

Human Rights Awareness among the People of Agra City: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The greatest challenges before humanity at the start of the 21st century are conflict, violence, terrorism, and war along with their terrible consequences of poverty, disease, despair, environmental destruction, and poor leadership. Religious fanaticism, insecurity, unemployment, illiteracy, fear, depression and dejection have been some of the primary causes of terrorist activities in the world. These challenges are present at all levels of human life—family, school, community, society, and globally. While considerable resources have always been and still are spent to offset the costly ravages of conflict, violence, and war and to pay for the high price of military defense and security measures, there are relatively few programs dedicated to a systematic, sustained plan of action to educate children and youth, create families, and build communities in ways that reflect the principles of peace.

Human rights are the result of humanity's increasing and persistent demand for dignity, respect, justice, protection and freedom—all needed for a decent human existence. The United Nations was created to protect future generations from the curse of war and to reiterate the belief in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and value of the human being, and in the equality of men and women. The end of the Cold War leads us to a single global conception of human rights. The UN's message is: Know your human rights. People who know their rights stand the best chance of realizing them. Knowledge of human rights is the best defense against their violation. Learning about one's rights builds respect for the rights of others and points the way to more tolerant and peaceful societies. Vast numbers of people are still unaware of their rights. While laws and institutions could in many cases defend them, people must first know where they may turn for help. Keeping in view the importance and popularity of the subject in today's world, I have endeavoured to focus my attention on the level of knowledge of human rights among the people of Agra city in regard to their gender, occupation, education level and age group.

In the present study 80 people were selected from the Agra city. Subjects consisted of 40 males and 40 females. Age ranged from 25 to 45. A survey was conducted using a self-prepared interview schedule to collect the data about the knowledge of people in regard to human rights. The study found that the number of people with average level of human rights awareness (65.0%) is more than the people with high level of human rights awareness (35.0%). Result indicated that there is no significant difference between male and female in their level of human rights awareness. Occupation is found to be a significant factor in the respondents' performance. Between businessmen and servicemen, the latter significantly performed better in the test than the former. Education level also significantly affects the sample's scores, with the high educated people scoring significantly higher than the low educated respondents. Also age group is a factor, which can affect people's human rights awareness. It was also found that mass media which includes TV, radio and internet is the most helpful source of knowledge regarding human rights among the people.

Through this study it was found that people do not have much knowledge about the basic concepts and application of human rights yet they have good knowledge of human rights violations. Human rights education among people can play an important role to make the people aware about their basic rights. Once the people get to know about their rights nobody can exploit them which can further threaten to international peace and security. The study emphasizes the need to develop more aggressive and effective human rights education programs to ensure the proper dissemination and education of human rights among the people of Agra city. The dream of peace education can only be realized through the proper implementation of human rights education programs.

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The greatest challenges before humanity at the start of the 21st century are conflict, violence, terrorism, and war along with their terrible consequences of poverty, disease, despair, environmental destruction, and poor leadership. Religious fanaticism, insecurity, unemployment, illiteracy, fear, depression and dejection have been some of the primary causes of terrorist activities in the world. These challenges are present at all levels of human life—family, school, community, society, and globally. While considerable resources have always been and still are spent to offset the costly ravages of conflict, violence, and war and to pay for the high price of military defence and security measures, there are relatively few programs dedicated to a systematic, sustained plan of action to educate children and youth, create families, and build communities in ways that reflect the principles of peace. Paradoxically, our greatest opportunity at this time in history is the fact that we have sufficient resources to create a universal civilization of peace—united and diverse, equal and just, prosperous and benevolent,

scientifically progressive and spiritually enlightened, technologically advanced and environmentally healthy.

Since the early decades of the 20th century, “peace education” programs around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality, among others (Brabeck, K. (2001). Some have also addressed spiritual dimensions of inner harmony, or synthesized a number of the foregoing issues into programs on world citizenship. While academic discourse on the subject has increasingly recognized the need for a broader, more holistic approach to peace education, a review of field-based projects reveals that three variations of peace education are most common: conflict resolution training, democracy education, and human rights education. Human rights education “faces continual elaboration, a significant theory-practice gap and frequent challenge as to its validity”^[1]. In one practitioner’s view: “Human rights education does not work in communities fraught with conflict unless it is part of a comprehensive approach... In fact, such education can be counterproductive and lead to greater conflict if people become aware of rights which are not realized. In this respect, human rights education can increase the potential for conflict”^[2]. To prevent these outcomes, many such programs are now being combined with aspects of conflict resolution and democracy education schools of thought, along with training in non-violent action. Since the early decades of this century, —peace education programs around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality, among others (Groff and Smoker, 1996; Harris, 1999; Johnson, 1998, Swee-Hin, 1997). Some have also addressed spiritual dimensions of inner harmony, or synthesized a number of the foregoing issues into programs on world citizenship. Human rights education can make a difference in facilitating the process of moving from war to peace.

