

Transformative Approach to Child and Literacy Rates by Gender in Rural and Urban Areas in Karnataka: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

Children are regarded as a vital asset and the future of our nation. They represent a significant portion of the overall population, yet they are the most vulnerable demographic within society. Various factors contribute to this vulnerability, including individual circumstances, family dynamics, and environmental influences. In recent years, shifts in social, economic, and environmental conditions have heightened the risks faced by children. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated these vulnerabilities globally. Investing in child welfare initiatives is essential for their overall socioeconomic development. Consequently, efforts are being made at multiple levels—international, national, state, and local—to enhance the well-being and development of children. Karnataka, one of India's largest and rapidly developing states, has allocated a substantial portion of its budget to child welfare. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected children, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds. This paper aims to present the situation of children in Karnataka, drawing on secondary data related to various child welfare issues. The paper indicates a transformative approach to Child and literacy rates by gender in rural and urban areas in India and Karnataka state.

Keywords: Sociological study, Child, Literacy rate, Socio-economic, Rural area, Urban area, Children

1. Introduction:

Children are considered the most precious resource of a nation and represent the most vulnerable group within society. While all children inherently possess a degree of vulnerability compared to adults, certain children face more severe risks than others. The concept of child vulnerability can be seen as a downward spiral, where each adverse event exacerbates their situation, leading to increased exposure to new risks. Consequently, with every shock experienced, the probability of negative outcomes for a child rises. Over time, the landscape of child protection has evolved significantly. The conventional model of institutional custodial care is being phased out in favor of the belief that a child's right to a family is fundamental. Acknowledging this right, all interventions should aim to fulfill the physical, social, emotional, and educational needs of children within a safe and nurturing family setting. The primary objective of social work interventions is to fortify families, prevent their disintegration, and avoid the

abandonment of children. In traditional Indian society, children without parents were typically cared for by extended family networks; however, these systems have gradually weakened, leading to a rise in child destitution. Although institutional care remains one option, even the most well-run institutions cannot replicate the personalized care that a family can offer.

The traditional model of institutional long-term care has led to the separation of children from their familial settings. Research and firsthand accounts indicate that the adverse and distressing experiences within large, impersonal institutions can contribute to what is known as "Institutionalized Child Syndrome," which is often associated with significant psychological issues. The prevalence of institutional care may inadvertently encourage families to consider institutionalization as a viable solution during times of crisis. Furthermore, the financial burden of institutional child care significantly exceeds its benefits, and even the most reputable institutions cannot replicate the nurturing environment of a family. Therefore, it is more beneficial to provide support to families in crisis through alternative, family-centered, and community-based services, allowing children to remain in their home environments.

2. A Transformative Approach to Child:

Protection In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This Convention is founded on the principle that children, defined as individuals under 18 years of age, possess fundamental freedoms and inherent rights akin to all human beings. Recognizing their vulnerability, the Convention emphasizes the necessity for special care. The key components for children's development and well-being include their survival, growth, protection, and active participation (UNCRC). The UNCRC grants children over 40 essential rights while honoring diverse cultural practices in parenting. Its framework is designed for adaptability across various nations with differing legal systems, employing universally applicable language. Following the adoption of the UNCRC, numerous governments promptly embraced the Convention, enacting legislation, establishing protective mechanisms, and undertaking innovative initiatives to safeguard and promote the rights of individuals under 18 years of age (Bhakhry, 2006).

The Constitution of India acknowledges the vulnerable position of children and safeguards their rights to protection. It ensures that children receive special attention through the establishment of specific laws and policies that align with the principle of protective discrimination outlined in Article 15. Articles 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, and 24 guarantee the right to equality, the protection of life and personal liberty, and the right against exploitation. This underscores the nation's dedication to the protection, safety, and welfare of all citizens, including children. The Chapter on Directive Principles of State Policy mandates that the State should particularly focus its policies on ensuring the protection of children. Nevertheless, despite numerous efforts at both international and national levels, children continue to be vulnerable, as the demand for care and protection is on the rise. In 2013, the Government of India implemented the National Policy for Children, which was informed by the constitutional mandate and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), marking a transition from a "need-based" to a "rights-based" approach.

The significance of investing in the welfare of children has been widely acknowledged by both researchers and policymakers. In the mid-1990s to early 2000s, child budget analyses were initiated in

countries such as South Africa, Brazil, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and India. This analysis subsequently influenced the development of public financial management (PFM) policies. In India, child budgeting has also been integrated into PFM policy. While the scope and methodology of child budgeting differ among countries, its primary aim remains the welfare of children. Child budgeting evaluates the government's fiscal commitment to children's development and the realization of their rights. The insights gained from these assessments typically inform decision-making within PFM processes (UNICEF, 2016; GoI, 2016). Experiences from Mozambique, Ecuador, Brazil, and Mexico suggest that conditional cash transfer programs focused on vaccination, nutrition, health, and education may yield better results than child budgeting alone. Therefore, even when budgeting occurs, the allocation of funds should be contingent upon achieving specific outcomes (UNICEF, 2019). Research by Chelsea Marshall, Laura Lundy, and Karen Orr (2016) indicates that incorporating children's perspectives in child budgeting can enhance the efficiency, equity, and accountability of public expenditure.

