

Research Article

ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE ON DEMOCRACY AMONG CHILDREN USING SOCIAL GROUP WORK METHOD THROUGH CHILDREN PARLIAMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study is to enhance knowledge on democracy among children using social group work method through children parliament approach. This study intervenes among children to attain their basic rights and make recommendations to adopt the model. The main reason for the study is, India has been stated as flawed democracy by the global democratic Index, flawed democracy is a state where the country has issues like significant fault in democratic aspects, including underdeveloped political culture, low level of participation in politics and issues in functioning of governance. Children are going to be the future citizen, so the children need to understand the power relations and the leadership for their bright future. Multidimensional growth is needed for a child, which enables a good citizen. India is a democratic country where people can participate in decision making. In present scenario children are deprived from their basic rights. Children parliament is a model where political roles can be practiced and played by the children. Using quasi-experimental study, research was conducted with 40 children. Base line data and end line data was collected to examine the knowledge on democracy before and after the intervention. The result shows that knowledge on democracy has been imparted to the children through children parliament. Hence, children parliament is one of the effective methods for children's integral growth and helps them to attain leadership skills and serves as a platform to practice the same.

Keywords: Children Parliament, Democracy, Social group work method, Future citizen, Children, Multi-dimensional growth, Leadership skills.

INTRODUCTION

Children are the future. They are the change makers of the society, if so; they need to be capacitated today. Capacitating means equipping them with knowledge. According to the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' UNCRC, "a child is a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". Humanium an international child sponsorship NGO, states that, in India there are 472 million children under the age of 18 representing 39% of total population. It also states, out of 472 million children 73% of children are living in rural areas and often has limited access to fundamental rights. Hence capacitation should be in all dimensions such as physical, psychological, intellectual, social, economic, political, ecological and spiritual. Democracy is a system where people have power to participate in decision making. According to Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), "Democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people". Educating children on democracy is much needed in the present scenario. Educating the children on democracy and helping the children to understand the power relations enables a good citizen. According to Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), dated on Feb 10, 2022, India has ranked 46th in the 2021 Global Democratic Index. I see there is a serious need to educate children on democracy. The Indian constitution of 1950 asserts that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of persons", and that "no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty". Integral growth is needed to a child for a bright future. This study focuses on one aspect, that is to understand the leadership and power roles in the polity. There are many leadership styles such as democracy, autocracy, bureaucracy,

socialism, communism, oligarchy, etc. Among the leadership styles, democracy is person centered and value oriented which has legal equality, political freedom and rule of law. Children to grow in the democratic knowledge, there is an already existing model called Children Parliament. According to Holistic Child Development India organization, children parliament is a group of children of a particular village, neighborhood or region who come together as a group for activities, learning and represent their interest and opinions to the decision makers of the village. Children parliament is a model to practice democratic values. This study relies on social group work method. According to Gisela Konopka (1963), "Social group work is a method of social work which helps the individuals to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experience and to cope more effectively with their personal group community problem". Hence the theme of the study is to enhance knowledge on democracy, values and practice among children using social group work method through Children Parliament approach. The main aim of study is to assess and to enhance the children's knowledge on democracy and to examine the reach of children parliament, as a group work method in formation of attitude, skill, and knowledge on democracy among children.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Peter Moss (2021) published article on "Democracy as First Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care". The article says democracy and education are interconnected. The researcher states democracy is a value and practice in education; and education is to strengthen and sustain democracy. The article states democracy as a multi-dimensional concept. The childhood participation helps them to grow socially and politically. The article states that democracy can be attained through education. Capacitating the children on Democracy

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through children parliament helps the children to understand the democracy and to grow in democracy.

Rebekah Gienapp (2020) published article on "ways to teach kids about democracy, citizenship and voting". The researcher explained the ways to reflect on democracy, they are, taking your children to election place and explaining why you are voting for a particular person; writing a letter to an elected official as a family; talking about how protest is patriotic; encouraging children to ask question and to speak up when they don't agree; talking about times when your country has lived up to its ideal and time when it has not. The article says by asking these questions and making them to speak their views, democracy will be tuned.

Gandhi Mary, (2014), M.Phil. scholar of social work department did a study on "Role of Children parliament in Tiruvannamalai District". The researcher used descriptive design to study about the impact of Children Parliament on the education, political knowledge, leadership skills, health, participation aspects of members. The researcher says children are the best agent for social change they can do better than elders without selfishness. This study is undertaken to know about socio demographic characteristics of the respondents, to analyze the effective participation of children in children parliament, to find out the impact of socio and cultural changes, political knowledge and impact of health and education and managerial skills of the respondents. The universe of study consists of 20 children parliament in Tiruvannamalai District, 120 sample was selected using Stratified Simple Random Sampling method. The main recommendation of the study is to NGOs, to encourage children studying class 6 to 12 to join in Children parliament for their leadership and bright future. The researcher concludes with suggestions to improve in capacity building, awareness and to participate in all government activities through Children Parliament.

