

## AN ASSESSMENT OF AWARENESS OF RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AMONG THE STUDENTS OF CLASS X

Asha KVD Kamath

*The General Assembly of United Nations adopted a convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) in 1989 with the right to survival, protection, development and participation forming the core of the convention. 192 countries affirmed their commitment to the convention and India ratified it in 1992. Chapter VI of the RTE Act (2009) deals with protection of the rights of children. It thrusts the responsibility of protection of child rights on the National Commission and the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights along with agencies at lower levels of administration. It also describes the mechanism of redressal of the grievances. But, are our children enjoying a secure childhood? Do they enjoy the rights as declared in UNCRC? India has been working towards providing a safe childhood to all children. As education is a medium to know about child rights and its redressal, it is essential to find out whether the children who are at the stage of stepping out of school aware of their rights. Therefore, the investigator felt the need to take up the study. The sample of the study included 138 students of class X from the two co-education schools (one residential and another non-residential) chosen randomly, following the CBSE syllabus. A questionnaire prepared by the investigator with 25 items of multiple-choice type was used as the tool for the study. The findings of the study show that the level of awareness on rights of the child is average among the students of class X. There are no significant differences between the students of residential and non-residential schools; boys and girls of both the schools taken together; boys and girls of residential as well as non-residential schools, on awareness about the rights of the child.*

**KEYWORDS:** Rights of Child, Class X Students

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Asha KVD Kamath   ✉  
Associate Professor  
Head, Dept. of Extension Education,  
Regional Institute of Education (NCERT), Ajmer-305004  
Email: ashakamathrie@rediffmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

Children of today are future of the country. If we want a strong and healthy country tomorrow, it is necessary to take care of the children of today. They are to be provided with all the basic needs including education. The Right to Education Act (2009) is a landmark in the history of India, which ensures free and compulsory education to all up to the age of 14 years. One of the Chapters of the Act (Chapter VI) deals with Protection of Right of Children and thrusts the responsibility of protection of child rights on National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and State Commission for Protection of Child Rights along with agencies at lower levels of administration. It also describes the mechanism of redressal of the grievances.

Understanding that child rights are important and every child must be allowed to enjoy those rights, the General Assembly of United Nations adopted the convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. The UNCRC is based on United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and International Covenant on Human Rights. The convention through its 54 Articles views the child as an individual possessing a number of economic, civil, social, political and cultural rights and lays down the standards for physical, moral, mental, spiritual and social development of the child. The right to survival, protection, development and participation form the core of the convention. 192 countries affirmed their commitment to the convention and India ratified it in 1992.

According to Article 1 of UNCRC, every human being below the age of 18 years is considered a child. As per Educational Statistics (2001), the child population in India from 0 – 18 years is 442 million, which is 43.06% of the total population and they are to be allowed to enjoy their rights. What are Child Rights then? They are human rights of children with particular attention to the rights of special protection and care accorded to minors including their right to association with both parents, human identity, basic needs for food, universal state, paid education, health care, criminal laws appropriate to the age and development of the child, equal protection of the child's civil rights and freedom from discrimination. India has been working towards providing a safe childhood to all children. Are our children enjoying a secure childhood? Do they enjoy the rights as declared in UNCRC? To mention a few, do they enjoy right to food, protection from child abuse, right to and in education as well as right to health? There is violation of child rights daily. Extreme right violations include bonded child labour, sale and trafficking, female foeticide and infanticide (UNICEF, 1999).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have been conducted to find the status of child rights. A study by Sengupta and Soumini (2009) showed that despite the success of MDMS,

child hunger as a problem persists in India and 42.5% of children below five years of age are under weight. According to Chowdhury et. al (2008), protein-energy malnutrition is clearly observed in India and other developing countries. Providing nutritional food to children in schools is one way of protecting a child's right to food as poor health and nutritional status of children is a barrier to attendance and educational attainment (Rana & Das, 2004; World Bank, 2004). Tamil Nadu was the first to initiate massive noon-meal programme for children (nilefw.org). Neither a child that is hungry nor a child that is ill can be expected to learn. Realising this need, the MDMS was launched in primary schools during 1962-63 in the state. The assumption was that the MDMS will improve school attendance, reduce drop outs and show beneficial impact on children's nutrition. A study (Kamath, 2014) has revealed that the MDMS has improved enrolment, retention and nutritional status of children.

