

ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS GENDER SENSITIVITY IN THE SCHOOLS OF KOLKATA

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality in education has undergone many changes in the recent past. Gender sensitivity advocates for adjustment of behaviour by increasing awareness of issues related to gender equality. As an instrument of character building, teachers are the prime medium through which gender sensitivity can be established in society. The objectives of the present study were to find out the attitude of male and female school teachers towards gender sensitivity in government, government-aided, and private schools in urban and suburban areas. The present study employed a quantitative empirical research design. This study involved a descriptive survey method, which included a sample of 225 secondary school teachers randomly selected from 27 schools in Kolkata. Data were collected using a self-constructed attitude scale. The collected data were systematically tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in data analyses, SPSS 20 was used for data calculation, and MS Excel 2007 was used for graphical presentation. The results of the survey revealed that teachers lacked sufficient education specifically focusing on 'gender' as a separate topic. However, the majority demonstrated a strong desire to further their understanding of gender issues. Results showed that there was no significant relationship between male and female teachers, and urban and suburban teachers in their attitude towards gender sensitivity. It was also revealed that there existed significant differences among the attitude of government, government-aided, and private teachers in secondary schools. The present study showed that the status of teachers' attitude towards gender sensitivity was not equally distributed.

Keywords: Attitude, Gender, School, Sensitivity, Teacher

INTRODUCTION

Gender sensitivity calls for changes in behaviour towards raising awareness

of gender equality issues. The aim can be accomplished by implementing various awareness campaigns, training facilities, workshops, programmes, and similar initiatives. Gender sensitivity involves expanding awareness and changing the behaviour of individuals regarding gender (Kalra, Sumaiya, Kumar, Talwar, & Saini, 2021). It is an innovative device capable of increasing gender awareness by eliminating social stereotypes and traditional practices. Education acts as a tool capable of changing perceptions and attitudes (Chaven, 2016). A gender-sensitive approach provides an important avenue for change, demonstrating the ability to address the practical and strategic needs of boys, girls, and transgender people across nations and worldwide (Roy, 2021). Gender sensitivity refers to differences in how men and women engage in operations and business activities. It assesses their access to resources, controls over them, and involvement in leadership and decision-making roles. Gender sensitivity has the potential to act as a tool for reshaping individual's perspectives, fostering a new understanding of gender equality principles in the minds of young people (Baviskar, 2016). The imperative of raising awareness in society about gender issues is very important as it plays a vital role in establishing and ensuring equality between the roles, duties, opportunities, benefits, and expectations of men and women in society (Gure, 2016). Educational initiatives aimed at promoting gender awareness have the potential to act as a powerful and fundamental catalyst for reshaping student perspectives within the formal schooling system. Emphasis on breaking down ingrained stereotypes and patriarchal norms is crucial. Women must assert themselves and challenge patriarchal norms, highlighting the essential role they play in building a resilient, enlightened, and forward-thinking society (Barodia, 2015). Teachers act as catalysts for social change and play a central role in the educational journey. Initially, educators must undergo personal transformation and take full responsibility for encouraging wider societal changes regarding gender equality (Dammani, 2015). Teachers play an important role as catalysts for achieving gender equality. They can effectively promote gender equality by exemplifying progressive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours in their educational content, teaching methods, and both inside and outside the classroom (Barodia, 2015). Every teacher should undergo professional training to promote mutual understanding between the sexes. They should educate girls about their rights in society, primarily by teaching boys to respect all girls and women. Boys must learn how to interact with girls respectfully, both in school and in society (Gure, 2016). The present study helped to know the secondary school teachers' attitudes towards gender sensitivity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since teachers are the backbone of society, teachers have to play a leading role in establishing gender sensitivity in society. The growing lack of tolerance and empathy within contemporary society creates a damaging environment for