Peace education programs centered on human rights awareness-raising typically focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which all individual members of the human race can exercise their personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity. Approaches of this type familiarize participants with the international covenants and declarations of the United Nations system; train students to recognize violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and promote tolerance, solidarity, autonomy and self-affirmation at the individual and collective levels (Brabeck, 2001). Human rights education —faces continual elaboration, a significant theory-practice gap and frequent challenge as to its validity (Swee-Hin, 1997). In one practitioner’s view: —Human rights education does not work in communities fraught with conflict unless it is part of a comprehensive approach.... In fact, such education can be counterproductive and lead to greater conflict if people become aware of rights which are not realized. In this respect, human rights education can increase the potential for conflict (Parlevliet, n.d.). To prevent these outcomes, many such programs are now being combined with aspects of conflict resolution and democracy education schools of thought, along with training in non-violent action.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights confirms the nations' commitment to the UN Charter on the promotion and protection of human rights. It is now recognized as one of the most important documents in the history of humankind and can be found in the constitutions of countries that became independent after World War II. The UN General Assembly recommends that the text be distributed in schools. NGOs are asked to bring it to the attention of their members. How many people have actually read this short, epoch-making declaration? How many know of the International Bill of Human Rights, which consists of the declaration; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights? The answer is: very few. NGOs are often the first to bring human rights problems to the attention of the UN and the international community. Schools offer an important means of fashioning a human rights culture, as do research institutions, as they provide in-depth information on specific human rights issues.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. So stated Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This is what the Indians have been preaching since times immemorial as it has become the immemorial customs of our nation. Human Rights are a fundamental value. There is a long Indian tradition of standing up for the weak against abuse by the strong. Upholding human rights values in every aspect is firmly in our tradition. The “Great Mauryan emperor Ashoka the great renounced the path of violence after the massacre in the war of Kalinga” The “Great Moghul,” Akbar the Great granted religious minorities legal status in his realm, One of the most influential was Mahatma Gandhi’s movement to free his native India from British rule. It is the core of our Constitution and the heart of our national interest today. But the values that we stand for – freedom, human rights, the rule of law – are all universal values. Given the choice, people all over the world want them. But it is regretting that India who was once looked up by whole world as the pioneer of these values is now grovelling in lowly dust of atrocities and human rights abuse. Human rights abuse is sadly a reality in Indian society, it is not just an affront to the values of tolerance, freedom and justice that underpin our society. It is also a tragic waste of human potential.

The Indian Constitution and Human Rights

The Constitution shapes the country's concept of human rights. The Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of the State policy are concrete steps toward the realization of human rights. Whereas basic objectives have been defined in the Preamble, the protection of human freedom and liberties are emphasized in Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. The rights of the child have been given the greatest priority. Since rights and duties are inseparable, Fundamental Duties (Article 51) are also imperative. These provisions epitomize the collective will and aspiration of all Indians. The following provisions in Constitution safeguard human rights:

- equality before the law (Article 14);
- nondiscrimination on ground of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth (Article 15);
- equality of opportunity (Article 16);
- freedom of speech, expression, assembly, association, movement, residence, acquisition, and disposition of property, practice of any profession, carrying out any occupation, trade, or business (Article 19);
- prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labor (Article 23);
- prohibition of labor in case of children below 14 years (Article 24);
- freedom of religion (Article 25);
- no provision for religious instruction in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds (Article 28);
- conservation of language, scripts, and culture (Article 29 [1]);
- right of minorities to administer educational institutions (Article 30);
- State guarantee of social order (Article 38 [1], Directive Principles of State Policy);
- adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work for both men and women, non-abuse of health of the worker, opportunity for children to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity (Article 39, Directive Principles of State Policy);
- right to work, education, and public assistance in specific cases (Article 41, Directive Principles of State Policy);
- provision for free and compulsory education of children up to 14 years of age (Article 45, Directive Principles of State Policy); and
- ensuring education and economic development of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other weaker sections of society (Article 46, Directive Principles of State Policy).

