

Child Welfare Schemes on Special Children With Reference To Chennai Corporation

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the effectiveness and reach of child welfare schemes targeted at children with special needs within the Chennai Corporation. Children with special needs require comprehensive support from various institutions to ensure their development, well-being, and inclusion in society. Governments worldwide have introduced numerous welfare programs to cater to the unique needs of these children, addressing areas such as education, healthcare, social inclusion, and skill development. In India, several schemes are implemented at both the central and state levels, aiming to improve the quality of life for children with special needs. However, the extent to which these schemes benefit the intended recipients within urban settings like Chennai is not fully understood.

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the impact of child welfare schemes on special children in Chennai, with a specific focus on the awareness, accessibility, and utilization of these programs by families and caregivers. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data collection through surveys and qualitative insights gathered from interviews with caregivers, educators, healthcare providers, and government officials involved in the implementation of these schemes. By examining both the structural framework of the schemes and the actual experiences of beneficiaries, this research aims to uncover gaps between policy and practice. Preliminary findings indicate that while there are numerous welfare programs available, factors such as lack of awareness, bureaucratic hurdles, and inadequate infrastructure limit their efficacy. Furthermore, socio-economic disparities and cultural stigma surrounding disabilities often exacerbate challenges faced by special children and their families. This study underscores the importance of tailored support, increased awareness, and enhanced service delivery to optimize the benefits of welfare schemes for special children. Recommendations include policy adjustments to improve accessibility, community-based awareness initiatives, and enhanced monitoring mechanisms to ensure that welfare programs fulfil their intended objectives within the Chennai Corporation. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of child welfare initiatives and offers insights for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders working towards an inclusive society for children with special needs.

Keywords: Child Welfare Schemes, Special Children, Chennai Corporation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children with special needs represent a unique segment of society that requires focused attention and support to overcome various challenges they face in their daily lives. These children often have disabilities that may be physical, intellectual, or developmental, which can impact their ability to participate fully in education, social activities, and personal development. The responsibility to provide support and resources for these children often falls on both the family and the government. In urban areas like Chennai, the challenges faced by special children and their families are often magnified due to issues such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and social stigma. It is within this context that child welfare schemes become critical for promoting the well-being, inclusion, and development of special children.

In India, a variety of child welfare schemes have been implemented at the central and state levels, specifically targeting the needs of children with disabilities. These programs aim to provide necessary resources such as special education services, healthcare support, vocational training, and financial assistance to families. The Government of Tamil Nadu, along with the Chennai Corporation, has developed and executed multiple schemes that seek to address these needs and facilitate the inclusion of special children in mainstream society. Notable schemes include the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for inclusive education, the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, and specialized vocational training programs. Despite the existence of these initiatives, questions remain about their effectiveness, accessibility, and impact on the intended beneficiaries within the urban context of Chennai.

This study seeks to explore the extent to which child welfare schemes for special children are implemented and utilized within the Chennai Corporation. By examining these schemes, the study aims to uncover the primary barriers that prevent effective service delivery, such as lack of awareness, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inadequate infrastructure. Additionally, this research will assess the level of satisfaction among beneficiaries and identify areas for improvement to enhance the welfare of special children. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study will gather quantitative data through surveys targeting families of special children, and qualitative insights from interviews with caregivers, educators, healthcare providers, and government officials. This dual approach will enable a comprehensive understanding of both the structural aspects of child welfare schemes and the lived experiences of those affected by them. Through this research, it is anticipated that the findings will not only highlight existing gaps but also provide actionable recommendations for policymakers to optimize the delivery and impact of welfare programs tailored for special children within the Chennai Corporation. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a body of knowledge that can drive the creation of a more inclusive society, where children with special needs receive the support necessary to thrive.

Overview of Child Welfare Schemes for Special Children in Chennai Corporation

The Chennai Corporation, in collaboration with state and central government agencies, administers a range of welfare schemes tailored to meet the needs of children with disabilities. These initiatives aim to enhance their quality of life by providing access to education, healthcare, social inclusion, and vocational training. Special children, who may have physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, often face significant challenges in accessing mainstream services. To address these challenges, Chennai Corporation implements and oversees various welfare programs that target the specific needs of these children.

One of the primary schemes in place is the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, which promotes inclusive education for children with disabilities. SSA provides resources such as special educators, assistive devices, and transportation facilities, ensuring that special children can attend school with adequate support. Additionally, the **Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)** program under SSA offers scholarships to reduce the financial burden on families and encourage continued education.

Healthcare access is another critical component of the welfare framework, addressed by the **Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS)**. This scheme covers medical treatments, including those for chronic conditions that are more prevalent among children with disabilities. Furthermore, the **District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRCs)** provide a range of services such as physical therapy, counseling, and the provision of assistive devices to support children's rehabilitation and overall well-being.

