



Promoting Child Rights: Policies, Practices and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

A key component of rights for humanity, child rights are necessary for every infant's existence, development, security and involvement. Systems that formerly viewed children primarily as dependents or recipients of adult protection have undergone a dramatic shift with the acknowledgment of children as individuals with rights. Children are representations of purity, beauty, unrestrained spontaneity, glimmer and originality. They can tell us directly that the monarch is nude, they do not hide anything, and they say what they see. A major turning point in the international recognition of children's rights was the 1989 adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The paper makes the argument that advancing children's rights necessitates more than just legitimate acknowledgment; it also calls for reliable institutions, child-sensitive practices, interaction strategies, schooling, transparency, social security and collaboration between governments, families, educational institutions, the general public, as well as children themselves. A rights-based approach can provide contexts where kids are shielded from exploitation and mistreatment and given an opportunity to actively engage in life-changing choices. The three interrelated aspects of promoting children's rights are examined in this paper: policies, which deal with the theoretical and analytical understanding of children as right holders; practices, which manage the institutional systems through which rights are carried out; and perspectives, which handle doable tactics for advancing and defending children's rights.

Keywords: Independence, Violence, UNICEF, Vulnerability, Child labour, Rights-based strategy, Human rights, Healthcare, Legislation

Introduction

The economic, social and cultural and political growth of communities is directly impacted by the welfare of children, who make up an important and vulnerable segment of society. Children were often

viewed primarily in terms of parental control, protection and dependence for a large portion of history. Due to their physical and mental immaturity, children belong to vulnerable social groups that require special care and protection, including adequate legal protection, before as well as after birth.



In order to shield children from abuse, exploitation and neglect, laws pertaining to child rights, their protection, promotion and policies are very crucial. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognized the need for protection of children. It declared that every human being has the privilege to all of the freedoms and rights outlined in it, regardless of their race, colour, sex, language, political or other beliefs. Therefore, an extensive approach is needed to promote children's rights. Although laws must acknowledge children's rights, they cannot ensure that these rights are realized on their own. Families must respect children's growing autonomy, schools must foster diverse and proactive environments, governments must set up suitable institutions and operations, and communities must oppose behaviours that expose children to violence, prejudice. UNICEF notes that more than just official ratification, the provisions of the convention on the rights of children calls for institutional, budgetary, administrative, legal and monitoring mechanisms (United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*). The convention is based on four key ideas. First, non-discrimination calls for the protection of children's rights without considering traits like sex, faith, language, impairment, social background or other socioeconomic status. Second, while making decisions pertaining to children, the child's greatest good must come first. Third, every child has the right to growth, survival, and existence. Fourth, children who are able to form their own opinions have the right to voice them and have their opinions given the weight appropriate to their adulthood and time (United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*). These ideas provide a thorough grasp of childhood. Engagement as well as safety are inextricably linked, as is growth and integrity. A youngster may need to be shielded from dangerous situations while also having the right to be involved in discussions about those situations.

Problems and Challenges Children Encounter Today

This article focuses on two attitudes that children encounter from their elders: disrespect, which is linked to a poor regard for youngsters, and insensitivity to their emotions. It ought to be the opposite. Even before they are born, children face difficulties and obstacles. Anyone who looks at the number of abortions performed in Indian hospitals would be struck by this unpleasant reality. Remembering the fact that no child is a problem for anyone would be excellent. In actuality, if someone views a child as a problem, it is because they do not understand them. In actuality, the child is a mystery—that is, a person that people gradually come to understand. Indeed, many other beings, including every human, are mysteries. To get children to obey, families and schools use the reward or penalty strategy. Children are frequently used by parents as a way to vent their frustration and rage. Through beatings, deprivation of food, warnings, slurs and other physical and psychological abuse, they mistreat their own children. The authorities have given them almost complete freedom over their children. For a variety of reasons, child victims of violence do not use the child hotline contact numbers. Numerous Indian states have passed legislation prohibiting the beating of students. However, many schools disregard this guideline, which begs the question of how they could instruct children without using physical force. Indian periodicals, who promote beating as a noble, masterful scheme, are publishing stories of teachers who liberally utilized sticks. It is indisputable that agitated educators use derogatory and harsh language with their young pupils. The majority of young children do not even understand what their teachers are saying.

