



Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions about Gender Equality

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Abstract

Teachers are the agent of social change. For teachers, promoting gender equality is not a question of opinion, but a requisite responsibility. The present study aims to examine the B.Ed. trainee students' perception of gender equality. It followed a descriptive survey design for which one self-made questionnaires was used as the tool and focused group discussions arranged for qualitatively perspective. Total 136 B.Ed. trainee students was taken as sample from Aliah University and WBUTTEPA of Kolkata, West Bengal. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis was done. It is found the B.Ed. trainee students have average level of gender equality perception irrespective of their gender, place of residence stream, types of family. There exist no significant differences in the perception level of gender equality among the students from different categories such as gender, discipline, residential status and although there exist significance positive differences in between family types. Based on this study, guidance and suggestions may be provided to enhance students' awareness, knowledge, understanding and competencies in relation to gender equality and to encourage student engagement in a global sustainable development. This study will give a direction to the management and administration for endorsing a favorable environment where seeds of human rights, gender equality, social justice can be sown.

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Introduction

All humans are born free and have equal rights and dignity. Gender equality is such a right that is at the core of human rights. Achieving this right is the best solution to some of the most crucial challenges of our time – from economic crisis and lack of health care, to climate change and violence against women.

When college or university students have a better awareness and higher understanding of gender equality, they can actively contribute to support, promote, and achieve sustainable development goals by making use of their academic background.

Students and teachers are important stakeholders for achieving this positive change. So, it is important to examine to what extent they are aware of gender equality, and what are their perceptions about that.

Objectives

- To measure B.Ed. trainee students' perceptions of gender equality
- To compare the perception level of gender equality and human rights among the students from different categories such as gender, discipline, residential status and family types
- To reflect their feedback about developing gender empowerment

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference of the level of perceptions of gender equality between the female trainee students and male trainee students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference of the level of perceptions of gender equality among the students from arts & social science and science & mathematics background

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference of the level of perceptions of gender equality among the students from urban and rural residential status

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference of the level of perceptions of gender equality among the students coming from nuclear family and joint family

Methods and Procedures

Design and methods: Both quantitative and qualitative approach has been applied and descriptive survey method was adopted for the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique: 136 trainee students were taken by simple random sampling technique from first- and second-year B.Ed. trainee students from three different Universities of Kolkata, West Bengal. The details of the different subcategories are shown in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1: Sub category wise details of the sample size

Sl. No	Categories	Sub Samples	N	%
1	Gender	Female	65	47.79
		Male	71	52.21
2	Place of Residence	Rural	96	70.59
		Urban	40	29.41
3	Type of Family	Joint	70	51.47
		Nuclear	66	48.52
4	Stream /Faculty	Arts & Social Science	87	63.97
		Science & Mathematics	49	36.03
5.	All	Total	136	100

Instrument and Scoring Procedure

(i) **Tool for Assessing Perceptions of Gender Equality:** One self-developed tool for assessing perception of gender equality among B.Ed. Trainee students was used. There were 30 items with five alternatives 'Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely and Never'.

Scoring Procedure: For positive statement the scoring was given 5,4,3,2,1 for the five alternatives 'Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely and Never' respectively and for negative

statement these scoring was reversed in the order 1,2,3,4,5
(ii) A FGD was conducted taking 10 trainee students (5 female and five male) for qualitative analysis.

Analysis: Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysis

The scores of the perceptions of gender equality of the B.Ed. Trainee student teachers are between 30-150 i.e., range of the scores is 120. 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 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 0.05 and 0.01 levels. The analysis, interpretation of data is presented based on the norms as shown below:

Table 2: Norms for interpretation of level of perceptions of gender equality

Range of Z-score	Grade	Level of Human Rights Awareness
+ 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

Results and discussions

The category wise level of perceptions of gender equality is shown in the Table 3. It was found the B.Ed. trainee students irrespective of their gender, place of residence stream, types of family have average level of gender equality perception. From Table 3, it is clear that only one student has shown extremely high level of perception among 136 B.Ed. trainee students, 5 students (4.76%) have shown high level of perception of gender equality, maximum students have average level of perception, 27.62% students have above average, 36.19% students have average and 21.90% students have below average level of perception as per specified norms in the Table 2.

