

AWARENESS AND EXERCISE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AMONG WOMEN OF PUNJAB

Anshu Narad and Gagandeep Kaur

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, irrespective of their nationality, places of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. People everywhere should know and understand what human rights are, to lessen the chances of tyranny and to promote justice and well-being in society. Awareness, understanding, and use of human rights can empower individuals, can promote solutions for specific problems and thus can reduce friction within society. A recent study was conducted to explore the awareness and exercise of human rights among working and non-working women of Punjab. The study was a descriptive survey. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 200 women (100 working women and 100 non-working women). Further, out of 100 women, 50 were from the rural area while 50 were from the urban area. The results of the study revealed that working women had a greater awareness of human rights and exercise more human rights in comparison to their non-working women counterparts. Further, rural working and urban working women had similar awareness of human rights while rural working women exercise more human rights as compared to urban counterparts. While rural and urban non-working women had similar awareness as well as knowledge about human rights.

KEYWORDS: Awareness, Human Rights, Women

Dr. Anshu Narad ✉

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara.

Email: anshusarad@gmail.com

Gagandeep Kaur

Post Graduate Teacher, Kalgidhar Academy Senior Secondary School, Ludhiana

Email: gagandeepjhajz@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world with an abundant range of diversity- evident in the flora and fauna, the people and the environment around us. Man, irrespective of differences, as a member of human society, has dignity and value. The way we identify this fundamental dignity and value of man, is through recognizing certain basic rights to survive, to sustain and to nourish his/her best potential. Milne (n.d.) has rightly said that, “there can be no human community without rights. Having rights is a part of what is to be member of any community. A community necessarily consists of members, who have rights and obligations. Unless there are members, there have to be rights, if there is to be any social life. Thus, rights enable an individual with at least some of the elements of a place, an identity and a role in the social milieu.” Pagels (n.d.) defined “human rights as the idea that the individual has right claims upon society, or against society that these rights which society must recognize, on which it is obliged to act, are intrinsic to human beings”. According to Plano and Olton (n.d.) “human rights are those rights which are considered to be absolutely essential for the survival, existence and personality development of a human being”. Nickel (n.d.) states, “human rights aim to secure for individuals the necessary conditions for leading a minimally good life”. Human rights are inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being. Human Rights means the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India (Protection of Human Right Act, 1993). Human Rights not only imply a “lawful entitlement” but a “just entitlement” due to various factors such as law, customs and morality. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. Everybody is equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018). Human rights involve both rights as well as obligations. Under international law, states have obligations and duties to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. This implies that the states must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights; must protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses and lastly must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights. Further the obligation at individual level is that as one is entitled with human rights, one must also respect the human rights of other (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976”).

Internationally, human rights have been categorized into Civil and Political

rights and Economic, Social and Cultural rights. Civil and political rights are enshrined in “Articles 3 to 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)”. Economic, social and cultural rights are enshrined in “Articles 22 to 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)”.

International human rights law lays down the obligations on Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more (United Nations, 2018). People everywhere should know and understand what human rights are, so as to lessen the chances of tyranny and to promote justice and well-being in the society. Awareness and understanding about human rights can empower individuals, can provide solution for definite problems and thus can reduce friction within society. Human rights issues are attached importance as per ideology and political convenience. Human Rights are used both to safeguard human freedom as well as destroy it. The brutal and barbarous acts against human beings, due to disregard and contempt for Human Rights outraged the conscience of mankind. After World War II it was realized by many nations, that people across nations lived under the control of dictators and tyrants, having no alternative and resort except than war, so as to get rid of inhuman treatment given to them. Subsequently, it was realized by majority of governments in the world that basic human rights must be protected, not only for the sake of the individuals and countries, but to preserve the human race. This led to universal concern for human rights education in order to ensure the protection and realization of human rights. Studies on human rights have (Rehman 2000, Tadasad 2000, Landman 2006 & Stein 2005,) pinpointed that educated people are less likely to be prone to inhumane treatment and exploitations.

In India, there are numerous ways of safeguarding human rights. India has adopted multi prolonged approach for ensuring human rights for its citizens, by incorporating various human rights provided in Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 in its Constitution, as Fundamental Rights (Article 12 to 35) and the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 36-51). Apart this respect and regard for human rights is an inseparable part of Indian philosophy for a long time. To address inequalities in the Indian society, education has been considered as the major instrument by promoting equality, social, economic and political justice and respect for the individual human beings. Pandey (2005) analysed the Indian education system from the human

rights perspective and concluded that Indian education system has adopted an awareness and value model of Human Rights education, where in values related to human rights have been integrated at all stages and in all subjects, not been taught as a separate subject. The only way to assure our commitment to human dignity and to promote world peace and prosperity is through human rights education, that is human rights and values must become an integral part of the entire educational system (Sharma, 2000; Goutham, 2000; & Dhillon, 2009).

