

## **A STUDY ON PERCEPTION OF GUARDIANS ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)**

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### **Abstract**

*Pre-school education is essential to any national system of education. In developed countries it has got its rightful place in the education system. But the scenario is not so in the developing countries like India. The reasons may be many like lack of political will, poor fund, weak policy, lack of proper attitude, etc. The present study seeks to find the perception of the guardians about early childhood education locality and gender-wise, and to analyze the same statistically following descriptive and inferential method. The study reveals that there exists no significant difference among the urban and rural guardians in respect of their perception about early childhood care education and that there is no significant difference among the male and female guardians in respect of the perception about early childhood care and education. The Government, policy-makers, curriculum-planners, educationists, teachers—all may find the findings useful and chalk out their action plan accordingly to bring a positive change in the field of early childhood care and education in the country.*

**Key Words:** *Early Childhood Care and Education, Perception, Guardians, Students, Teachers.*



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### **1.0 Introduction**

The education that a child aged below 6 years receives before the start of primary education is called pre-primary education. It is usually divided in two stages: kindergarten/nursery/playgroup for children of 3-5years; and pre-primary or kindergarten for children aged 5-6years. There is however, another kind of arrangement in some schools: play group for children aged 3-4, nursery for 4-5, KG-1 for 5-6 and KG-2 for children aged 6-7. The term “early childhood education,” is often used to describe pre-school or baby/child care programme. Other terms which are often used interchangeably with early childhood education are ‘early childhood learning’s,’ ‘early care,’ ‘nursery education,’ and ‘early education’. If we follow Gandhiji, we find that the real education begins at conception not at birth. It, therefore, includes pre-natal education, peri-natal and post-natal care also. It includes formal as well as non-formal education i.e., education imparted in a school as well as outside. Pre-primary education in its broader sense may be divided into the following four parts-----

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- I. Pre-primary education from conception to birth.
- II. Pre-primary education from birth to two and a half year.
- III. From a two and half to four year.
- IV. From four to five or six years.

However, the Indian scenario is not so supportive for pre-school education like the advanced countries, though the origin of the concept that it starts in the womb is India. The problems may be related to lack of political will, weak policy, poverty or negative attitude of guardians. At this backdrop, the present study has been undertaken.

## **2.0 Survey of Literature**

Arnett (1989) investigated training for caregivers in day-care for its relationship to caregivers' attitudes toward children and their behavior in interactions with children. The study included 59 caregivers from 22 day-care centres on Bermuda's island. Caregivers who had half or all of their Bermuda College training were less authoritarian in their childrearing views than caregivers who had none, and their interactions with children were evaluated better on Positive Interaction and lower on Detachment. Caregivers with a 4-year ECE degree differed from the other three groups in that their childrearing views were less authoritarian, and they were rated higher on Positive Interaction and lower on Punitiveness and Detachment in their interactions with children. Dash and Roul (2009) conducted a critical study on early childhood care and education across integrated child development services. A sample of 30 anganwadi centres was selected randomly for the study. The study revealed that ICDS has a definite impact on its beneficiaries. It also reveals that the scheme has the potential of enhancing a positive change in the all round development of children

Comer and Ben-Avie (2010) state that every interaction within an early childhood program either promotes community or disrupts it. So they say that excellent early childhood programs have in place a process that pulls the energies and abilities of all the members of the school community together so that everyone—children, educators, parents, and community members—develop well. The study reveals that healthy interactions between educators and families create the necessary conditions for the early childhood programs.

Barton, Georgina (2010) explored arts-based educational research (ABER) as an effective and appropriate research method in the early years. It has been noted that the arts play an increasingly important role in the development of the child through various modes like oral or written language, drawing or song. The study shows how much research, in the past, has

often treated children as inferior participants. It is a powerful platform for research with children which gives children more of a voice in the research process.

Mohalik (2013) studies the role of the teacher in ECCE in respect of the nature of the learner and the responsibility of the teacher. He states that ECCE caters to the needs of the learner upto the age of 6-8 years, which is the very critical and significant stage of human life as it lays the foundation for future development and education. The role of the teacher is to expose the child to different teaching learning materials in the form of play, music and other activities. He should act as encourager, supporter and facilitator for physical and mental development. The author analyses different issues and concerns of preparing ECCE functionaries and suggests measures for improving the quality of preparation.

Meland et al. (2016) examined how gender affects how 2-year-olds deal with various everyday activities as observed by kindergarten staff. Everyday activities are tied to situations such as meals, dressing and undressing, grooming, and potty/toilet training and are part of the daily educational life in a kindergarten. The necessary data was gathered by observing 535 boys and 509 girls in an organised manner. The youngsters, who were between the ages of 30 and 33 months, were watched for three months. The result reveals gender differences favouring the girls.

### **3.0 Rationale of the Study**

As per National Policy on Education '86, the childhood period is the most crucial period in a child's life. Different developmental domains of children are-----

- a. Motor control : Concerning children's ability to use and control their muscles.
- b. Perception and Sensory Development : Now children function using the senses and their ability to process the information gained.
- c. Communication and Language Development : Using visual and sound stimuli, especially in the acquisition of language, as well as in the exchange of thought and feelings.
- d. Cognitive Development : Concerning how children think and react.

In other words, the importance of early childhood care and education can be understood from the following-----

- I. Pre-school education is essential for a child because it prepares him to build a base for his future education.

