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A STUDY ON AWARENESS OF LEGAL RIGHTS AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NAMAKKAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Awareness of legal rights refers to an individual's understanding and knowledge of the rights granted to them by law. This includes civil, political, social, economic, and educational rights. Such awareness is fundamental in ensuring that individuals can protect themselves from injustice, exercise their freedoms responsibly, and participate actively in a democratic society. The objective of the present investigation is to study the awareness of legal rights among higher secondary school teachers based on the selected sub sample gender and the descriptive survey study method of research has been used. The total sample for the present study consisted of 295 higher secondary school teachers of which the total numbers of male and female teachers are 67 and 228 respectively from of 13 higher secondary schools in Namakkal district. The awareness of legal rights tool was used for data collection and the inferential statistics of the obtained data are calculated for analysis and interpretation. The analysis revealed that the male and female teachers do not differ in the dimensions cognitive, affective, behavioural and total scores of awareness of legal rights.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays eminent role in everyone's life. Education emphasizes general important and refinement in behavioural, development of a person who has interest in wider aspect of his environment. Education is a process of bringing changes in behavioural patterns of pupils in the derived direction. In a democratic and legally governed society, every citizen is entitled to

certain fundamental and statutory rights that ensure freedom, protection, and equal opportunity. Among them, teachers especially those at the higher secondary level play a crucial role in shaping the intellectual, emotional, and ethical foundations of future generations. As professionals working in dynamic and sometimes challenging educational environments, it is essential for teachers to be well-informed about their legal rights and responsibilities. Awareness of legal rights empowers teachers not only to safeguard their professional and personal interests but also to advocate for the rights of students and uphold justice within the educational system. Legal rights of teachers include various dimensions such as employment protection, workplace safety, rights under service rules, protection from harassment, entitlement to leave, and due process in disciplinary actions. In addition, laws such as the Right to Education (RTE) Act, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and Right to Information (RTI) Act have direct implications on teachers' professional practices. However, despite the availability of legal safeguards and protections, several studies have shown that teachers often lack adequate awareness of these rights, which may lead to unreported grievances, unchallenged violations, and limited advocacy for justice (Rajendran & Irudayamary, 2021). Teaching and learning management mainly associated with the teacher using the concept of teaching to students and also students will realize how the teacher teaches the language (Malini & Rajkumar, 2018). Thus, investigating the level of awareness of legal rights among higher secondary school teachers is a timely and necessary endeavour. It provides insights into gaps in teacher education, identifies the need for legal literacy programs, and promotes the protection of teachers' rights as professionals in the field of education.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Legal rights education in the school curriculum, especially for adolescents, is crucial in building a responsible and aware citizenry. Girls, in particular, benefit from understanding their rights in contexts such as education, safety, and freedom from discrimination. It equips students to recognize and report violations, thus fostering a safe and equitable environment. Teachers who are well-informed about their legal rights are better equipped to handle workplace challenges, protect themselves from exploitation, and advocate for fair treatment. In Tamil Nadu, various laws and policies like the Tamil Nadu Recognized Private Schools (Regulation) Act, 1973, the Right to Education Act, 2009, and provisions under the Constitution of India ensure that teachers are provided with certain entitlements. However,

without adequate awareness and positive attitudes towards these rights, teachers may fail to assert or utilize them effectively.

The need for this study arises from the realization that understanding and awareness of legal rights is crucial for teacher development, job satisfaction, and institutional effectiveness. In this context, Namakkal district provides a relevant case for analysis due to its educationally progressive profile and the diversity of schools in the region. By identifying gaps in legal knowledge and attitude, the study contributes to the professional empowerment of teachers, enabling them to assert their rights confidently and responsibly. A legally aware and positively inclined teaching community can contribute to a more transparent, equitable, and respectful school environment, thereby reducing incidences of exploitation or discrimination. The study can guide teacher education institutions to integrate legal education modules in their curricula, ensuring that both pre-service and in-service teachers are adequately informed of their legal protections and responsibilities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research problem undertaken for the present study has been entitled as “**A Study on Awareness of Legal Rights among Higher Secondary School Teachers in Namakkal District**”.

