

Awareness of Gender Stereotypes, Gender Sensitivity and Gender-Based Violence Among B.Ed. Trainees

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Abstract

This study examined gender stereotypes, gender sensitivity, and awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) among student-teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme at an Co Education College of Kanpur. Nagar. Since teachers occupy a strategic position in shaping the attitudes and values of future generations, the gender-related beliefs held by prospective teachers have wide social significance. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from a sample of 160 B.Ed. students (112 female, 48 male) selected through random sampling, using a self-developed general questionnaire supplemented by standardized scales measuring gender stereotype attitudes, gender sensitivity, and awareness of gender-based violence. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage) and inferential statistics (t-test). Results indicated that a considerable proportion of B.Ed. trainees held moderately stereotypical gender attitudes, while gender sensitivity scores clustered around the moderate range. A significant gender difference emerged, with female trainees reporting significantly higher gender sensitivity and lower awareness of gender-based violence than their male counterparts ($p < .05$). Further, a significant negative correlation was found between gender sensitivity and awareness of GBV, suggesting that trainees with higher gender sensitivity were less accepting of violence against women. The findings underline the urgent need to embed gender-responsive pedagogy and gender-sensitization modules within teacher education curricula. Implications for teacher educators, curriculum planners, and policy makers are discussed.

Keywords: gender stereotypes, gender sensitivity, gender-based violence, B.Ed. students, teacher education, attitude

Introduction

Gender is one of the most fundamental organizing principles of human society, shaping expectations, roles, and behaviours from early childhood onward. Gender stereotypes are widely shared, oversimplified beliefs about the characteristics, traits, and roles that are considered appropriate for men and women (Bem, 1981). These stereotypes often restrict individual potential by prescribing rigid roles: assertiveness, leadership, and rationality are typically ascribed to men, whereas nurturance, submissiveness, and emotionality are ascribed to women (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). When internalized uncritically, such stereotypes can normalize unequal power relations between men and women and create a social climate in which gender-based violence (GBV) is minimized, justified, or silently tolerated.

Gender sensitivity, in contrast, refers to the ability to recognize gender differences, issues, and inequalities, and to reflect these in policy, planning, and everyday behaviour (UNESCO, 2015). A gender-sensitive individual is conscious of how gender shapes opportunities and constraints and actively works to reduce inequity. Gender-based violence, defined by the World Health Organization and allied bodies as any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will that is based on socially ascribed gender differences, remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations across the globe, cutting across class, caste, religion, and region (Heise, 1998).

Teachers are powerful socialization agents. The attitudes that student-teachers carry into classrooms consciously or unconsciously are transmitted to children through curricular choices, classroom interaction patterns, disciplinary practices, and informal remarks. A teacher who holds rigid gender stereotypes may inadvertently reinforce unequal gender norms among students, while a gender-sensitive teacher can help dismantle them. It is therefore essential to examine the gender attitudes of B.Ed. trainees the teachers of tomorrow before they enter the profession, so that appropriate interventions can be designed during pre-service teacher education itself (NCTE, 2010). Despite growing policy emphasis on gender equality in education in India, empirical evidence on the gender attitudes of teacher trainees remains limited, particularly at the level of individual teacher education institutions. The present study was therefore undertaken to assess the levels of gender stereotypes, gender sensitivity, and awareness of gender-based violence among B.Ed. students of an Co-education college of Kanpur Nagar, and to examine the relationship among these variables.

