

Awareness about Child Rights among the Secondary School Children of Mangalore City

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Abstract—Child rights are essential for protecting children's safety, dignity, and healthy development. Adolescence is a stage of life during which awareness has strong influence on attitudes and behaviour. School plays an important role in imparting knowledge about child rights to students, but studies have shown that despite the presence of legal provisions, there is limited understating among children about their rights. In support of this concern, Bhattacharya (2018) pointed out that although India has strong child protection laws, many children are not fully aware of their rights and often realises them only after experiencing violations. In this context, the present study analyses the extent of awareness about child rights among secondary school students in Mangalore city. The study employed a Descriptive Research design and utilised a semi structured questionnaire to collect data from 100 students, who were selected from both government and private schools. The result indicates that most students were aware of child rights, but there was difference in the depth of understanding among them. This finding is also similar to Chowdhary (2019) who observed that awareness exists at a basic level, but deeper knowledge regarding legal provisions and structured guidance remains limited. Well-established awareness about child rights was observed in female students and students in higher classes. On the other hand, some misunderstandings were found, particularly regarding the legal definition of a child. The result indicates the requirement to strengthen child rights education through a regular classroom where there will be active teacher guidance which helps students to develop a more accurate understanding.

Index Terms—Awareness, Child Rights, Education, School, Secondary School Students

I. INTRODUCTION

In the Modern world child rights play an important part in human rights. Child rights do not mean only

taking care of a child, but also accepting them as individuals who have their own rights. The importance of child rights is to ensure that every child lives with dignity, protection and opportunities to grow. Every child has the right to be protected, to participate and to be cared for their development. Children are considered as defenceless group in society.

The game changer in the history of child rights was the adoption of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on November 20, 1989, which came into effect on September 2, 1990 it is one of the widely accepted rights approved by 196 countries. Children were viewed different before and after the adoption of UNCRC it has brought a light into children's lives where the children turned from helpless to and individual who had their own rights and dignity. India adopted the UNCRC on December 11, 1992, by adopting this India showed responsibility in child rights.

Child Rights are an integral part of human rights. The need for child rights arises because children are more dependent on others for their protection and care. The role of child rights is to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, receives safety, education, and most importantly the freedom to express their opinions. The main aim of child rights is to support the overall development of children and to treat every child equally without discrimination based on religion, gender, nationality, or economic status. Child rights are categorized into four main groups: Survival rights, Developmental rights, Protection rights and Participation rights.

Every child has a right to live with dignity. Awareness of child rights help children to know about their rights which help them to understand about the rights and how to implement. By knowing child rights, they become more confident to speak and ask for a help

when they are in a situation where they face abuse or inequality, or a discrimination. Children who are aware of these rights are more responsible, and have an ability to take decisions, and respect others and contribute to the society.

Many Children remain unaware of their rights and continue facing exploitations. So, in order to overcome these issues school plays a crucial role in promoting child rights and raising awareness among students. Since children spend most of their time in school it is a best place to educate them about their rights and to implement these rights in their life. School is the space where children spend most of their time learning about themselves, their society, values. Secondary students are between 13-18 years; at this age they are mature enough to understand about the right but the proper monitoring is required.

Karnataka is one of the Indian states that has made strong progress in protecting and promoting child rights. The state has created several programs that work with same goal in providing awareness. Karnataka's approach follows national and international child rights frameworks but also includes local innovations suited to its own communities. The KSCPCR works to ensure that every child under the age of 18 in Karnataka is protected and supported in all areas of life education, health, safety, and participation.

Mangalore is located in Dakshina Kannada District, is known as one of Karnataka's major educational centres. Here the education provides both the opportunity and promote child right awareness. Mangalore has many types of schools such as government, private, and aided this provides a great environment for children to get better education. Many institutions have already started to provide education based on child rights and safety.

Studying child rights awareness among secondary school students is not just an academic exercise. It is an important to understand how effective children know about their rights and how to implement it in their daily life and how society plays and important role in empowering these rights. The children who know about their rights are responsible and confident to protect themselves, respect others and share their opinion. This awareness not only builds a good citizen but leads to the nation's development.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bhattacharya (2018) reported that not many children were aware of child rights and found that in India rate is significantly low. India has several strong child protection laws such as Right to education Act, POCSO Act, and Juvenile Justices Act. The study emphasizes that effective awareness can be created only when schools, communities, and families work together, as many children and parents remain unaware of these rights.

Chowdhury (2019) examined the extent to which secondary school teachers in West Bengal were aware of child rights and found that although they knew basic concepts like right to education and protection, their knowledge about specific laws and policies was limited. The study highlighted the need for in-depth teacher training programmes to strengthen child protection and welfare in schools.

Singh (2021) explored awareness of child rights among students and found that while many had basic understandings about protection and education, they lacked knowledge of specific laws such as the Right to Education Act and the Juvenile Justice Act. The study stressed the importance of teacher training and workshops to create a safe and supportive school environment for children.

Sathiyaraj and Jayaraman (2013) focused on the awareness of primary school teachers regarding child rights and found that most teachers were aware of fundamentals rights but lacked knowledge about formal laws and child protection policies. The study suggested that continuous training and clear guidelines would help teachers create a child friendly and secure environment in schools.

