

## **Human Rights Awareness of University Students: An Investigation**

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**ABSTRACT:** Human right refer to the fundamental freedoms and basic liberties without which men, women and children cannot live with respect and dignity. Basic to human rights are the values of non-discrimination and equality, which contribute to building a culture of peace in society. In the present study an attempt has been made to investigate the human rights awareness of postgraduate students studying in the university. In the present study descriptive survey method was adopted. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select samples of 200 post graduate students studying value education course. A standardised Human Rights Awareness Test by Vishal Sood & Arti Anand,(2012) was used to collect the data. To analyse the data mean, standard deviation and t-test was used. The finding of the study reveals that post graduate students irrespective of their entire sample, gender, place of residence, stream/faculty and type of family have average level of human rights awareness.

**KEY WORDS:** Values, Human Rights, Peace, Awareness, Dignity, Post Graduate Students

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

*“All men are born free but every where they are in chains”* - J.J. Rousseau

All human beings which born in the world needs love, care and wish to have a peaceful happy life. Peace makes advancement of civilization possible and foundation of peace in the world rest on the basic principles of justice, equality and the freedom enjoyed by man. Whenever these rights have been denied to people or nations there have been conflicts between man and man, nation and nation. Knowledge of freedom and rights is considered a fundamental tool to guarantee respect for the rights of all. Education should encompass values such as peace, tolerance and respect for human dignity. Inculcating human rights education and awareness is the only guarantee of demonstrating our commitment to human dignity, promotion of an adequate standard of life to everyone and finally for the promotion of world peace and prosperity for all. (UNESCO, n.n)

### **II. HUMAN RIGHTS**

Human right refer to the fundamental freedoms and basic liberties without which men, women and children cannot live with respect and dignity. Human rights are the natural rights of a human being which means the right to guarantee dignity as a person. After World War II, the universal declaration of human rights on 10 December 1948 marks the first cornerstone of an international movement for human rights. It is the basic international code of conduct which is a general binding for all the members' nations of UNO to promote and protect human rights. It has laid great emphasis on protecting basic rights of all human beings as these are pre-requisites for the survival. A number of cases of human rights denial in various forms and incidents are happening. Even in some cases the role of the government responsible for protecting human rights are not appropriate. Most of the human violation cases are seen in case of deprived sections of society. The main reason for occurrence of incidents of exploitations is the lack of awareness among large masses about their basic human rights (Vishal Sood & Arti Anand, 2012).

### **III. EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

Education for human rights is of great importance. All human beings are equal in dignity. Human rights are equal and basic for all human beings that define their individual identities and collective identities and allow them to make their independent choices in the specific as well as in the totality of human situations. They also encompass the equal right to informed participation in decision-making process in matters relating to access to, management of and material bases of the life support system of individuals. There are moral claims which are undeniable and natural in all human individuals by virtue of their humanity alone. These claims are articulated and formulated in what we today call human rights. These human rights can be found in every culture, tradition and civilization.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (vol. 6), defined human rights as a wide continuum of values that are universal in character and in some sense equally claimed for all human beings. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'. All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. The International community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national, regional and various historical, cultural and religious background must be borne in mind, it is the duty of the states, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Helena,2002).

The educational policies of country addresses the concerns reflected in the Constitution. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) clearly says that Education has continued to evolve, diversify, and extend its reach and coverage since the dawn of human history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the time. The policy as modified in 1992 seeks "to promote equality to provide equal opportunity to all not only in access, but also in the conditions for success".

The Indian education system has followed a 'Value and Awareness Model' of human rights education, wherein, human rights are not taught as a separate subject, instead, various values related to human rights have been integrated in all subjects. (Pandey, 2005) Since the Indian society has traditionally been a value-based and spiritual society, inculcation of certain values through the process of education is considered as essential for promotion of respect for human dignity. This basic principle has been accepted and reflected through all the three Curriculum Frameworks for school education formulated so far in the country by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

#### **IV. NEED FOR THE STUDY**

The concept of human rights has a universal frame of reference. It is imperative that children are introduced to universal values in a manner appropriate for their age. Reference to day-to-day issues can be discussed so that young students become aware of issues related to human dignity and rights. It encompasses respect for human dignity, rights, justice, tolerance, cooperation, social responsibility, and respect for cultural diversity, in addition to a firm commitment to democracy and non-violent conflict resolution. The concern for equality and social justice, which refers to practising non-exploitation towards the have-nots, the poor and the underprivileged and creating a non-violent social system, is the hallmark of education for peace. Similarly, human rights are central to the concept of peace. Peace cannot prevail if the rights of individuals are violated. Basic to human rights are the values of non-discrimination and equality, which contribute to building a culture of peace in society (NCF, 2005).

The modern society all over the world is considered by tremendous growth in information and communication technology, liberalization and globalisation of the economy and continuous pursuit of gross materialism without caring for eternal human values, where rights of an individual are limited by his/her duty towards others. Materialistic values are slowly overcoming the spiritual and moral values of the society. The diverse information's accessed through media influences impressionistic minds of students and makes them to unaware of the responsibilities and human rights.