individual's relationships, family dynamics, and the communities around them. Hence, gender sensitivity has emerged as a top priority in contemporary discourse. It is important to note that gender sensitivity does not only advocate sensitivity to women but emphasizes equality for all genders. Gender discrimination can be eliminated by promoting gender sensitivity through education. Educational institutions are tasked with ensuring that all students are gender sensitive and are taught to respect each other without prejudice based on gender. Teachers must consistently receive support to maintain gender equality in their behaviour and engage in critical discussions on issues such as gender sensitivity, social violence, and sexual harassment during classroom activities. They should create awareness in the community that both boys and girls are equal. This study will strive to help teachers overcome the entrenched gender biases of schools and adopt a gender-sensitive attitude.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reeves and Baden (2000) found that women worldwide face an unequal treatment, and are denied rights, opportunities, and resources simply because of their gender. Jain (2003) highlighted the key challenge of gender mainstreaming, advocating a departure from a narrowly focused pectoral approach to education. Instead, there was a call to recognize the complex connections between education and various dimensions of human life in a broader sense. Duckworth and Seligman (2006) revealed that boys generally achieve better results on standardized tests, while girls generally achieve higher grades. Lumadi and Shongwe (2010) showed that the teachers lacked gender sensitivity in their teaching methods at the secondary education level. Both teachers and students face difficulties in understanding the concept of gender in education. Moreover, teachers did not demonstrate any awareness of gender issues nor did they make any deliberate efforts to address gender inequality in the classroom. UNESCO (2014) highlighted that teachers' attitudes, behaviour, and language have the potential to discourage girls and hinder their progress in the educational environment. Teacher training programmes suffer from a deficiency in providing gender sensitivity education. Teachers must undergo such training to understand and acknowledge their attitudes, perspectives, and assumptions about gender. This ensures that teacher-student interactions do not negatively affect the learning experience and achievement of both boys and girls. Vreckova, Paris, and Jeffrey (2020) showed that women demonstrated greater intercultural sensitivity in four of the five subjects. Yuden, Chuki, and Dorji (2020) indicated that there was a lack of sensitivity to gender in the teaching methods of teachers at the secondary education level. Both teachers and students face difficulties in understanding gender concepts in education. Teachers did not show any awareness of gender issues nor did they actively try to address gender inequality in the

classroom. Kalra et al. (2021) expressed that significant influences on gender sensitivity in both private and government CBSE-affiliated schools include gender-sensitive stakeholders, gender-neutral practices, and gender-inclusive capacity building. These are important elements that need to be focused on during gender sensitivity training programmes. De Jesus, Dorado, Biag, Durante, and Llames (2022) revealed that no significant correlations were observed between grade level and exposure to queer literature, or between gender and level of gender sensitivity. Niones (2022) revealed that there was no significant relationship between teachers' gender sensitivity attitudes towards their students and the aspects of gender sensitivity. Therefore, teachers were strongly advised to improve their training on gender sensitivity to effectively address gender-related issues in schools. In the review of past research, the present researchers did not explore teachers' attitude regarding gender sensitivity within secondary schools in Kolkata during their investigation. So, there was a gap in the area. Therefore, the investigators considered this study.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were taken into consideration for the study:

- O1:** To find out the attitude of male and female secondary school teachers towards gender sensitivity in schools.
- O2:** To find out the attitude of government, government-aided, and private secondary school teachers towards gender sensitivity in schools.
- O3:** To find out the attitude of urban and suburban secondary school teachers towards gender sensitivity in schools.
- O4:** To know the status of teachers' attitude towards gender sensitivity in secondary schools.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were postulated for the study:

- H01:** There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school teachers regarding their attitude towards gender sensitivity in schools.
- H02:** There is no significant difference among government, government-aided, and private secondary school teachers regarding their attitude towards gender sensitivity in schools.
- H03:** There is no significant difference between the urban and suburban secondary school teachers regarding their attitude towards gender sensitivity in schools.

RESEARCH QUESTION

RQ: What is the status of teachers' attitude towards gender sensitivity in secondary schools?

DELIMITATIONS

The present study was delimited to:

1. Secondary co-educational schools from Kolkata.
2. Secondary school teachers.
3. West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) only.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey method and empirical research design were employed for the study. The population of the study included all teachers of all the secondary schools in Kolkata. 27 secondary schools and 225 secondary school teachers (Male Teachers- 115, Female Teachers- 110, Government Teachers- 85, Government-aided Teachers- 112, Private Teachers- 28, & Urban Teachers- 185, Suburban Teachers- 40) were selected randomly for the present study. In this study, the investigators considered two types of variables. The first variable was attitude towards gender sensitivity which was the major variable and the second variables were gender (male & female), type of school (government, government-aided, & private), and location (urban & suburban) which were categorical variables. A closed-ended self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. This tool consisted of 20 items on a three-point Likert Scale. The response categories were provided namely, Agree, Neutral, and Disagree. These 14 items were positive (scores were awarded Agree-3, Neutral-2, and Disagree-1), and 6 items were negative (scores were awarded Agree-1, Neutral-2, and Disagree-3). To collect data, the investigators used a standardized tool namely, the Teachers' Attitude Scale towards Gender Sensitivity (TASTGS), which was developed by the researchers. The investigators collected data through field survey. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics (such as mean, SD, and percentile) and inferential statistics (independent-sample t-test and one-way ANOVA were tested at .05 level of significance) by SPSS 20 and graphical representations (bar graph) were done by MS Excel 2007 in this study.