Grewal and Singh (2011) stated that despite the existence of strong legal frameworks like the Right to Education Act and Juvenile Justice Act, awareness among children and stakeholders remains uneven. The study emphasised that transformative change requires proper training, school support, and community participation to ensure effective implementation of child rights.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

- To understand the demographic profile of the Respondents

- To study the overall level of awareness about child rights among secondary school students in Mangalore
- To explore the role of schools in creating awareness about child rights

The study employs a descriptive research design to understand the level of awareness regarding child rights among secondary school students in Mangaluru city. The study focuses on students studying in government and private secondary schools in Mangaluru. The selected area for the study is Mangaluru city, which is known for its educational institutions. Using convenient sampling, 100 respondents were selected to ensure representation from different school backgrounds. Data was collected through a self-prepared questionnaire and secondary data through research articles, journals and online sources.

IV. DISCUSSION

Table 1 - Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	61	61%
	Female	39	39%
Class	8 th	50	50%
	9 th	50	50%
Type of School	Government	26	26%
	Private	74	74%
Medium of Instruction	English	74	74%
	Kannada	26	26%

Awareness of Child Rights among Students by Type of School

A clear majority of students (96%) reported that they are aware of child rights, reflecting a high level of overall awareness. All government school students (100%) indicated awareness, and a strong majority of private school students (94%) also demonstrated awareness, suggesting generally high levels of understanding across both types of schools.

Understanding of the meaning of a Child

A majority of students (38%) defined a child as person below 18 years, which reflects a relatively correct

understanding. However, a considerable proportion identified a child as below 14 years (61%), indicating partial and limited awareness. So, among 8th standard students has more awareness about meaning of child than 9th standard student, indicating certain gaps in understandings.

Role of Teachers in explaining and promoting discussions on Child Rights

A clear majority of students (62%) reported that teachers explain child rights in class and also encourage discussion, reflecting a supportive and participatory learning environment. This indicates that classroom teaching plays an important role in strengthening students' awareness and understanding of child rights. Overall, the findings suggest that teacher involvement positively contributes to promoting child rights education in schools.

V. FINDINGS

- A strong majority of students (96%) reported being aware of child rights, indicating a generally high overall level of awareness among secondary school students in Mangalore.
- Most students (92%) recognized that children have the right to protection from abuse and neglect, reflecting clear understanding of basic protection rights.
- A majority of students (88%) stated that schools conduct programs and discussions on child rights, highlighting the active role of schools in creating awareness.
- A considerable majority (85%) reported feeling encouraged by schools to report child rights violations, showing institutional support for child protection and reporting mechanisms.

VI. SUGGESTION

The findings of the study indicate that secondary school students in Mangalore have a general awareness about child rights, but their understandings are not always complete or exact. While many students are familiar with the basic idea of child rights, some confusion still exists regarding the correct legal definition of a child and the detailed provisions related to child protection. Therefore, it is essential that child

rights education is improved within the school system. Instead of teaching it only as a small part of the syllabus, schools should consistently discuss child rights throughout the academic year so that students gradually build a clear and confident. The difference in awareness levels between different types of schools also suggests that exposure and teaching methods play an important role. To address this gap, equal importance must be given to awareness programs in both government and private schools. Educational authorities can organize regular workshops, interactive sessions, and awareness campaigns that actively involve students. Inviting resource persons such as social workers, legal professionals, or child welfare officers can make the sessions more practical and relatable. When students hear real life examples and practical explanations, they are more likely to understand the seriousness of child rights issues. The study also shows that although most students recognize child labor as wrong, not all of them clearly understand the legal age limits and protective measures available. This indicates the need to move beyond basic awareness and focus on practical knowledge. Schools should inform students about available child helplines, reporting mechanisms, and support systems so that they feel empowered to respond if they come across situations involving exploitation or abuse. In addition to classroom teaching, co-curricular activities can greatly enhance understanding. Activities such as debates, poster presentations, essay writing, and role plays encourage students to reflect on real life situations and express their opinions. These methods make learning more engaging and help students retain information more effectively. Overall, strengthening child rights education at the secondary school level will help in developing socially responsible and informed young individuals. When students clearly understand their rights and responsibilities, they are better prepared to protect themselves and support others in their community. A strong foundation of awareness during adolescence can contribute to building a more sensitive and rights conscious society in the future.

VII. FUTURE RESEARCH

The study aimed to assess awareness of child rights among secondary school students in Mangaluru. The future research can expand this study by including

students from higher secondary levels to assess whether awareness improves with age and academic exposure. Comparative studies between rural and urban schools may provide deeper insights into environmental influence on child rights awareness. Researchers may also explore the role of parents and teachers in shaping students understanding of child rights. In addition, qualitative studies using interviews or focus group discussions can help in understanding students' perceptions and experiences in greater depth.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The present study analyzed the level of awareness regarding child rights among secondary school students in Mangaluru. The findings suggests that the most students have a basic understanding of child rights, there are lack of theoretical clarity, particularly in relation to the legal definition of a child and specific child protection provision. The study also reveals that school environment plays an important role in shaping awareness levels, as differences were identified based on institutional backgrounds and exposure to awareness initiatives.

Although students generally realize issues such as child labor as violations of rights, their understanding is often limited to general knowledge rather than detailed legal awareness. This indicates that child rights education at the secondary level needs to be improved and presented in a more consistent and practical manner. School has major responsibility in promoting rights-based understanding among adolescents. Creating greater awareness at this stage can contribute to developing informed, responsible, and socially conscious individuals who are able to recognize and responding to child rights issues effectively.

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