With regard to child abuse, a report of Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007) states that many children still suffer from child abuse. These abuses include physical, sexual and emotional type but also poor education and health, hazardous employment, early marriage and discrimination. It also reports that 50% of Indian children are under weight and a vast majority of children are beaten by their parents, teachers and other adults.

While analysing the facilities available in schools, Jain and Agarwal (2011) observed that as a result of governments initiative, 73% of primary schools have brick building, 80% schools have drinking water, 47% have urinals and 40% have toilets. These studies throw light on the status of child rights in India which is not satisfactory. Are the children demanding for their rights? This is possible only when they are aware of their rights and the procedure for its redressal. As education is a medium to know about child rights and its Redressal, it is essential to find out whether the children who are at the stage of stepping out of school aware of their rights as children. Therefore, the Investigator felt the need to take up the study.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To find the level of awareness of rights of the child among the students of class X.
2. To compare the level of awareness of rights of the child between
  - i. the students of residential and non-residential schools
  - ii. boys and girls of class X

- iii. boys and girls of residential school
- iv. boys and girls of non-residential school

### **SAMPLE**

The sample for the study consisted of 138 students of class X from two co-education schools chosen randomly. These schools followed the CBSE pattern of studies. Out of the two schools, one was a residential school and it was compulsory for the students to stay in the hostel. Another was a non-residential school. All the students of class X (138) present in the class on the day of administration of the tool were considered as part of the sample. Table 1 gives the details of the sample.

**Table 1**

**Sample of the Study.**

<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
Residential	46	33	79
Non-Residential	32	27	59
Total	78	60	138

### **TOOL USED**

The tool was a questionnaire prepared by the Investigator. There are a total of 25 items of multiple-choice types for a maximum of 25 marks. Each item has four alternatives and the respondent is expected to choose only one among them as correct response. One score is awarded to one correct response. Each question is built around a hypothetical context. The rights covered in the questionnaire were reflecting the right to protection, right to a name, right to citizenship, right to culture, right to religion, right to be heard, right to seek redressal, right to be with the parents, right to expression, right to health and right to education. Though there is no time limit, no student has taken more than 60 minutes for completing the questionnaire.

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The raw data was analysed by the investigator using Mean, SD and t-value. Objective wise analysis has been given in this section.

#### **Objective 1: To Find the Level of Awareness of Rights of the Child Among the Students of Class X.**

Mean and SD for the total sample was calculated and the results are given in Table 2. Results shows that the calculated mean is 14.0 for the sample of 138 students.

**Table 2****Mean and SD of Students of Class X on Awareness of Rights of the Child.**

N	M	SD
138	14.0	2.90

Table 2 shows that the mean score for a sample of 138 students is 14.0 for a total of 25. The secured mean is slightly more than 12.5 i.e. 50%. Therefore, it can be said that the awareness level of the students is around average (56%), which is slightly more than 50%. The SD also indicates less dispersion of the scores from the mean.

**Objective 2 (i): To Compare the Level of Awareness of Rights of the Child between the Students of Residential and Non-Residential Schools.**

The raw data was analysed in terms of awareness of rights of the child between the students of Residential and Non-Residential schools. Table 3 depicts the results of the same.

