

# A Study of Human Rights Awareness among Professional Students in relation to their Stream of Study

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## Abstract

Education plays an important role in making students become aware of world issues such as human rights. Human Rights Education is all about helping people to develop to the point where they understand human rights, and where they feel that they are important and should be respected and defended. Human Rights Education constitutes an essential contribution to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and an important investment towards the achievement of just society, in which all the people are valued and respected. The present investigation found the level of human rights awareness among professional students in relation to their stream. Only professional students of Punjab pursuing their education in Computer Application, Engineering and Law courses were taken in consideration. Samples of approximately 50 students from each of three groups of professional students were drawn on random basis. Descriptive survey method was employed for the present study. Human Rights Awareness Test (HRAT) by Dr. Vishal Sood and Dr. (Mrs.) Arti Anand (2012) was used to check awareness of professional students towards human rights. One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare awareness of professional students in relation to their stream of study. It is concluded from the results that students of engineering, computer application and law do not differ significantly in their level of human rights awareness.

**Key Words:** Education, Human Rights , Professional Students, Awareness, Stream

## Introduction:

Education plays an important role in making children become aware of world issues such as Human Rights, and in developing proper attitude towards such issues early in life. Education is recognized by the International Commission on Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a principal means to foster deeper and more harmonious human relations and, thereby, to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war.

Human Rights are the claims of the individual for such conditions as are essential for the fullest realization of the innate characteristics, which nature has bestowed him/her with as a human being. It implies that there are inherent and inalienable rights which are due to an individual by virtue of his/her being a human being and that they are necessary to ensure the dignity of every person as a human being irrespective of one's race, religion, nationality, language, sex, or any other factor (Naseema, 2006).

The general conference of the United Nations Education Research Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its 18<sup>th</sup> session in Paris in 1974 recommended that, “Education should be directed for the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedom. It shall promote understanding, strength, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of United Nations for the sake of peace.”

United Nations World Conference on Human Rights at Vienna in 1993, declared UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). Of the hundred clauses in the Program of Action of Vienna Declaration, four are related to education and training. The World Conference on Human Rights calls on all states and institutions to include human rights, humanitarian law and democratic rule of law as subject in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings.

Despite many of the shortcomings of the present educational system in the country, Human Rights Education must begin there. With this in view, National Human Rights Commission has been working over the years with the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, and National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). More recently, UGC constituted in 1997, a standing committee on Human Rights Education to start a post-graduate course in the universities and to deal with matters relating to the organizing of seminars, workshops and symposia at the university level. The Committee has been able to give direction, teaching and research in this comparatively new academic Endeavour.

### **Review of Related Literature**

A study on awareness among students of three streams (commerce, science, arts) revealed a significant difference in the mean scores of students of all the three streams. Science students are more aware of human rights in comparison to students of arts stream. There is no significant difference between male and female students of different streams in their awareness level towards human rights (Sharma, 2001), it was concluded by conducting a study on human rights awareness among girl students of science and arts stream that there is a significant difference between girls of arts and science stream in the level of awareness. The girls of science stream and belonging to urban areas have more awareness of human rights as compared to those girls who are from rural areas and doing their studies in arts (Kumar, 2002). The findings of a survey on human rights awareness among secondary teacher trainees of Himachal Pradesh suggested that male secondary teacher trainees are more aware than female secondary teacher trainees about human rights; however rural secondary teacher trainees are less aware as compared to urban secondary teacher trainees. Another finding of the study revealed that science stream secondary teacher trainees are more aware about human rights than arts stream secondary teacher trainees (Katoch, 2013). A study on 200 prospective teachers revealed that human rights awareness level of prospective teachers is very low. B.Ed students are more aware about their rights in comparison to D.Ed. students. Male teacher trainees have more human rights awareness than female teacher trainees, whether they are doing B.Ed. or D.Ed. (Ashraf, 2013).

A sample of 300 B.Ed. student teachers was taken from the region of Panducherry to study their human rights awareness and normative survey method has been adopted to achieve the objectives of the study. The results of the study suggested that human rights awareness of B.Ed. student teachers is found to be at low level (Kumar 2016). A study of human rights awareness among B.Ed. college students of Sirsa district of Haryana state revealed that private college B.Ed. students are more aware about human rights than university maintained B.Ed. college students. It is also concluded that urban B.Ed. students have more awareness regarding human rights as compared to rural B.Ed. students. Male students of B.Ed., either they are from rural or urban areas are more aware of human rights in comparison to female B.Ed. students (Hooda, 2018).

