



Research Paper

## Human Rights Awareness among University Students in Patna: A Gender-Based Comparative Study

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**ABSTRACT:** Awareness of human rights is essential for nurturing a fair and inclusive society. University students, as future policymakers and influencers, play a pivotal role in upholding these values. A thorough understanding of human rights enhances civic participation and fosters social accountability. In the Indian context, where cultural and societal dynamics differ widely, perceptions and awareness levels of human rights may vary considerably between male and female students. This study explores the extent of human rights awareness among students of universities in Patna, focusing specifically on gender-based comparisons. Results of the study revealed that female students exhibited higher level of awareness, especially in the domains of legal and political rights, whereas male students were predominantly situated within the medium and low awareness categories. The findings on the overall awareness on human rights showed that female students showed higher levels of awareness than their male counterparts. Both genders demonstrated similar moderate awareness, while a greater proportion of males exhibited low awareness and a larger percentage of females attained high level of awareness.

**KEYWORDS:** University Students, Gender Disparities, Civic Education, Social Equity

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Every individual in the world, from conception to death, is entitled to the basic rights and freedoms known as human rights. All people, regardless of gender, race, or nationality, are entitled to these universal rights, which include the freedom of expression, the right to education, and the right to be free from discrimination (UNESCO, 2020). In the current global environment, where reports of human rights abuses persist in various nations, raising awareness, particularly among younger generations has become increasingly crucial. Globally, educational systems are becoming more and more recognised as important venues for raising awareness of human rights issues and advancing the ideals of equality, respect, and dignity (Khan & Malik, 2022).

Human rights are those that we have just by virtue of being human; no state has bestowed them upon us. Because they are universal, human rights ensure the existence of human beings regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion. They range from the most fundamental - the right to life - to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to food, education, work, health and liberty. Human rights are considered to be fundamental and universal rights derived from human dignity (Hodge, 2022). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines human rights as "rights derived from the inherent dignity of the human person." Human rights when they are guaranteed by a written constitution are known as "Fundamental Rights" because a written constitution is the fundamental law of the state. The concepts of human rights suggests that all people have inherent rights from birth, that these rights are inviolable, and that the nation and its citizens must uphold them. This idea highlights how crucial it is to treat everyone equally and fairly before the law, irrespective of their social background, gender, race or religion (Lynk, 2023).

Students represent in for the next generation of leaders and responsible members of society. Their perceptions of social responsibility, equality, and equity are influenced by their knowledge of human rights. Students who are aware of their own and other people's rights are more inclined to oppose injustice as well as take part in democratic processes. Therefore, assessing their awareness levels offers valuable insights into how effectively human rights education is being implemented in educational institutions.

## II. OBJECTIVES

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of human rights awareness among female and male students. It seeks to examine not only the general level of awareness but also to highlight any gender based differences that exist.

## III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research design:-** This was a community based cross-sectional study conducted on students from different colleges of Patna, Bihar. Descriptive research design was found relevant and appropriate as the study describes the level of awareness among students.

**Sample size:-** A total of 200 students comprising of 100 female and 100 male were selected for the study. Each area was visited during the college hours and students giving consent to participate in the study were chosen as samples. Samples for the study were obtained through the use of convenient sampling.

**Data collection technique:** Taking into account of the objectives of the study, survey cum interview method was considered applicable. A questionnaire was developed with close-ended questions related to the objectives of the study. A pilot study was also conducted to test the workability of the tool. A total 27 questions were asked preclude details of the related profile of the respondents. The language used in the questionnaire was English, while the investigator adopted both Hindi and English during the interview sessions. The questionnaire was segregated into sections namely basic awareness of human rights, awareness of legal rights, awareness of political rights, awareness of social rights and awareness of cultural rights.

**Data analysis:** The data gathered was quantitative in nature, measured and analysed by the descriptive statistics. For statistical analysis, the response was coded and entered into excel sheet. Data were tabulated and statistical analysis was done using SPSS.