To promote social and economic inclusion, the **Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)** offers financial support to organizations providing vocational training and rehabilitation services. These organizations play a crucial role in helping special children acquire skills that can lead to future employment and self-sufficiency. Complementing this, various **Scholarship Schemes** for disabled children help them pursue higher education and vocational training, which are essential for their long-term development and integration into society.

Despite these initiatives, the effectiveness of welfare schemes is often limited by challenges such as lack of awareness among beneficiaries, bureaucratic hurdles, and inadequate infrastructure. Families frequently report difficulties in accessing services, which can be compounded by socio-economic disparities and social stigma surrounding disabilities. As such, there is a need for greater community outreach, streamlined processes, and improved monitoring of service delivery to ensure that these schemes reach the intended beneficiaries effectively.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To Evaluate the Awareness, Accessibility, and Utilization of Child Welfare Schemes by Special Children and Their Families
2. To Analyse the Effectiveness and Impact of Welfare Schemes on the Quality of Life of Special Children
3. To Identify Key Challenges and Gaps in the Implementation of Welfare Schemes and Provide Recommendations for Improvement

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Children with special needs face a range of challenges that impact their ability to access education, healthcare, and other essential services necessary for their development. These challenges are often exacerbated in urban settings like Chennai, where limited resources, infrastructure constraints, and social stigma can make it difficult for families to secure the support their children need. In recognition of these issues, various welfare schemes have been implemented by both central and state governments, with the Chennai Corporation overseeing several programs specifically aimed at improving the quality of life for special children. Despite these efforts, there are persistent concerns regarding the effectiveness, accessibility, and reach of these schemes within the city.

Many families of special children are not fully aware of the welfare schemes available to them, leading to underutilization of crucial services. Moreover, even when families are aware, they often face significant obstacles, such as complex application processes, lack of adequate infrastructure, and bureaucratic delays. Additionally, socio-economic disparities can further limit access to these services, as lower-income families may find it particularly challenging to navigate the system and access the necessary resources.

The effectiveness of these welfare schemes is also a critical concern. While numerous programs aim to address diverse aspects of welfare for special children such as inclusive education, healthcare, and vocational training there is limited information on how well these schemes meet the unique needs of beneficiaries in Chennai. There is also a lack of comprehensive evaluation on whether these programs contribute meaningfully to improving the quality of life and long-term prospects for special children.

Overview of Welfare Schemes for Special Children in Chennai

The Chennai Corporation has implemented various welfare schemes for children with disabilities, focusing on inclusive education, health care, skill development, and social integration. Key programs include the provision of special education facilities, financial assistance for medical treatments, and vocational training programs tailored to the needs of children with different types of disabilities. Additionally, these initiatives provide resources like assistive devices, transport facilities, and customized learning materials. Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the National Trust Act, the Chennai Corporation works with state and central governments to promote the integration of special children into mainstream education systems. Schemes such as the Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) aim to support disabled children in acquiring secondary education, which is crucial for their personal and social development.

Welfare Schemes

The Government based on their conviction that a child's development is linked with social progress has implemented several welfare schemes. The supply of free textbooks covers all children studying in Government and Government Aided Schools including self-financing sections in aided schools and children studying in recognized but self-financing institutions adopting the State syllabus. This scheme will be implemented continuously. All the beneficiaries of the Noon Meal Scheme in Standard I to VIII are supplied with free uniforms. This scheme will be implemented continuously. The free Bus Pass scheme covering students from Std I to XII studying under the State Board syllabus has made access to schools easy. This scheme will be implemented continuously. To enhance the productive effects of schooling through the reading habit, books are distributed through mobile libraries in collaboration with the Directorate of Public Libraries. The Science Vans, which are mobile classrooms, attached to District Elementary Education Offices; impart Science education to students in the Primary and Upper Primary classes, enabling students to come to grip with the advancements in the field of Science and Technology. 5,534 number of Primary and Nursery Schools are functioning in the State The Government is keen that schools be zones of safety for children and accordingly well-defined norms have been formulated in the interests of children for granting recognition to these schools.