The shift from a welfare model to a rights-based paradigm is one of the most significant advancements



in child-rights theory. A completely welfare-oriented approach assumes that adults are the best people to make decisions for children. A rights-based strategy acknowledges that children should be respected, heard, and safeguarded at the same time. This differentiation is especially essential since protection without involvement can become authoritarian. Parents and guardians have a duty to provide children with adequate advice, but this instruction must take into consideration their developing skills and abilities ((United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*). One of the main tenets of the Convention is the idea of the child's best interests. According to Article 3, the child's best interests must always come first in decisions impacting children, whether they are made by legislative bodies, courts, administrative bodies, or social welfare groups. (United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*).

When it comes to natural and man-made disasters, children are among the most vulnerable victims. A particularly sad illustration of children's vulnerability is the Kumbakonam school fire in Tamil Nadu on July 16, 2004. Ninety-four children died in a terrible fire at the Sri Krishna Aided Primary School, and dozens more suffered severe burn injuries (State of Tamil Nadu). Overcrowding, a thatched roof, insufficient safety measures, a small stairway, and the lack of fire escapes or emergency exit all contributed to the catastrophe (Ministry of Home Affairs). According to the National Institute of Disaster Management's investigation, institutional carelessness, insufficient safety precautions, and a significant teacher shortage all contributed to the children's greater susceptibility (Satapathy and Walia). The event shows that not everyone in society is equally affected by calamities; children may be particularly vulnerable due to their age, reliance on adults, and limited ability to react on their own. More generally, children's chances for healthy growth and protection can be impacted by systemic injustices

including caste, poverty, gender discrimination, and unequal access to healthcare and education. Therefore, protecting children's rights necessitates both emergency readiness and ongoing attention to the social and economic factors that influence the lives of kids. It is a known fact that gender discrimination is still widespread in India. It starts even from childhood. Parents prefer boys due to various reasons like dowry system, safety and so on. According to a study by Vani K. Borooah, there is a gender bias in Indian children's dietary habits and prevention of various diseases. According to the aforementioned researcher, girls are given 5% less attention than boys, particularly when their mothers are illiterate (Borooah 1724). There are at least three ways that children are instrumentalized. First, many parents view them as the realization of their dreams. Children's independence and even their freedom of choice are denied by their parents. Even when making decisions that directly affect children, they do not even take their opinions into account. Youngsters are expected to do exactly what their parents say. They must fulfil their parents' aspirations—possibly things that the parents themselves failed to do.

India is making rapid progress in all areas. The country is now proud of its market economy, cutting-edge technologies and upgraded infrastructure. In terms of gender equality, there has not been any discernible development in recent years. Nonetheless, prejudice against female children still exists in the nation. Gender-based violence, including foeticide, infanticide, child sexual abuse, rape, child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, discrimination, domestic violence, forced prostitution etc., affects female children from the moment they are conceived. These gender-based obstacles violate their human rights by using them as tools for exploitation, humiliation and increased vulnerability. We should seriously consider how gender-based violence deprives female children of their basic rights. Every



child is entitled to exist on this planet of Earth. However, data shows that female children are denied the right to exist, to be born, and to support themselves. Even before kids are born, rejection starts. With the widespread use of amniocentesis, a medical procedure that can reveal a foetus' gender, and even different tests for sex determination have become permanent practices. Everyone is aware that a person's wellbeing is positively impacted by pleasant childhood experiences. Millions of Indian girls, however, are merely deprived of their early years. They are either traded or forced into early marriages, or forced to work inside and outside of their families. Female children are thrown into a life of responsibility from an early age. Female girls are frequently forced to work both inside and outside of their homes due to a variety of factors including family situations, rural poverty, migration into larger cities, bonded labour, caste and ethnic origin, insufficient educational institutions, industry profit motives, and so on.

