

Grievance Redressal Mechanism: A Comparative Study between Coastal & Non Coastal Districts of Odisha

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Abstract: *The School Student Helpline is a unique initiative launched by the S & ME (School & Mass Education) department, Government of Odisha to redress the school related grievances lodged by the children, parents as well as community members. The present research work is based on the comparative analysis between the coastal and non coastal districts of Odisha. The study emphasis on the reasons behind the gap in receiving the no of grievance in coastal and non-coastal areas, the functioning of the system, response of the people and last but not least the strategy for further improvement in the mechanism.*

Keywords: Helpline, Grievance, RTE, Coastal & Non Coastal, Data, Analysis

1. Introduction

The 86th Amendment to the Constitution has made Elementary Education a Fundamental Right of every child in the age group 6-14 years. Based on this Amendment, the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act was passed in Parliament in August 2009 and came into effect on April 1, 2010. One of the most crucial challenges of this Act is, the establishment of an effective Grievance Redress System. The Act has made local authorities, the grievance redress agencies and the SCPCRs the appellate bodies at State level, but that does not sufficient to establish the modalities through which violations can be dealt with. A well-defined institutional mechanism for grievance redresses which involves a system of registering, investigating and responding within a well-appointed time frame. To achieve the specific goal of RTE Act, S & ME department of Odisha set a School Student Helpline in 19th October 2010 to reach out the school students across the state to take care of their needs and problems. It is a Toll Free No through which any student whose right to education is in stake can dial the No 18003456722 or lodge a complaint to draw the attention of the Government.

2. Background of the Study

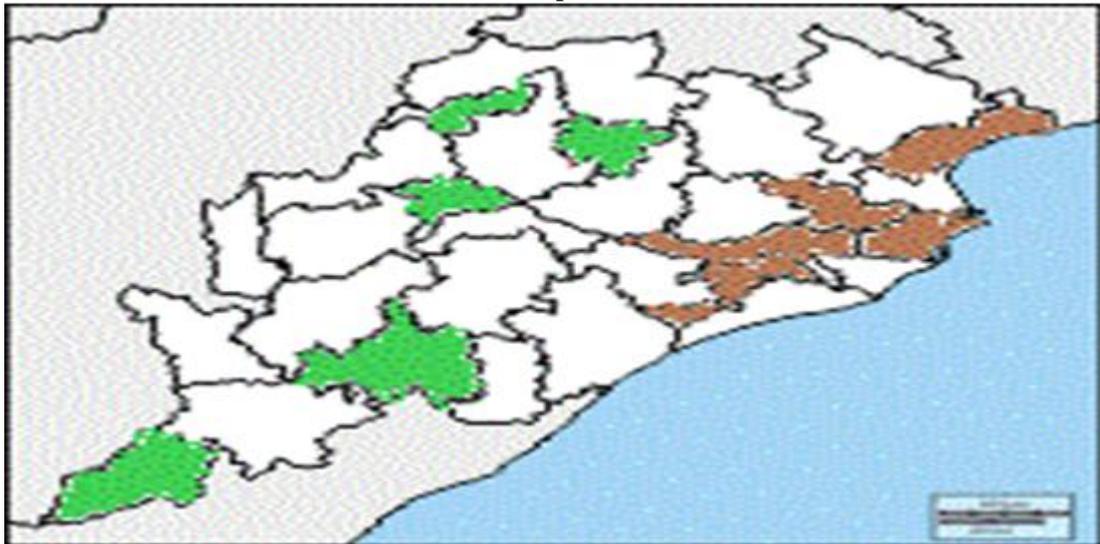
To achieve the goal of RTE by ensuring educational facility to all school age children i.e between the age group 6-14 government has launched different programmes from time to time to attract the children to attend the school and motivate the parents to send their children to school. In spite of continuous effort, the parents, children and SMC members

are unsatisfied as their requirements are remain unattended and there was no one to listen to them. The above situation forced the government to develop such mechanism through which one can directly reach the government to put forth the problems and grievances to be redressed. No doubt this system has benefitted maximum to the stake holders of coastal district rather than non-coastal district. The moto of the present research study is to know the reasons behind that are responsible for receipt of less number of calls from non-coastal district rather than coastal districts.

3. The Study Area

The School Student Helpline extends its services to all the 30 districts of the state of Odisha. No doubt calls are received from throughout the state but gap is observed between the districts i.e number of receive call varies from 200 to 1500. The graphical presentation of the district wise call received status reflects that the number of calls received in coastal district is more in comparison to the calls received from the non-coastal districts. The district wise status is given in Annexure I. In order to achieve the objective of the present research project some sample districts have been taken into consideration. Out of 30 districts 10 districts were taken as sample which includes five from non-coastal districts (Boudh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Malkangiri and Rayagada) and other five from Coastal districts (Balasore, Cuttack, Khorda, Jajpur and Kendrapara) The coastal and non-coastal districts are selected on the basis of receive of calls 1000 and 250 respectively. The graphical presentation of the selected districts is given below.