The importance of human rights education hardly requires any over emphasis. It has a crucial role in preventing human rights violations from occurring. The United Nations proclaimed that human rights education is “, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through imparting knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes”. These efforts are designed to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, facilitate the full development of human personality, sense of dignity, promote understanding, respect, gender equality and friendship to enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, and further activities for maintenance of peace.

Human rights education, training and public information are, therefore, necessary and essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among the communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. Through the learning of human rights as a way of life, fundamental change could be brought about to eradicate poverty, ignorance, prejudices, and discrimination based on sex, caste, religion, and disability and other status amongst the people.

The Need for Human rights Education

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Human rights Education in India

Human rights Education in India

It may be said that in India that the content of human rights education is not different to what was

taught by way of religion, be it Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. There is lot of truth in that statement. The quintessence of human rights is also the basic essence of all religions, Love, compassion, loving kindness are the same. However, while teaching religions we confined the obligations arising from these doctrines only to their followers. Human rights could bring in a universal aspect to moral and ethical education. And we in our divided societies are in great need of this On the other hand in the context of rapid secularization we could still retain a basic common ground for respect for each other. We could still be our brothers' keepers and withstand value systems which only promote selfish ways of life.

Indian textbooks barely mention human rights. Indirect references to human rights are included in the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India and in civics and history textbooks. Most universities in India do not offer human rights education, although some have three-month to one-year postgraduate courses on human rights. Section 12(h) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, requires the Commission "to spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promote awareness .The National Human Rights Commission of India and many NGOs have launched a countrywide public information campaign for human rights. It aims to make everyone more conscious of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and better equipped to stand up for them. At the same time, the campaign spreads knowledge of the means which exist at the international and national levels to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Human rights and fundamental rights are the two faces of a coin. The end of the boundary of fundamental rights marks the beginning of the domain of human rights. A fundamental right is often referred to the rights, a person has according to a country's constitution. These fundamental rights are usually seen as natural human rights. Fundamental rights enumerated from Article 14 to 32 in Part III of the Indian constitution, whenever violated seeks help of human rights for enforcement. The United Nations was created to protect future generations from the curse of war and to reiterate the belief in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and value of the human being, and in the equality of men and women. The end of the Cold War leads us to a single global conception of human rights. The UN's message is: Know your human rights. People who know their rights stand the best chance of realizing them. Knowledge of human rights is the best defense against their violation. Learning about one's rights builds respect for the rights of others and points the way to more tolerant and peaceful societies. Vast numbers of people are still unaware of their rights. While laws and institutions could in many cases defend them, people must first know where they may turn for help. Through this paper an attempt has been made to check the effect of various variables like education, occupation, source of awareness on the knowledge and attitude towards human rights.

Through this paper an attempt has been made to assess human rights awareness of a selected sample of people in order to draw lessons for the country's ongoing human rights education and awareness programs. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the survey will undoubtedly enhance and strengthen human rights education programs in the country. A carefully conducted survey of this kind can easily and empirically assess several important areas in relation to human rights education, including awareness, knowledge. These areas are related to various objectives of human rights education. The survey, however, assessed mainly the first objective of human rights education: raising the level of human rights awareness. What is human rights awareness? It is people's perception that they have rights and that they have them because they are human beings irrespective of any social or other distinction. It also means the peoples' ability to easily distinguish various aspects of human rights—to life, security, religion, expression, education, etc.—and that they understand the importance of these aspects in relation to human survival and dignity.

METHODOLOGY

Method

Survey method was used to collect data. People individually answered a survey questionnaire.

Objectives of the Study

1. To check the level of awareness regarding human rights among the people of Agra city.
2. To assess the **Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts** among the people of U.P in regards to their gender, occupation, education and age groups.
3. To assess the **Knowledge of human rights violations** among the people of U.P in regards to their gender, occupation, education and age groups.
4. To check the most useful source of knowledge on Human rights.

Hypothesis of the Study

1. People have average knowledge about human rights.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female regarding Human Rights Awareness.
3. There is no significant difference between businessmen and servicemen regarding Human Rights Awareness.
4. There is no significant difference between low educated and high educated people regarding Human Rights awareness.
5. There is no significant difference between younger age group and older age group people regarding Human Rights awareness.

6. Mass media is an important source of knowledge on human rights.

Sample

A sample of 80 people, age ranged from 25 to 45, were selected from Agra city. Subjects consisted of 40 males and 40 females. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The data was collected using survey method.