**Awareness test:** Percentage was derived from the collected data and awareness level of the respondents were assessed according to the following category/scale.

**Table 1: Categorisation of awareness level and their percentage**

Percentage score of the respondents	Awareness level of the respondents
0%-33%	Low
34%-66%	Medium
67%-100%	High

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Background characteristics:-** The results of the age distribution of respondents revealed that among female students, 65 per cent are between 18-22 years old, while 35 per cent fall in the 22-26 years category. On the other hand, male respondents showed a higher representation (52%) in the age group of 18-22 years whereas 48 per cent were in the 22-26 years group. Undergraduates made up the majority (68.5%) in terms of educational background, with females (75%) more represented than male respondents (62%). In the distribution by academic stream, the Arts stream had the highest overall participation (36%). In the Science stream, where males predominated with 43 per cent, girls (13%) were least represented (Table 2).

**Table 2: Background characteristics of the respondents (N=200)**

Characteristics	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Total (N=200)
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage (Numbers)
Distribution of respondents on the basis of age (years)			
18 - 22 years	65	52	58.5 (117)
22 - 26 years	35	48	41.5 (83)
Total	100	100	100 (200)
Distribution of respondents on the basis of educational qualification			
Under-graduate	75	62	68.5 (137)
Postgraduate	25	38	31.5 (63)
Total	100	100	100 (200)
Distribution of respondents on the basis of stream			
Arts	58	14	36 (72)
Science	13	43	28 (56)
Commerce	18	23	20.5 (41)
Others	11	20	15.5 (31)
Total	100	100	100 (200)

**Assessment of basic awareness regarding human rights:** This segment deals with the percentage wise allotment of students with regards to their basic awareness about human right. The data gain to accompany about the term human rights, celebration day, meaning of gender equality and who may enjoy the right likewise. The results revealed gender-based differences. Among females, a substantial 77 per cent demonstrated high awareness,

compared to 51 per cent of males. This suggests that female respondents are more informed and possibly more engaged with human rights topics.

In the medium awareness category, 41 per cent of males fell into this group, while only 20 per cent of females belonged to this group. This suggests that while a greater percentage of boys have some knowledge of human rights, it is not as thorough or in-depth as that of girls. In addition, only 3 per cent of females and 8 per cent of males were classified as having low awareness. This implies that men were almost three times more likely than women to be ignorant of the fundamentals of human rights. These variations show a considerable awareness gap between males and females. Overall, the participants have 64 per cent of high level, 30.5 per cent medium level and 5.5 per cent of low level awareness of human rights (Table 3).

These results align with several prior studies that find females often report higher awareness of human rights as compared with males. Pragina *et al.* (2024) reported low awareness of human rights among Indian medical students with a lower awareness among male students as compared to male. This may be due to female students are often socialized with a stronger orientation toward social issues, ethical considerations, care, and communal relationships, which may predispose them to engage more critically with human rights concerns.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their basic awareness regarding human rights (N=200)**

Category	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Total (N=200)
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage (Numbers)
Low	3	8	5.5 (11)
Medium	20	41	30.5 (61)
High	77	51	64 (128)

**Assessment of legal awareness regarding human rights:** Table 4 deals with the meaning of legal rights, how it functions for the accused person and what situation can be benefited to the accused one until he is proven guilty. The data illustrates that among females, 63 per cent demonstrated high awareness of legal rights, compared to only 25 per cent of males. This noteworthy difference implies that the female participants are more aware and perhaps more involved in knowing their legal rights. In the group of medium awareness, 37 per cent of boys and 19 per cent of girls were seen. It's remarkable that 38 per cent of male respondents represents low awareness, which is more than twice as many as the 18 per cent of female respondents who represents the same. This highlights a concerning gap, where a significant number of males are uninformed from legal education. All participants have an overall legal awareness level of 44 per cent high, 28 per cent medium whereas 28 per cent low respectively.