Mimansha Singh (2022), published an article "Democracy building – Role played by children". This article emphasis on democracy for children. The researcher explains the rights of children as per UN, the children has right to express their views on any matters related to children and they shall be heard in judiciary proceedings. The researcher says many countries allow their children to participate in democracy, where children are allowed in decision making process, New Zealand organized 'Agenda for children' where children expressed their problems in society, 'children in action' in South Africa where children allowed in parliamentary hearings, child-related committees in Israel. All these countries record that their children are allowed participate in decision making process. The researcher also marks children participation in India, in Karnataka the government started 'Makkala Grama Sabhas' where children can discuss the problems related to infrastructure, education and other facilities of children with the high official members in the panchayat. Once in a year children's representatives will collect all the issues and important issues are transferred to Chief Minister for policy making. The researcher suggests the decision making should start from schools and home.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Multidimensional growth is needed for a child, which enables a good citizen. India is a Democratic country where people can participate in decision making. According to the United Nations' 1989 Convention on the rights of the child, or CRC, is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

In present scenario children are deprived from their basic rights. Children parliament is a model where political roles can be practiced and played by the children. Through this study, knowledge on

democracy can be imparted to the children, intervenes among the children to attain their basic rights, and recommends adopting the model for children's integral growth.

AIM

The aim of the research is to enhance knowledge on democracy among children using social group work method through children parliament.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To assess the children's knowledge on democracy
- To enhance the children's knowledge on democracy
- To examine the reach of children parliament, as a group work method in formation of attitude, skill and knowledge on democracy among children.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher conducted the study using quasi experimental design where there will be only experimental group. Under this design the researcher collected a base line data to assess the knowledge on democracy among children, followed by that interventions was given through sessions of children parliament to reflect knowledge on democracy and an end line data was collected to measure the efficiency of children parliament using social group work method approach in enhancing knowledge on democracy. From the previous studies it was understood that no interventional study has been conducted through children parliament. So, the researcher took interventional study in enhancing knowledge on democracy among children.

UNIVERSE AND SAMPLING

The universe of the study was children of Sivarajpet slum, Tirupattur district. The researcher used probability sampling design. The population and sample consisted of 40 children from class 4th – 12th standard. Census method was used to collect data from the children. Census method was adopted as the whole population is relatively small and accessible and the sample was definite.

TOOL FOR DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative method was used to collect data from the respondents. The researcher used self-constructed questionnaire to collect base line and end line data from the children. The researcher used Likert scale, and Guttman scale to assess the knowledge on democracy. The tool was constructed in Tamil and English for the easy understanding of the children. The respondent's knowledge on democracy was assessed under the following dimensions,

1. General knowledge on Polity
2. Understanding the Structure of Democracy
3. Understanding the Democratic System
4. Overall knowledge on Nature of Indian Constitution
5. Understanding the Fundamental Rights
6. Directive Principles of state policy
7. Preamble of Indian Constitution

Cronbach's alpha test was used to evaluate the reliability of tool. In this study Cronbach's alpha test is used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire. The test was found to be 0.760 α , which meant that the questionnaire was good and reliable.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 - Overall knowledge on democracy based on the base line and end line data

Dimensions	Factors	Base line				End line			
		Frequency (40)		Percentage (100)		Frequency (40)		Percentage (100)	
		Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
D1	General knowledge on Polity	15	25	37.5%	62.5%	11	29	27.5%	72.5%
D2	Structure of Democracy	40	-	100%	-	4	36	10%	90%
D3	Democratic System	39	1	97.5%	2.5%	5	35	12.5%	87.5%
D4	Nature of Indian Constitution	39	1	97.5%	2.5%	2	38	5%	95%
D5	Fundamental Rights	35	5	87.5%	12.5%	6	34	15%	85%
D6	Directive Principles	40	-	100%	-	16	24	40%	60%
D7	Preamble of Indian Constitution	40	-	100%	-	6	34	15%	85%
Overall	Knowledge on Democracy	39	1	97.5%	2.5%	2	38	5%	95%

