

ARE OUR SCHOOLS CHILD FRIENDLY?

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Abstract

Over two decades after the emergence of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, suffering and exploitation of children in most developing countries including India continue. Since most of the children are either ignorant or incapable of possessing their rights. It is being provided by the stake holders, namely parents, teachers, civil society members etc. After environment of home, it is the school which influences a child most, and contributes to the shaping of his or her personality. Child friendly environment of school is inevitable need for the all round development of the child. Therefore researcher wanted to know that, are our schools child friendly and is there any difference between the child friendliness of boy's schools and girl's schools. To fulfill the purpose researcher developed a Child Friendly School Questionnaire having thirty seven questions and administered it on the sample of 200 students consisting 100 boys from boy's junior high schools and 100 girls from girl's junior high schools of Varanasi city and found that the schools violate rights of children and boys are more vulnerable than girls. Therefore the schools cannot be accepted child friendly.

Key Words: School, Child, Child Rights, Child Friendly School, Child Friendly Environment

Introduction

Children are the future of the nation. Yet around the world, children are denied their rights that could enable them to develop fully and participate actively in the development of their country. Since most of the children are either ignorant or incapable of possessing their rights, it is being provided by the stake holders, namely parents, schools, teachers, civil society members etc. After environment of home, it is the school which influences a child most, and contributes to the shaping of his or her personality. Schooling is the one experience that most children worldwide have in common and the most common means by which societies prepare their young for the future. But schooling is not always a positive experience for children. It can mean shivering in cold, unheated buildings or sweltering in hot, airless ones. It can mean being forced to adjust in deplorable school buildings, being hungry, thirsty or unwell; it can also mean being frightened by the threat of punishment, humiliation, bullying or even violence at the hands of teachers and fellow pupils.

These conditions hinder learning. Learning is further baffled when schools have no toilets, running water or electricity. Years of research on learning environment's contribution to student's learning achievement and development have led to a general recognition that, beyond students' own innate abilities, motivation, and prior knowledge, learning occurs when systems of the home, community, schools and peers come together to form a protective circle that nurtures and develops student's growth (Bergman; Walker and Garfinkel, 1992). Research has repeatedly demonstrated the interconnectedness of the pieces, with safety and health affecting the academic environment (Geierstanger et al., 2004; Roeser et al., 1998 & Scott et al., 2001). According to the literature, physical facilities have impact on student achievement and behavior (Asagwara, 1997; Earthman, 1998; Heyneman and Loxley, 1983; & Jamison et al., 1981). Another factor that impacts learning achievement is teacher availability, qualification, and the quality of teaching students experience in the classroom (Asagwara, 1997; UNICEF, 2001; and Nye, Konstantopoulos & Hedges, 2004).

Henderson and Berla (1994) cited evidence that school family partnership result in improved attendance, higher grades and test scores, more positive attitudes, and better graduation rates. Bergmann et al. (1992) have also documented the positive role of community groups in the social education of young people.

Fulfilling the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) requires not just getting all children into school, but making sure that all schools work in the best interest of the children entrusted to them. This means providing safe and protective schools that are adequately staffed with trained teachers, equipped with adequate resources and graced with appropriate conditions for learning environment.

After considering all the above issues, UNICEF has developed a framework for rights-based, child-friendly educational systems and schools that are characterized as "inclusive, healthy and protective for all children, effective with children, and involved with families and communities - and children" (Shaeffer, 1999) on the basis of convention on rights of the child 1989. Child-friendly school (CFS) means that type of school which protects and fulfils the right to survival, right to development, right to participation and right to protection of a child. It embraces a multidimensional concept of quality and addresses the total needs of the child as a learner.

At national level NCERT has presented The National Curriculum Framework 2005 to make school education burden free and child centered. Afterward National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, 2010 elaborates the symbiotic relationship between the school education and teacher education. Thus issues highlighted in NCF,2005 like Inclusive education, Learning without burden, Community knowledge, Gender perspective, perspective of sustainable and equitable development, as well as language proficiency become the center-staged in this framework. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2010) has recommended placing child rights in the curriculum of teacher education to prepare a humane and child friendly teacher. Right to education act is another catalyst to turn schools child centred and child friendly.