Data Analyses and Interpretation

Testing of H01: There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school teachers regarding their attitude towards gender sensitivity in schools

Table 1: Mean Comparison of Attitude of Teacherstowards Gender Sensitivity in Secondary Schools: Gender

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>S_{ED}</i>	<i>t(223)</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Male</i>	115	47.30	4.07	0.86	0.55	1.57*	.12
<i>Female</i>	110	48.15	4.15				

*Not significant at .05 level

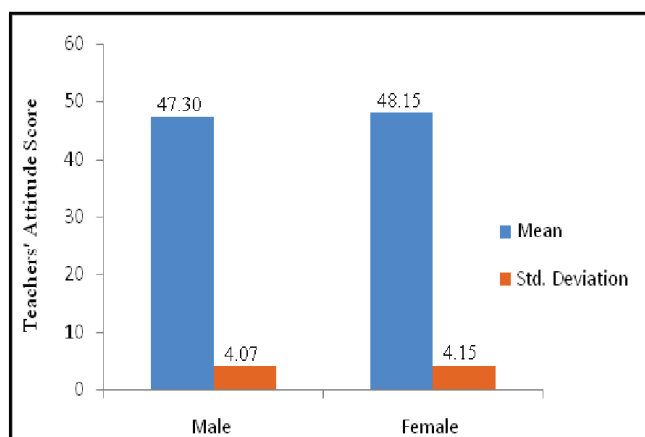
**Figure 1:** Bar Graph for Mean & Std. Deviation Score of Male and Female Teachers' Attitudetowards Gender Sensitivityin Secondary Schools

Table 1 revealed a non-significant mean differencebetween the male andfemale secondary school teachers on their attitude towards gender sensitivity with $t(223) = 1.57, p > .05$. Table 1 & figure 1 showed that male secondary school teachers exhibited lower attitude scores on gendersensitivity ($M = 47.30, SD = 4.07$) compared to the female school teachers ($M = 48.15, SD = 4.15$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was not rejected.

Testing of H02: There is no significant difference among government, government-aided, and private secondary school teachers regarding their attitude toward gender sensitivity in schools

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Scores on Attitude of Teachers towards Gender Sensitivity in Secondary Schools: Type of Schools

Type of School	N	M	SD
Government	85	48.89	4.39
Government-aided	112	47.07	3.89
Private	28	48.18	3.90
Total	225	47.72	4.12

Table 3: Mean Comparison of Attitude of Teachers towards Gender Sensitivity in Secondary Schools: Type of Schools

Source of Variances	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square Variance	F	p
Between Groups	103.34	2	51.69	3.10*	.05
Within Groups	3704.46	222	16.69		
Total	3807.80	224			

*Significant at .05 level

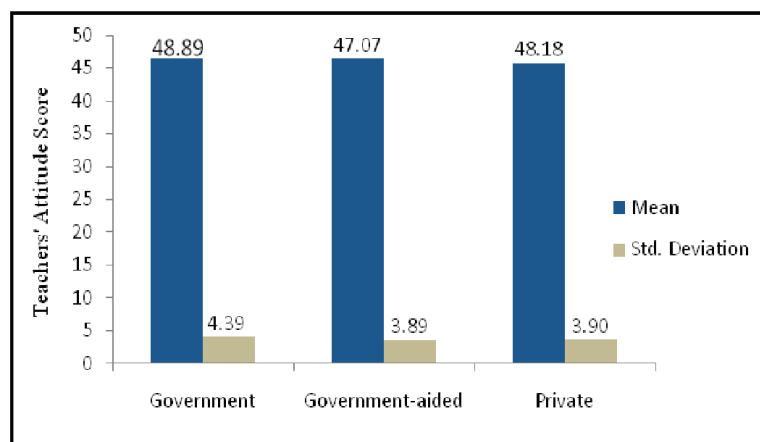


Figure 2: Bar Graph for Mean & Std. Deviation Score of Government, Government-aided, and Private Teachers' Attitude towards Gender Sensitivity in Secondary Schools

Table 3 revealed significant mean difference among the government, government-aided, and private secondary schools on their attitude towards gender sensitivity with $F(2,222) = 3.10$, $p < .05$. Table 2 & figure 2 showed that government secondary school teachers exhibited higher attitudes towards gender sensitivity ($M = 48.89$, $SD = 4.39$) compared to the government-aided secondary school teachers ($M = 47.07$, $SD = 3.89$) and private secondary school teachers ($M = 48.18$, $SD = 3.90$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected.