Statistical Tool

A structured interview scheduled with close ended questions was prepared by the researcher and was used for data collection in the present study. The Human Rights Awareness Survey Questionnaire (HRASQ) has 31 items divided into the following categories:

- 1. Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts 20 items
- 2. Knowledge of human rights violations 11 items
- 3. Source of knowledge on human rights 01 items

Statistical Technique

Percentage, Mean, SD, ANOVA was employed to find out the difference in various aspects from the level of Human rights awareness including gender, occupation and education level in each aspect.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Table No. 1. Number and percentage of people falling under different levels of Human Rights Awareness

Dimension		Low <= 20	High 21 - 40	Total
Level of score limit Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts of people of Agra city	No.	60	20	80
	%	75%	25%	100%
Level of score limit Knowledge of human rights violations of people of Agra city	No.	35	45	80
	%	43.8%	56.2%	100%
Total Human Rights Awareness	No.	52	28	80
	%	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%

Table No.1 shows number and percentage of people of Agra city under different levels (Low and High) of awareness regarding Human Rights Awareness. It was found that the number of people with low level (75%) of awareness regarding **Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts** is more while more people (56.2%) have **Knowledge of human rights violations**. In total there is low level of knowledge about Human Rights is more among the people.

In addition, an attempt has been made to find the differences between male and female, businessmen and servicemen, low educated and high educated regarding the level of human rights awareness for two sub factors (**Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts and Knowledge of human rights violations**) of the Human Rights Awareness Survey Questionnaire as mentioned before.

Table No. 2. Significance of difference regarding Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts and Knowledge of human rights violations between Male and Female

S.N.	Dimensions	Gender	N	%	Mean	SD	F-value
1	Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts	Male	40	49.0	18.725	2.385	1.874
		Female	40	51.0	19.500	2.669	
2	Knowledge of human rights violations	Male	40	49.5	05.650	0.975	0.290
		Female	40	50.5	05.775	1.097	
Total Human Rights Awareness		Male	40	49.1	24.375	2.914	1.581
		Female	40	50.9	25.275	3.464	

Tables No. 2 indicate that there is not a significant difference between male and female in both the sub factors of Human Rights awareness. In sub factors like 'Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts' Female got higher mean value than Male. In sub factors like 'Knowledge of human rights violations' female scored higher mean value than male. Which indicate that in Female have more awareness about Human Rights. From the Table it is found that the overall **Human Rights** awareness scores indicates that there is no significant difference between Male and Female (F=1.581), therefore the hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Table No. 3. Significance of difference regarding Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts and Knowledge of human rights violations between Business men and Service men

S.N.	Dimensions	Occupation	N	%	Mean	SD	F-value
1	Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts	Businessmen	40	47.7	18.250	2.284	10.259
		Servicemen	40	52.3	19.975	2.526	
2	Knowledge of human rights violations	Businessmen	40	44.6	05.100	0.708	43.052
		Servicemen	40	55.4	06.325	0.944	
Total Human Rights Awareness		Businessmen	40	47.0	23.350	2.684	21.163
		Servicemen	40	53.0	26.300	3.039	

Tables No. 3 indicate that there was a significant difference between Businessmen and Servicemen. In

the sub factors of people **Human Rights** awareness questionnaire, namely, ‘Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts’ (F = 10.259) and ‘Knowledge of human rights violations’ (F= 43.052), Servicemen scored significantly higher mean value than Businessmen. Total **Human Rights Awareness** scores indicates that there is significant difference between Businessmen and Servicemen (F=21.163), therefore the hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Table No. 4. Significant of difference regarding Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts and Knowledge of human rights violations among Low educated and High educated people

S.N.	Dimensions	Education Level	N	%	Mean	SD	F-value
1	Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts	Low	40	48.3	18.450	1.852	05.743
		High	40	51.7	19.775	2.965	
2	Knowledge of human rights violations	Low	40	46.8	05.350	0.863	11.099
		High	40	53.2	06.075	1.071	
Total Human Rights Awareness		Low	40	47.9	23.800	2.493	08.962
		High	40	52.1	25.850	3.541	

There was a significant difference between **Low educated and High educated people** on the sub factors of people **Human Rights Awareness**, namely, ‘Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts’ (F=5.743) and ‘Knowledge of human rights violations’ (F=11.099). **High educated people** scored significantly higher than **Low educated people**. Hence it could be concluded that the education level is significantly related to people’s Human Rights awareness. Therefore the hypothesis 4 is rejected.