The above table reveals the knowledge on democracy from the base line and end line data of the children based on the respective dimensions. D4 & D2 states, a vast majority (92.5% & 90%) of children have increased their knowledge on nature on Indian Constitution & structure of democracy respectively. It also further states, from D3 & D7, a significant majority (85%) of children have increased their understanding on democratic system & preamble of Indian Constitution respectively. It also reveals from D5, almost three-fourth (72.5%) of the children have increased their knowledge on fundamental rights. D6 states a majority (60%) of the children have increased their knowledge on directive principles while, one-tenth (10%) of children have increased their understanding on general knowledge on polity from D1. The overall knowledge on democracy enables us to understand a vast majority (92.5%) of the children enhanced their knowledge through children parliament. It is evident that there is a drastic change understanding of democracy from base line to end line, initially there was lack of awareness on democracy but after the intervention through children parliament their knowledge on democracy among children has been enhanced. This ensures that children parliament is an effective model for their development and personal growth. Children parliament is an initiative that acts as a platform for children to learn about democracy and participate in decision-making process. This model allows children to express their views, opinions and ideas on matters that affect the children and their communities they live in.

Table 2 - Independent sample t-test between base line and end line knowledge on democracy

Factors	Type of Data	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Statistical Inference
Overall General Knowledge on Polity	Base Line	40	4.83	1.999	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	6.23	1.097	
Overall understanding on the Structure of Democracy	Base Line	40	1.90	1.676	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	10.88	3.322	
Overall understanding on the Democratic System	Base Line	40	4.23	2.391	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	10.50	2.124	
Overall knowledge on the Nature of Indian Constitution	Base Line	40	.65	.893	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	4.05	.876	
Overall understanding on Fundamental rights	Base Line	40	2.30	1.114	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	4.83	1.059	
Overall knowledge on the Directive Principles	Base Line	40	.03	.158	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	1.45	.749	
Overall Understanding of the Preamble	Base Line	40	1.05	1.108	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	9.23	2.224	
Overall Baseline Study on Knowledge on Democracy	Base Line	40	14.98	5.846	t' = 0.001 P < 0.05 Significant
	End Line	40	47.15	8.176	

The presented table reveals that, there is a significant difference between base line and end line data based on the dimensions of the study, which includes general knowledge on polity, structure and system of democracy, knowledge on nature of Indian Constitution, fundamental rights and directive principles and preamble of Indian Constitution.

H0: There is no significant difference between base line and end line data with regard to knowledge on democracy of the respondents.

H1: There is a significant difference between base line and end line data with regard to knowledge on democracy of the respondents.

Result: Independent sample t-test was applied. It is found that there is a significant difference between base line and end line data with regard to knowledge on democracy of the respondents. Hence, the research hypothesis is accepted, and null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

The present study reveals that, the respondents of overall end line data (M=47.15, SD=8.176, N=40) have more knowledge on democracy than respondents of overall base line data (M=14.98, SD=5.846, N=40). The result reveals that the test is statistically significant. Hence, it could be concluded that children parliament through social group work method enhanced the knowledge on democracy among the children.

SUGGESTIONS

Children are going to be future citizens. So, capacitation is very much needed for children to be a good leader and a concerned citizen. Children parliament encourages children to be an active citizen by providing them opportunity to participate in civic activities. This model helps the children to understand their rights and responsibilities and teaches them the importance of being engaged in the democratic process. Educating children on power relations carter them to be a good citizen. There is lack of awareness among the children on democracy. The concept democracy can't be taught to children in a limited time. Lack of awareness is due to lack of exposure to democratic process and institution to practice democracy. Children parliament paves the way for children to grow in democracy.

Multi-dimensional growth is needed for the children. Multi-dimensional growth is essential for children to develop and grow in different aspects of life. Children parliament enables them to grow multi-dimensionally. Children parliament helps them to voice out on their opinions and concerns about theirs and the community needs. This model enables the children to think on their own and figure out what is needed for them and the community.

Children parliament empowers the children. Children parliament promotes inclusion regardless of background, gender, religion and socioeconomic status. It also gives equal participation to all the children. It promotes unity and equality among the community members. It also creates sense of belongingness among the children. Children parliament develops their leadership skills and helps them to participate in decision making process. It helps them to be well-learned and well-informed citizens. It aims to promote democratic values and principles among the young people. Child related social workers can make greater impact in the lives of children through children parliament and it is one of the effective methods. Children who are pursuing 4th grade to 12th grade can join in children parliament for their personal growth. A policy should be created on making the children parliament a mandatory one.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion children parliament is one of the efficient methods in enhancing knowledge and understanding of democracy in a practical way. Interventional research was conducted and proved children parliament does enhance knowledge on democracy among children. Children parliament is a platform where children can grow multi-dimensionally. Since the children parliament serves as a strong foundation, every issue in the community can be addressed by the children. Children parliament not only improves the quality of children but also build the community. A policy should be created in the education system to make children parliament model as a requirement in schools. Hence, the children parliament is an effective model for integral growth of children and their development and the community they live in.

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