A study by Bhat *et al.* (2024) aligns closely with the finding of the current research. They found that female students tend to have higher legal awareness in several measured domains compared to male students. The study suggests legal literacy programs are needed to bring male students to comparable levels.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their awareness regarding legal rights (N=200)**

Category	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Total (N=200)
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage (Numbers)
Low	18	38	28 (56)
Medium	19	37	28 (56)
High	63	25	44 (88)

**Assessment of political awareness regarding human rights:** Data regarding awareness of political rights among respondents are presented in table 5. This part deals with the idea which needs to be known for an individual to form or run the government, other than that it includes an individual's privacy. Furthermore, it deals with the freedom of speech and expression of an individual. Girls (32%) were more likely than boys (12%) to have high awareness. This shows that the girls in the sample are more aware of or involved in their political rights. In the medium awareness category, 43 per cent of boys fell into this group, compared to 33 per cent of females. This indicates that while many males are somewhat aware of their political rights, they may lack comprehensive knowledge. In contrast, a third of women were in this group of respondents with a medium level of awareness, indicating a balanced but more pronounced overall tendency towards higher awareness.

Alarmingly, 45 per cent of males had low awareness of political rights, compared to 35 per cent of females. This suggests that males in the sample were more likely to be uninformed or disengaged from political processes, possibly due to limited civic education or lower perceived relevance. Analysis of overall awareness levels revealed that 22 per cent of participants exhibited high awareness, 38 per cent moderate awareness, and 40 per cent low awareness.

These findings are in contrast with the prior research by findings of the Al-Khaza'leh and Lahiani (2021) of the UAE students in humanities faculties had higher political awareness and that there exist gender differences in political awareness. Interestingly, in that study male students had higher awareness when measured by political

knowledge or participation in some aspects, but females sometimes scored higher in other kinds of rights awareness.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their awareness regarding political rights (N=200)**

Category	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Total (N=200)
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage (Numbers)
Low	35	45	40 (80)
Medium	33	43	38 (76)
High	32	12	22 (44)

**Assessment of social awareness regarding human rights:** The data given in the Table 6, evaluate the awareness regarding social rights among the participants. This section deals with the expected standard of living in a community for and individual which includes housing, healthcare, water, food, education basically can be named as livelihood rights. Among the female students, 18 per cent reported a low level of awareness, compared to 21 per cent of their male counterparts. This indicates that a slightly greater proportion of males fall into the lower category of awareness. The majority of respondents, however, are concentrated in the medium level of awareness. Within this category, females accounted for 72 per cent, while males accounted for 65 per cent, suggesting that female students are relatively more consistent in maintaining an average level of understanding of social rights. This indicates that women are more consistently informed at an average level.

In contrast, high awareness is more prominent among males, with 14 per cent showing advanced knowledge, compared to only 10 per cent of females. When the data is examined as a whole, it was observed that 19.5 per cent of the students demonstrate low awareness, while the largest proportion (68.5%), and fall into the medium category and only 12 per cent exhibit high awareness. These findings align with existing literature highlighting gender disparities in awareness of social rights. A study by Subasini *et al.* (2023) found significant differences in awareness of women's rights among student teachers, influenced by factors such as gender, subject, locality, qualification, and age.

**Table 6: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their awareness regarding social rights (N=200)**

Category	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Total (N=200)
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage (Numbers)
Low	18	21	19.5 (39)
Medium	72	65	68.5 (137)
High	10	14	12 (24)

**Assessment of cultural awareness regarding human rights:** This section deals with the right to religion, speaking of any language, the choice of living according to the cultural background of the community, choosing the nation of own will and having rights in the property as well. The distribution of respondents according to their basic awareness of cultural rights reveals marked gender-based differences. Among female students, 37 per cent fall into the low awareness category, whereas only 21 per cent of male students are placed in this group. This indicates that a considerably higher proportion of females lack sufficient knowledge of cultural rights compared to their male counterparts.