The association drawn in the literature between conducive environment and student achievement and the practices made at international and national level by UNICEF, NCERT, NCTE and RTE 2010 propelled the researcher to ask these questions:

1. Are schools child friendly?
2. Is there any difference between the environment of boy's schools and girl's schools in context of child friendliness?

Objectives of the study

1. To find out that the Schools are Child Friendly or not?.
2. To Compare the Child Friendliness of Boy's Schools and Girl's Schools.

Methodology of the study

The survey method was adopted. A Child Friendly School Questionnaire (CFSQ) was developed by the investigator on the basis of dimensions of Convention on Rights of the Child, UNICEF's Child Friendly School Framework and India's Right to Education Act, 2010. The CFSQ consists of thirty seven Yes or No response type items. Purposive sampling technique was followed to select the sample for the survey. The sample of two hundred students was drawn from ten boy's junior high schools and ten girl's junior high schools of Varanasi city. Ten students from each school were selected. The sample contained hundred male and hundred female students. The CFSQ was administered on the sample and the data was collected.

Analysis of Data and Result

37 categories were identified by the investigator on the basis of the questions placed in CFSQ. After having a deep perusal of Table-1 it was found that 82% students of boy's junior high school and 78% students of girl's junior high school have accepted that there is no health checkup facilities in their schools and in totality 80% students have accepted the same.

Table-1: Percentage of the Responses

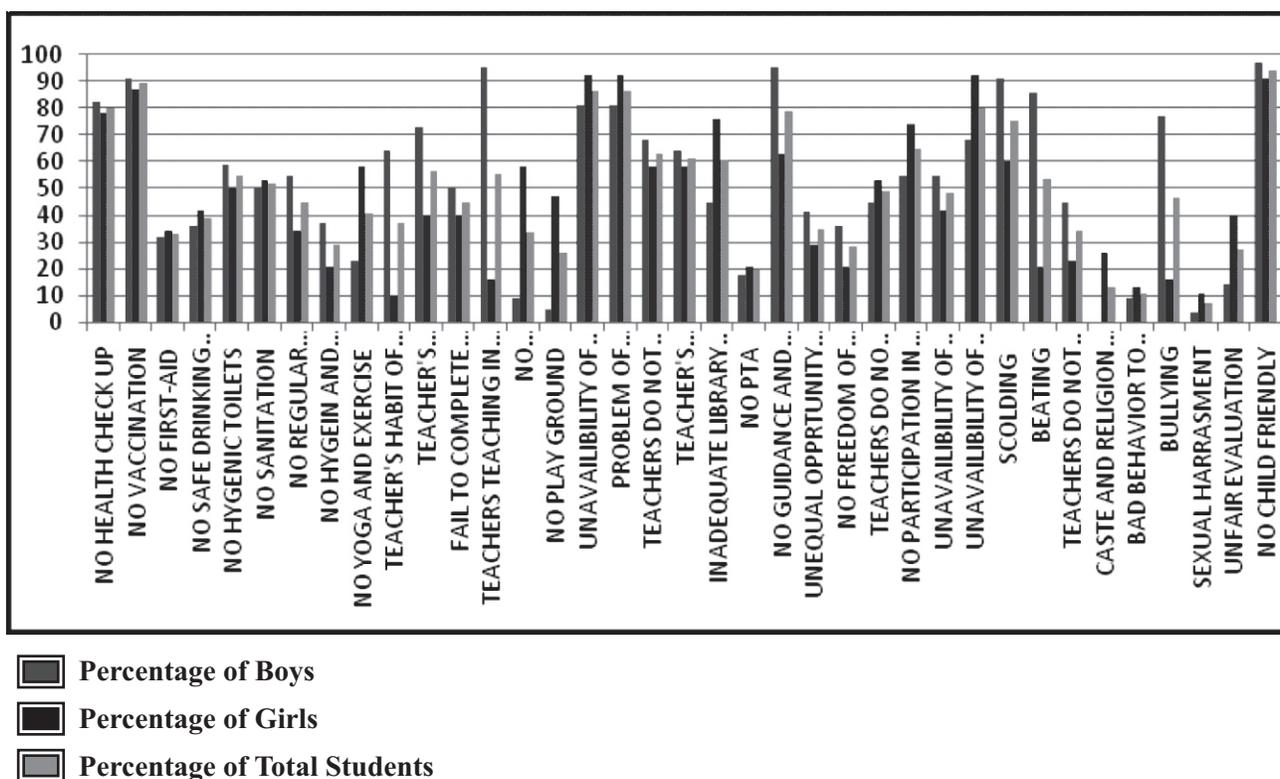
S.No.	Items	Boys (N=100)	Girls (N=100)	Total (200)
1	No regular health check up	82% (f=82)	78 % (f=78)	80% (f=160)
2	No vaccination	91% (f=91)	87% (f=87)	89% (f=178)
3	No first- aid	32 % (f=32)	34% (f=34)	33% (f=66)
4	No safe drinking water	36 % (f=36)	42% (f=42)	39% (f=78)
5	No hygienic toilets	59 % (f=59)	50 % (f=50)	54.5% (f=109)
6	No sanitation and cleanness	50% (f=50)	53% (f=53)	51.5% (f=103)
7	No regular examination of cleanness of hair, teeth, nails, Uniform and shoes	55 % (f=55)	34 % (f=34)	44.5% (f=89)
8	No health and hygienic education	37 % (f=37)	21% (f=21)	29% (f=58)
9	No yoga and exercises	23% (f=23)	58% (f=58)	40.5% (f=81)
10	Teacher's habit of intoxication	64% (f=64)	10% (f=10)	37% (f=74)
11	Teacher's unpunctuality and irregularity	73% (f=73)	40% (f=40)	56.5% (f=113)
12	Fail to complete curriculum on time	50% (f=50)	40% (f=40)	45% (f=90)
13	Teacher's teaching tuition and coaching	95% (f=95)	16% (f=16)	55.5% (f=111)
14	No cultural, community and sports activity	9% (f=09)	58% (f=58)	33.5% (f=67)
15	No suitable play ground in school	05% (f=05)	47% (f=47)	26% (f=52)

