

Impact of ICDS upon the Health and Education of Preschool Tribal Children in Nawrangpur Block of Odisha

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ABSTRACT

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 was the outcome of the consequences of Second World War and was intended to have peace in the world. For having peace in any society, state, nation and world, it is desired that there must be equal opportunity for all and the government welfare service must be delivered rightly to all. Article 16 of Indian Constitution has laid down a general rule that there shall be equal opportunity for all citizens and thus emphasizes on universality of Indian Citizenship. A sizable percent of the total population of India consists of children belonging to the age-group 0-6 years and majority of them live in villages. The health and well being of these children constitute the solid foundation on which the future of our nation depends. There are societies in our country which are well organised and fight for their rights. On the other hand there are people who are ignorant of their rights, as a result, cannot fight for their rights. Scheduled Tribe people, who commonly inhabit in remote areas, often are not aware of the different services being provided by government for their welfare. Integrated Child Development Services is a national flagship programme in our country which is primarily intended to take care of pregnant mothers, lactating mothers, and preschool children. The present study was conducted in a tribal inhabited block of Odisha to reveal the impact of the services upon the health and education of the preschool children. The findings were encouraging but not up to the mark.

Keywords: Health, education, nutrition, preschool

At present times, human resources are appropriately been termed as human capital. Children hold the key of the future. Investment for their development is a sine qua non. Neglect in this area has far reaching disastrous consequences. Childhood is the critical formative stage of life in terms of psycho-physical growth and socio-cognitive development. The preschool children are in vulnerable situations. They deserve special attention. A sizable percent of the total population of India consists of children belonging to the age-group 0-6 years and majority of them live in villages. The health and well being of these children constitute the solid foundation on which the future of every nation depends.

There is an old Chinese saying- *Just as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined*. Because of the plasticity of physical and nervous structures, the human child is capable of learning and can develop more varied types of adjustment than are possible at later stages. The basic personality pattern of any individual is set during the early years of his life. On 14th November 1961, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan had aptly commented- *Children should be enabled to live in congenial surroundings*. In our country there are many children who are deprived of such congenial surroundings for which they cannot grow as per their innate potentialities. It is the responsibility of government and ethical duty of all concern to look to the interest of such deprived children.

Internationally, early childhood is defined as the period of a child's life from conception to age eight. This stage is a special time in human life. It is the foundation of human life to achieve optimal physical growth and psychological development. The first eight years of childhood are critically important and the physical growth in positive environment leads to proper mental progress and this is invariably related for the better performance in early education. This implies and it has been well recognised that early childhood care and early childhood education are the two sides of the same coin.

Care means children's health and nutrition, their evolving emotional and social abilities, as well as their minds. Children who lack sufficient nutrition and nurturing, and stimulus during this crucial period may be left with developmental deficits. The benefits of early childhood education come from the experience through participation. Children absorb everything what they hear and see. The education received in early childhood lays the foundation of the life and helps mental and academic development of child. It is very essential to recognize importance of early childhood education. As such, children must receive attention and affection to develop in a healthy manner.

The well being of children has been a concern and has been an integral part of the country's developmental planning since 1951. At independence, preschool education was primarily in the hands of a few voluntary organizations. During the 1960s, the major responsibility of developing child-care/development services had primarily rested with the voluntary sector, with a welfare-oriented approach. The 1970s marked a shift from welfare to development and accordingly child welfare services were expanded to the health, education, nutrition, etc. sectors. The National Policy for Children was adopted in 1974 and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme was launched as a sequel to it in 1975. Survival, protection, equal opportunity, and participation are basic to holistic child development. Child care services to the 0-8 year olds is divided into two age sets, viz., 0-6 years and 6-8 years.

The 0-6 years set is covered under early childhood care and education services while the 6-8 year old set enter the primary cycle. Again, within the 0-6 year old set the 0-3 year old children are targeted under child development programmes while the 3-6 year olds comprise the target group for preschool education.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme was launched on 2nd October 1975 in our country. Today, ICDS scheme of India represents one of the world's largest and most unique programmes for early childhood development. On one hand, it is intended to meet the challenge of providing preschool education and on the other hand to address the issues related to malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality among millions of children of our country. This programme is intended to improve both the pre-natal and the post-natal growth environment of the child.