In the medium awareness category, the pattern is reversed. Majority of males (65%) demonstrate an average level of awareness, while only 28 per cent of females fall into this group. This highlights that male students are more concentrated in the moderate awareness range, suggesting relatively better consistency in their understanding of cultural rights. Regarding high awareness, female (35%) respondents reported having a strong understanding of cultural rights, while men only reported having a 14 per cent understanding.

The analysis of the overall distribution indicated that 29 per cent of students fall into the low awareness group, 46.5 per cent into the medium group, and 24.5 per cent into the high awareness group. This indicates that nearly half of the respondents maintain only an average level of awareness, while almost one-fourth display strong awareness of cultural rights. These results align with previous research indicating gender differences in cultural rights awareness. A study by Li *et al.* (2022) found that gender equality awareness among school-age children varied significantly across different domains, with boys and girls exhibiting distinct patterns of awareness in family, school, and occupational fields. Additionally, the higher percentage of males in the medium awareness category may be attributed to factors such as increased participation in educational programs and community-based initiatives that promote understanding of cultural rights. Conversely, the substantial proportion of females exhibiting high awareness suggests that targeted interventions and awareness campaigns focusing on women's rights and cultural empowerment have been effective in enhancing their understanding of cultural rights.

**Table 7: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their basic awareness regarding cultural rights (N=200)**

Category	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Total (N=200)
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage (Numbers)
Low	37	21	29 (58)
Medium	28	65	46.5 (93)
High	35	14	24.5 (49)

**Assessment of overall awareness regarding human rights:** This section deals with the overall knowledge of human rights, which includes four of the main right that is legal, political, social and cultural combining with the basic human right. The overall awareness of human rights among the respondents shows clear gender based differences. Only 6 per cent of females fall in the low awareness category, whereas a considerably larger proportion of males, 37 per cent, are placed in this group. This indicates that female students are far less likely to demonstrate poor awareness of human rights compared to their male counterparts. In the medium category, both genders reflect relatively similar proportions, with 41 per cent of females and 36 per cent of males reporting moderate levels of awareness. It may be inferred that both male and female students demonstrate comparable levels of moderate awareness regarding human rights, with a slight predominance observed among female respondents. With regard to high awareness, 53 per cent of female respondents reported strong knowledge of human rights, in contrast to 27 per cent of males. This indicates that over half of the female respondents demonstrate higher levels of awareness, whereas only about one-fourth of males fall into this category (Table 8). Overall, 21.5 per cent of students are in the low awareness category, 38.5 per cent fall in the medium category, and 40 per cent demonstrate high awareness of human rights. The distribution indicates that although a substantial proportion of students demonstrate high awareness, a notable segment exhibits only moderate or low awareness, suggesting a heterogeneous understanding among the respondents.

These results align with previous research indicating that gender influences human rights awareness, with females often displaying greater awareness than their male counterparts (Hossain *et al.*, 2025). However, the current research findings are in contrast with the prior research by findings of study on university students of Jamia Millia Islamia University, suggested that while students possess foundational awareness, their remains room for improvement, particularly in addressing gender disparities and integrating human rights education across all disciplines (Sonish, 2025).

**Table 8: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their overall awareness regarding human rights (N=200)**

Category	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Total (N=200)
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage (Numbers)
Low	6	37	21.5 (43)
Medium	41	36	38.5 (77)
High	53	27	40 (80)

## V. CONCLUSION

This study reveals notable gender-based differences in human rights awareness among university students across legal, political, social, and cultural domains. Female students generally exhibited higher awareness, particularly in legal and political rights, while males were more represented in medium or low awareness categories. Social and cultural rights showed mixed patterns, with females demonstrating greater high and medium level awareness in some areas. Overall, majority of students displayed moderate awareness, suggesting the need for further scope for improvement. These findings highlight the need for inclusive, gender-sensitive educational programs and awareness initiatives to enhance comprehensive understanding of human rights and promote equitable engagement among all students.

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