Map 1



Map 1 shows green: Non-Coastal & Brown: Coastal Districts

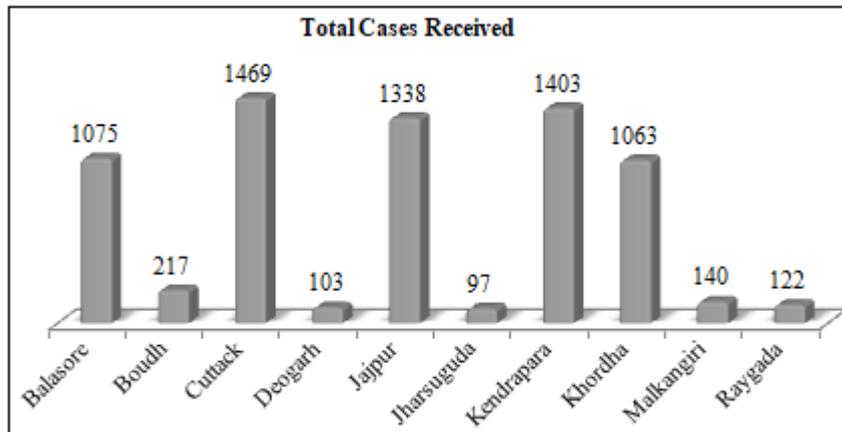


Figure: 1

Figure 1 shows the no of cases received both coastal and noncoastal districts

Research Methodology

Social research is a social phenomenon which studies behavior of human being as a member of the society, their feelings, attitudes, cause and effect relationships, etc under various circumstances. The present study is based on the cause and effect relationship of grievance Redressal mechanism that how far the society has accepted the initiation taken by the government to redress the school related grievances received from children, parents and community members etc. Following are the step by step methodologies followed to undertake the said research work:

- Sampling
- Collection of data

- Consolidation of data
- Analysis of data

The Helpline render its services to all the schools located in the state of Odisha. Though the state comprises of 30 districts but for comparative research purpose sample of 10 districts have been selected @ 5 each from coastal and non-coastal districts. In order to administer the questionnaire four types of target group have been taken into consideration such as teacher, administrator, SMC/Parents and children. Further the sample of questionnaire administered by the teacher, children, SMC and administrator from each district. The detail is given below:

Figure 2

Coastal					Non Coastal				
District	Adm	SMC	Trs	Children	District	Adm	SMC	Trs	Children
Balasore	4	38	39	40	Deogarh	3	51	45	49
Khordha	10	59	57	59	Boudh	3	13	17	20
Cuttack	6	17	25	24	Malkangiri	5	37	56	50
Jajpur	10	44	44	44	Jharsuguda	4	50	49	49
Kendrapara	9	39	39	38	Raygada	5	35	25	33
	39	197	204	205		20	186	192	201

Figure 2 reflects the district wise samples taken for research work

Collection of data is second stage of the present research work. As per the schedule the collection of data is completed within three months i.e. From March to June 2017. Both primary and secondary data have been collected for the said work. The data which is collected from reference books, reports, etc are known as Secondary data. The secondary data was collected from the available records and registers since inception of School Student Helpline. But the primary data has been collected from the respondents through administering the developed questionnaires. The area of implementation of Helpline is vast which includes varied types of stake holders from bottom to top such as Administrators, parents, members of School Management Committee, school going age children both inside and outside the school.

Separate set of questionnaires have been developed for selected respondents (SMC/Parents, Children, Teacher and Administrator). The questionnaire includes both open ended

as well as dichotomous questions. The selection of respondents is done randomly.

Consolidation of data is third stage of the research work. As mentioned earlier the questionnaires contain both objective having Y/N reply and subjective which includes views of the respondents. The answers of the questions have been coded and placed in tabular form to facilitate the consolidation work. It is to be mentioned here, that though some questions are similar for more than one stake holder but analysis done separately keeping in view of different level of the respondents.

4. Analysis of Data

Analysis of data is the last stage of the study. In the present study the consolidated data analysed separately.

Figure 3: Administrators

Indicators	Total			Coastal			Non Coastal		
	Total Administrators	Response	%	No of Administrators	Response	%	No of Administrators	Response	%
Opinion on the Helpline System	55	50	91	39	35	91	16	15	94
Receive and Redressal of grievances through Helpline	55	40	73	39	35	90	16	5	35
Impact of Helpline on Education system	55	44	80	39	35	90	16	9	56

Figure 3 highlights the Response of the Administrators

Administrators of both districts as well as block level are the key persons who play an important role in redressing the school related grievances. The developed questionnaires have been administered among 55 administrators both from coastal as well as non-coastal areas. All most all the administrators have opined that School Student Helpline is a unique initiative through which they get opportunity to know dislocations of the government programmes if any at grass root level and rectify thereof. This system acts like a bridge between school and community.

The above table reflects that overall 72% of the administrators have received different types of grievances. But analysis shows that there is a huge gap between the coastal and non-coastal districts which varies from 90% to 30%. Further they expressed their concern that 35% to 40%

grievances are proved false after due enquiry which is a mere wastage of government time and man power.