Over the past few millennia, in India, the status of women has been subject to abundant changes. In the ancient times, it has been claimed by many historians that women enjoyed an equal status with men. On the other hand, medieval India was supposed to be the “Dark Age” for women as it led in the decline in women's status. During the British Raj, many reformers fought for the upliftment of women. In modern independent India, the status of women is a sort of a paradox. One on hand women, is at the top of ladder of success, while on the other hand, she is oppressed, suppressed, marginalized or rather colonized by men, is subject to all socio-economic and cultural deprivations and is mutely suffering the violence and exploitation like harassment, taunts, abuses and threats afflicted by her family members. Kuldeep (2000) found that domestic violence though takes place within households but affects women in all spheres and areas of their life. Karl (2000) pinpointed that a large percentage of women have no say in important household and have no decision taking power related to their own life and seek permission of male members for each and every issue. The problem of violence, overt and covert, physical and non-physical against women is not new in Indian society and adversely affects the status of women (Devi, 2005). Shukla (2003) found that women in India face various problems which surround their lives, livelihood, relationships with gender, elders, husband and their colleagues when they work outside their homes. Ramakrishnan (2008) affirmed that the most basic of human rights are violated and many such violations are committed against several women every day in some or the other part of the world. Behera (2006) pinpointed that irrespective of income, class and culture across societies, girls and women are subject to various abuses viz. physical, psychological and sexual. Violence against women should be considered as a human right violation and a crime, detrimental to the development of women and the society (Devi & Prema, 2006). Kaarthikeyan (2005) explained that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity. It is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the

full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity. On the contrary, Baboo (2000) found that legal security, industrial urbanization, agricultural and modernization are the responsible factors for the development of the women. Sharma (2006) stressed that the best investment that a country can make in its future, is through the education of females as it enables the country to completely utilize its human resources for national development. A significant percentage of working women reported independent mobility, as without seeking prior consent from their husbands they can move out their homes. (Khan, 1995). However, Alakh (2002) reported that rural non-working women participate in varied agricultural operations ranging from land preparation for crop, taking care of the standing crops, to harvesting, storage, carrying the produce from farm to home and animal care. But, working women are neither fully independent and nor fully enjoy the rights of decision taking in their lives. Panda (2006) reported that about sixty per cent of working women at some point of time in their working lives face sexual harassment. Ashraf (2013) explored human rights awareness among prospective teachers and found that male teachers were more aware in comparison to their female counterparts. Narayana and Kavya (2016) explored the awareness of human rights among women and found that majority of women were neither aware of importance of human rights nor understood the impact of human rights in improving their status. On the contrary, Devi (2013) and Dayal and Kaur (2015) found good level of awareness of human rights among rural women and female teachers.

Though there are number of Human rights enforced for the betterment of citizen of India. But in the present study some human rights like right to equality, right against exploitation, right to property, right to education, etc. were taken into consideration. The study was directed towards finding out the awareness and exercise of human rights among educated working and non-working women of Ludhiana District of Punjab. Hence, the paucity of the work done in the field, inconsistencies in the finding of studies, for the progress of the Nation as whole and for the dignity, respect, welfare of women, so that they live a better life, inspired the investigator take to up the present study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following objectives were framed for the study:

1. To explore awareness and exercise of human rights of women.
2. To compare working and non-working women with regard to awareness of human rights and exercise of human rights
3. To compare rural working and urban working women with regard to

awareness of human rights and exercise of human rights

4. To compare rural non-working and urban non-working women with regard to awareness of human rights and exercise of human rights

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Following are the hypotheses of the study:

1. There exists no significant difference in awareness of human rights of working and non-working women.
2. There exists no significant difference in exercise of human rights of working women and non-working women.
3. There exists no significant difference in awareness of human rights of rural working and urban working women.
4. There exists no significant difference in exercise of human rights of rural working women and urban working women.
5. There exists no significant difference in awareness of human rights of rural non-working and urban non-working women.
6. There exists no significant difference in the exercise of human rights of rural non-working women and urban non-working women.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was used in the study. Data collection was done from women in rural area and urban area of Ludhiana district of Punjab, by employing simple random sampling technique. The sample comprised of 200 educated women (100 working women and 100 non-working women, out of 100 women, 50 each from rural area and urban areas). A self-constructed Human Rights Awareness and Exercise Questionnaire was used to collect the data. Before the administration of the questionnaire, a brief description about the tool, objectives of the study were discussed, and assurance was given to the respondents that information provided by them will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of research work. Parametric statistical techniques were used for analysis of data. To explore the current status in terms of awareness and exercise of human rights, mean and standard deviation were calculated and for testing the significance of difference between means of awareness and exercise of human rights, t-test was applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Differences in Mean Scores of Awareness of Human Rights of Working and Non-Working Women.

