



**PERCEPTION OF ANGANWADI WORKERS (AWW) ON
DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES (DAP) AT EARLY
CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CENTRES**

Sandhya Rani Pal

Department of Education
Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar-751022
India
sandhya_pal@yahoo.com

Sankar Prasad Mohanty

Department of Education
Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar-751022
India
sankarprasadmohanty@rdwu.ac.in

*Corresponding Author email: sandhya_pal@yahoo.com

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editor@readersinsight.net

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ABSTRACT

Hundred Anganwadi Workers (AWW) from the twin city of Odisha, India participated in the current study to discover their perception of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) as a part of Early Childhood Care and Education through Anganwadis. As Developmentally Appropriate Practice needs a deep understanding of each child and the child's context of living, this study found out the perception of teachers or Anganwadi Workers by using the Teachers' Perception Questionnaire. The data includes the perception level which was categorized under the AWWs' understanding and maintenance of the Physical environment of learning, providing Developmentally Appropriate play and learning materials to learners, transactional Activities done by the AWWs and assessing child's development and learning, their initiatives to involve parents and families of children and establishing reciprocal relationship with them and finally how well they have self-awareness about their actions and self-evaluation. The collected data were thematically analyzed and the result showed that the AWWs were very much aware of their actions and understanding of the world around them. Most understood Developmentally Appropriate Practices and how it can be best implemented in the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres.

Keywords: *Anganwadi; Anganwadi Workers (AWW); Perception; Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP); Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. Preschool teachers (Anganwadi Workers) demonstrated an understanding of DAP and recognized the importance of considering children's needs, interests, and developmental levels when planning curriculum. Moreover, DAP is not solely based on normative data from child development studies but also incorporates cultural traditions and values as vital sources of curriculum content, ensuring that the educational experiences are relevant and meaningful to the children's cultural contexts (Breadecamp,1991).
2. The Nua Arunima Handbook is a comprehensive guide for Anganwadi workers in Odisha, India, detailing activities for children aged 3 to 6 years. It focuses on preschool education through a variety of themes, including songs, stories, dance, and action rhymes, aiming to lay a strong foundation for children's formal education and holistic development (WCDD, 2013).
3. The study recommended improvements in teacher training, qualifications, mentoring, and reflective practice. It also suggested future research to further investigate variations in perceptions of DAP and the effects of mentoring on teaching practices.

Research Objectives/aims/purpose/Significance

The objective of the current study is to explore the perception of Anganwadi workers on the Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP). Developmentally Appropriate Practice is a framework designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development. The concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is central to providing high-quality education that aligns with young children's developmental stages and individual needs (NAEYC, 1996; 2009).

It is based on the understanding that educators must consider children's developmental levels, individual differences, and cultural contexts when planning and implementing educational experiences. Despite the widespread endorsement of DAP, there is evidence to suggest that preschool teachers may struggle to consistently apply these practices in their daily work. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of Anganwadi Workers regarding DAP and examine how these perceptions influence their classroom activities. By identifying teachers' knowledge and their implementation of DAP, the research seeks to contribute to the enhancement of early childhood education quality.

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for early childhood practitioners, teacher preparation programs, and childcare administrators. By highlighting the areas where support and professional development are needed, the study aims to promote the consistent use of developmentally appropriate practices in preschool settings. Additionally, the research may inform policy decisions regarding the qualifications and training requirements for preschool teachers.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing document analysis and interview questionnaires to gather data from 100 Anganwadi Workers from the Twin Cities (Cuttack and Bhubaneswar) state of Odisha in India. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions and practices concerning DAP. The participants were purposefully selected based on their educational background and experience in early childhood education. 100 Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) were taken for the current study. The study employed a qualitative, interpretive research design to explore preschool teachers' perceptions of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and how these perceptions influence their curricular practices.

Instrumentation: Data collection tools included an interview guide and a document analysis rubric. The interview guide was designed to provide a consistent line of inquiry while allowing flexibility to explore participants' responses in depth. The document analysis rubric was used to analyze daily/weekly curriculum plans against the DAP framework.

Data Collection: Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, confidentiality, and incentives.

Data Analysis: The data from interviews and document analyses were examined using thematic analysis to identify patterns and generate themes. These themes were compared to identify similarities and differences between teachers' stated theories and their actual planning practices.

Results

The study aimed to explore preschool teachers' perceptions and implementation of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in their curriculum transaction. The following are the summarized results:

- Perceptions of DAP: Anganwadi Workers (Preschool teachers) were able to articulate their understanding of DAP and recognized the importance of considering children's needs, interests, and developmental levels when planning curriculum.
- Curriculum Planning: Teachers reported using various strategies, such as writing centers, math experiences, and science experiences, to enhance development. They also valued integrating children's interests into the curriculum.
- Teacher-Child Interactions: Observations during shared play experiences were highlighted as valuable for understanding children's developmental needs. Teachers also emphasized the importance of intentional teaching and nurturing environments.
- Use of Guidelines and Assessments: Most of the teachers used state early learning guidelines i.e., "New Arunima" booklet as a reference for Curriculum planning. Information about children's interests and needs was often gathered through parent interviews, and these informations were used for assessment information to inform curriculum decisions.
- Consistencies in Practice: The Anganwadi workers' ability to describe DAP and their teaching strategies were found consistent with each other and had a clear understanding of individualized instruction. The study revealed congruence between teachers' descriptions of DAP and their actual teaching practices.

Findings

The study has revealed some crucial insights into the perceptions and implementation of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) by preschool teachers. The primary findings obtained from teacher interviews and document analyses are as follows:

Considerations in Developing Curriculum: Teachers acknowledged the significance of considering children's needs, interests, and developmental levels while developing the curriculum. However, awareness of developmental milestones was evident in the planning practices described.

Key Learning Experiences: Teachers emphasized critical learning experiences that align with how young children learn, focusing on content areas such as language, literacy, mathematics, science, and art.

Teaching to Enhance Learning and Development: Teachers viewed themselves as facilitators of children's learning, employing strategies like integrated curricula, adult scaffolding, and teachable moments to enhance development and learning goals.

Document Analysis Findings: The document analysis revealed consistencies between the teachers' interview responses and their actual planning practices, particularly in comprehensive and integrated curriculum and curriculum implementation.

In conclusion, quality early learning experience have been associated with predictors of positive developmental outcomes (Duncan et al., 2007). The Anganwadi system and the Anganwadi workers are crucial for providing accessible and affordable healthcare, as well

as quality preschool education, in India. However, to strengthen these centers, the government, community, and schools need to lend their support.

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Author's Biography



Sandhya Rani Pal had worked as an Assistant Professor at Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha, India with expertise in Guidance and Counselling, Organisational Behaviour, and Preschool Education. She has extensive teaching and training experience and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in the area of Early Childhood Care and Education. Additionally, she has conducted behavioral and psychological training for government officials.



Dr. Sankar Prasad Mohanty is an Associate Professor of Education, in the Department of Education, Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India with expertise in research methodology, inclusive education, curriculum development, and teacher education. He has a strong background in teaching, research, and administration, and has been recognized for his publications and research grants. He has also actively participated in conferences and seminars as a speaker, resource person, and organizer.