STUDIES RELATED TO AWARENESS OF LEGAL RIGHTS

Rani and meenakshi (2022) conducted a study on awareness of legal rights among higher secondary school students in Tamil Nadu. The findings showed that although students were familiar with basic civil rights, their awareness of educational and gender-related rights was limited. Urban students performed better than their rural counterparts due to better access to media and educational resources. The study of priya and thomas (2023) examined legal awareness among adolescent girls in government schools in Kerala. The study found that most girls were unaware of their protection rights under the POCSO Act, and highlighted the need for integrated legal education in the curriculum. According to Rajendran and Irudayamary (2021) explored the knowledge and awareness of higher secondary teachers regarding legal rights. The study revealed that while teachers had positive attitudes, their actual knowledge levels were moderate, especially concerning the legal rights of students and staff under educational law. Sharma and Kulkarni (2020) studied the awareness of legal rights among women in rural Maharashtra. The results indicated very low levels of awareness,

particularly regarding rights against domestic violence and property inheritance. The study emphasized the role of community-based legal education programs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

To investigate the significant difference between awareness of legal rights among higher secondary school teachers based on the selected sub sample gender.

METHOD OF THE PRESENT STUDY

In the present study, the Descriptive Method of research has been used. The type of descriptive research method applied in the present study is the “Survey study” method.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Stratified Random Sampling Technique is used for this present study.

STUDY AREA

The study has been conducted in the higher secondary schools of Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population for this present study was the Higher Secondary School Teachers

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

In this study 295 higher secondary school teachers were selected. The sample included higher secondary school teachers in government, government aided, and private schools in Namakkal district.

TOOLS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

Awareness of Legal Rights Scale

The second tool used to find the awareness of legal rights scale is a standardized by Rosenberg (2020) which contained 25 items and three dimensions cognitive, affective and behavioral. Each accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Maximum value 125, Minimum value 25. The validity was established by a panel of experts in the field of education.

TABLE – 1: Showing The Evaluating Awareness of Legal Rights Dimensions.

S.NO	DIMENSIONS NAME	ITEM NUMBER	TOTAL
1	Cognitive	1-11	11
2	Affective	12-17	6
3	Behavioral	18-25	8
TOTAL			25

SCORING PROCEDURES AWARENESS OF LEGAL RIGHTS TOOL

Rating scale was used for awareness of legal rights, which are five-point scale. The investigator totally had 25 items for awareness of legal rights. The maximum possible score is 125, while the minimum score is 25. The teachers were asked to show their responses by placing tick marks. The teachers were asked to show their responses by placing tick mark (✓) is the appropriate column. The statements were categorized into the following:

TABLE – 2: Table Showing The Scoring Procedures Of The Awareness Of Legal Rights Tool.

RESPONSES	SCORES
Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Undecided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly dis agree	1

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The main aim of the present research work is to awareness of legal rights among higher secondary school teachers with respect to their gender. For this purpose, the principals of the selected institutions are personally contacted and permission was taken for data collection or conducts the study. After taking the permission, the necessary information like number of teachers, size of classroom, seating arrangement etc. are obtained and a convenient day was fixed for the administration of the tools without affecting the normal activities of the sampling institution. Thereafter, in the fixed day, the sample teachers are briefed about the test in detail before administering the test. They are assured that their responses would be kept confidential and that the research is for educational purpose. Consent has been also taken from the respondents after explaining to them the purpose of the research as well as the

academic use of the data later on. The investigator read instructions clearly. After rapport formation, the tools are administered one by one. Though there is no time limit for answering the questions, but it took 5-10 minutes to complete all the tools by the teachers.

STATISTICAL METHOD APPLIED FOR ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the present study, the inferential statistics techniques like 't' test of the obtained data are calculated for analysis and interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

HYPOTHESIS-1

There is no significant difference in the awareness of legal rights of male and female higher secondary school teachers.