| Women | N | Mean | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|-------------------|-----|------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Working Women | 100 | 6.91 | 2.91 | 5.87 | 0.01 |
| Non-Working Women | 100 | 4.93 | 1.69 | | |

Results in Table 1 gives information regarding the mean scores and standard deviation of awareness of human rights of working and non-working women. Further, the t-value calculated with regard to awareness of human rights of working and non-working women was found to be significant at 0.01 level. It can further be explained that working women had more awareness of human rights in comparison to their non-working counterparts. On the basis of above-mentioned findings, it can be stated that the Hypothesis no.1 i.e. “there exists no significant difference in the awareness of human rights of working and non-working women” can be rejected.

Table 2

Differences in Mean Scores of Exercise of Human Rights of Working and Non-Working Women.

| Women | N | Mean | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|-------------------|-----|------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Working Women | 100 | 31.6 | 49.5 | 8.64 | 0.01 |
| Non-Working Women | 100 | 23.7 | 7.70 | | |

Table 2 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of exercise of human rights of working and non-working women. Further, the t-value calculated with regard to exercise of human rights of working and non-working women was found to be significant at 0.01 level. It can further be explained that working women exercise more human rights in comparison to their non-working counterparts. On the basis of above-mentioned findings, it can be stated that the Hypothesis no.2 i.e. “there exists no significant difference in the exercise of human rights of non-working and working women” is thus rejected.

Table 3

Differences in Mean Scores of Awareness of Human Rights of Rural Working and Urban Working Women.

| Women | N | Mean | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|---------------------|----|------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Rural Working Women | 50 | 4.68 | 1.30 | 1.48 | Not Significant |
| Urban Working Women | 50 | 5.18 | 1.98 | | |

Data in Table 3 reflects mean scores and standard deviations of awareness of human rights of rural working and urban working women. Further, the t-value calculated with regard to awareness of human rights of rural working and urban working women was found to be not significant. It can further be explained that rural working and urban working women had similar awareness of human rights. On the basis of above-mentioned findings, it can be stated that the Hypothesis no.3 i.e. “there exists no significant difference in the awareness of human rights of rural working and urban working women” is thus accepted.

Table 4

Differences in Mean Scores of Exercise of Human Rights of Rural Working and Urban Working Women.

| Women | N | Mean | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|---------------------|----|-------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Rural Working Women | 50 | 32.82 | 3.52 | 2.48 | 0.05 |
| Urban Working Women | 50 | 30.42 | 5.84 | | |

Results shown in Table 4 give details on the mean scores and standard deviations of exercise of human rights of rural working and urban working women. Further, the t-value calculated with regard to exercise of human rights of rural working and urban working women was found to be significant at 0.05 level. It can further be explained that rural working women exercise more human rights in comparison to their urban counterparts as they may suffer more from violations, conflicts, injustices and other related problems in their daily lives and thus have sharper and better sense of what could be human rights violations. On the basis of above-mentioned findings, it can be stated that the Hypothesis no.4 i.e. “there exists no significant difference in the exercise of human rights of rural working and urban working women” is thus rejected.

Table 5

Differences in Mean Scores of Awareness of Human Rights of Rural Non-Working and Urban Non-Working Women.

| Women | N | Mean | SD | <i>t</i> | Level of Significance |
|-------------------------|----|------|------|----------|-----------------------|
| Rural Non-Working Women | 50 | 6.58 | 2.68 | 1.13 | Not Significant |
| Urban Non-Working Women | 50 | 7.24 | 3.12 | | |

Data presented in Table 5, reflects mean scores and standard deviations of awareness of human rights of rural non-working and urban non-working women. Further, the t-value calculated with regard to awareness of human rights of rural non-working and urban non-working women was found to be insignificant. On the basis of above-mentioned findings, it can be stated that the Hypothesis no.5 i.e. “there exists no significant difference in the awareness of human rights of rural non-working and urban non-working women” is thus accepted.