- II. It develops a child's personality by exposing the creativity of the child in a natural way.
- III. It helps to learn how a child can adjust with his/her peers and interact with outsiders.
- IV. It ensures the physical, mental, social and emotional growth of the child.
- V. It develops his cognitive skills in the scientific curriculum that nurtures him.
- VI. It helps to nurture or grow a child's mind into a healthy and socially well adjusted individual.

Hence, in order to reach the benefits of pre-school education to each child, right perception of the guardians about the same is extremely essential along with the government programs. At this point the study seems to be significant.

#### **4.0 Objectives of the Study**

The present study had the following objectives -----

- (i) To measure the perception of the guardians about the early childhood care and education locality-wise and gender-wise.
- (ii) To analyze and interpret the same using both descriptive and inferential statistical measures.

#### **5.0 Hypotheses of the Study**

The null hypotheses formulated for the present study were----

$H_1$ : The urban guardians and the rural guardians will show no significant difference between their mean scores obtained in their test of perception about early childhood care and education.

$H_2$ : The male guardians and the female guardians will show no significant difference between their mean scores obtained in their test of perception about early childhood care and education.

#### **6.0 Procedure of the Study**

##### *6.1 Method of the Study:*

Descriptive-cum-survey method was used in the study.

##### *6.2. Tool of the Study:*

A perception scale was developed for the study. With 40 items on 7 dimensions like curriculum, co-curriculum, teaching strategy, aims of pre-school education, guardians' co-operation, objectives of pre-school education, importance of pre-primary education. Expert

opinion was sought for the purpose of validity, and changes were made accordingly. As a next step, reliability was determined. The Product Moment ‘r’ was determined as 0.57. It was found that there was a moderate co-relationship between the two scores of test-retest.

*6.3. Scoring Key:*

The scoring key was like this---

For positive statement      For negative statement

A U D D                      A U D D

3 2 1                        1 2 3

*6.4 Variables in the Study:*

Perception of the guardians was treated as the dependent variable, and the locality of the guardians’ residence and the gender o the guardians were treated as the classificatory independent variables.

*6.5 Population and Sample:*

All the guardians of Malda District having children of pre-school stage were the population of the study, and 200 guardians formed the sample of the same. The pattern was such that half of the sample was male and half female, and also half was from rural area and half from the urban.

*6.6 Sampling, Data-Collection and Scoring:*

Purposive sampling technique was followed for data-collection. Each of the respondents was given a copy of the scale and he or she was asked to put a tick mark in the boxes against the statements. The data were scored as per the prepared scoring key.

**7.0 Analysis and Interpretation**

*7.1 Presentation through Descriptive Statistics*

Table 1

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
All Urban Guardians	100	115.81	1.67
All Rural Guardians	100	115.87	1.66
All Male Guardians	100	115.79	1.65
All Female	100	115.89	1.68
All Guardians	200	115.84	1.66

The researcher selected 200 samples for conducting the preset study. In the case of total sample, the value of mean score is 115.84 and SD value is 1.66. It indicates the tendency of very slight deviation of the individual score of the distribution. The above table specifically indicates that the lowest mean value belongs to the selected male guardians of Malda District; the highest mean score belongs to the selected female guardians of the same.

7.2 Testing of Hypotheses:

**Table-2**

$H_1$	Variable s	M	N	S <sub>ED</sub>	T	df	Levels of Significance		Not Significant
							0.05	0.01	
	AUG	115.81	100	0.23	0.790	198	1.98	2.61	
ARG	115.87	100							

The calculated value is not equal to or does not exceed the critical value. So the difference is not significant, and the null hypothesis has not been rejected.

**Table-3**

$H_2$	Variable s	M	N	S <sub>ED</sub>	t	df	Levels of Significance		Not Significant
							0.05	0.01	
	AMG	115.79	100	0.23	0.670	198	1.98	2.61	
AFG	115.89	100							

The calculated value is not equal to or does not exceed the critical value. So the difference is not significant, and the null hypothesis has not been rejected.

All results related to the differences of guardians' perception about early childhood care and education have been found as insignificant results. These results have specified that the null hypotheses have not been rejected. So, locality and gender wise significant difference in terms of the guardian's perception about early childhood care and education has not been found. All the guardians of Malda ditrict have exposed their commonness in perception.

**8.0 Findings of the Study**

The findings of the study were as follows-----

- ❖ There is no difference among the urban and the rural guardians in respect of their perception about early childhood care and education.

- ❖ There exists no difference among the male and the female guardians in respect of their perception about early childhood care and education.

## 9.0 Educational Implications

The study bears implications for all---teachers, researchers, guardians, professionals, parents, policy- makers, curriculum-planners, educationists, education officers, the Provincial as well as the Central Governments. All may find some clues from the study.

### 10.0 Suggestion for Further Studies

Further study may be undertaken in broader perspective involving larger population and sample. Comparative study between two districts may be conducted. Perception of teachers and education officers may be studied separately. Opinion and awareness of the community as a whole may be studied regarding the same. Attitude of guardians towards stage-specific pre-school education may be undertaken to have new insight.

### 11.0 Conclusion

The researcher has concluded that locality and gender-based difference in respect of the guardians' perception about early childhood care and education is not significant; all types of guardians belonging to Malda district have expressed common perception about early childhood care and education. All have intended to have early childhood care and education in the educational system for a better future of the pre-school children.

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