Prostitution, sexual exploitation, illegal adoption, child labour, camel racing and organ trade are some of the other reasons why girl children are trafficked. Violence acts against female children that are motivated by gender standards are done overtly against their consent. Violence against females is acceptable, condoned and even permitted in many places with no consequences. Because of this, females are socially and philosophically powerless to oppose or even confront the implicit and explicit injustices they face. The vulnerability of Indian girls is further increased by the ineffective application of laws and the absence of severe legal penalties. Furthermore, women are merely victims of a patriarchal family ideology that favours male offspring rather than independent individuals. The vulnerability of the girl-child is further increased by social silence on domestic violence, abuse in the home, and a woman's submission to her husband and family.

Even with widespread awareness, there are still many obstacles to overcome. Laws are not always guaranteed to be implemented just because they exist. The implementation of children's rights may be hampered by inequalities in society, poverty, unfair treatment, disputes, poor quality of life, cultural opposition, ineffective organizations, insufficient funds and lack of consciousness. The conflict between involvement and security presents another difficulty. Children are too young, according to adults, to take significant options. On the other hand, children may be given unwarranted responsibility by poorly planned participatory initiatives. The right strategy is to acknowledge children's growing skills rather than giving them total adult authority or freedom. The distinction between meaningful and official involvement creates another difficulty. Inquiring children what they think can lead to symbolic rather than practical engagement if there is no proof that their thoughts were taken into account. Institutional readiness to hear and reply is necessary for true involvement.

Understanding Child Rights & Legal Perspectives

Governments cannot promote children's rights on their own. Multiple stakeholders must work together. Regulations, guidelines, allocation of resources, development of institutions and oversight are all primarily the domain of legislatures. They have to convert multilateral commitments into efficient domestic procedures. Families provide children with their immediate social context and are essential to their growth, care, security and direction. Engagement, equal treatment, critical thinking and insights on rights all be fostered by schools and instructors. Additionally, teachers are often among the persons in the best position to spot children who might be victims of neglect, assault, prejudice or other issues. Campaigning, study findings, service delivery,



inspection, campaigns for awareness and mobilization of communities are some of the ways that civil society organizations make a difference. Non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in promoting information and assisting with the convention's execution, says UNICEF (UNICEF. *Implementing and Monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child*).

In the Indian context, achieving gender equality—where men and women, girls and boys, have equal rights, benefits freedom, resources, opportunities and protections—is imperative. Children are taught conventional ideas about what it means to be a guy and a girl at a young age. De-learning societal frameworks is essential to dispelling these inflexible, unfair gender stereotypes and encouraging a variety of healthy gender identity manifestations. Children's perspectives can be expanded and preconceived notions about traditional gender roles challenged through gender equality education. Priority should be given to protecting girls' rights and ending all types of prejudice and harassment. The government must make efforts in boosting employment, generating economic possibilities, guaranteeing food security and universal health care, and giving priority to the most disadvantaged citizens. Child labour and child trafficking are discouraged by the presence of youngsters in schools. In order to address the learning issue and get all students back to school, schools must be ideologically sharpened. Increased funding for education is necessary to guarantee educational equity.

Child rights are somewhat civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights created especially to protect children's welfare. These rights are interconnected, unbreakable, and global. Four guiding principles are laid out by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

1. Impartiality

2. Preserve the interests of the children
3. The privilege to existence, growth and life
4. Regard for Children's thoughts

Governments are directed by these principles when drafting laws and programs that safeguard children against discrimination, exploitation, abuse and mistreatment while fostering their overall growth. The most extensive international agreement pertaining to children's rights is the UNCRC. It acknowledges that children have rights and demands governments to provide them with access to healthcare, education, safety from violence and chances to participate in life-changing decisions. To protect children's rights, national governments and international organizations have created a number of legal and policy frameworks. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which address poverty, gender equality, health, nutrition, safe drinking water and reduced inequality greatly enhance children's rights. The lives of children are immediately improved when these objectives are met.

