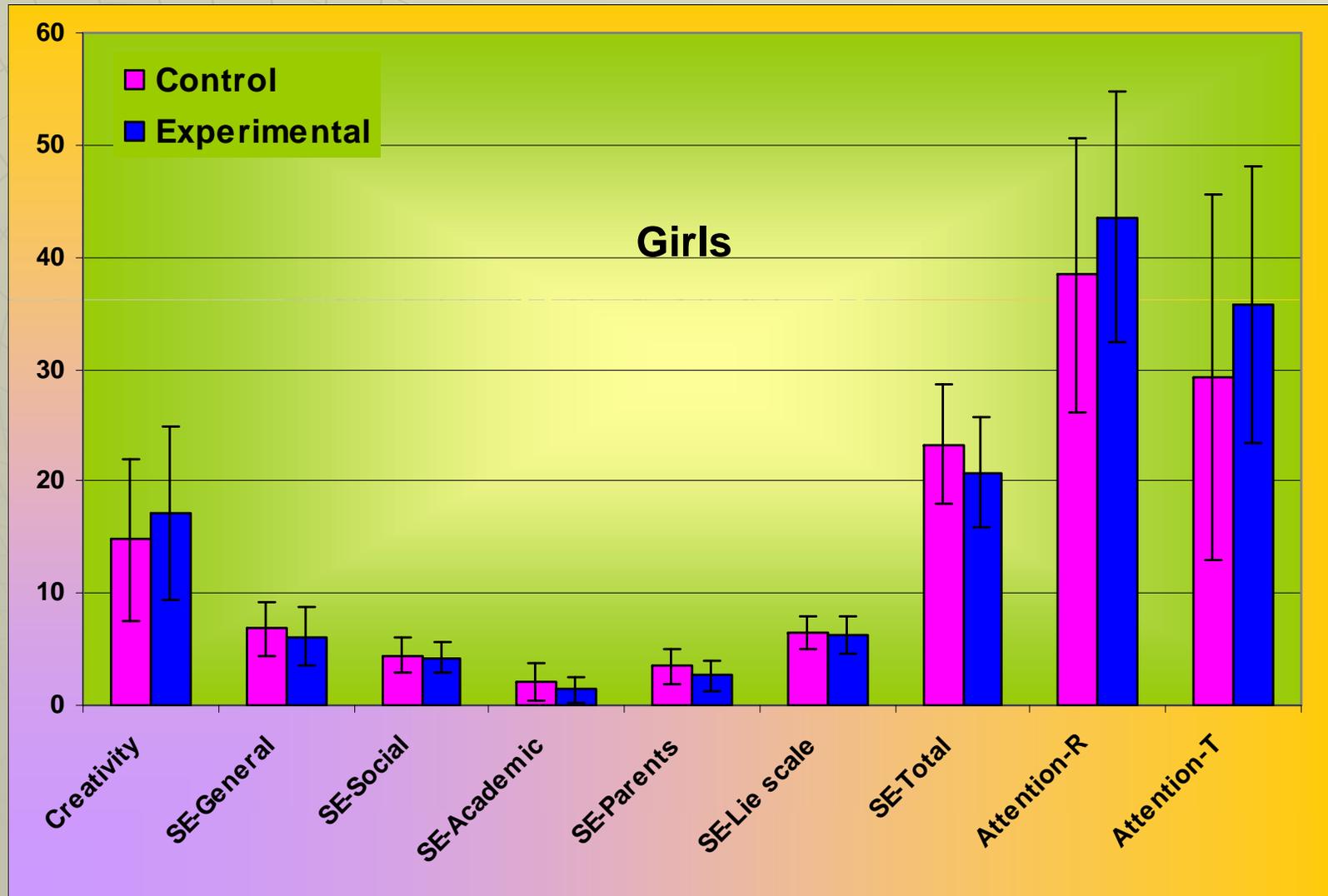◆ Creativity (Mehdi 1985)

◆ Attention (S. D. Kapoor 1972)