Table 1: Responses of the Parent Respondents about Welfare Schemes

| Sl. No. | Query | Responses of the Respondents | | | |
|---------|---|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| | | Yes | No | To Some Extent | Total |
| 1. | Do you know about Welfare Schemes extended to the school children? | 137 (21.08%) | 416 (64.00%) | 97 (14.92%) | 650 (100%) |
| 2. | Do you know about the assistance provided under Welfare Schemes extended to the school children? | 183 (28.15%) | 396 (60.92%) | 71 (10.92%) | 650 (100%) |
| 3. | Do you think that the deserving children get the assistance from the Welfare Schemes extended to the school children? | 197 (30.31%) | 377 (58.00%) | 76 (11.69%) | 650 (100%) |

The details relating to responses of the parent respondents about Welfare Schemes extended to the school children provided in the above table 1 indicate that 21.08% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about Welfare Schemes extended to the school children, 64% of the parent respondents of the child victims do not know about Welfare Schemes extended to the school children and 14.92% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about Welfare Schemes extended to the

school children to some extent; 28.15% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this Welfare Schemes extended to the school children, 60.92% of the parent respondents do not know about the benefits extended to the children under this Welfare Schemes extended to the school children and 10.92% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this Welfare Schemes extended to the school children to some extent; and 30.31% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Welfare Schemes extended to the school children, 58% of the parent respondents do not think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Welfare Schemes extended to the school children and 11.69% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Welfare Schemes extended to the school children to some extent.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been introduced with the focus on Elementary Education of satisfactory quality with emphasis of education for life. In spite of many significant strides made in the field of Elementary Education one area still remains a little out of reach Quality. This has now been brought within reach in schools where Activity Based Learning Methodology is implemented. The rate of success in achievement level is higher in these schools. Hence, the Government of Tamil Nadu is planning to upscale Activity Based Learning Methodology to all the Primary schools across the State. Self-Learning Mathematics kits have proved to be an effective tool in learning Mathematics. 48 Enrolling all school age children has been a challenging task but the State, with concerted efforts, has achieved it to a great extent. In the primary classes, the Net Enrolment Rate has increased to 99.29%. In the upper primary classes, the NER has reached 98.25%. The interventions of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have reduced the Dropout rate at Primary level to 1.91% as against the Dropout rate of 3.81% last year (2005-2006). The dropout rate at the upper primary level has declined to 4.08% as against 7.58% recorded last year. It is significant to note that the dropout rate of girls is marginally lower than that of boys at both primary and upper primary levels. As per the Household survey 2001, there were 5.74 lakhs out-of-school Children in the State. The number of out-of-school children has been reduced to 1.03 lakh which is set as the target for 2007-2008. Infrastructure facilities like classroom buildings, toilet and drinking water facilities have been provided based on the need under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Table 2 Responses of the Parent Respondents about Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

| Sl.No. | Query | Responses of the Respondents | | | |
|--------|---|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| | | Yes | No | To Some Extent | Total |
| 1. | Do you know about Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan? | 197 (30.31%) | 380 (58.46%) | 73 (11.23%) | 650 (100%) |
| 2. | Do you know about the assistance provided under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan? | 173 (26.62%) | 384 (59.08%) | 93 (14.31%) | 650 (100%) |
| 3. | Do you think that the deserving children get the assistance from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan? | 182 (28.00%) | 394 (60.62%) | 74 (11.38%) | 650 (100%) |

The details relating to responses of the parent respondents about Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan provided in the above table 2 indicate that 30.31% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 58.46% of the parent respondents of the child victims do not know about Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and 11.23% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to some extent; 26.62% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 59.08% of the parent respondents do not know about the benefits extended to the children under this Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and 14.31% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to some extent; and 28% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 60.62% of the parent respondents do not think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and 11.38% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to some extent.

National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme

National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) programme implemented in 37 blocks in 11 districts; 937 Model Cluster schools established. Additional Classrooms have been provided for 665 Model Cluster Schools. Teaching Learning Equipment to 675 Model Cluster schools at the rate of Rs.30,000 to each school. Thirty Seven Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya Residential Schools are catering to the needs of 1,879 out of School girls in the age group of 10-14 years. Early Childhood Care and Education & Computer Aided Learning play materials are to be supplied to

5,040 non-upgraded centres, child friendly materials to be supplied to 6,797 centres, kit Materials to 20,000 Upgraded Anganwadis and 80 new mini centres. Bridge courses And Residential Camps will be conducted to cover 1,03,261 Out-of-School children. 2,13,659 primary and upper primary teachers will be given Teaching Learning Material grant at Rs.500 each. 37,504 primary schools and 14,015 upper primary schools will be given School grant at Rs.2000 each. 30,787 primary schools and 10,587 upper primary schools to be benefited by the Maintenance grant at Rs.5,000 to each school. Teaching Learning Equipment grant at Rs.10,000 to 210 new primary schools and at Rs.50,000 to 338 newly upgraded middle schools.

Table 3: Responses of the Parent Respondents about National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme

| Sl. No. | Query | Responses of the Respondents | | | |
|---------|---|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| | | Yes | No | To Some Extent | Total |
| 1. | Do you know about National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme? | 129 (19.85%) | 484 (74.46%) | 37 (5.69%) | 650 (100%) |
| 2. | Do you know about the assistance provided under National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme? | 196 (30.15%) | 357 (54.92%) | 97 (14.92%) | 650 (100%) |
| 3. | Do you think that the deserving children get the assistance from the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme? | 146 (22.46%) | 431 (66.31%) | 73 (11.23%) | 650 (100%) |

The details relating to responses of the parent respondents about National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme provided in the above table 3 indicate that 19.85% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme, 74.46% of the parent respondents of the child victims do not know about National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme and 5.69% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme to some extent; 30.15% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme, 54.92% of the parent respondents do not know about the benefits extended to the children under this National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme and 14.92% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme to some extent; and 22.46% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme, 66.31% of the parent respondents do not think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme and 11.23% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme to some extent.