India has passed a number of legislation and constitutional measures to safeguard children, such as:

- The right to free and compulsory education is guaranteed by Article 21A
- Children cannot work in dangerous occupations, according to Article 24
- The State must be implemented to defend children from exploitation and abuse according to under Article 39
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012
- The Juvenile justice (Care and Safety of Children) Act, 2015



- The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016

These legislative proceedings show India's dedication to the development and protection of children. However, despite this gradual development, child rights misconduct and children's feelings of anxiety and insecurity have increased rather than decreased. This appears to be a sign that the state's efforts to protect and promote children's rights have backfired.

The necessity to protect children was acknowledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It declared that every human being has the right to all of the freedoms and rights outlined in it, regardless of their race, colour, sex, language, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, place of birth, or other status. The UN felt the need to create special conventions that would be legally binding and uphold the principles of human rights for particular groups that are vulnerable and encounter more human rights violations in their daily lives.

Strategies for Strengthening Children's Rights

Quality Education

Children who obtain education acquire knowledge, self-confidence, and life skills. Educational Institutions should provide inclusive, fair and child-friendly learning environments that value diversity and encourage engagement.

Mechanisms for Safeguarding Children

To shield vulnerable children from abuse, trafficking, neglect and exploitation, governments must set up efficient reporting systems, child helplines, rehabilitation clinics, foster care systems and juvenile justice centres.

Policies for efficient Healthcare and Nutrition

Children's survival and development depend on having access to immunizations, care for pregnant women, healthy meals, mental health services, cleanliness and clean drinking water. Programs for public health greatly lower child mortality and enhance long-term outcomes.

Enhancing Community Participation

In order to develop children's rights, parents, educators, local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community leaders are essential. child protection systems are strengthened by community education, awareness campaigns, and child participation activities.

Digital Security

Governments and educational institutions must encourage digital literacy, online safety education, cyberbullying prevention and responsible internet usage in light of children's escalating internet access.

Perspectives and Dimensions on Child Rights

Promoting child rights requires a multidisciplinary perspective.

Human Rights Perspective

Children are independent rights holders rather than passive recipients of care. Their dignity and autonomy should be respected in all decisions affecting them.

Social Perspective

Communities must recognize that investing in children strengthens social cohesion, reduces inequality, and promotes sustainable development.

Educational Perspective

Teachers and schools should integrate child rights education into the curriculum to foster responsible citizenship, empathy, inclusion, and democratic participation.



Policy Perspective

Governments should allocate sufficient financial resources, strengthen child protection institutions, improve monitoring mechanisms, and ensure accountability for violations of child rights.

Conclusion

The fundamental human imperative to defend the worth of children from any misuse of authority is the foundation for child rights. Child rights are violated by acts that violate children's dignity in relation to their basic freedom and rights. Legislation is essential to implement child rights practices. In actuality, laws have not resolved every social issue in and around the world, including those pertaining to children's rights, but they have prevented things from getting worse. More significantly, laws provide children with a legal protection to exercise their basic human rights. Human rights are innate and belong to every human being, without exception. A child has the same rights

as any other human being. In addition, as of their dependency, vulnerability, small size and age, children's rights are unique and significant. In order to create societies that are vibrant, legitimate and peaceful, child rights are essential. Even if national laws and international agreements have made great strides, there are still many obstacles to overcome. Coordinated governmental policies, high-quality healthcare and education, community involvement, and ongoing political commitment are all necessary for the effective promotion of children's rights. Promoting child rights necessitates a basic understanding that children are human beings with inherent rights, not just passive objects of adult care. A thorough international framework founded on non-discrimination, the child's best interests, survival and development, and participation is provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These ideas lay the groundwork for redefining how societies interpret and respond to children.

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