Table 3: Category wise level of perceptions of gender equality

Categories	Sub Samples	Extremely High	High	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Low	Extremely low	Total
All	Total sample	N	1	13	27	52	21	20	136
		%	0.74%	9.56%	19.85%	38.24%	15.44%	14.71%	1.47%
Gender	Female	N	0	3	18	23	17	3	65
		%	0.00%	4.62%	27.69%	35.38%	26.15%	4.62%	0.00%
	Male	N	1	4	17	27	15	2	70
		%	1.43%	5.71%	24.29%	38.57%	21.43%	2.86%	5.71%
Place of Residence	Rural	N	1	9	25	28	25	6	96
		%	1.04%	9.38%	26.04%	29.17%	26.04%	6.25%	2.08%
	Urban	N	0	1	9	18	8	2	40
		%	0.00%	2.50%	22.50%	45.00%	20.00%	5.00%	5.00%
Type of Family	Joint	N	1	3	19	27	12	1	70
		%	1.43%	4.29%	27.14%	38.57%	17.14%	1.43%	4.29%
	Nuclear	N	0	4	19	25	11	6	66
		%	0.00%	6.06%	28.79%	37.88%	16.67%	9.09%	1.52%
Stream /Faculty	Arts & Social Science	N	1	4	24	28	25	4	87
		%	1.15%	4.60%	27.59%	32.18%	28.74%	4.60%	2.30%
	Science & Mathematics	N	0	7	13	19	7	1	49
		%	0.00%	14.29%	26.53%	38.78%	14.29%	2.04%	4.08%

It is interesting to note from the Table 3 that, no female trainee showed extremely high or extremely low levels of perception of gender equality, while one male student showed extremely high and 4 male students shown extremely low levels of perception of gender equality. Female and male students both have shown nearly same level of perceptions, as for instance it can be said that 27.69% female students have shown average level of perception, while 24.29% male students have shown average level of perception. In case of place of residence, one student living in rural area has extremely high level of perception, while no student living in urban area has shown that level of perception. Again, for rural area, 26.04% students have shown above average level of perception, 29.17% students have shown average level of perception and 26.04% students have shown below average level of perception of gender equality and for urban area these

percentages are 22.50%, 45.00% and 20.00% respectively. For family type category, it can be said that, students coming from joint family 27.14% students have shown above average level of perception, 38.57% students have shown average level of perception and 17.14% students have shown below average level of perception of gender equality and for single or nuclear type family, these are 28.79%, 37.88% and 16.67% respectively. Table 3, also made it clear that, among students who have arts and social science background, 4.60% showed high level of perception of gender equality, 27.59% showed above average level, 32.18% average level, 28.74% below average level of perception, while for students coming from science and mathematics background, these levels of perception were shown by 14.29%, 26.53%, 38.78% and 14.29% students respectively.

Table 4: Important statements about gender equality with respondents' response

Item Number	Statement	A %	O %	S %	R %	N %
4	Girls are mostly treated with respect at class room	60	17.7	13.8	4.6	3.8
9	Women leaders can effectively solve problems of women's	29.7	29.7	28.1	7.8	4.7
13	Women are treated equally in Education	57.5	12.6	18	9.4	2.3
14	A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl	12.6	6.3	6.3	5.5	69.3
16	Women always need men for help	12.5	8.6	47.7	14.1	17.2
22	Women are only for good cooking and cleaning.	8.7	8.7	11.8	2.4	68.5
25	Men and women should be equally involved in household chores	67.7	7.1	14.2	7.9	3.1
26	Parents need to start raising awareness about gender Equalities in their children	81	7.1	8.7	2.4	0.8
27	Females' participation in sports is good for their culture	64.3	14.3	13.5	6.3	1.6
29	Males are better at math than females	5.6	7.9	22.2	12.7	51.6

[A - Always, O - Often, S - Sometimes, R - Rarely, N - Never] It is clear from Table 4, that perceptions of gender equality were conveyed by different kind of statements differently. For example, it can be said that 60% respondents indicated their understanding that 'girls are mostly treated with respect at class room', always. 69.3% students expressed their disagreement with the statement that 'a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl', only 12.5% students agreed with the statement 'Women always need men for help'. 68.5% indicated their

disagreement with the statement 'Women are only for good cooking and cleaning' by choosing the option 'never'. Most of the respondents (81%) agreed that there is a need to start raising awareness about gender equalities in their children from the end of parents, 67.7% respondents said that 'Men and women should be equally involved in household chores', 64.3% responded to the statement 'Females' participation in sports is good for their culture' with 'always' 51.6% of respondents reflected their disagreement with the statement that 'Males are better at math than females'.