All the above studies related to human rights awareness reveal that a significant difference is found among students doing courses in different stream. But there is a lack of studies which study human rights awareness among students enrolled in higher education. So the researcher decided to compare the human rights awareness level of professional students of different streams.

### Operational Definitions of the Terms

- **Awareness:** Awareness can be operationally defined as “perception and cognitive reaction to an event” or, more specifically, human rights awareness refers to “the ability to perceive, to feel or be conscious about human rights, its concepts and principles, norms and regulations related to human rights violations and their protection as well as promotion as measured by HRAT-SVAA.
- **Professional Students:** In the present study, the students pursuing their education in computer application, engineering and law courses in government or private institutes of Punjab will be taken as professional students.

### Rationale of the Study

Knowledge of human rights is must for all round development of human beings. In our educational system, this knowledge is provided indirectly through various subjects, but quality of knowledge is not up to mark. The present investigation will help in finding the level of awareness of human rights among professional students in relation to their stream. The outcome of the study would help in locating the weak points in our educational system that would further help in rectifying the faults.

India is a developing country. It is also the biggest democracy in the world. The future of any country depends on the quality of its future citizens namely the youth of the present. The quality of youth in further is determined by the environment they live in, the value system they inherit and the kind of education they get. Among all, perhaps education is the most important factor that helps in molding their personality and future. Youngsters are those sections of society that can easily bring about the changes in the society with their

enthusiasm and zeal. This is possible only if they have knowledge about their rights and duties. Human Rights Education is the major source of this knowledge; it is multidisciplinary and touches every dimensions of human experience. It challenges students to learn about, reflect on, care about and act on human rights concerns which further prepares them for their future.

The results of the study would help the educationists as well as policy makers to find out the loopholes in our educational system and would remove the weaknesses. Moreover, the field of Human Rights Education is not much explored yet, all works related to the promotion of human rights are more theoretical rather than practical. A lot of work has to be done for spreading awareness about human rights. There is no such study which directly deals with testing of human rights awareness of professional students in relation to their stream. So the investigator thought of testing the awareness of professional students towards human rights in relation to their stream. It would help the other investigators to pursue further in this direction.

### **Objective of the Study**

To study the human rights awareness level of professional students in relation to their stream.

### **Hypothesis**

There will be no significant difference in human rights awareness among professional students on the basis of stream of their study.

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher used descriptive survey method to study human rights awareness among professional students in relation to their stream.

### **Sample of the Study**

All the professional students, pursuing their studies in computer application, engineering and law courses after secondary education constitute the universe of the study. A representative sample of approximately 50 students from each of the three groups of professional students was drawn on random basis.

### **Research Tool**

Human Rights Awareness Test (HRAT) by Dr. Vishal Sood and Dr. (Mrs.) Arti Anand (2012) will be used to measure awareness of professional students towards human rights, which is comprised of 50 items and three dimensions i.e. 1) Knowledge of Human Rights Documents 2) Knowledge and Understanding of Human Rights Concepts 3) Understanding of Situations involving Human Rights Violations/ Non-Violations.

## Technique

One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the human rights awareness level of professional students in relation to their stream.

## Analysis of Data and Results

The data was collected from different colleges of Law, Engineering and Computer Application. After collecting data, scoring was done and scores obtained by students on Human Rights Awareness Test (HRAT) were compared by applying 'one way ANOVA'. The results are given in following tables.

Table 1 depicts the mean scores of students of all three streams (Engineering, Computer Application and Law) on Human Rights Awareness Test comprised of three dimensions along with their standard deviation.

**Table 1**

**Significance of Difference in Scores of Professional Students on Human Rights Awareness Test in relation to their Stream**

<b>Human Rights Awareness Test</b>	<b>Stream</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
Knowledge about Human Rights Documents	Engineering	50	9.26	2.81
	Computer Application	50	10.44	2.63
	Law	52	9.71	2.63
Knowledge and Understanding of Human Rights Concepts	Engineering	50	19.40	3.03
	Computer Application	50	18.06	4.31
	Law	52	18.81	3.81
Understanding of Human Rights Violations/ Non-Violations	Engineering	50	33.92	7.04
	Computer Application	50	32.86	5.92
	Law	52	34.25	6.95
Total	Engineering	50	62.58	8.67
	Computer Application	50	61.36	9.20
	Law	52	62.77	10.83

Table 1 betrays that the mean values of students of engineering, computer application and law on knowledge about human rights documents (dimension one) are 9.26, 10.44 and 9.71. The values of standard deviation for the scores of students of all the three streams are 2.81, 2.63 and 2.63 respectively. The mean score of computer application students is greater than law and engineering students ( $10.44 > 9.76, 9.26$ ). It indicates that students of computer application have more knowledge about human rights documents as compared to the students of engineering and law.

