



AWARENESS OF LAWS TO SAFEGUARD CHILD RIGHTS IN SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: The child rights are 'specialised human rights that apply to all human beings below the age of 18'. They take into account the fragility, specificities and age-appropriate requirements of children, and aim to factor in the development of a child. In India and many other nations, Children are defined as people under the age of 18, who need more than just human rights because of a set of unique needs that stem from their vulnerabilities. There are Laws that safeguard the rights. This study focuses on the awareness of laws, RTE Act 2005, POCSO Act 2012, and J J Act 2015 in 500 school children from class 8 to 10. School children from various schools of Chhattisgarh were randomly selected for the study. A questionnaire was made by the author to gather information on the Acts by the school children. Data was analysed using Graphical Representation (Histogram). The results revealed that the school children were more aware of the J J Act than RTE and POCSO Act. The findings show the need for building awareness on Child rights and Laws to protect child rights, in both Government run schools and private schools teaching in English and Hindi. It also shows the need for Training and Sensitisation of Child Rights and Protection and about Laws that safeguard the child rights to be made mandatory in all Educational Institutions.

Index Terms - Child Protection, Child Rights, RTE Act, J J Act, POCSO Act

I. INTRODUCTION

Child rights are defined as 'specific human rights that apply to each and every person underneath the age of 18 years' [1]. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children summarised the rights of children into the following fundamentals with references to various articles:

1. The Right to An Identity (Article 7 & 8)
2. The Right to Health (Article 23 & 24)
3. The Right to Education (Article 28)
4. The Right to A Family Life (Articles 8, 9, 10, 16, 20, 22 & 40)
5. The Right to Be Protected from Violence (Article 19 &

34)

6. The Right to An Opinion (Article 12 & 13)
7. The Right to Be Protected from Armed Conflict (Articles 38 & 39)
8. The Right to Be Protected from Exploitation (Articles 19, 32, 34, 36 & 39) [2]

India is home to 472 million children under the age of 18, who represent 39% of the country's total population. Of these, 29% are aged between 0 to 6 years [3]. 73% of children in the country live in rural areas, often having limited access to fundamental needs such as nutrition, access to healthcare, education, and protection.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights is an Indian statutory body established by Act of Parliament, the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005. It is mandated under section 13 of CPCR Act, 2005 "to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child" [4]. These rights encompass freedom of children and their civil rights, family environment, necessary health care and welfare education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures outlined for broad classification under which child rights can be denoted namely the right to Survival, right to protection, right to participation and right to development.

Apart from these rights, there are laws to safeguard child rights. Child protection laws in the country are framed in line with India's constitutional provisions for safeguarding child rights.

Laws that Safeguard the Child Rights are [4]:

1. The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1987
2. Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986
3. Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
4. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE Act, 2009) [5]
5. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences, (POCSO Act, 2012) [6]
6. Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act, (J J Act, 2015) [7]

1.1 Status of Child Protection in India

India was ranked 112 on the Child Development Index. Despite the child protection act, children experience various forms of child rights violations such as the denial and inability to access the right to food, right to education, right to health and rights against exploitation. The country has several laws to protect children, which is increasingly accepted as a core component of social development. The challenge here is implementing laws due to inadequate human resource capacity on the ground and availability of quality prevention and rehabilitation services (UNICEF India, n.d.)

Ajithkumar, (2013) [8] in his research paper had found out the awareness of child rights and practices among secondary school teachers based on the gender and type of institution. Results indicated that the awareness and practices of both the gender and type of institutions are abysmally poor.

Sathiyaraj and Jayaraman (2013) [9], too, had conducted a study on awareness on child rights among school teachers from urban and rural based schools. The results showed that 27% of teachers were aware of child rights.

Roy (2013) [10], in his paper attempts to locate the status of children in the development ladder of the Indian economy at regional level and shows how the disparity in development indicators actually accelerates the nature of exclusive development. The research emphasized Child Abuse as a principal inhibitor in child development.

Grewal & Singh (2011) [11], traced the status of child rights in India, with special attention to traditional beliefs and gender discrimination. The paper examines the possibilities and limitations of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 for operating as an equalising agent in the country. It recommends that raising public awareness and participation along with meaningful and ethical child participation are essential before children in India can enjoy the rights.

A study by Roy (2015) [12] highlighted the widespread abuse of children in India, where there has been a progressive

rise of more than fifty percent in the number of crimes committed by children. They identified four major risk factors as the primary causes: individual, family, mental health and substance abuse.

The present focus of the study is the awareness of Laws that Safeguard the Child Rights in school children.

II. METHOD

2.1 Statement of the Problem

It is hypothesised that school children are more aware of the RTE Act than POCSO Act and J J Act.

It is hypothesised that school children are aware of the Acts in the order

- First RTE Act
- Second POCSO Act
- Third J J Act

It is hypothesised that out of 500 school children, the maximum score of:

1. 21 to 25 score shall be attained by 100 school children
2. 16 to 20 score shall be attained by 150 school children
3. 11 to 15 score shall be attained by 200 school children
4. 5 to 10 score shall be attained by 50 school children

2.2 Methodology Sample

School children from various schools of Chhattisgarh were randomly selected for conducting this Awareness survey on Laws to safeguard the Child rights. A total of 500 government school children from class 8 to 10 participated in this study.