Creativity, Self Esteem and Attention
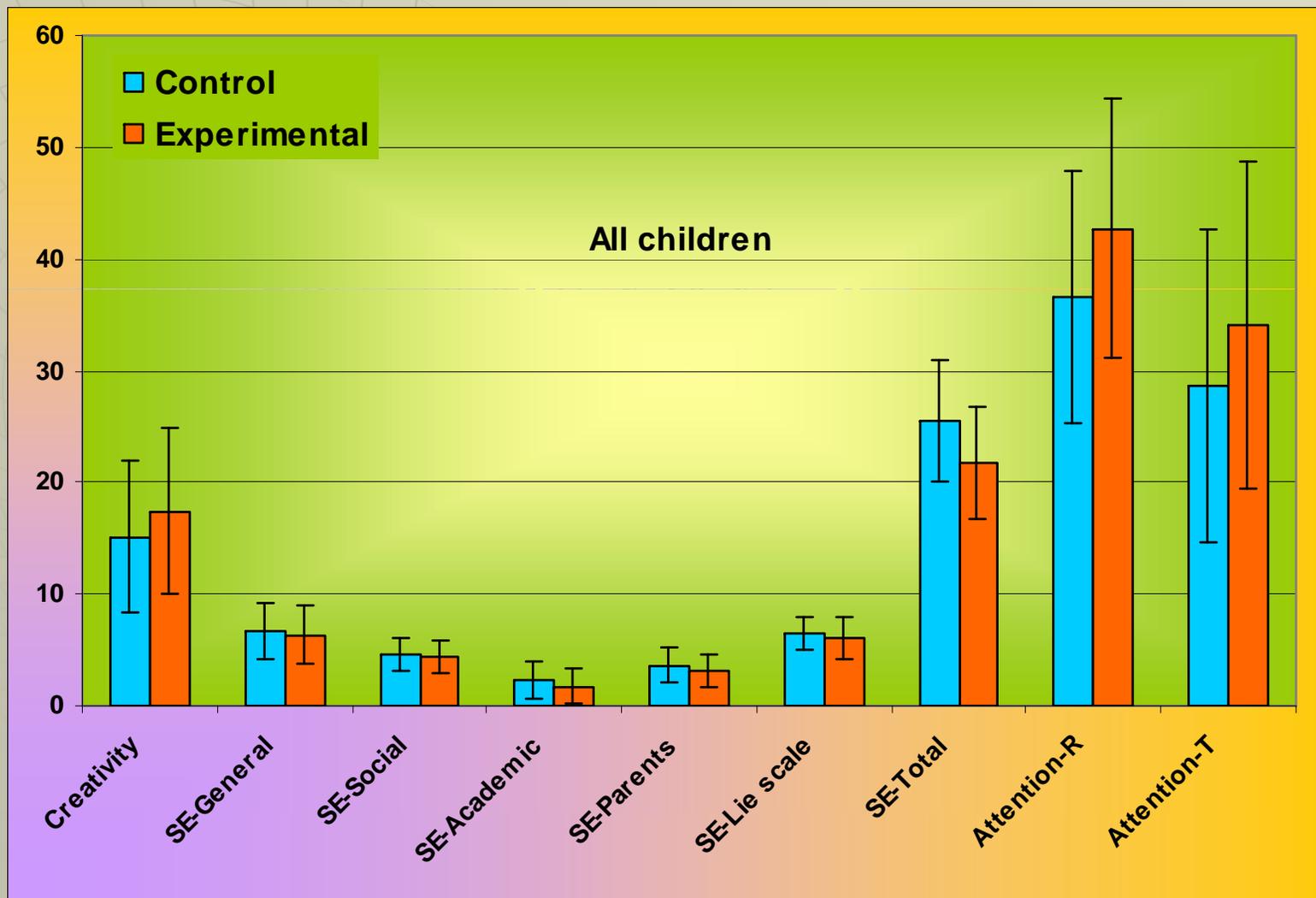
Performance of boys

Performance of girls

Summary of findings

Psychometric tests

- Results from tests and self reports match reasonably well.

- Experimental group was better on Attention and Creativity but Self esteem parameters were ambiguous.

- Girls scored worse in terms of self esteem

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Summary of findings

Questionnaire based interview

- Gender and class-specific informational asymmetries

- Gender and class-specific constraints to skill acquisition

- Restricted physical mobility for girls

- Socialization on perceived gendered nature of computer skills

- Specific problems at entry and end points of Computer Training for girls

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Possible mediating influence of NGOs on results of tests

◆ High GS (Gender Sensitivity) associated with better attention and creativity but not self esteem in all children

◆ High GS associated with low defensiveness

◆ High GS is associated with low parental and total self esteem in girls.

Implications

◆ CT is associated with better performance on attention & creativity for both boys and girls.

◆ Self esteem results are not good for either boys or girls, but they are worse for girls.

◆ Self esteem may be too complex a phenomenon to show up as effect of such one-shot interventions, especially if class and gender divides are very strong.

◆ Self esteem enhancement therefore may require multiple strategies at individual and social levels.

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Implications (continued)

- ◆ Need to trace the process through which biological invulnerability of girls in childhood turn into psychosocial vulnerability in adolescence.

- ◆ Younger the age of the girl, the higher is likely to be the beneficial impact of interventions such as CT. So, start CT early, especially in girls.

- ◆ Focus on levels of achievement equally at entry and end points in terms of outcome with effective interventions

Thank You