TABLE 6

Differences in Mean Scores of Exercise of Human Rights of Rural Non-Working and Urban Non-Working Women.

| Women | N | Mean | SD | <i>t</i> | Level of Significance |
|--------------------------|----|-------|------|----------|-----------------------|
| Rural Non-Working Women | 50 | 22.58 | 8.18 | 1.46 | Not Significant |
| Urban Non -Working Women | 50 | 24.82 | 7.10 | | |

Results in Table 6 reflect the mean scores and standard deviations of exercise of human rights of rural non-working and urban non-working women. Further, the t-value calculated with regard to exercise of human rights of rural non-working and urban non-working women was found to be insignificant. It can further be explained that rural non-working and urban non-working women had similar awareness of human rights. On the basis of above mentioned findings, it can be stated that the Hypothesis no.6 i.e. “exists no significant difference in the exercise of human rights of rural non-working and urban non-working women” is thus accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

The study documents the following conclusions:

- Working and non-working women differed significantly with respect to awareness of human rights. Working women had more awareness of human rights as compared to non-working women counterparts.
- Working and non-working women differed significantly with respect to

exercise of human rights. Working women exercise more human rights in comparison to their non-working counterparts.

- Rural working and urban working women did not differ significantly with respect to awareness of human rights. Rural working and urban working women had similar awareness of human rights.
- Rural working and urban working women differed significantly with respect to exercise of human rights. Rural working women exercise more human rights as compared to their urban counterparts.
- Rural non-working and urban non-working women did not differ significantly with respect to awareness of human rights. Rural non-working and urban non-working women had similar awareness of human rights.
- Rural non-working and urban non-working women did not differ significantly with respect to exercise of human rights. Rural non-working and urban non-working women had similar awareness of human rights.

REFERENCES

- Adam, P. (2008). Awareness of human rights. *Journal of Women Development* 52(5), 25-38.
- Alakh, N. (2002). *Economic and Political Weekly*. New Delhi: Alt Publication.
- Baboo, B. (2000). *Status of Women and Children in Boden Block*. Bangkok: University Press.
- Dayal, J.K., & Kaur, S. (2015). A comparative study on human rights awareness among teachers working in P.S.E.B. and C.B.S.E. affiliated schools. *Paripex - Indian Journal of Research*, 4(4).
- Definitions and classifications. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.humanrights.is/en/human-rights-education-project/human-rights-concepts-ideas-and-fora/part-i-the-concept-of-human-rights/definitions-and-classifications>.
- Devi, K.U. (2005). *Violence against women: Human rights perspective*. New Delhi: Serial Publications.
- Devi, K., & Pandey, P. (2006). Combating violence against women: Some initiatives. *Women's Link*, 12(3).
- Devi, P. (2013). A study of awareness among rural women about their rights. *Asian Journal of Educational Research & Technology*, 3 (2), 305-311.
- Dhillon, K. (2006). Human rights education suggestions for school curriculum. *Edutracks*, 9, 20-22.
- Narayana, G.D., & Kavya, C.N. (2016). A sociological study on awareness of human rights among women. *International journal of Applied Research*, 2(1), 629-632.

- Goutam, A. (2000). *Human rights and justice system*. New Delhi: A.P.H.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. (1976). Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>.
- Karl, B. (2002). Status of women and social change. *Journal of Indian Law Institute*, 25, 270.
- Karthikeyan, D. (2008). *Electrified Wall Divides People on Caste Lines*. The Hindu.
- Kaushik. (1993). *Politics of islamization in Pakistan*. New Delhi: South Asia Publications.
- Kuldeep, N. (2000). *Violence Against Women*. The Hindu.
- Landman, M. (2005). *Protecting human rights: A comparative study*. Georgetown University Press: Washington D.C.
- Mhloyi, M. (1994). *Status of women population and development international union for the scientific study of population*. Belgium: International Conference on Population and Development.
- Nickel, J. (n.d.). *Human Rights Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* [Online] Available: www.iep.utm.edu/hum-rts.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2018). *What are Human Rights*. [Online] available. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/pages/whatarehumanrights.aspx>.
- Pagels, E. (n.d.). In *Education for Values, Environment and Human Rights* by Y. K. Sharma (2007). [Online] Available: <https://books.google.co.in/books?isbn=8176299308>.
- Panda, Monalisa. (2006). *Sexual harassment at workplace*. Delhi: Human Touch.
- Shabana, A. (2013). A study of human rights awareness among prospective teachers. *International Journal of Scientific Research*, 2(7), 535-536.
- Sharma, M. K. (2000). *Education and human rights*. New Delhi: Regency.
- Sharma, N. (2006). *Women and education issue and approaches*. New Delhi: Regency.
- Stein, V. J. (2005). *Making Promises, Keeping Promises: Ratification and Compliance in International Human Rights Law*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Tadasad, K. (2000). *Human rights and police administration – A case study of inter relationship in Hubli-Dharwad Commissionerate in Karnataka*. Ph.D. Political Science, Karnataka University.
- The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English (n.d.). In *A Review on Human Rights and Good Governance and Status of Human Rights in India* by Gagandeep Dhaliwal. [On line] Available: ijear.org/vol32/1/gagandeep.pdf
- United Nations. (2018). *Human Rights*. (2018). [Online] Available. <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/index.html>