GENDER

Male and female higher secondary school teachers do not differ in their awareness of legal rights

TABLE – 3 Table Showing The 'T' Value Of Awareness of Legal Rights Among Higher Secondary School Teachers Based On Gender.

Dimension	Male (67)	Female (228)	t- test	S/NS
	Mean	S.D		
Cognitive	42.91	6.603	0.356	NS
	43.19	5.439		
Affective	25.75	2.197	0.274	NS
	25.66	2.353		
Behavioural	34.52	4.032	0.531	NS
	34.71	3.795		
Awareness of legal rights	103.13	11.55	0.318	NS
	103.60	10.01		

NS - Not Significant

INTERPRETATION

From the above table it is found that the calculated t values are less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance in the dimensions of cognitive, affective, behavioural and total scores of awareness of legal rights. Hence the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

RESULTS

Male and female teachers do not differ in the dimensions cognitive, affective, behavioural and total scores of awareness of legal rights.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study reveal that there is no significant difference in the awareness of legal rights between male and female higher secondary school teachers across the dimensions of cognitive, affective, behavioural, and overall scores. This suggests a relatively uniform level of legal rights awareness among teachers, regardless of gender. The mean scores of both male and female participants were nearly identical across all dimensions, and the t-values were not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These results align with the findings of Rajendran and Irudayamary (2021), who reported that while higher secondary teachers may hold positive attitudes toward legal rights, their depth of legal knowledge tends to be moderate. Furthermore, this uniformity may reflect the fact that both male and female teachers in the Namakkal district are exposed to similar institutional environments, teacher training programs, and access to professional development resources. The lack of significant gender differences also indicates that awareness programs or legal literacy interventions should be designed to target all teachers equally rather than focusing on one gender. However, the overall scores suggest that there is still room for improvement in increasing comprehensive awareness of legal rights in educational contexts, particularly in areas like protection laws, employment regulations, and grievance redressal mechanisms.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study carry several important educational implications for teacher development, school administration, policy-making, and curriculum planning:

- ❖ Integration of legal literacy in teacher education programs: The results indicate a moderate level of legal rights awareness among higher secondary school teachers. Therefore, teacher education institutions (both pre-service and in-service) should integrate legal literacy modules into their curriculum. This will empower future educators with the necessary knowledge to assert and protect their rights and those of their students.

- ❖ Need for continuous professional development: Schools and educational departments should organize regular workshops, seminars, and training sessions on legal rights, with a focus on workplace laws, student protection acts, and service rules. These programs will enhance teachers' understanding of relevant laws such as the RTE Act, POCSO Act, RTI Act, and labour rights.
- ❖ Promotion of a legally empowered teaching community: A legally informed teacher workforce can foster a more just, respectful, and secure educational environment. Teachers with legal awareness are more likely to report violations, advocate for students, and contribute to transparent decision-making in schools.
- ❖ Policy reform and institutional support: Education policy-makers should ensure that legal protections and grievance mechanisms are clearly communicated and accessible to teachers. Institutions must also establish support systems to help teachers deal with legal challenges they may face in their professional lives.
- ❖ Equal access to legal information for all teachers: The study showed no significant gender differences, which implies that awareness programs should target all teachers equally, without bias, to promote fairness and inclusivity. However, special attention may be given to teachers in remote or under-resourced areas who may lack access to updated legal information.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The present study titled a study on awareness of legal rights among higher secondary school teachers in Namakkal district aimed to assess the level of legal rights awareness among teachers based on gender differences. The analysis revealed that male and female teachers do not significantly differ in their awareness of legal rights across cognitive, affective, behavioural, and total dimensions. This indicates a gender-neutral distribution of legal rights awareness among the teaching community in the region. The findings underscore the need to enhance legal literacy for all teachers through training programs, workshops, and curriculum integration, regardless of gender. By doing so, teachers can be better equipped to recognize their legal protections, assert their rights, and foster a legally conscious school environment. The study also highlights the importance of empowering teachers as both educators and rights-bearing professionals who contribute to justice and equity in the education system.

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