16	No availability of sport kit	81% (f=81)	92% (f=92)	86.5% (f=173)
17	Electricity problem	81% (f=81)	92 % (f=92)	86.5% (f=173)
18	Teacher's do not clarify the confusions	68% (f=68)	58% (f=58)	63% (f=126)
19	Teacher's odd behaviour after frequent questioning by students	64 % (f=64)	58 % (f=58)	61% (f=122)
20	No quality library and laboratory facility	45 % (f=45)	76% (f=76)	60.5% (f=121)
21	No PTA	18% (f=18)	21% (f=21)	19.5% (f=39)
22	No guidance and counselling	95 % (f=95)	63% (f=63)	79% (f=158)
23	No equal opportunity to participate in various co-curricular activities	41% (f=41)	29% (f=29)	35% (f=70)
24	No freedom of expression in class	36% (f=36)	21% (f=21)	28.5% (f=57)
25	No education of child rights	45% (f=45)	53% (f=53)	49% (f=98)
26	No respect of the view of the child in decision making	55% (f=55)	74% (f=74)	64.5% (f=129)
27	Unavailability of news papers and magazines	55% (f=55)	42 % (f=42)	48.5% (f=97)
28	Unavailability of computers and internet	68% (f=68)	92% (f=92)	80% (f=160)
29	Scolding by teachers	91% (f=91)	60 % (f=60)	75.5% (f=151)
30	Beating by teachers	86 % (f=86)	21 % (f=21)	53.5% (f=107)
31	Do not listen problems of students	45% (f=45)	23 % (f=23)	34% (f=68)

