



Perception Of Anganwadi Workers About The Practices Of Early Childhood Care And Education In Tribal Districts Of Odisha

¹ Sonalika Biswal, ² Dr. Sasmita Kar
¹Research Scholar, ²Assistant Professor

¹Department of Education, Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

²Department of Education, Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Abstract: The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme has played a crucial role in ensuring that young children receive comprehensive care and education at the grassroots level. Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) serve as key centers for the delivery of early childhood care and educational services. The study aimed to investigate the perception of stakeholders about the practices of ECCE and the problems in implementing ECCE in tribal districts of Odisha. Survey Method under Descriptive Research was applied for the study. Thirty Anganwadi Centres was selected as sample for the purposed study. The data were collected through a combination of Interview Schedule and Checklist cum Observation Schedule. The study found that the practices of Early Childhood Care and Education, especially in tribal districts of Odisha still trail. These findings highlight the need for infrastructure improvements and resource allocation to enhance the quality of ECCE services in Anganwadi Centers.

Keywords: Anganwadi Centres, Anganwadi Workers, Early Childhood Care and Education, Problems, Tribal District

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A child's initial year of life is very crucial. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is plays a important role for below six year children. It is the package of services envisaged under the Women and Child Development Department and ICDS Scheme to promote education especially in remote, socio-economically backward and tribal areas (Mishra, 2017). It ensures healthy brain development and growth of children. 85% of child's brain development happens before the age of 6 (NEP, 2020). So ECCE aim at promoting better overall learning, development and well being. It refers to various programmes aimed at children's physical, cognitive and social development from birth to six years of age before they enter primary education. The most prominent government intervention in the area of ECE is the ICDS programme. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution as amended in 2002, states that- "The State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children up to the age of six". According to UNESCO (2024), ECCE is a comprehensive, integrated and holistic approach to child health, care, learning and development. It encompasses many services, programmes and initiatives designed to promote the cognitive, physical, social and emotional development of children up to the age of eight. New Education Policy (2020) highlights about the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education and are going to merge in school education.

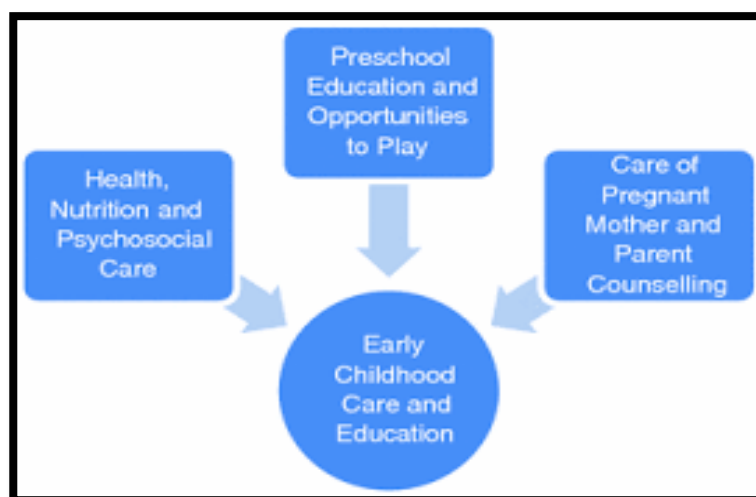


Figure 1.1 Dimensions of ECCE

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Table 2.1 Summary of the Review

