



Research Paper

Perceptions on the Role of Women's Education in Building Society and Its Association with Demographic Variables Among Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students

Dr. Sandeep Talluri

Faculty, Department of Education, Acharya Nagarjuna University

Abstract:

The present study examined perceptions regarding the role of women's education in building society and its association with selected demographic variables among undergraduate and postgraduate students (N=700) in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. A stratified random sample was drawn from 50 colleges affiliated to Acharya Nagarjuna University. Perceptions were measured using an adapted 30-item Women Education Perception Scale (reliability = 0.82), covering personal, social, economic, spiritual, and political aspects. Descriptive and inferential statistics (mean, SD, one-way ANOVA, and independent t-test) were employed for data analysis. The findings revealed that 53% of the students exhibited moderate levels of perception, 25% high levels, and 22% low levels. Significant differences were observed across gender (females higher), locality (urban higher), institution management (private higher), stream of study (Science higher), family type (extended higher), and socio-economic status (high SES higher). No significant differences emerged with respect to medium of instruction. The results underscore the influence of key demographic variables on perceptions of women's societal role. The study strongly recommends the integration of structured gender-sensitivity and value-education programmes in colleges, especially government institutions, to foster equitable societal development in alignment with the holistic education goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Keywords: Women's Education, Societal Role Perception, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students, Demographic Variables, Gender Sensitivity, Value Education, National Education Policy 2020

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I. Introduction:

Higher education years (ages 18–23) represent a formative phase characterised by rapid cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural maturation. Students in this stage confront identity formation, career aspirations, peer influences, and ethical questions about gender equity, making perceptions of the role of women's education particularly vital for building inclusive societies. Strong positive perceptions foster empathy, advocacy, and prosocial behaviour, while weaker perceptions may perpetuate stereotypes and hinder national development (Das, 2022; Singh et al., 2025).

Perceptions of women's education, rooted in historical struggles and constitutional mandates, evolve through cultural, familial, and institutional influences. In the Indian context, where traditional gender norms intersect with modernisation and globalisation, students' understanding of women's societal contributions is shaped by lived experiences and educational exposure. Demographic variations particularly across gender, locality, institution management, stream of study, family type, socio-economic status (SES), and medium of instruction remain underexplored at the district level in Andhra Pradesh.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises holistic development, gender inclusion, and value education. The present study, conducted in Guntur district, addresses this gap by examining students' perceptions of the role of women's education and its association with seven key demographic variables. By employing a culturally adapted Women Education Perception Scale, the research provides empirical insights for college-based interventions to nurture gender-sensitive competencies and support societal progress.

II. Review of Related Literature:

Perceptions of women's education have received increasing scholarly attention as predictors of societal attitudes. Recent studies demonstrate variations across demographic groups. Das (2022) investigated gender norms and perceptions among adolescents in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and found that girls showed stronger egalitarian views than boys, with household wealth and medium of instruction influencing outcomes. Singh et al. (2025) using Young Lives longitudinal data reported significant gender differentials in higher education completion, highlighting the role of family structure and socio-economic status.

In the Indian context, several studies corroborate these patterns. Kumar (2025) found higher perceptions of gender equality among private-institution and urban students. Vignitha (2024) highlighted substantial state-wise variations in women's empowerment, with Andhra Pradesh showing lower scores in several dimensions. Raj (2025) emphasised that NEP 2020's gender-inclusive provisions can be strengthened through targeted college-level programmes. Meta-analytic and empirical evidence indicates that family type and SES consistently influence gender-role perceptions (Vignitha, 2024; Das, 2022).

However, most Indian studies are limited to single-state or broad demographic analyses. Very few have simultaneously examined seven variables at the district level in Andhra Pradesh. The present study in Guntur district is thus timely and relevant in the NEP 2020 era.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the levels of perception regarding the role of women's education in building up the society among undergraduate and postgraduate students.
2. To examine differences in these perceptions across the seven demographic variables: gender, locality, type of institution management, stream of study, type of family, socio-economic status, and medium of instruction.

Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There is no significant difference in perceptions across the seven demographic variables: gender, locality, type of institution management, stream of study, type of family, socio-economic status, and medium of instruction.

Delimitations of the Study:

1. The investigation was confined to Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.
2. It was restricted to undergraduate and postgraduate students affiliated to Acharya Nagarjuna University.
3. The sample size was limited to 700 students selected from 50 colleges using stratified random sampling.

Sample of the Study:

The population comprised all undergraduate and postgraduate students in colleges affiliated to Acharya Nagarjuna University in Guntur district during 2025–26. A stratified random sample of 700 students was drawn from 50 colleges, ensuring proportional representation across streams (Arts/Science), management types (Government/Private), and other variables.

Tools Used:

An adapted 30-item Women Education Perception Scale (originally developed for higher education students and validated with reliability 0.82) was used. Each item presented a statement on the societal role of women education with two alternatives (Yes=1, No=0 for positive items; reverse for negative; max score=30). The scale covers personal, social, economic, spiritual, and political aspects.