Students especially, the young students of universities should know or aware about the human rights. After the completion of their courses in the universities they will enter into the society and will involve different social, political roles and responsibilities. Unless and until they would learn and know about human rights they cannot access them properly. That they can be used whenever there is discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or religious belief or on the basis of class or caste systems in modern times. Keeping in view, researchers aim to study the significance of human rights awareness level in the university. Therefore the researchers thought to do an investigation to measure the level of awareness of students with regard to concepts and principles of human rights as well as awareness with regard to situations involving human right violations. Though in many courses human rights is the part of the curriculum but after this study the researchers could reach a point that human rights education can be suggested as one of the paper in the curriculum.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To measure the level of human rights awareness of students studying Value education.
2. To find out the difference if any between the following post graduate students in respect of their awareness of human rights (i) Gender (ii) Stream/Faculty (iii) Place of Residence (iv) Type of Family.

### **HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

1. The level of human rights awareness of Post graduate students studying Value education is high
2. There is no significant difference between the following sub samples with respect of the human rights awareness level of post graduate students

- |                          |   |                 |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| (i) Gender               | - | Male /Female    |
| (ii) Stream/Faculty      | - | Arts / Science  |
| (iii) Place of Residence | - | Urban/Rural     |
| (iv) Type of Family      | - | Joint / Nuclear |

### **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

In this study descriptive survey method was adopted.

### **SAMPLE**

In the present study a samples of 200 post graduate students studying value education course consists of 100 urban and 100 rural were selected using stratified random sampling technique.

### **V. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND SCORING PROCEDURE**

A standardised Human Rights Awareness Test developed by Vishal Sood &Arti Anand, (2012) was used to measure the awareness level of post graduate students. There are 50 statements with three alternatives i.e., true, undecided and false. For positive statements a score of 2 marks was given for true, 1 mark for undecided and zero was given for false options and for negative statements the scoring procedure was completely reversed. Human rights awareness tool was classified into three dimensions namely:

- Knowledge of human rights related documents
- Knowledge and understanding about human rights concepts
- Understanding of situations involving human rights violation/non-violations

#### **Norms for interpretation of level of human rights awareness**

| <b>Range of Z-score</b> | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Level of Human Rights Awareness</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------|--|
| + 2.01 and above        | A            | Extremely High                         |
| + 1.26 to +2.00         | B            | High                                   |
| +0.51 to +1.25          | C            | Above Average                          |
| - 0.50 to +0.50         | D            | Average                                |
| -0.51 to -1.25          | E            | Below Average                          |
| -1.26 to -2.00          | F            | Low                                    |
| -2.01 and below         | G            | Extremely low                          |

### **VI. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

The reliability of the human rights awareness test was ranged between to be 0.67 to 0.73 which is a fairly high measure of intrinsic consistency test. This test was found to possess an adequate content validity.

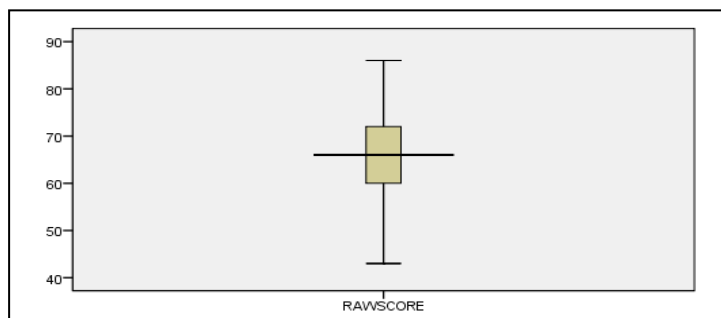
### **VII. ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

The data were analysed and interpreted according to respondent's gender, place of residence, stream/faculty of study and type of family. The mean score and Quartile for the entire sample was calculated to divide the human rights awareness into different levels namely above average level, average level and below average level. Standard deviation values were used for understanding the distribution. The critical ratios were calculated to test the variables. The t –test was employed to test the hypothesis at 0.01 levels. The analysis, interpretation of data and discussion are presented as below:

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Human Rights Awareness Scores of Post Graduate Students**

| Si. No | Categories         | Sub Samples | No. of Students |         |               |       | %  | Level of Human Rights Awareness |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------|---------------|-------|----|---------------------------------|
|        |                    |             | Above Average   | Average | Below Average | Total |    |                                 |
| 1.     | Gender             | Male        | 3               | 28      | 13            | 44    | 22 | Average                         |
|        |                    | Female      | 18              | 94      | 44            | 156   | 78 | Average                         |
| 2.     | Place of Residence | Urban       | 7               | 67      | 26            | 100   | 50 | Average                         |
|        |                    | Rural       | 14              | 55      | 31            | 100   | 50 | Average                         |
| 3.     | Stream/ Faculty    | Arts        | 14              | 78      | 42            | 134   | 67 | Average                         |
|        |                    | Science     | 7               | 44      | 15            | 66    | 33 | Average                         |
| 4.     | Type of Family     | Joint       | 3               | 20      | 15            | 38    | 19 | Average                         |
|        |                    | Nuclear     | 18              | 102     | 42            | 162   | 81 | Average                         |

**Figure 1: Box plot for Human Rights Awareness Scores of Post Graduate Students**



From the Table 1, Figure 1, it is observed that human rights awareness levels of the post graduate students are classified as average. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of the samples. It is found the post graduate students irrespective of their entire sample gender, place of residence stream, types of family have average level of human rights awareness.