The district of Nawarangpur came into existence on 2nd October 1992 after district reorganisation in the state of Odisha when erstwhile Koraput district was reorganised in to four districts. Administratively Nawrangpur district comprises of one subdivision, ten tahasils, one municipality and one NAC, ten CD blocks, ten police stations, 169 grama panchayats. There are 887 revenue villages in the district. There are four assembly constituencies and one parliamentary constituency which are reserved for ST. As per 2011 census, the rural population comprises 92.8% of the total population of the district. The ST population works out to 55.8%. The male and female literacy rates in rural areas are 55.0 and 33.0 and that in urban areas stand at 84.9 and 70.7. Nawrangpur block is one of the ten CD blocks of Nawrangpur district. This block is coming under tribal sub-plan area. ICDS has lofty goals and is based on fairly sound thinking, however, as with many other development programmes, there may be wide gap between theory and practice. The present study was intended to reveal the impact of ICDS upon preschool tribal children of this block.

Objectives of the Study

- ◎ To study the impact of support system being

provided by government to the tribal people of Nawrangpur block through ICDS programme upon the health of the preschool children.

- ⊙ To study the impact of support system being provided by government to the tribal people of Nawrangpur block through ICDS programme upon the education of the preschool children.

Sample of the Study

ICDS services are provided through Anganwadi Centres located in the villages. These centres take care of preschool children along with the services meant for their mothers. After attaining the age of six, the children are admitted in to the nearby primary schools. Thus, it is the teachers who can judge the impact of the services of Anganwadi Centres upon the children. Hence, the primary school teachers were considered to be important sources for the study. Initially, 60 primary schools located in tribal dominated villages were selected randomly. From each of the 60 sampled schools two senior teachers were selected for the sample. Thus, the sample was comprised of 120 primary school teachers.

Tools Used: A questionnaire was developed by the investigators for the teachers on two aspects i.e.

health and education of preschool children.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The responses of 120 teachers collected on two aspects i.e. health and education of preschool children were analysed applying descriptive statistics i.e. frequency and percentages. On health, there were 12 parameters and on education, there were 26 parameters. The responses along with their percentage on the two aspects are presented in the Tables 1 and 2 respectively. The results are presented for both the aspects.

(i) **Health:** Section-A of the questionnaire was having 12 parameters of three responses (promotes/ doesn't promote/no difference) relating to the impact of ICDS support system on the health of the preschool children. As revealed from Table - 1, majority of the primary school teachers (more than 50%) had expressed their views that early childhood care related services taken by Anganwadi centres promoted all the twelve parameters under taken i.e. height, weight, health, smartness, cleanliness, agility, vision, speech, hearing ability, sense of understanding, sense of smelling and self confidence. However, even if it is minor, there were perhaps some centres in the feeding villages of the schools which did not provide the services as

Table 1: Responses of School Teachers on the Impact of ICDS upon Health of Preschool Children (N=120)

Sl. No.	Parameters	Responses		
		Promotes	Doesn't promote	No Difference
1	Height	102 (85.00)	10 (8.33)	08 (6.67)
2	Weight	101 (84.17)	16 (13.33)	03 (2.50)
3	Health	92 (76.67)	15 (12.05)	13 (10.83)
4	Smartness	101 (84.17)	10 (8.33)	09 (7.50)
5	Cleanliness	85 (70.84)	22 (18.33)	13 (10.83)
6	Agility	102 (85.00)	05 (4.17)	13 (10.83)
7	Vision	82 (68.33)	05 (4.17)	33 (27.50)
8	Speech	69 (57.50)	21 (17.50)	30 (25.00)
9	Hearing ability	75 (62.50)	13 (10.83)	32 (26.67)
10	Sense of Understanding	82 (68.33)	19 (15.83)	19 (15.83)
11	Sense of smelling	66 (55.00)	10 (8.33)	44 (36.67)
12	Self confidence	81 (67.50)	09 (7.50)	30 (25.00)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage (Source: Data collected through questionnaire)

Table 2: Responses of School Teachers on the Impact of ICDS upon Education of Preschool Children (N=120)