Author	Year	Findings
CPBS	2018	Children's nutritional status was directly related to education and wealth indicators, with more children in the lower levels on wealth and educational indices being stunted or wasted. With respect to social category, Scheduled Tribes (STs), followed by Scheduled Castes (SCs) had a larger proportion of malnourished children.
Grantham. et al	2007	Over 200 million children around the world under five do not develop adequately because they live in poverty and have poor health services, nutrition, and care. These children are at risk for delayed development and underachievement at school, and poor child development has costs in terms of both psychological well-being and economic development.
Mahapatra et.al	2020	The nutritional status of pre-school children, particularly of tribal and rural areas was in critical situations. Nutrition among boys were higher than girls in tribal areas.
Mishra,	2017	ECCE and AWC interventions are found to positively impact children's learning achievement in mathematics and language and educational competencies compared to children not exposed to pre-school education.
Ansari, et.al.	2019	The level of achievement of child development is still low. This is caused by various factors, including the teacher competence, the potential of the child itself, the support of educational facilities and infrastructure, school and parent cooperation, community support, and government policies.
UNESCO	2024	Children with poor health entering primary school are more likely to have higher absenteeism, class repetition, and eventually drop out before completing primary education.
Mas	2019	Children with special needs (CWSN) are very few in the ECCE centers (1 and 2 per 500 to 600 children). As per the census 2011, children with special needs among the tribal population are lowest in the age group of 5-19 compared to other social groups (Census, 2011). Most of centers did not accept children with disabilities in their centers. Factors that influence their decision are curriculum, centre's facilities, centre's environment, as well as teachers' and principals' knowledge and skills in handling disabilities.
Kurniah	2018	Most Institutions have not managed completely and systematically. The level of achievement of child development in general is still low, this is caused by various factors, including the factors of teacher competence, the potential of the child itself, the support of educational facilities and infrastructure, school and parent cooperation, community support and government policies.

2.1 Rationale of the Study

Based on the extensive literature review, it was evident that numerous researchers had conducted studies on Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) in various regions. However, less no. research had been conducted in the specific context of Tribal Districts in Odisha. Therefore, a research gap existed in this particular area that needed to be addressed. Taking into account this research gap, the researcher aimed to carry out a comprehensive study on Practices of ECCE in Tribal Districts of Odisha.

2.2 Research Questions of the Study

- I. What do the Anganwadi Workers perceive about the Practices of Early Childhood Care and Education in tribal districts of Odisha.
- II. What are the Problems faced during the Practices of Early Childhood Care and Education in Tribal Districts of Odisha.

2.3 Objectives of the Study

- I. To study the perception of Anganwadi Workers about the Practices of Early Childhood Care and Education in tribal districts of Odisha.
- II. To study the Problems in Practices of Early Childhood Care and Education in Tribal Districts of Odisha.

2.4 Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to:

- Koraput District only.
- Thirty AWCs only.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design: Survey method under Descriptive Research was adopted for carrying out the study.

3.2 Population: The population of the study comprised all the Anganwadi Centres of tribal districts of Odisha were the population of the study.

3.3 Sample: One district i.e. Koraput from Southern Administrative Divisions was selected as the sample for the study. 30 AWCs and their Anganwadi Workers from 02 blocks (15 from each block) were selected for the purposed study.

3.4 Tools used: Semi- Structured Interview Schedule for AWWs (Self-developed) and Check-list cum Observation Schedule was used for data collection from the informants.

4.0 RESULTS

The study revealed that among the 30 AWCs, 26 (86.66%) had their own building, while 4 centers (13.33%) had not any building. Researcher observed that the Anganwadi workers in the centers where room were not available providing services in open spaces like field and courtyard area of village people's houses. They were facing lot of problems to provide the services in that situation. Most (73.33%) of the centers lacked proper seating arrangements, only 26.66% centres having suitable seating arrangement for the children. Weight machines were available in most (90%) of the centres while 10% centres did not have this machine. Adequate teaching and learning materials (TLM) were found in 20% centres, whereas the remaining 80% centres had insufficient supplies of TLM.

The presence of separate toilet was reported by 40% Anganwadi Workers, while 60% mentioned that there was absence of separate toilet facilities. None of the centers had sufficient light, ventilation, or electricity. Among the AWWs, 30% reported that there is a good condition of doors and windows, while 70% indicated unsatisfactory conditions. Separate kitchen rooms were available in most of the Anganwadi Centers (80%), while 20% AWCs lacked this facility.