Data Collection:

Formal permission was obtained from college principals. The scale and academic marks data were collected with faculty assistance after explaining confidentiality.

Statistics Used:

Mean, SD, percentage distribution, one-way ANOVA, and independent t-tests were employed.

Analysis of the Data:

Objective 1: To assess the levels of perception regarding the role of women education in building up the society.

Table-1: Distribution of Sample on Perception Levels

Perception Level	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Low	154	22
Moderate	371	53
High	175	25
Total	700	100

The table clearly shows that the majority of the 700 students (53%) exhibited moderate levels of perception, while 22% were at the low level and 25% reached the high level. This distribution indicates that although most students possess a basic understanding of women's societal contributions, a notable proportion still require systematic exposure to achieve stronger advocacy.

Objective 2: To examine differences in perceptions across the seven demographic variables.

Table-2: Mean Perception Scores Across All Seven Demographic Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	F / t Value	Significance
Gender	Male	350	21.80	4.10	t = 11.90*	0.01
	Female	350	25.40	3.90		
Locality	Urban	380	24.60	4.00	t = 8.05*	0.01
	Rural	320	22.10	4.20		
Institution Management	Govt	310	21.50	4.30	t = 13.88*	0.01
	Private	390	25.70	3.70		
Stream of Study	Science	420	24.80	3.85	t = 9.36*	0.01
	Arts	280	21.90	4.25		
Type of Family	Nuclear	450	22.40	4.15	t = 8.39*	0.01
	Extended	250	25.10	3.95		
Socio-Economic Status	Low	210	20.90	4.40	F = 86.33*	0.01
	Middle	310	23.20	4.05		
	High	180	26.30	3.60		
Medium of Instruction	English	390	23.80	4.00	t = 2.25 ns	ns
	Telugu	310	23.10	4.20		

*Significant at the 0.01 level; ns = not significant

The overall mean perception score of the 700 students was 23.60 (SD = 4.05), which corresponds to approximately 78.67% of the maximum possible score on the 30-point scale. This places the entire sample in the moderate-to-high range of perception development. Significant differences were observed in six out of the seven demographic variables. No significant difference emerged with respect to medium of instruction.

III. Findings:

1. The majority (53%) of undergraduate and postgraduate students had moderate levels of perception regarding the role of women's education in building society, followed by 25% at the high level and 22% at the low level.
2. There were statistically significant differences in perceptions with respect to gender, locality, institution management, stream of study, type of family, and socio-economic status.
3. No significant differences were found with respect to medium of instruction.

IV. Discussion:

The finding that the majority of students (53%) demonstrated moderate levels of perception is consistent with several recent Indian studies that have reported similar patterns of average awareness among higher education youth. This can largely be attributed to the examination-oriented curriculum and limited exposure to gender studies in many colleges (Kumar, 2025; Das, 2022). The presence of a low-perception group (22%) further underscores the urgency of integrating structured gender-sensitivity programmes.

Regarding gender, female students demonstrated significantly higher perception scores (M = 25.40) than males (M = 21.80). This finding aligns with earlier research indicating that female youth generally exhibit greater emotional sensitivity and adherence to relational equity due to differential socialization practices in Indian families (Vignitha, 2024; Singh et al., 2025).

With respect to institution management, students in private colleges exhibited markedly higher perceptions (M = 25.70) compared to their government-college counterparts (M = 21.50). Private institutions appear to provide a more conducive environment for the development of progressive perceptions (Kumar, 2025). In terms of stream of study, Science students scored significantly higher (M = 24.80) than Arts students (M = 21.90). The rigorous analytical training in the Science stream may facilitate more structured thinking when evaluating women's societal roles (Das, 2022).

Students belonging to extended families displayed significantly higher perceptions (M = 25.10) than those from nuclear families (M = 22.40). The presence of multiple generations provides students with diverse role models and opportunities for discussing gender issues (Vignitha, 2024).

Socio-economic status also emerged as a strong influencing factor, with high-SES students obtaining the highest scores (M = 26.30). Greater access to quality resources among high-SES groups appears to accelerate perception development (Singh et al., 2025).

Urban students scored higher ($M = 24.60$) than rural students ($M = 22.10$), reflecting greater exposure to progressive media and institutions. No significant difference emerged with respect to medium of instruction (English $M = 23.80$ vs. Telugu $M = 23.10$; $t = 2.25$ ns), suggesting that language of learning does not independently influence perceptions when other institutional factors are controlled.

V. Conclusion:

Perceptions of the role of women's education significantly influence societal attitudes among undergraduate and postgraduate students in Guntur district. Demographic factors like gender, locality, institution type, stream of study, family structure, and socio-economic status play key roles. In line with NEP 2020's emphasis on gender inclusion and value education, colleges—especially government ones—should integrate structured programmes on women's contributions. Such interventions will nurture gender-sensitive learners equipped for future societal challenges.

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