Further they are of opinion that the grievance mechanism has brought a tremendous improvement in the teacher absenteeism, timely provision of children entitlements, cooperation among the school and community etc. Besides it developed self confidence among the children to put forth their problems before the authority without fear and improved sense of responsibility among the field functionaries towards development of education system.

The analysis of last five years data highlights that the number of cases decreased in cases of corporal punishment, teacher absenteeism, late arrival of teachers, shortage of books, non-distribution of uniform and regularisation of MDM etc. which is proved in the present research work.

Figure 4: SMC/ Parents:

	Indicators	Total			Coastal			Non Coastal		
		No of SMC	Response	%	No of SMC	Response	%	No of SMC	Response	%
1	Existence of Helpline system	383	379	99	197	197	100	186	182	98
2	Timings of the system	383	77	20	197	44	22	186	33	18
3	Opinion on the existing Helpline system	383	355	93	197	182	92	186	173	93
4	Lodging of the grievance	383	176	46	197	155	79	186	21	11
5	Redressal of the given grievances	383	164	43	197	147	75	186	17	9
6	Training on functioning of Helpline	383	350	91	197	178	90	186	172	92

Figure 4 highlights the Response of the SMC / Parents

This table reflects that a total 383 number of SMC/parents were contacted out of which 197 and 186 were

from coastal and non-coastal districts respectively. The analysis shows that more than 90% of both coastal and non-coastal districts have knowledge about existence of the Helpline system and type of cases to be registered. This is

because more than 90% of respondents have attended the cluster level training programme on functioning of School Student Helpline during 2015. But as regard timing, most of them have idea that it is functioning at par with school timing i.e from 10 A.M to 4. 30 P.M which is to be taken care of. Only 15% to 20% know the actual functional timing of the helpline. If we analyse the Redressal of the grievance in relation to received cases, it reflects that whatever grievances received have been complied after due enquiry.

Both in case of lodging as well as Redressal of the grievances, the overall% is 45%. But the analysis reflects that the % varies from non-Coastal to coastal is 11% to 75% which is a major concern. The reasons behind may be lack of awareness about lodging of the grievances or no knowledge about the children entitlements prescribed by the government from time to time.

Figure 5: Teachers

S.No	Indicators	Total			Coastal			Non Coastal		
		No of teachers	Response	%	No of teachers	Response	%	No of teachers	Response	%
1	Existence of Helpline system	396	370	93	204	200	98	192	170	89
2	Functioning of Helpline	396	381	96	204	195	96	192	186	97
3	How far teachers discuss about helpline system with the children	396	167	42	204	95	47	192	72	38
4	How far the helpline is helpful in redressing the grievances of the children	396	279	70	204	173	85	192	106	55

Figure 5 highlights the Response of the Teachers

The above table highlights that more than 90 % teachers have clear cut idea about the functioning of helpline. But only 42% teachers discuss about the system with the children in prayer class, Meena meeting etc. The sharing of teachers with children regarding use of helpline varies from

46% to 37% in coastal and non-coastal districts respectively. over all 70% teachers have responded that it is a good initiative by the department for the children to ventilate their problems. Besides they have opined that this system has brought some change in the negative practice of the teachers such as late arrival to school, physical punishment to children, unauthorised absent etc.

Figure 6: Children

	Indicators	Total			Coastal			Non-Coastal		
		Total Children	Response	%	No of Children	Response	%	No of Children	Response	%
1	Mode of lodging grievance	390	366	94	205	197	96	185	169	91
2	Knowledge about types of grievances lodged	390	376	96	205	203	99	185	173	94
3	Grievance lodged by the children	390	44	11	205	25	12	185	19	10
4	Redressal of the given grievances	390	44	11	205	25	12	185	19	10

Figure 6: Reflects the response of Children

A total 390 number of children have contacted to get their response on functioning of Helpline system, out of which 205 and 185 are from coastal and non-coastal districts respectively. The analysis shows, though more than 90 % of children knew the display of the toll free no on the wall of the schools but very few have in their mind.

Regarding lodging of the grievances only 44 children have lodged their grievance which is about 11%. All the 44 grievances are received from the children of upper primary level. The actual analysis of the helpline data also shows that most of the grievances lodged by the children are from upper primary level where as the grievances of the primary level are usually lodged by the parents of the children. Redressal analysis reflects that all 44 grievances are belong to the category of children entitlement.

5. Conclusion

The School Student Helpline mechanism is a positive step towards bringing a revolutionary change in the entire education system of Odisha. Undoubtedly it has a remarkable change in the attitude of the teacher, programme implementation, community involvement etc. This

mechanism brought the parents, children as well as School Management Committee members closure to the apex authority to put forth their grievances directly and have complete faith on it regarding timely redress of their grievance. But it is clear from the analysis that the reach of the mechanism to the people is more in coastal district rather than non-coastal district. However some of the activities like use of electronic media for wider publicity of the toll free no, orientation of Parents and SMC members on lodging grievances properly are to be taken up for further improvement in the grievance mechanism.

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