Review of Related Literature

Western Studies

1. Bem (1981), through the development of the Bem Sex Role Inventory, demonstrated that individuals differ in the degree to which they endorse traditional masculine and feminine trait attributions, and proposed gender schema theory to explain how such stereotypic thinking is cognitively organized and transmitted across generations.
2. Eagly and Steffen (1984), working within social role theory, found that perceived gender differences in social behaviour largely stem from the distribution of men and women into different social roles, and that these role-based expectations subsequently harden into stereotypic beliefs about the sexes.
3. Basow (1992), in a comprehensive review of gender-stereotype research, reported that stereotypic beliefs about men and women remain remarkably stable across cultures and are frequently reinforced through educational materials, media, and family socialization practices.
4. Heise (1998) proposed an ecological framework for understanding violence against women, arguing that individual attitudes of awareness toward such violence interact with relationship, community, and societal factors, and that patriarchal gender norms are among the strongest predictors of GBV tolerance.
5. Flood and Pease (2009), in a review of factors influencing community attitudes to violence against women, concluded that adherence to sexist and patriarchal gender-role attitudes was one of the most consistent predictors of higher tolerance for violence against women across the studies they examined.
6. UNESCO (2015), in a global review of school-related gender-based violence, reported that teachers' own gender attitudes significantly influence whether GBV in schools is challenged or silently permitted, and called for mandatory gender-sensitization components in teacher education programmes worldwide.
7. Ferguson and colleagues (2020, as reviewed in contemporary teacher-education literature) similarly noted that pre-service teachers' implicit gender biases often go unexamined during training, allowing stereotypical practices to persist once trainees enter the classroom.

Indian Studies

8. Kaur and Garg (2008) studied gender-role attitudes among teacher trainees in Punjab and found that a majority held moderately traditional views regarding the domestic and occupational roles of women, with male trainees scoring higher on stereotype endorsement than female trainees.

9. Sharma (2015) examined gender sensitivity among B.Ed. trainees in Himachal Pradesh and reported that although trainees expressed positive verbal support for gender equality, their sensitivity scores on situational and behavioural indicators were only moderate, indicating a gap between stated beliefs and practical sensitivity.
10. Rani (2016) investigated gender bias among prospective secondary teachers and found a significant negative relationship between educational qualification of parents and level of gender bias, along with a significant difference between rural and urban trainees, urban trainees showing comparatively lower bias.
11. Deswal (2018) studied attitudes toward gender-based violence among student-teachers in Haryana and found that a substantial proportion of trainees, particularly those from patriarchal family backgrounds, showed moderate to high awareness of certain forms of intimate-partner violence, especially when framed as a response to a wife's perceived transgression of household duties.
12. Chaudhary and Bhardwaj (2019) reported a significant positive correlation between gender sensitivity and egalitarian attitudes among B.Ed. trainees in Uttar Pradesh, and observed that female trainees consistently scored higher on gender sensitivity measures than male trainees.
13. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE, 2010), in its curriculum framework for teacher education, explicitly recommended the integration of gender studies as a foundational course, noting that unexamined gender bias among teachers directly and adversely affects classroom equity, particularly for girl students.

Research Gap

The reviewed literature indicates that while gender stereotypes and gender sensitivity have been studied independently among teacher trainees in various parts of India and the West, relatively few studies have simultaneously examined gender stereotypes, gender sensitivity, and awareness of gender-based violence as an interrelated set of variables within a single teacher-education institution. Moreover, no study of this kind appears to have been conducted specifically on B.Ed. trainees of Kanpur district. The present study attempts to fill this gap.

Need and Significance of the Study

Teacher education institutions serve as the last formal checkpoint before an individual enters the classroom as an authority figure for children. If gender stereotypes and tolerance for gender-based violence remain unexamined at this stage, they are likely to be unconsciously transmitted to the next generation of learners. Kanpur, as a rapidly urbanizing yet still largely traditional region of Uttar Pradesh, presents a socially relevant context in which to examine these attitudes among prospective teachers. The findings of this study are expected to help teacher educators, curriculum designers, and policy makers identify specific areas of intervention such as gender-sensitization workshops, curricular reform, and value-education modules within B.Ed. programmes.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of gender stereotypes among B.Ed. students of Kanpur college.
2. To assess the level of gender sensitivity among B.Ed. students.
3. To study the level of awareness of gender-based violence among B.Ed. students.