**Table 2: Differential Analysis for Human Rights Awareness Levels of Post Graduate Students**

| Si. No | Categories         | Sub Samples | N   | %   | Mean  | SD    | t- value with dfs 198 | Sig 2-tailed |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1.     | Gender             | Male        | 44  | 22  | 66    | 7.77  | 0.122                 | 0.903        |
|        |                    | Female      | 156 | 78  | 66.17 | 8.415 |                       |              |
|        |                    | Total       | 200 | 100 | 1.78  | 0.415 |                       |              |
| 2.     | Place of Residence | Urban       | 100 | 50  | 65.90 | 7.301 | 0.402                 | 0.688        |
|        |                    | Rural       | 100 | 50  | 66.37 | 8.148 |                       |              |
|        |                    | Total       | 200 | 100 | 1.50  | 0.501 |                       |              |
| 3.     | Stream /Faculty    | Arts        | 134 | 67  | 65.87 | 8.76  | 0.656                 | 0.512        |
|        |                    | Science     | 66  | 33  | 66.68 | 7.164 |                       |              |
|        |                    | Total       | 200 | 100 | 1.33  | 0.471 |                       |              |
| 4.     | Type of Family     | Joint       | 38  | 19  | 64.84 | 8.41  | 1.073                 | 0.285        |
|        |                    | Nuclear     | 162 | 81  | 66.44 | 8.22  |                       |              |
|        |                    | Total       | 200 | 100 | 1.81  | 0.393 |                       |              |

Table 2 further reveals that the mean, standard deviation and t-Value of male and female post graduate students human rights awareness levels. The calculated t-value is 0.122 which is lesser than the table value of 1.96 to be significant at 0.05 levels. Therefore null hypothesis is accepted. Further it was found that the male and female postgraduate students do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels.

Table 2 further reveals that the mean, standard deviation and t-Value of urban and rural post graduate students human rights awareness levels. The calculated t-value is 0.402 which is lesser than the table value of 1.96 to be significant at 0.05 levels. Therefore null hypothesis is accepted. Further it was found that the urban and rural postgraduate students do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels.

Table 2 further reveals that the mean, standard deviation and t-Value of arts and science post graduate students human rights awareness levels. The calculated t-value is 0.656 which is lesser than the table value of 1.96 to be significant at 0.05 levels. Therefore null hypothesis is accepted. Further it was found that the arts and science postgraduate students do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels.

Table 2 further reveals that the mean, standard deviation and t-Value of post graduate student's human rights awareness levels belonging to joint and nuclear family. The calculated t-value is 1.07 which is lesser than the table value of 1.96 to be significant at 0.05 levels. Therefore null hypothesis is accepted. Further it was found that the post graduate student's human rights awareness levels belonging to joint and nuclear family do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels.

## VIII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- It was found that the post graduate students irrespective of their entire sample, gender, place of residence, stream and type of family have average level of human rights awareness levels.
- It was found that the male and female postgraduate students do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels. This findings contradicts the findings of Kumar(2002),Kumar (2008)and Tiwari & Tiwari (2012)
- It was found that the urban and rural post graduate students do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels. Students belonging to urban areas were significantly more aware than rural counter parts in terms of awareness regarding human rights commissions and its functions. This finding is line with Chhabra (2005) and Kaur (2006) and contradicts the findings of Kumar (2002) and Kumar (2008).
- It was found that the arts and science post graduate students do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels.
- It was found that the post graduate student's human rights awareness levels belonging to joint and nuclear family do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels.

## IX. CONCLUSION

From this investigation it can be referred that the human rights awareness of post graduate students is in average level. Therefore there is a strong need to develop their human rights awareness level through various programmes which will help them to understand the human dignity, values and rights. So that students can able to analyse the forces which violates their rights and dignity. It was found that the postgraduate students selected demographic factor do not differ significantly in their human rights awareness levels. This study can also help institutions to understand the actual human rights awareness levels of the students. It also indicates lack in certain dimensions like Knowledge of human rights related documents, understanding about human rights concepts, Understanding of situations involving human rights violation/non-violations. Therefore it needs value and awareness model of human rights education as a separate subject as quoted by Pandey (2005) and human rights are not taught as a separate subject instead various values related to human rights have been integrated in all subjects and in all stages of curriculum. To sum up, more effective and planned human rights programs are necessary at university level to ensure proper dissemination and education of human rights awareness among post graduate students.

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