Test of H_0 3: There is no significant difference between urban and suburban secondary school teachers regarding their attitude towards gender sensitivity in schools.

Table 4: Mean Comparison of Attitude of Teacherstowards Gender Sensitivity in Secondary Schools: Location

<i>Gender</i>	N	M	SD	Mean Difference	SED	t(223)	p
<i>Urban</i>	185	47.55	3.98	0.92	0.72	1.29	.20
<i>Suburban</i>	40	48.48	4.70				

*Notsignificantat .05level

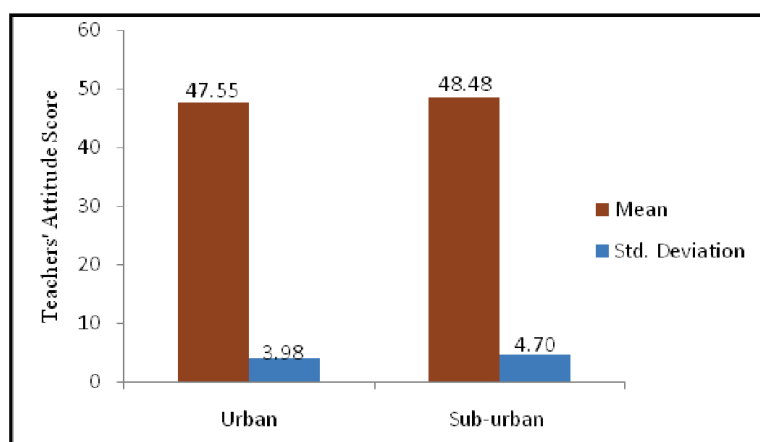


Figure 3: Bar Graph for Mean & Std. Deviation Score of Urban and Suburban Teachers' Attitude towards Gender Sensitivity in Secondary Schools

Table 4 revealed a non-significant mean difference between the urban and suburban secondary school teachers on their attitude towards gender sensitivity with $t(223) = 1.29$, $p > .05$. Table 4 & figure 3 showed that urban secondary school teachers exhibited lower attitude scores on gender sensitivity ($M = 47.55$, $SD = 3.98$) compared to the suburban school teachers ($M = 48.48$, $SD = 4.70$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was not rejected.

Exploration of RQ: What is the status of teachers' attitude towards gender sensitivity in secondary schools?

<i>Table5: Percentile Status for Teachers' Attitude towards Gender Sensitivity</i>				
<i>Percentiles</i>	<i>Raw Scores</i>	<i>No. of Teachers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Levels of Attitude towards Gender Sensitivity</i>
<i>P75 & Above</i>	51 & Above	68	30.22	High
<i>P25 to P75</i>	44 to 50	115	51.11	Moderate
<i>P25 & Below</i>	43 & Below	42	18.67	Low
<i>Total</i>		225	100	