As far as knowledge and understanding of human rights concepts is concerned, it can be noticed from above table that engineering students have high mean score (19.40) than students of computer application and law (18.06 and 18.81). It stipulates that students of engineering are more aware of human rights concepts than students of computer application and law.

The values of mean and standard deviation of engineering and computer application students for understanding of situations involving human rights violations/ non-violations are 33.92 & 7.04 and 32.86 & 5.92 respectively, whereas mean and standard deviation for that of law students are 34.25 & 6.95. It is vivid that mean value of law students is greater than students of computer application and engineering ( $34.25 > 33.92, 32.86$ ). Thus, it is clear that students of law have better understanding of situations involving human rights violations/ non-violations.

In order to assess human rights awareness among professional students of three streams, the values of mean and standard deviation for engineering students came out to be 62.58 and 8.67 and the same for students of computer application and law are 61.36 & 9.20 and 62.77 & 10.83. The mean score of law students is greater than computer application and engineering students ( $62.77 > 61.36, 62.58$ ). It is apparent that students of law are more aware of human rights in comparison to others.

Table 2

## One Way Analysis of Variance

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F-Ratio</b>
<b>Knowledge about Human Rights Documents</b>	Between Groups	35.466	2	17.733	2.44
	Within Groups	1080.613	149	7.252	
	Total	1116.079	151		
<b>Knowledge and Understanding of Human Rights Concepts</b>	Between Groups	45.96	2	22.548	1.60
	Within Groups	2098.897	149	14.087	
	Total	2143.993	151		
<b>Understanding of Human Rights Violations/ Non-Violations</b>	Between Groups	53.392	2	26.696	0.60
	Within Groups	6611.450	149	44.372	
	Total	6664.842	151		
<b>Total</b>	Between Groups	59.063	2	29.531	0.32
	Within Groups	13816.931	149	92.731	
	Total	13875.993	151		

$p > 0.01$  or  $0.05$

Table 2 represents the sum of squares and mean square between groups and within groups of students of all the three streams along with their degree of freedom on each dimension and the whole Human Rights Awareness Test. The F-value signifies the difference between the means on knowledge about human rights documents is 2.44, knowledge and understanding of human rights concepts is 1.60 and understanding of situations involving human rights violations/ non-violations is 0.60, which are less

than tabulated value, so these values are not significant even at 0.05 level of significance of difference. The F-value of all scores obtained on human rights awareness test is 0.32, which is also non-significant on both levels of significance of difference, because it is less than tabulated values at 0.01 and 0.05 level.

Therefore, from above interpretation, it is crystal clear that there is no significant difference in human rights awareness among professional students in relation to their stream of study. Thus, the hypothesis stating “there will be no significant difference in human rights awareness among professional students on the basis of stream of their study” is accepted.

### **Discussion of Results**

It is concludes that significant difference does not exist among students of engineering, computer application and law regarding their knowledge about human rights documents, understanding of human rights concepts and situations involving human rights violations and non-violations. However, after going through the results, it is noticeable that students of law have more understanding of situation in which an individual's human rights are being violated. If not any significant difference is found among professional student in their awareness level towards human rights on the basis of their stream of studys, it may be the reason that they all are nearly from the same institutions and have the same learning environmental conditions regarding human rights.

### **Educational Implications**

Every research has its own worth in its implications; likewise the present study also has a meaningful impact in the present educational context. At present, many people are being suppressed and deprived of their human rights. The only solution to the problem is to educate people about humanity and human rights. An individual should have knowledge about the rights, from which he or she cannot be deprived on the basis of gender, race, colour or religion etc. It is necessary for all round development of personality of an individual. In our educational system, the knowledge of human rights is not provided in an appropriate manner. It can be seen from the results of present study. In present study, the researcher studied human rights awareness among professional students in relation to their stream. Even the students of law are not that much aware of human rights concepts, they don't have much knowledge about human rights documents. The results of the study would help in finding the weak points in curriculum and teaching methods used in colleges of professional courses. It would further help in making the changes regarding the study materials and curriculum of students of professional courses.

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