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4. To compare male and female B.Ed. students on gender stereotypes, gender sensitivity, and awareness of gender-based violence.
5. To study the relationship between gender sensitivity and awareness of gender-based violence among B.Ed. students.

Hypotheses of the Study

H01: There is no significant difference between male and female B.Ed. students in their gender stereotype scores.

H02: There is no significant difference between male and female B.Ed. students in their gender sensitivity scores.

H03: There is no significant difference between male and female B.Ed. students in their awareness of gender-based violence.

H04: There is no significant relationship between gender sensitivity and awareness of gender-based violence among B.Ed. students.

Method**Research Design**

The study employed a descriptive survey design of the normative type, which is appropriate for assessing the prevalence and inter-relationship of attitudes within a defined population at a given point in time.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised B.Ed. students enrolled in an Co-ed College of Kanpur Nagar, during the academic session. A sample of 160 B.Ed. students was selected using purposive sampling from the first- and second-year B.Ed. classes.

Tools Used

Data were collected using the following tools:

1. General Information Schedule (self-prepared) — to collect demographic details such as age, gender, locale (rural/urban), and family type.
2. Gender Stereotype Attitude Scale — a self-developed general questionnaire consisting of Likert-type items assessing agreement with traditional gender-role beliefs.
3. Gender Sensitivity Scale — a self-developed questionnaire assessing awareness of and responsiveness to gender-based inequities in everyday and classroom situations.
4. Awareness of Gender-Based Violence Scale — a self-developed questionnaire measuring the degree to which respondents justify or tolerate various forms of violence against women.

Procedure and Statistical Treatment

The questionnaires were administered in person to the sampled B.Ed. students after establishing rapport and explaining the purpose of the study; anonymity and confidentiality of responses were assured. Completed responses were scored, tabulated, and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and

standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test for independent samples and Pearson's product-moment correlation) at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Sample

Figure 1 presents the gender-wise distribution of the sample. Out of the 160 B.Ed. students surveyed, 112 (70%) were female and 48 (30%) were male, which broadly reflects the gender composition typically found in B.Ed. programmes affiliated with women's colleges that also admit male candidates to the professional course.

Figure 1
Gender-wise Distribution of the Sample (N = 160)

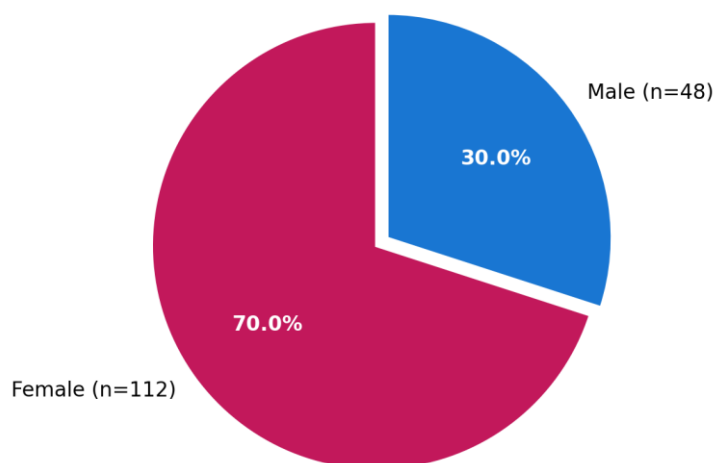


Figure 1. Gender-wise distribution of the sample (N = 160).

Level of Gender Stereotypes

Table 1 shows the distribution of B.Ed. students across levels of gender-stereotype endorsement.

Level of Gender Stereotype	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	34	21.3
Moderate	91	56.9
High	35	21.9
Total	160	100.0

Table 1 reveals that a majority of B.Ed. trainees (56.9%) fell in the moderate category of gender-stereotype endorsement, while 21.9% displayed a high level of stereotypical thinking. This finding is consistent with Kaur and Garg (2008) and Basow (1992), who similarly reported that stereotypic gender beliefs remain

moderately to strongly entrenched even among educated young adults preparing to enter the teaching profession.