From the study it was revealed that 60% AWCs had storage rooms for storing food items such as rice and pulses, while 40% had no storage room. 30% AWWs reported that they have adequate storage facilities such as cupboard to keep materials and records, while 70% reported its absence in AWCs. 50% AWWs reported that they had clean classrooms while, 50% AWWs stated that classrooms were not clean. Most of the AWWs (90%) had no water facilities in their AWCs, while 10% confirmed that they had water facilities in their AWCs. Additionally, only 20% Anganwadi Workers reported that there is availability of clean and drinkable water facilities, while 80% Anganwadi Workers mentioned that there is non-availability of drinking water facilities in their AWCs. None of the workers reported the presence of outdoor play equipment for children, indicating a lack of this facility in all centers.

The researcher found that not all services were offered at every Anganwadi centre. The following interpretations of the status of the various activities conducted in AWCs are discussed on the basis of the following table.

Table-1.2 Activities conducted in the AWCs as perceived by AWWs (N=30)

Dimensions of Activities	Activities being conducted			
	Indoor	% of Response	Outdoor	% of Response
Physical & Motor	Singing and Dancing Activity	90 %	Individual activity	33.3%
	Playing games with toys	10	Group activity	33.3%
Language Development	Picture reading & Reciting names	93.33%	Field Visit	70%
	Telling story & Singing song	10%	Local market visit	13.3%
Socio-Emotional	Familiarize with important offices	40 %	Visit to local markets & monuments	76.67 %
	Greetings to elders & friends	50 %	Field visit for collection	70%
Cognitive	Drawing pictures & shapes	60%	Playing outside	10%
	Play with clay	6.67%	Craftworks	16.6%

From the table 1.2 revealed that various indoor and outdoor activities conducted in AWCs for development of children so as to prepare them for school education. The indoor activities such as colouring & joining pictures and drawing pictures & shapes for cognitive development of children are organized in the AWCs by AWWs. Playing with clay is found to be given least priority. It was also revealed that the AWWs given least importance to singing a song and telling stories which is essential for language development. Most of the AWWs (76.67%) reported that they have no proper training to implement all the activities. This distribution suggests that there is need for improvement in organizing activities for children, particularly for those in the "Average" range, through targeted training and support. It is crucial for Anganwadi Workers to possess a strong understanding of ECCE for delivering high-quality early childhood education.

The findings indicate that higher proportion of Anganwadi workers (76.14%) lack sufficient Knowledge about ECCE, which may hinder their ability to effectively manage ECCE. In response to this finding, the government should prioritize training programs and capacity-building initiatives for the Anganwadi Workers.

Table-1.3 Problems faced by the Anganwadi Workers in Implementing ECE programmes (N=30)

Sl. No.	Dimensions of Problems	f	Percentage of Response
1.	Irregular Attendance	12	40%
2.	Lack of resources	6	20%
3.	Additional responsibility	5	16.66%
4.	Language barrier	7	23.33%
5.	Accessibility	18	60%
6.	Lack of encouragement	6	20%
7.	Personal/ Others	2	6.66%

The problems faced by the AWWs during the practices of ECCE at AWCs were cited in table 1.3. It was revealed from the table, irregular attendance of children was the main problem as reported by 40% AWWs. Language barrier, lack of encouragement for them, additional responsibility other than scheduled and lack of resources in the centre were reported in 23.33%, 20%, 16.66% and 20% by AWWs respectively. Most of the AWWs (60%) revealed that accessibility was the major problems in the AWCs.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Despite the ICDS scheme being implemented for forty five years, there has not been a complete improvement in the status of Anganwadi centers. Some centers lack basic amenities such as proper rooms, seating arrangements, curriculum and weight machines for children. Additionally, the availability of certain facilities like toilets, play materials and drinking water facilities is very poor. Therefore, immediate action is required from the government to ensure that all facilities are accessible in every Anganwadi centre. Additionally, the government should focus on enhancing the skills of Anganwadi workers. Continuous professional development programs and ongoing training sessions should be implemented to keep the Anganwadi Workers updated with the latest research, best practices and advancements in the field of ECCE.

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