32	Discrimination on the basis of caste and religion	0% (f=0)	26 % (f=26)	13% (f=26)
33	Bad behaviour to disabled	9% (f=09)	13% (f=13)	11% (f=22)
34	Bullying	77% (f=77)	16 % (f=16)	46.5% (f=93)
35	Sexual harassment in school	4 % (f=04)	11% (f=11)	7.5% (f=15)
36	Unfair evaluation	14 % (f=14)	40% (f=40)	27% (f=54)
37	No, my school is not child friendly	97% (f=97)	91% (f=91)	94% (f=188)

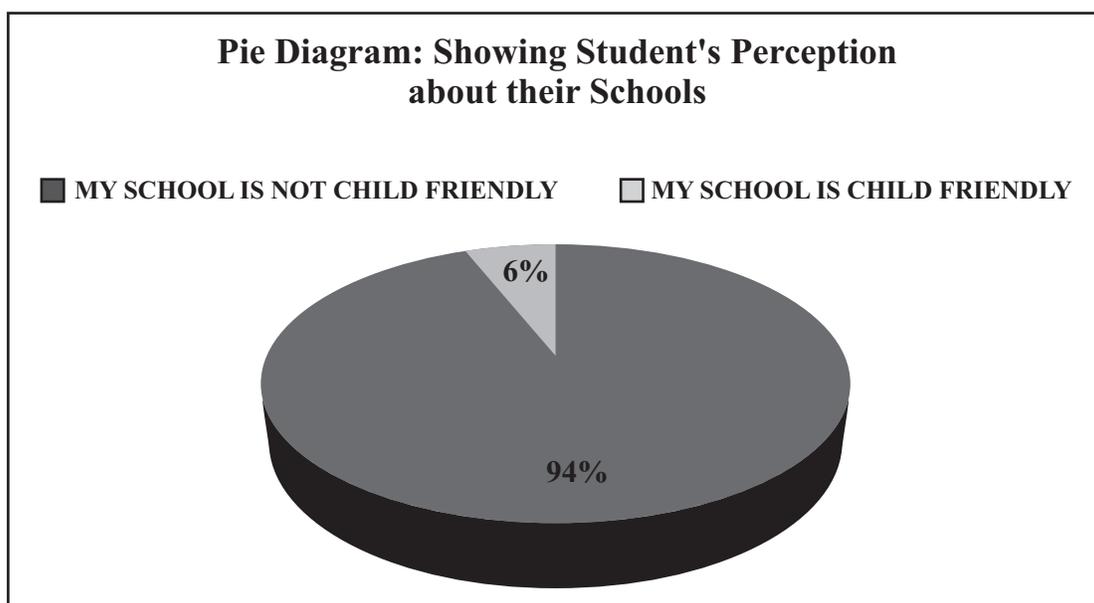
Total 89% students have accepted that they never seen any type of vaccination program in their schools, in which 91% were boys and 87% were girls. 33% student have said that there is no first aid facility available in their school after minor injury or mild sickness in which 32% were boys and 34% were girls. 36% boys and 42% girls have mentioned the problem of unsafe drinking water in their schools, in totality of students the percentage is 39. 59% of boys and 50 % of girls have agreed about unavailability of hygienic toilets in their schools and total 54.5% of students have mentioned the same problem. Investigator also found that 50 % of boys and 53% of girls have underlined the problem related with sanitation and cleanliness of school and the total number of students were 51.5%. 55% boys and 34% girls have reported that the cleanliness of nail, teeth, hair, uniform and shoes are not examined by their teachers and in totality the number is 44.5%. Total 29% students have mentioned that their teachers do not make them aware of hygienic habits, in which 37% are boys and 21% are girls. 23% of boys, 58% of girls and 40.5% of total students have pointed out that there is no period of yoga and exercises in their school's time table. 37% of total students, 64% of boys and 10% of girls' students have reported that in their schools, teachers smoke, chew tobacco, gutkha and paan. 73% of boys, 40% of girls and 56.5% of total students have mentioned the unpunctuality and irregularity of their teachers. 45% of total students, in which 50% were boys and 40%, were girls have reported that their teachers often fail to complete syllabus with in time. 95% of boys, 16% of girls and 55.5% of total students have underlined that their teachers teach in private tuitions and coaching. 33.5% of total students, 9% of boys and 58% of girls have accepted that in their schools cultural, community and sports activities do not take place. 05% of boys, 47% of girls and 26% of total students have mentioned that there is no play ground in their schools. 81% of boys, 92% of girls and 86.5% of total students have reported the unavailability of sports kit in their schools.