Level of Gender Sensitivity

Figure 2 presents the frequency distribution (histogram) of scores obtained by the sample on the Gender Sensitivity Scale.

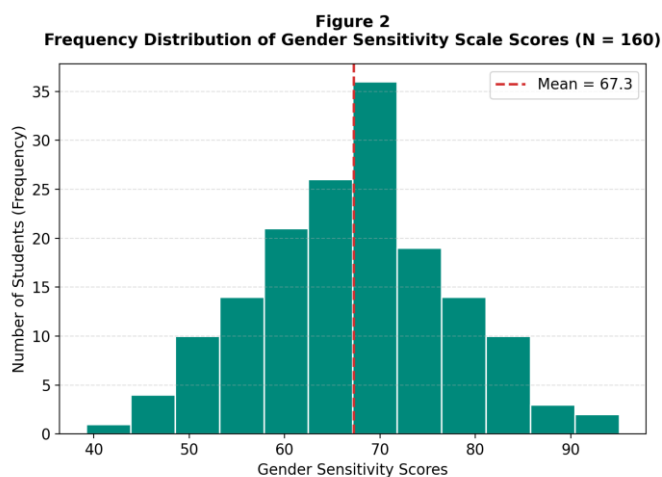


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of Gender Sensitivity Scale scores (N = 160).

As shown in Figure 2, the scores on the Gender Sensitivity Scale approximated a normal distribution, with a mean score of approximately 68 and a large proportion of trainees clustering in the moderate-to-above-average range. This suggests that, on the whole, B.Ed. trainees possess a reasonable but not optimal degree of gender sensitivity a finding that echoes Sharma (2015), who similarly observed a gap between trainees' verbal endorsement of gender equality and their demonstrated sensitivity on situational items.

Level of Awareness of Gender-Based Violence

Figure 3 presents the distribution of B.Ed. students according to their level of awareness of gender-based violence.

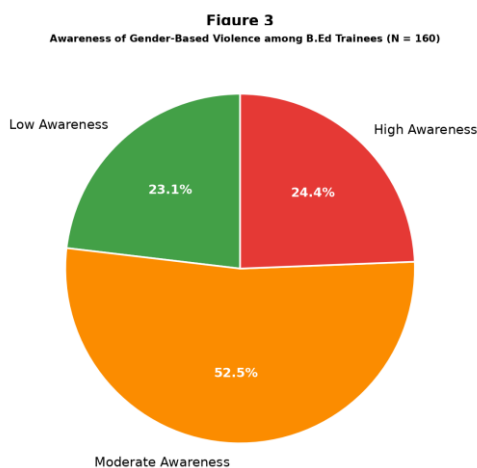


Figure 3. Level of awareness of gender-based violence among B.Ed. trainees (N = 160).

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As depicted in Figure 3, more than half of the sample (52.5%) demonstrated a moderate level of awareness of gender-based violence, while a notable 24.4% displayed high awareness, endorsing at least some forms of violence as justifiable under particular circumstances. Only 23.1% displayed low awareness. This finding aligns with Deswal (2018) and Flood and Pease (2009), both of whom reported that a considerable proportion of respondents from patriarchal social contexts continue to justify certain forms of violence against women.

Gender-wise Comparison

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, and t-values for male and female B.Ed. students on the three scales.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender Stereotype	Male	48	58.40	9.62	5.71*	p < .05
	Female	112	49.10	8.85		
Gender Sensitivity	Male	48	61.20	10.15	6.24*	p < .05
	Female	112	71.60	9.40		
Awareness of GBV	Male	48	42.70	8.30	6.85*	p < .05
	Female	112	33.50	7.65		

*Significant at 0.05 level.