Sl. No.	Parameters	Responses		
		Promotes	Doesn't promote	No Difference
1	Concentration	81 (67.50)	30 (25.00)	09 (7.50)
2	Discipline	82 (68.33)	30 (25.00)	08 (6.67)
3	Obedience	79 (65.84)	25 (20.83)	16 (13.33)
4	Co-operation	87 (72.50)	23 (19.17)	10 (8.33)
5	Humbleness	83 (69.17)	19 (15.83)	18 (15.00)
6	Sincerity	71 (59.17)	20 (16.66)	29 (24.17)
7	Sports spirit	105 (87.50)	05 (4.17)	10 (8.33)
8	Reading ability	63 (52.5)	34 (28.33)	23 (19.17)
9	Writing ability	62 (61.67)	38 (31.67)	20 (16.66)
10	Punctuality	76 (63.33)	33 (27.50)	11 (9.17)
11	Attendance	82 (68.33)	30 (25.00)	08 (6.67)
12	Pronunciation	58 (48.33)	44 (36.67)	18 (15.00)
13	General attitude	76 (63.33)	10 (8.33)	34 (28.34)
14	Sense of responsibility	65 (54.17)	30 (25.00)	25 (20.83)
15	Thinking ability	66 (55.00)	28 (23.33)	26 (21.67)
16	Habits	75 (62.50)	20 (16.67)	25 (20.83)
17	Honesty	75 (62.50)	14 (11.67)	31 (25.83)
18	Sense of Values	65 (54.17)	22 (18.33)	33 (27.50)
19	Creativity	76 (63.33)	13 (10.84)	31 (25.83)
20	Curricular competency	66 (55.00)	23 (19.17)	31 (25.83)
21	Co-curricular competency	86 (71.67)	18 (15.00)	16 (13.33)
22	Emotion	75 (62.50)	22 (18.33)	23 (19.17)
23	Excitement	58 (48.33)	38 (31.67)	24 (20.00)
24	Inquisitiveness	83 (69.17)	12 (10.00)	25 (20.83)
25	Observation	69 (57.50)	21 (17.50)	30 (25.00)
26	Communicative ability	74 (61.67)	20 (16.66)	26 (21.67)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage (Source: Data collected through questionnaire)

desired as a result the teachers did not feel much positive impact on children.

(ii) Education: Section-B of the questionnaire was having 26 parameters of three responses (promotes/doesn't promote/no difference) relating to the impact of ICDS support system. Table - 2 indicates that majority of the primary school teachers (more than 50%) have viewed the early childhood education related services provided by Anganwadi centres promote all the 26 parameters under taken in the study i.e. concentration, discipline, obedience, co-operation, humbleness,

sincerity, sports spirit, reading ability, writing ability, punctuality, attendance, pronunciation, general attitude, sense of responsibility, thinking ability, honesty, sense of values, creativity, curricular-competency, co-curricular competency, emotion, excitement, inquisitiveness, observation, and communicative ability with the children. However, even if it is minor, there were perhaps some centres in the feeding villages of the schools which did not provide the services as desired as a result the teachers did not feel much positive impact on children.

CONCLUSION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. The Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. Article-1 of the declaration reads: *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.* The study revealed that the services rendered through ICDS programme are not fully satisfactory. The reasons may be ignorance of the beneficiaries, lack proper monitoring, irregularity, corruption etc. It should be realized that the prevention of malnutrition on a countrywide scale requires initiation and planning at the local, national and international levels. The pre-school education has demonstrated a positive impact on reduction of drop-outs and achievement levels in primary grades. Quality of pre-school education depends upon healthy environment and stimulating activities. It is the right of every child to achieve his/her full development potential. Societal investment in the areas of health, immunization, nutrition and education is most desirable for the country's future. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) which came into effect from April 1, 2010, has also addressed Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) under Section 11 of the Act which states, *"with a view to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate Government may make necessary arrangement for providing free pre-school education for such children".*

In this context, there is a need to ensure ECCE for every child below six years across the country. Frederick Douglass has said- *It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.* Therefore, it should be ensured that our children have positive experiences prior to entering school. High-quality preschool education will have long-term benefits and will produce strong returns on investment. ICDS is the mainstay for promotion of all round development of young children and mothers, particularly in rural and backward areas. Hence, it has to be strengthened.

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