Table 5: Differential Analysis for Gender Equality Perceptions Levels of B.Ed. trainee Students

Sub Sample Categories → Statistics ↓	Gender			Place of residence		Family types		Streams	
	All	Females	Males	Rural	Urban	Joint	Nuclear	Arts & Social Science	Science & Mathematics
N	136	65	71	96	40	70	66	87	49
%	100	47.79	52.21	70.58	29.41	51.47	48.52	63.97	36.02
Mean	110.09	108.29	109.80	109.11	111.63	108.58	112.12	110.18	109.88
Standard Deviation	10.45	18.00	11.15	10.98	9.79	10.98	9.39	11.44	8.51
σ _D	-	0.562		0.1926		2.288		0.045	
t value	-	0.4906		0.9843		0.2536		0.0379	

Table 5 represents the mean scores and standard deviation of the samples for all categories and sub-samples for the perceptions of gender equality. According to the scoring procedures, the scores of the perceptions of gender equality expanded its value from 30 to 150, i.e., the range of the total sample score was 120. The mean score and standard deviation of the total sample were 110.09 and 10.45 respectively. The mean score and standard deviation of the female students' sub-sample were 108.29 and 18.00 respectively, while that of male sub-samples 109.80 and

11.15. For sub-samples from rural area, the mean scores and standard deviation are 109.11 and 10.98 respectively, while that of urban area sub-samples 111.63 and 9.79 respectively. For sub-samples from joint family, the mean scores and standard deviation are 108.58 and 10.98 respectively, while that of single or nuclear family sub samples 108.5 and 10.57 respectively. The mean score and standard deviation of the students with arts and social science background were 112.12 and 9.39 respectively, while that of the students with science and mathematics background were 110.18 and 11.44

respectively.

Significance of t value from table 5

Table 5 also showed the t-value of male and female B.Ed. trainee students' gender equality perception levels. The calculated t-value is 0.562 which is lesser than the table value of 1.98 to be significant at 0.05 levels. Consequentially, it will be very much less than the table value of 2.63. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at both level of significance of 0.05 and 0.01. Further it was found that the male and female trainee students do not differ significantly in their gender equality perceptions levels.

Table 5 further revealed of t-value of urban and rural B.Ed. trainee students' gender equality perception levels. The calculated t-value is 0.1926 which is lesser than the table value of 1.98 to be significant at 0.05 levels. Consequentially, it will be very much less than the table value of 2.63. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at both level of significance of 0.05 and 0.01. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted. So, it was found that the urban and rural B.Ed. trainee students do not differ significantly in their perception in gender equality.

Table 5 further revealed that of t-value of B.Ed. trainee students gender equality perception levels belonging to joint and nuclear family. The calculated t-value is 2.288 which is greater than the table value of 1.98 not to be significant at 0.05 levels. But, it is less than the table value of 2.63. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at the level of significance of 0.01 and rejected at 0.05 level. Further it was found that the B.Ed. trainee students' perceptions of gender equality levels belonging to joint and nuclear family not differ significantly at 0.05 level.

From the Table 5, it can be further interpreted that of t-value of B.Ed. trainee students gender equality perception levels coming from arts and science background. The calculated t-value is 0.045 which is lesser than the table value of 1.98 to be significant at 0.05 levels. Consequently, it is much less than the table value of 2.63. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at both level of significance of 0.05 and 0.01. Further it was found that the B.Ed. trainee students' perceptions of gender equality levels coming from arts and science background do not differ significantly.

Feedback form Focused Group Discussions (FGD)

In this study, qualitative method allowed (FGD) for an in-depth look into the participants' perceptions, bringing about a rich understanding of how the students felt about gender equality issues in relation to their classes, each other, and what are their thoughts for society and education. Throughout many of the discussions there remained an underlying assumption that males were the natural participants in social activities including political field. B.Ed. trainee students seemed to think that males were the dominant force in physical education and sport. Female students also expressed a dislike of some of the dominant behaviours demonstrated by the boys. On the one hand, many of the students talked positively about the increased social interaction and achievements and fun they experienced in particularly in their community-based activities. Also, it has come up in FG discussion, we need to change the position that equality for women in practical life is not yet available even though there is talk of gender equality, in today's situation gender equality is very much required for a sustainable society.

As per the FGD, respondents prioritized other challenges as follows

- Lack of awareness of gender equality in the society
- Lack of knowledge regarding reproductive health rights, which may build indecision regarding when to marry/getting married, lack/obstacle of own choice of life partner
- Lack of custom of gender equality in the family/ home and often in schools
- Women are subordinate to men

Conclusion

Through the above discussion and interpretation, it may be concluded that, the perceptions of gender equality and human rights of B.Ed. trainee students are at an average level.

All respondents irrespective of gender, family and education background, think that girl under the age of 18 should not marry off. In recent time people's perception is changing, they are sending their girls to get all kinds benefits under Kanyasree Prokolpo, Government of West Bengal.

An individual should have knowledge about the rights, from which she or he 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 present study, the researcher studied gender equality awareness among professional students in relation to their gender, residential address, family types and educational stream., The results of the study would help in finding the weak points in curriculum and teaching methods used in colleges / universities of professional courses. This study is pivotal, to indicated current facts. The state and central government are jointly supposed to include gender equality and human rights content in the curriculum so that stakeholders and all schools, colleges and universities have awareness and are pro-active in promoting gender equality in education and society.

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