Table No. 5. Significant of difference regarding Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts and Knowledge of human rights violations among different Age group

S.N.	Dimensions	Age Group	N	%	Mean	SD	F-value
1	Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts	<= 35	51	66.2	19.843	2.625	13.409
		36 - 45	29	33.8	17.827	1.814	
2	Knowledge of human rights violations	<= 35	51	67.6	6.058	1.027	19.495
		36 - 45	29	32.4	5.103	0.724	
Total Human Rights Awareness		<= 35	51	66.5	25.902	3.182	19.510
		36 - 45	29	33.5	22.931	2.282	

There was a significant difference between **different age groups** on the sub factors of people **Human Rights Awareness**, namely, ‘Knowledge and Application of Human Rights Concepts’ (F=13.409) and ‘Knowledge of human rights violations’ (F=19.495). **Younger age group** scored significantly higher than **older age group**. Hence it could be concluded that the age is one of the factors which is significantly related to people’s Human Rights awareness. Therefore the hypothesis 5 is rejected.

Table No. 6. Important source of knowledge on Human Rights

S. N.	Important source of knowledge on Human Rights	No. of Responses	%
1	School/College	12	15
2	Newspaper/Magazine	26	32
3	TV/Radio/Internet	31	38
4	Other	11	13
Total		80	100

Most respondents identified the TV/Radio/Internet (38.8%, in all variables) as the most important source of knowledge on human rights followed by respondents (32.5%) who was considered newspapers/magazines to be most important source in creating human rights awareness, while education in school/college were considered to be most important in creating human rights by (15%) respondents. Some respondents (13.8%) reported all the three not important sources creating awareness regarding human rights among them. They reported their own experiences/personal discussions/family is most important in creating human rights awareness among them.

CONCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The study found that the number of people with average level of human rights awareness (65.0%) is more than the people with high level of human rights awareness (35.0%). Result indicated that there is no significant difference between male and female in their level of **Human Rights** awareness. Thus gender is not a factor, which affects their human rights awareness. Occupation is a significant factor in the respondents’ performance. Between Businessmen and Servicemen, the latter significantly performed better in the test than the former. Education level also significantly affected the sample’s human rights awareness scores, with the High educated people scoring significantly higher than the low educated respondents. Also age group is a factor, which can affect people’s human rights awareness. Mass media also playing an important role in spreading knowledge

regarding human rights among the people of Agra city. The study emphasizes the need to develop human rights education packages for the people of Agra city. A more aggressive and effective human rights education program is necessary to ensure the proper dissemination and education of human rights among the people of Agra city. Through this study it was also found that people do not have much knowledge about the basic concepts and application of human rights yet they have good knowledge of human rights violations. This includes the commitment of school officials to propagate and espouse the principles of UDHR, and making sure that they are taught during the school year. Training of teachers in handling human rights, discussions, including making them understand the importance of human rights education in maintaining quality life, is necessary. Teaching methods should emphasize the application/relevance of human rights to daily life as lived by the respondents in their respective milieus. Human rights concepts that the people lack knowledge of should be given more emphasis. These are concepts on the inherent quality of human rights and on the responsibility that goes with the exercise of one's rights, among others. The ambivalence of teachers in teaching human rights should be looked into. Intensive teacher training together with clear policies and administrative support should be put in place. Along with this NGOs, social workers, mass media also need to come forward to give the proper knowledge to the people about the human rights concepts and the application procedure with real life situations. Mass media can play an important role in this as it can reach to a large no. of people within less time. Different lectures, conferences, seminars, workshops need to be organized to spread the knowledge of human rights among the people. Different activities at school/college level can be organized like essay competition, speech competition, debate to promote human rights among the students. This will surely help people to combat with the situation of third world war which is further threatening to human peaceful existence.

Over the last five decades, the process of internationalization and globalization of the concept of human rights has generated the movement "All Human Rights for All." In a complex country such as India, violations of human rights at all levels necessitate human rights education at all school levels in general and teacher education in particular. Hence, human rights education should find its rightful place in the school curriculum, teacher training courses--pre- and in-service, textbooks, supplementary reading materials, educational policies, and school administration. Human rights education must exert its influence from early childhood education onward and through a broad range of disciplines to build a human rights culture. Hence, greater commitment from all sectors and preparation of a sound, realistic plan of action can help us achieve human rights education for all and transform the human rights movement into a mass movement to achieve a better social order and peaceful coexistence. Indeed, this is one of the greatest challenges in the 21st century.

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