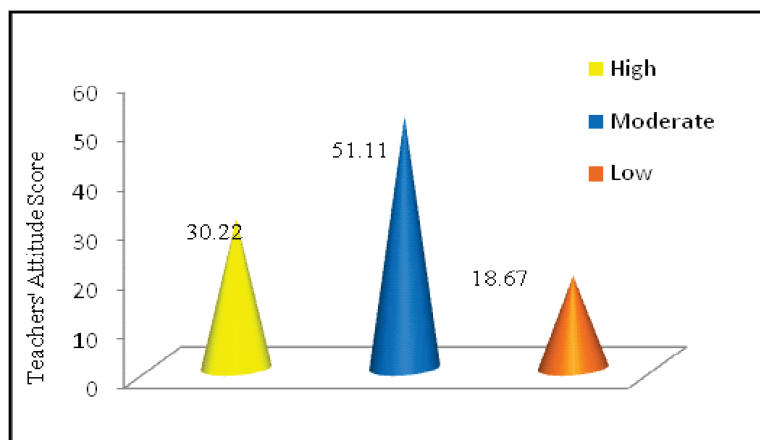


Figure 4: Bar Graph for Status of Teachers' Attitude towards Gender Sensitivity Table 5 and Figure 4 revealed that 30.22% of the samples (68 secondary school teachers) had the attitude of high level of gender sensitivity, 51.51% of the samples (115 secondary school teachers) had the attitude of moderate level of gender sensitivity, and 18.67% samples (42 secondary school teachers) had the attitude of low level of gender sensitivity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to H01, investigators found that there was a small difference in the mean value of male and female school teachers' attitude, but it was marginal. Thus, it was clear that both male secondary school teachers' and female secondary school teachers' attitude were equal towards gender sensitivity. According to H02, investigators also found that the mean value of government secondary school teachers' attitude was more than that of government-aided and private secondary school teachers' attitude towards gender sensitivity in schools. So, it was indicated that the attitude of government secondary school teachers was more positive in gender sensitivity as compared to the government-aided and private secondary school teachers in schools. According to H03, the mean value of suburban secondary teachers' attitude was more than that of urban secondary teachers' attitude. Hence, it was indicated that suburban secondary teachers' attitude were more positive towards gender sensitivity as compared to urban secondary teachers' attitude in schools. According to RQ, a maximum number of secondary school teachers revealed their attitude towards gender sensitivity was moderate, fair, and sound; the least no. of teachers revealed low and unfavourable attitude, and the rest of the teachers revealed high and most favourable attitude towards gender sensitivity.

The study revealed that male and female secondary school teachers' attitude towards gender sensitivity were the same. The results were similar to the findings of De Jesus et al. (2022) where they found gender was not a significant factor between grade level and exposure to queer literature, or between gender, and extent of gender

sensitivity. On the other hand, according to the study of Lumadi and Shongwe (2010) the secondary education level, teachers had demonstrated a deficiency in incorporating gender sensitivity in their teaching methods, thereby creating challenges for both educators and students to grasp the concept of gender in education. The investigators also found that there was a significant mean difference in their attitude towards gender sensitivity among government, government-aided, and private secondary schools. Similarly, Kalra et al. (2021) found that important factors influencing gender awareness in both private and government CBSE-affiliated schools include stakeholders who are gender-sensitive, gender-neutral practices, and capacity-building efforts to promote gender inclusion. In the world, women face unfair treatment, their existence is devalued, and they are denied rights, opportunities, and resources simply because of their gender, which was observed by Reeves and Baden (2000). However, this was contradicted by the findings of Calles and Domael (2019). On the other hand, the study expressed that secondary teachers of urban and suburban schools were not different concerning their attitude toward gender sensitivity. However, Yuden et al. (2020) found that secondary-level school teachers lacked gender sensitivity in their teaching methods. Furthermore, the study also revealed that both teachers and students face the challenge in understanding gender concepts within educational settings, and teachers lack awareness of gender issues and do not make efforts to address gender inequality in the classroom. The results were also similar to the findings of Niones (2022) and contradicted the findings of Duckworth and Seligman (2006).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers need extensive training in gender sensitivity to proactively address various gender-related concerns within the school environment.
- School parameters can be fully aligned with gender sensitivity for everyone involved.
- The administration needs to examine the missing aspects in schools to address concerns of gender sensitivity. The gender and development department of the institution can explore the necessary programmes to address gender-related issues.

CONCLUSION

Gender sensitivity involves changing behaviour through heightened awareness of gender equality issues. It involves examining and challenging one's personal views and beliefs, even those that were previously understood (Kalra et al., 2021). Addressing gender sensitivity is crucial at this point. Transformation and empowerment serve as dual tools through which we can shift societal attitude toward gender away from traditional stereotypes. Education acts as a vehicle for inculcating the idea of gender equality in the minds of the youth, with teachers acting as carriers

of knowledge (Vreckova et al., 2020). Teachers' attitude towards gender sensitivity concerning their students offers varying levels of exposure to gender sensitivity within schools. The teachers demonstrate an awareness of gender sensitivity in both knowledge and practice within their profession and school environment. Teachers exhibit varying training of gender-sensitive attitude due to differences in their exposure to gender-sensitive training. School regulations address gender sensitivity concerns, emphasizing the importance of gender-sensitive policies within educational settings to promote gender equality through the education system (Calles & Domael, 2019). Gender sensitivity attitude among teachers through training may not be influenced by specific aspects of gender sensitivity within schools. Gender sensitivity is needed through programmes aimed at raising the awareness of secondary education teachers (Yuden et al., 2020). Through the gender-sensitive attitude of teachers, students become self-reliant in and out of school.

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