2.3 Instruments of study

A questionnaire consisting of 25 questions was prepared by the author on the topic Awareness on Laws to safeguard the Child Rights of school children.

2.4 Design of the study

Table 1. Expected score on the questionnaire *Awareness of Laws to safeguard the child rights

Range of Scores	Expected Number of school children to obtain the score
5 - 10	50
11 - 15	200
16 - 20	150
21 - 25	100
Total	500

2.5 Procedure

A demographic data sheet was given to all the school children assembled in the hall. The demographic detail consisted of only the class of that particular student. In continuation a 25 item questionnaire on the Awareness on Laws that safeguard the child rights was given to each student. The questionnaire was made in Hindi for students' convenience.

The students were instructed to write the class to which they belong on the sheet provided and were asked to tick the correct answer out of multiple answers in the box provided. There was no time limit given to answer the 25 questions.

After 45 minutes, the answer sheets were collected from the school students. The total of correct responses was calculated out of 25 scores and how many students achieved the score ranges from 5 to 10 score, 11 to 15 score, 16 to 20 score and 21 to 25 score.

2.6 Analysis of Data

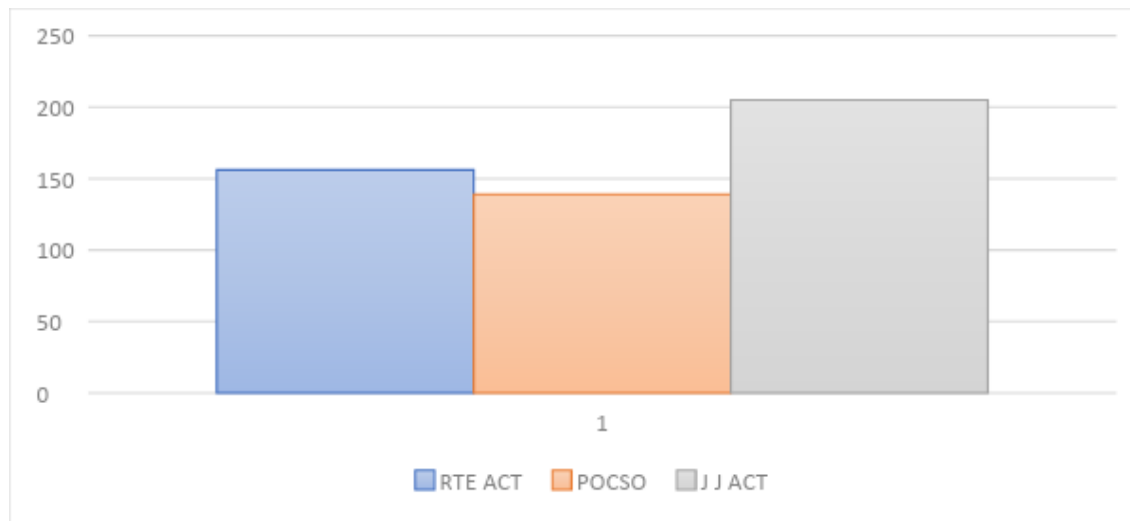
A detailed analysis of the answer sheets was conducted using the Graphical Representation (Histogram) to reveal the results. The results revealed the score obtained by 500 students.

Table 2. Total Correct Responses of all three Acts by school children.

Acts	RTE ACT	POCSO ACT	J. J ACT	TOTAL
No. of School children	156 (31.2%)	139 (27.8%)	205 (41%)	500

Note. The authors.

Figure 1. Graph of the correct responses attained by 500 students for all three Acts.



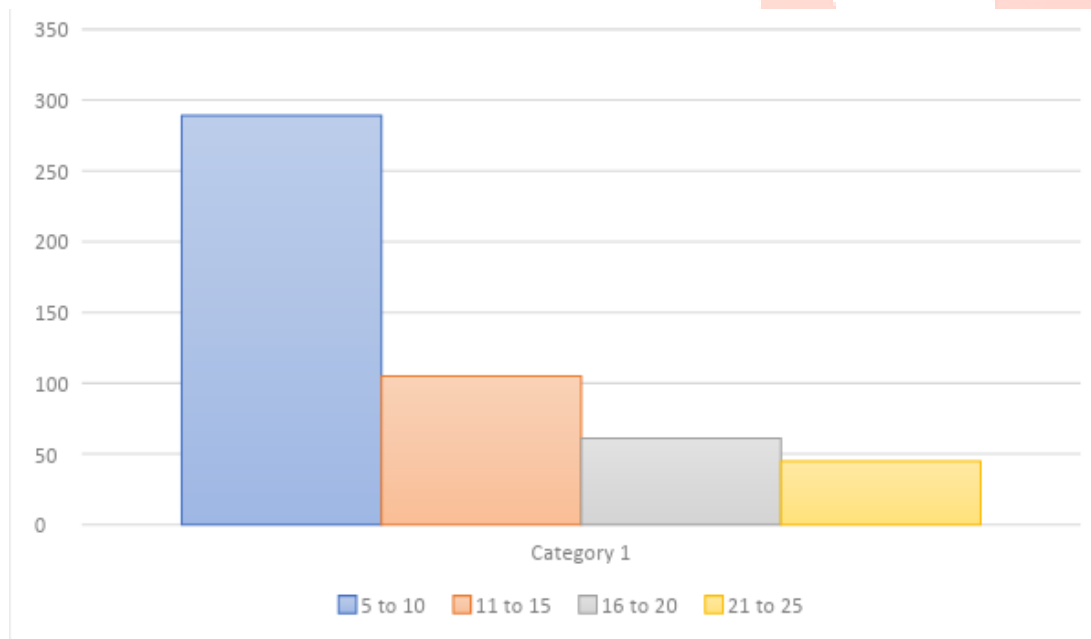
Note. The authors.