Bar Diagram of the Data in Table-1



81% of boys, 92% of girls and 86.5% of total number of students have agreed about the problem of electricity in their schools. 63% of total students, 68% of boys and 58% of girls reported that their teachers do not ever try to clarify the subject related confusions of students. 64% of boys, 58% of girls and 61% of total students have mentioned that if students ask frequent questions teachers often get angry. 45% of boys, 76% of girls and 60.5% of total students have underlined the problem of unavailability of quality library and laboratory in their schools. 18% of boys, 21% of girls have reported about the non existence of parent-teacher association, in totality 19.5% students have mentioned the same. Problem of unavailability of any type of guidance and counselling program have reported by 95% of boys, 63% of girls and 79% of total students. 41% of boys, 29% of girls and 35% of total students have underlined that they do not get equal opportunity to participate in various programs held in their schools. Total 28.5% of students have accepted that they do not get freedom of expression in their class, in which 36% are boys and 21% are girls. 45% of boys, 53% of girls and 49% of total students have accepted that their teachers do not give any information about child rights. 55% of boys, 74% of girls and 64.5% of total students have mentioned that they do not get any chance to participate in decision making by their teachers or school administration. 48.5% of total students, 55% of boys and 42% of girls have mentioned the unavailability of news paper and magazines in their schools. 68% of boys, 92% of girls and in total 80% of students have accepted the problem of unavailability of computers and internet in their schools. 91% of boys, 60% of girls and 75.5% of total students have reported that they are scolded by their teachers in schools. 86% of boys, 21% of girls and 53.5% of total students have reported that their teachers beat them. 34% of total students, 45% of boys and 23% of girls have mentioned that their teachers do not listen their problems. Surprisingly all boys have accepted that their teachers do not discriminate on the basis of

caste and religion but 26 % of girls reported the discrimination on the basis of caste and religion, in totality the number is 13%. Only 09% of boys, 13% of girls and 11% of total students have underlined the bad behavior of teachers towards disabled. 77% of boys have mentioned that they are encountered to bullying by their peers and senior students. Only 16% of girls mentioned the problem of bullying in their schools and the in totality the number is 46.5%. 4% boys, 11% girls and 7.5% of total students have reported that they are sexually harassed in their schools. Total 27% of students, 14% of boys and 40% of girls have accepted that their teachers do not evaluate their test and examination copies fairly. 94% of total students have announced that their schools are not child friendly in which 97% were boys and 91% were girls.



Findings and Discussion

Physical health is related to right to survival of the child and good physical health is a prerequisite for effective learning but after analyzing the data researcher found that the schools are hindering the right to survival of the child in various ways which are as follows:

- Schools are not providing proper health check up and vaccination facilities.
- First-Aid facility is also ignored in some extent in schools.
- Schools are not providing safe drinking water to students adequately.
- Lack of hygiene and sanitation is another big issue in Schools.
- Teacher's unawareness to cleanliness of students and not giving them health and hygiene education is also a problem.
- Yoga and exercises are totally unpractised in some schools in which most of the schools are of girls.
- Teacher's habit of practising intoxication in schools is another severe, health concerning abuse noticeably higher in boy's schools and which may also tends student to such type of malpractices.