**Table 3**

**Mean, SD and t- Value on Awareness of Rights of the Child Between the Students of Residential and Non-Residential Schools.**

Type of School	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>
Residential	79	14.16	2.83	0.64
Non-Residential	59	13.83	3.18	

As per Table 3, the mean value is 14.16 (56.64%) for a group of 79 students of residential school and 13.83 (55.32%) for a group of 59 students of non-residential school. Though the students of residential school have greater mean when compared with the students of non-residential school the t-value is only 0.64 which makes the difference between the means not significant because, for the obtained value to be significant, the table value is 1.98 at 0.05 level for df 136. Therefore, we can say that there is no significant difference between the students of residential and non-residential school on awareness of rights of the child.

**Objective 2 (ii): To Compare the Level of Awareness of Rights of the Child between the Boys and Girls of Class X.**

Even though there is no significant difference between the students of residential and non-residential schools on awareness of rights of the Child, the investigator wanted to find out whether there is any difference between the boys and girls of both the schools together on awareness of rights of the child. The results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4**

**Mean, SD and t- Value of Boys and Girls of Class X on Awareness of Rights of the Child.**

Gender	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>
Boys	78	14.35	3.11	1.25
Girls	60	13.75	2.74	

According to data in Table 4, boys have scored a higher mean (14.35) when compared with girls (13.75) however; the obtained t-value is only 1.25, which shows that the difference between boys and girls is not significant. In other words, the awareness level of boys and girls on rights of the child has been almost the same.

**Objective 2 (iii): To Compare the Level of Awareness of Rights of the Child between the Boys and Girls of the Residential School.**

Previous results show that there was no significant difference in the awareness level between boys and girls taken together, an attempt was made by the investigator to find out whether there is any difference between boys and girls of only residential school on awareness of rights of the child. Results are given in Table 5.

**Table 5**

**Mean, SD and t- Value on Awareness of Rights of the Child Between the Boys and Girls of Residential School.**

Gender	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>
Boys	46	14.58	2.86	1.60
Girls	33	13.57	2.71	

Table 5 shows that in spite of a mean difference of 1.01 between boys and girls of residential school on awareness of rights of the child, this difference is not significant as the obtained t-value is 1.60. Where as for the t-value to be significant at 0.05 level the table value is 1.99 for df 77. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no significant difference between boys and girls of residential school on awareness of rights of the child.

**Objective 2 (iv): To Compare the Level of Awareness of Rights of the Child between the Boys and Girls of the Non-Residential School.**

In order to investigate whether the difference exists between boys and girls of non-residential School on their awareness about the right of the child, mean, SD and t-value was calculated. Table 6 provides the details of the results.

**Table 6**

**Mean, SD and t- Value on Awareness of Rights of the Child Between the Boys and Girls of the Non-Residential School.**

Gender	N	M	SD	t
Boys	32	13.71	3.42	0.30
Girls	27	13.96	2.92	

As reflected in Table 6, the mean difference between boys and girls of the non-residential school is just 0.25. Though the girls have scored a higher mean, the difference has not been significant as the obtained t-value is only 0.30. For the obtained t-value to be significant at least at 0.05 level, the t-value has to be 2.0 for df 57, as per the table. Therefore, we can say that there is no significant difference between boys and girls of non-residential school in the level of awareness on rights of the child.

## CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the level of awareness on Rights of the Child among the students is around average (56%) and there is not much difference between the boys and girls in their level of awareness. This indicates that there is a need to increase the level of awareness among the students whether they are girls or boys; students of residential or non-residential schools. As this is a stage of education where a large percentage of students discontinue their formal education due to various reasons, it is essential that they go out into the society with a good understanding of their rights for betterment of their future. Unless the students have a greater understanding of the rights of the child, they will not be either in a position to know about them or to fight for their protection at appropriate level.

Therefore, when the students are in the school, special programmes and activities are to be organised on rights of the child inviting participation of all the students. Such deliberate attempt made by the schools is expected to increase the level of awareness among the students. This necessitates a plan of action to be taken up at various levels of administration with sufficient freedom to schools to organize programmes on rights of the child.

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