Numerous initiatives have emerged from the international community, beginning with the UNCRC, leading to child protection measures at national, provincial, and local levels. The phrase, "The future of India is the future of its children," underscores the critical role children play in the nation's development and welfare. As a result, significant efforts have been directed towards enhancing the welfare and development of children. Karnataka, one of India's largest and most populous states, has also undertaken various initiatives to support child welfare. The state has experienced notable economic growth in recent decades, channeling investments into social development sectors such as health and education (Economic Survey, 2020-21). However, despite this rapid economic advancement, a considerable number of households still rely on rain-fed agriculture, which fails to provide sufficient employment and income. Many of these agricultural families belong to marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), who often migrate in search of work, frequently bringing their children along. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted these vulnerable groups. In this context of adversity, many children, who represent 33.9 percent of the population under 18 in Karnataka, face neglect, resulting in the denial of many of their rights. This paper aims to outline the conditions faced by vulnerable children and the efforts made to safeguard their interests. Numerous initiatives have emerged from the international community over the years, starting with the UNCRC, leading to enhanced child protection measures at national, provincial, and local levels. The phrase, "The future of India is the future of its children," underscores the critical role children play in the nation's development and welfare. Consequently, significant efforts have been directed towards improving the welfare and development of children. Karnataka, one of India's largest and most populous states, has also undertaken various initiatives to support child welfare. The state has experienced notable economic growth in recent decades and has increased investments in social development sectors, including health and education (Economic Survey, 2020-21). However, despite this rapid economic advancement, a considerable number of households still rely on rain-fed agriculture, which fails to provide sufficient employment and income. Many of these agricultural families belong to marginalized communities, such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), who often migrate in search of work, often taking their children with them. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted these vulnerable groups. As a result of these challenges, many children, who represent 33.9 percent of the population under 18 in Karnataka, have been overlooked, leading to the denial of many of their rights. In this context, the current paper

aims to outline the conditions faced by vulnerable children and the efforts being made to safeguard their interests.

3. Literacy Rates by Gender in Rural and Urban Areas in India & Karnataka

The table above indicates that Karnataka has shown significant advancement in comparison to the national average. However, there remains a considerable disparity in literacy rates between females and males in both urban and rural regions of the state. The literacy rate for urban males has surpassed 90 percent, whereas the rural female literacy rate stands at only 59.71 percent. Therefore, it is essential to implement strategies aimed at enhancing female literacy in rural areas. A door-to-door survey conducted in Karnataka following the Covid-19 lockdowns has uncovered that over 1 million children are currently out of school (Indian Express, 19 October 2022). Among the 1,012,800 children identified, 454,238 belong to the 0-3 age group, while 533,205 are aged 4-6 years. In the 6-14 age bracket, 15,338 children are out of school, and 10,018 have never been enrolled. Out of a total of 1,770,081 children aged 0-18, 273,936 (0-3 years) and 302,088 (4-6 years) have not attended anganwadis. Among the 1,183,929 children aged 6-14 who are enrolled in schools, 2,162 have dropped out, and an additional 1,545 have never enrolled.

The primary factors contributing to this issue include the closure of anganwadis during the pandemic, the lack of food supply, and the migration of laborers. According to SamagraShikshana Karnataka (SSK), a significant number of drop-out children are from the districts of Vijayapura, Bidar, Yadgir, Kalaburagi, Koppal, Ballari, Dharwad, Raichur, Gadag, Haveri, Chikkodi, Chitradurga, Davanagere, Chikkaballapura, Kolar, and Chamarajanagar. In response, the education department has initiated bridge courses, the ChinnaraAngala program, and home-based education for children with disabilities to reintegrate out-of-school children into formal education. Poverty appears to be the predominant reason for children being out of school, as many impoverished agricultural families require their children to assist in the fields during peak seasons, often involving tasks such as tending to livestock. Additional factors include child labor, family migration from rural areas, parental neglect, a lack of interest in education among children, the considerable distance to schools, detrimental parental habits, and insufficient accountability among officials. It appears that many out-of-school children are either engaged in child labor or are at risk of becoming child laborers.

It is essential to take measures to encourage out-of-school children to enroll in educational institutions. The Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring access to free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education for all children can be achieved through the effective execution of various educational initiatives. These include programs such as ChinnaraAngala, residential and non-residential bridge courses, seasonal bridge courses, tent schools, mobile and feeder schools, as well as providing transportation services and home-based education.

4. Conclusion

Karnataka has been actively engaged in initiatives aimed at ensuring the survival, development, and safeguarding of children within the State. These efforts have led to notable improvements in various aspects affecting children, such as enhancing the sex ratio, decreasing mortality rates, improving nutritional health, and advancing both health and educational opportunities. Additionally, measures are being implemented to shield children from harmful practices, including child marriage, child labor,

neglect, abuse, and trafficking. There is also a focus on upholding the rights of children with special needs (CWSN), those affected by HIV/AIDS, street children, children involved in begging or who are missing, as well as the offspring of prisoners and commercial sex workers. However, despite these advancements, challenges remain in the protection of children's rights. Disparities in sex ratios between males and females persist in both rural and urban settings, alongside ongoing nutritional deficiencies. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation, leading to increased reports of child marriage, labor, and neglect. To mitigate these challenges, it is essential for all stakeholders—including communities, families, and NGOs—to actively participate in safeguarding children from such adversities. The State should actively engage communities in the planning and execution of child-related policies and programs. This requires substantial investment directed towards community engagement, organization, and the provision of essential information, knowledge, and tools to address protection issues and safeguard children from harm. Fostering critical awareness of one's circumstances, often referred to as sensitization, enhances the willingness and readiness to take action for change. Thus, awareness serves as a crucial initial step in empowering individuals and communities to act. However, the transition from awareness to action hinges on the availability of necessary resources and tools. Access to accurate information, resources, and established accountability frameworks can support effective action and drive positive change.

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