Table 4 Parent Respondents about Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme

| Sl. No. | Query | Responses of the Respondents | | | |
|---------|---|------------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| | | Yes | No | To Some Extent | Total |
| 1. | Do you know about Physical and mental development of children | 150 (23%) | 360 (55%) | 140 (22%) | 650 (100%) |

| | Scheme? | | | | |
|----|--|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 2. | Do you know about the assistance provided under Physical and mental development of children Scheme? | 130 (20%) | 345 (53%) | 175 (27%) | 650 (100%) |
| 3. | Do you think that the deserving children get the assistance from the Physical and mental development of children Scheme? | 201 (30.92%) | 410 (63.08%) | 39 (6.00%) | 650 (100%) |

The details relating to responses of the parent respondents about Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme provided in the above table 4 indicate that 23% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme, 55% of the parent respondents of the child victims do not know about Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme and 22% of the parent respondents of the child victims know about Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme to some extent; 20% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme, 53% of the parent respondents do not know about the benefits extended to the children under this Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme and 27% of the parent respondents know about the benefits extended to the children under this Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme to some extent; and 30.92% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme, 63.08% of the parent respondents do not think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme and 6% of the parent respondents think that the deserving persons get the assistance from the Physical and Mental Development of Children Scheme to some extent.

3. IMPACT OF WELFARE SCHEMES

The welfare schemes have shown a positive impact on special children's access to education and healthcare services. By offering inclusive education opportunities, the Chennai Corporation has enabled many children to participate in the regular schooling system, thus fostering their social integration. The provision of scholarships and financial aid has alleviated the economic burden on families, making specialized care more accessible.

Health initiatives, such as early intervention programs and free medical camps, have also been beneficial. These programs focus on early detection and treatment of disabilities, which is crucial for improving long-term outcomes for special children. The free distribution of assistive devices, such as hearing aids and mobility aids, has improved the quality of life for many children, allowing them to perform daily tasks with greater ease.

While the welfare schemes have had a positive impact, their effectiveness is often hampered by various challenges. A significant issue is the lack of adequate awareness among parents and caregivers regarding the available schemes. Additionally, the infrastructure for special education within regular schools remains insufficient, with limited resources and trained personnel to cater to the unique needs of special children. Further, the bureaucratic process for accessing these benefits can be cumbersome, deterring many families from fully utilizing the schemes. There are also gaps in the coverage and consistency of services, especially in low-income areas, which affects the equitable distribution of resources.

The welfare schemes introduced by the Chennai Corporation for special children have made commendable strides in improving access to education, healthcare, and social services. However, to maximize the impact and effectiveness of these programs, there is a need for increased awareness campaigns, infrastructure development, and streamlined processes. Addressing these challenges will ensure that more special children benefit from these schemes, fostering a more inclusive society.

4. CONCLUSION

The study on "Child Welfare Schemes for Special Children with Reference to Chennai Corporation" highlights the vital role of government initiatives in supporting the well-being and development of special children within Chennai. The analysis reveals that while various schemes have been implemented, including financial aid, healthcare services, and educational programs, significant gaps still exist in terms of accessibility, awareness, and the adequacy of resources provided to the target population. Many parents and guardians remain unaware of the available welfare schemes. This lack of awareness prevents special children from receiving the full benefits of these programs, thereby limiting their development opportunities. Moreover, the study identifies challenges in the implementation of these schemes, such as bureaucratic hurdles, inadequate training for caregivers, and insufficient specialized resources in schools and medical facilities. These issues contribute to the underutilization of services and highlight the need for improved outreach and communication strategies.

The study also emphasizes the importance of personalized and inclusive approaches to welfare schemes. Special children have diverse needs, and a one-size-fits-all approach is often inadequate. Programs that focus on individual development, social integration, and vocational training show promising results but require better funding and support from both government and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, there is a pressing need for collaboration between stakeholders including healthcare professionals, educators, and social workers to create a cohesive support system for special children. The study suggests that Chennai Corporation could enhance its child welfare initiatives by increasing awareness campaigns, simplifying application processes, and providing on-going training for professionals involved in the care of special children. By addressing these issues, Chennai can foster a more inclusive environment that ensures special children receive the care, education, and opportunities they deserve. These efforts will not only improve the quality of life for special children but also contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

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