Education is the best mean to all round development of the child and schools are the best place, but after analyzing the data investigator found that the school itself violating the right to education, right to leisure and play thus disrupting the right to development of a child in such ways:

- Teachers are unpunctual and irregular thus fail to complete syllabus with in time.
- Mass of teachers teaches in private tuition and coaching even it is prohibited by the RTE, 2010 act. In boy's schools the number of teachers teaching in private tuition and coaching is very large with comparison to girl's schools.
- Girl's schools do not provide proper play ground and sports kit and are noticeably backward in practising cultural, community and sports activities thus it is clear that girls are more vulnerable than boys in possession on their right to leisure and play.
- Problem of electricity is a big question in most of the schools.
- Large number of teachers become aggressive after frequent questioning by students and do not clarify the confusions of the students on their regarding subjects.
- Library and laboratory are essential part of schools even though the quality of these is ignored on fairly large scale and conditions are worse in girl's schools.
- Although Guidance and counselling service is an ineluctable part of learning but it is surprisingly noticeable that most of the schools do not provide any type of guidance and counselling service to students.

It is apparent that the schools have an important role in democratization and socialization of children and both comes with actively participation. In schools students participate in various ways to learn despite all the schools combat the right to participation of a child in various possible ways:

- Schools fail to provide equal opportunity to participate in various co-curricular activities satisfactorily.
- Students do not have freedom of expression in their class.
- Teachers and administration do not seek ideas, views and participation of students in decision making and do not respect their views.

Children have the right to get information that is important to their health and well-being but the present study revealed that:

- The teachers do not give information about rights of the child.
- The schools do not provide news papers, magazines, computer and internet facility to students.

Investigator revealed that in schools students encounter various threats to their protection:

- Corporal punishment is an offence according to RTE 2010 despite Students are scolded and beaten by the teachers massively and the boys' students are more vulnerable than girls' students.
- Teachers are inattentive towards the problems of students.
- Students face bullying by peers and seniors in schools and number of boys are noticeably higher than girls.

- Caste and religion based discrimination is absent in boys schools but happens in girls schools on some extent.
- Most of the teachers are good to disabled students but schools do not possess special facilities for disabled.
- Sexual harassment and unfair evaluation by teachers are worth noticeable.

Conclusion

All social systems and agencies which affect children should be based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is particularly true for schools which, despite disparities in access across much of the world, serve a large percentage of children. Such rights-based — or child-friendly — schools not only but must help children to realize their right to a basic education of good quality. They are also needed to do many other things such as to assist children to learn what they needed to learn to face the challenges of the new century; enhance their health and well-being; guarantee them safe and protective spaces for learning, free from violence and abuse; raise teacher morale and motivation; and mobilize community support for education. But the present investigation shows that the schools are failed to provide quality education, basic facilities of health, sanitation and safety. A large number of teachers are engaged in private tuition and coaching classes. Schools are inattentive towards child's mental and physical health. Corporal punishment and bullying are massive problems in various schools and no facility of guidance and counseling is provided in schools. Thus present investigation shows that the schools are violating the right to survival, right to development, right to participation and right to protection of children. Hence, the environment of the schools is not child friendly in Varanasi city. The investigation also indicates that the boys are more vulnerable than girls. Consequently, the child friendly environment of boy's schools in comparison to girl's schools is not up to the mark to be known as child friendly schools.

Implications and Suggestions

The information uncovered in this study is relevant in several ways. Results of the study serve as progress report on the effectiveness of the RTE Act, 2010 .In addition; the study informs the national conversation about school improvement efforts. Furthermore, it has relevance for educational policy in terms of movement toward the attainment of national goals for education and effective implementation of RTE Act, 2010 in schools.

Based on the findings and subsequent conclusion of this study, the investigator submits the following suggestions:

- Schools must have the basic facilities of health, sanitation, first-aid, hygienic toilets, safe drinking water, electricity, enriched library, good laboratory, playground, sports kit etc.
- Schools must have guidance and counselling cell for students.
- Schools must ensure the safety, protection and participation of students.
- Schools must have a bonding with community and parents.
- Schools must protect and encourage the rights and well being of the child.
- General place should be given to child right in the pre-service and in-service teacher training programs.

- Child rights must be included in the curriculum of school education.
- Legal provisions to protect RTE with all forms of child rights and its implementations should be enforced strictly.
- The government should establish a proper monitoring system for schools in this regard.

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