Table 3. Total Correct responses in the score range by school children.

Score Range	Correct responses by 500 school children
5 – 10	289
11 – 15	105
16 – 20	61
21- 25	45

Note. The authors.

Figure 2. Total Correct responses in the score range by the school children



Note.

The

authors.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result in Table 1 (Fig. 1 for graphical representation) depicts the scores of all the three acts of child rights and protection i.e., RTE Act 2005, POCSO Act 2012 and J J Act 2015. According to the study, the school children were more aware of the J J Act with 205 responses, RTE Act with 156 responses and POSCO Act with 139 responses. The lower awareness of the RTE Act is similar to findings by previous research [13].

According to the first hypothesis the school children are more aware of the RTE Act 2005 than the other acts. But the results in table 2 revealed that the school children are more aware of J J act 2015 than the other Acts, which signify that children comprehend that there are certain ways to handle the children's behaviours in a more conducive and effective environment. This shows that the country still has work to do in terms of attaining universal elementary education, and inclusion of socio-religious groups, as children aren't very aware of their rights [14].

The second hypothesis of the research study focuses that the school children shall be aware of the Acts in the order first - RTE, second - POCSO, and third - J J Act. But the results reveal just the opposite order with J J Act as first with 205 students correct answers, RTE as second with 156 correct responses by students and POCSO is retained as third with 139 responses by school children. This is in keeping with findings from previous research stating that while children have awareness on child abuses they lack knowledge on legal procedures [15].

This result indicates that irrespective of being in school, children are aware of the JJ Act. They are aware that there are measures in place to correct their misbehaviours. Hence such a response is seen in the present research.. Awareness of the act is important as it provides knowledge on the justice delivery system in every country that requires reformation through correctional measures provided by the government or nongovernmental institutions [16].

Table 3 (see Fig. 2 for graphical representation) depicts the correct responses in the score ranges by school children. According to the third hypothesis the maximum score between 21 to 25 shall be by 100 school children and the least score between 5 to 10 shall be by 50 school children.

The present study results revealed that the maximum score in the range 21 to 25 is by only 45 school children and 289 school children scored in the range 5 to 10.

This is very alarming as this result stresses the dire need of genuine awareness on all the three acts which are related to child rights and child protection. Unless and until the school children are not sensitised with training on these Acts, they shall not self-guard themselves from sexual abuse, exploitation and neglect. Hence all school authorities make it mandatory to sensitise and give relevant training on these Acts and also about child rights and protection.

The present research study recommends that many sensitization and awareness training programs to be conducted at Government level by the Government of Chhattisgarh State, India, Department of Women and Child Development, Chhattisgarh State Commission for Child Rights and Child Protection, and by Government of Chhattisgarh State, Department of School Education because children s safety protection from any kind of harm

abuse neglect to be taken seriously and implementation of all Acts to be considered immediately and effectively.

3.1 Limitations

1. Although the sample is 500, there is still awareness required for more children on Child rights and Acts. 2. Only female students had participated in the survey. 3. Focus was on only government-run schools.

IV. CONCLUSION

Children's rights have to be highlighted as human rights accustomed explicitly to the needs, wants and overall well-being of children, that take into account their fragility, specificities and age-appropriate requirements. Children's rights aim to factor in the development of a child, with counties having laws that safeguard the rights of school children. This study focuses on the awareness of laws, RTE Act 2005, POCSO Act 2012, and J J Act 2015 in 500 school children from class 8 to 10 using a questionnaire made by the author to gather information on the Acts by the school children. The results revealed that the school children were more aware of the J J Act than RTE and POCSO Acts.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Both Boys and Girls are given awareness on Child rights and Laws to protect child rights. 2. All schools both Government run schools and private schools to be considered

Both English and Hindi medium schools to be considered Awareness on Child rights and Laws to safeguard child rights to be rendered in small groups through short plays, Dramas, Nukkad Natak, Street plays in both rural and urban area schools.

The awareness programmes are in the local dialect.

Training and Sensitisation of Child Rights and Protection and about Laws that safeguard the child rights to be made mandatory in all Educational Institutions. This is important as the laws have relevance in allowing the children to understand the rights they have, and also for medico-legal and psychotherapeutic practice [17].

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