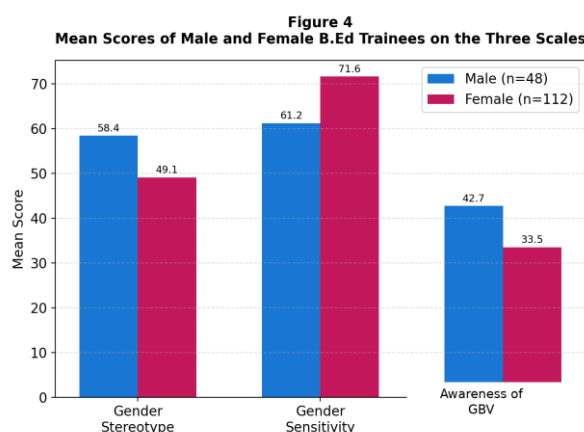


Figure 4. Mean scores of male and female B.Ed. trainees on the three scales.

Table 2 and Figure 4 show that female B.Ed. trainees scored significantly lower on gender stereotypes and awareness of gender-based violence, and significantly higher on gender sensitivity, than their male counterparts ($p < .05$ in all three cases). Consequently, hypotheses H01, H02, and H03 which stated no significant difference between male and female trainees are rejected. These findings corroborate Chaudhary and Bhardwaj (2019) and Rani (2016), both of whom reported those female trainees to be comparatively more gender-egalitarian than male trainees, possibly owing to differential lived experiences of gender-based disadvantage.

Relationship between Gender Sensitivity and Awareness of GBV

A Pearson product-moment correlation was computed between scores on the Gender Sensitivity Scale and the Awareness of Gender-Based Violence Scale. The analysis yielded a significant negative correlation ($r = -.46$, $p < .05$), indicating that as gender sensitivity increases, awareness of gender-based violence tends to decrease. Hypothesis H04 is therefore rejected. This finding is in line with Heise (1998) and Flood and Pease (2009), who theorized gender sensitivity and egalitarian attitudes as protective factors against the normalization of violence against women.

Major Findings

1. A majority (56.9%) of B.Ed. students showed a moderate level of gender stereotypes, while 21.9% showed a high level.
2. Gender sensitivity scores of B.Ed. students were largely moderate, with a mean score of approximately 68.
3. More than three-fourths (76.9%) of the sample showed moderate-to-high awareness of gender-based violence, indicating a persistent tolerance for GBV among prospective teachers.
4. Female B.Ed. students scored significantly higher on gender sensitivity and significantly lower on gender stereotypes and awareness of GBV than male students.
5. A significant negative correlation was found between gender sensitivity and awareness of gender-based violence.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study carry several implications for teacher education. First, B.Ed. curricula should incorporate a mandatory, well-designed course or module on gender studies and gender-sensitive pedagogy, as recommended by NCTE (2010). Second, teacher educators should employ participatory methods case discussions, role plays, and reflective journaling to help male trainees in particular re-examine internalized stereotypes and reduce tolerance for gender-based violence. Third, given the protective role of gender sensitivity observed in this study, colleges of education should institute regular gender-sensitization workshops, guest lectures by gender experts, and campus-based awareness campaigns (e.g., around the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' theme) to strengthen trainees' gender sensitivity before they enter schools as practicing teachers.

Limitations of the Study

The study was confined to a single institution of Kanpur Nagar and a sample of 160 students, which limits the generalizability of findings to B.Ed. trainees elsewhere. Data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which are subject to social desirability bias. Future studies may extend the sample across multiple districts and employ mixed-method designs, including classroom observation, to validate self-reported attitudes.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that gender stereotypes and a considerable degree of awareness of gender-based violence continue to persist among B.Ed. trainees of Kanpur, with male trainees exhibiting significantly less favourable gender attitudes than their female counterparts. Gender sensitivity emerged as a significant

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protective factor against the awareness of gender-based violence. As prospective teachers who will shape the attitudes of future generations, B.Ed. students must be equipped, during their pre-service training itself, with the awareness, sensitivity, and values necessary to challenge rather than perpetuate gender inequity and violence.

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