

A Study on Child Rights Awareness Among Student Teachers

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Abstract - In this study, child rights awareness of B.Ed. student teachers in Salem District of Tamil Nadu state has been investigated. Survey research design has been used for data collection with the help of Child Rights Awareness Questionnaire which was developed by the researcher. Descriptive and inferential statistics have been used to analyse the data obtained through the survey. The survey instrument showed very high levels of internal reliability as indicated by Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega values. The results found that there were no statistically significant differences in the awareness scores with respect to gender, subject specialisation, locality, and parental educational qualification of the respondents.

Key words: Child Rights Awareness, B.Ed. Student Teachers, Teacher Education, Child Protection, Survey Method

INTRODUCTION

The importance of understanding about child rights by B.Ed. students is an essential professional competency that indicates their level of awareness, sensitiveness and dedication towards protecting and nurturing the welfare of children in educational and social institutions. Since the B.Ed. students are future teachers, it is their responsibility to create positive environments for learning in which the dignity, equality and needs of the children are valued. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child views children as subjects of rights and stresses on the rights of children in regards to survival, development, protection and participation (United Nations, 1989). This means that the student teachers should be aware of the rights of the children that include right to education, protection from violence and exploitation, holistic development and participation (United Nations, 1989; UNICEF, n.d.).

B.Ed. student teachers must also be acquainted with the provisions that have been made in India in order to ensure children's rights are protected through law. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009; Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015; and the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 (amended in 2016) are some significant legislative frameworks which cover education of children, protection of children against sexual offenses, care and rehabilitation of children, and prevention of prohibited child labour respectively (Government of India, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2016).

In addition, awareness of children's rights is not only limited to knowing about the legal framework but also to the wellbeing of children physically, psychologically, socially and educationally. In this regard, the UN Convention states the rights of children to good health, to an acceptable level of living standards, to safety from any harm and to development and participation (United Nations, 1989). Therefore, as B.Ed. student teachers, they should know how to create a classroom that is both safe and inclusive with respect to individual differences and children's participation in learning. They could also help in the welfare of children through gender equality, discrimination, education and cooperation with families and proper child welfare agencies.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education (2023). A systematic scoping review carried out in 2023 explored the topic of child protection and safeguarding in relation to initial teacher education. This study reviewed 31 publications to synthesize the findings related to the appropriate preparation of future teachers in dealing with child abuse. The authors stressed the necessity of better preparation of future teachers regarding child protection issues and argued that future development of courses in the field should be based on effective training programs. This study is directly related to the current research since it defines the area of initial teacher education as important for analyzing teachers' perceptions of child rights and protection issues.

Prabhu, Prabhu and Noronha (2023) have conducted a study about the knowledge about the child sexual abuse and the attitude towards the reporting of such cases in teachers and parents of the children studying in selected primary schools in Udupi Taluk, India. The relevance of this study lies in the knowledge required for recognizing child sexual abuse and the attitudes related to the reporting of such abuse cases. This study is important in the context of child rights awareness and protection and the duty of teachers in protecting children.

Karataş and Öztürk (2023) investigated the effect of an active learning-based children's rights education programme on the understanding and attitudes of primary school teacher candidates. The study used an explanatory sequential design, combining a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent pre-test/post-test control-group design with a case study. The intervention involved 72 third-year teacher candidates and lasted 13 weeks. This study is directly relevant to teacher education because it examined children's rights among prospective teachers rather than limiting the investigation to practising teachers or schoolchildren.

Badhesha and Sarwal (2025) examined awareness of the Right to Education Act, 2009, among D.El.Ed. and B.Ed. teacher trainees in Patiala District. The study adopted a quantitative design and included 160 trainees, consisting of 80 D.El.Ed. and 80 B.Ed. trainees. Data were collected using a self-developed RTE Literacy Evaluation Tool. The findings indicated a moderate level of awareness of the Act, and no statistically significant difference was reported between the two groups of trainees. The study is particularly relevant to the educational-rights component of the present investigation.

Singaraju et al. (2024) assessed awareness of child abuse and neglect among 300 schoolteachers in Andhra Pradesh. The researchers administered a 12-item questionnaire before and after an audiovisual educational intervention and again after three months. The findings showed a statistically significant improvement in awareness immediately following the intervention, with no statistically significant decline between the immediate post-intervention and three-month assessments. The study is relevant to the child protection dimension because it examined teachers' awareness of abuse, neglect and reporting procedures. Its intervention-based design differs from the descriptive survey proposed for the present study.

Kaunain et al. (2025) conducted a comparative study of awareness of child abuse and neglect among teachers in urban and rural schools. The study was published in the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care. It examined teachers' awareness of child abuse and neglect in different school settings. The study is relevant to the present investigation because locality is one of the demographic variables proposed for comparison. However, the present study concerns B.Ed. student teachers, and the findings of practising schoolteachers cannot automatically be generalized to teacher trainees.

In this study, Sreenivas, Abid and Prema (2026) analyzed knowledge of child protection laws among prospective teachers at the secondary level. The legal instruments under discussion were the Right to Education Act of 2009, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2015. It is pertinent to the current study due to its focus on prospective teachers and knowledge of child protection laws. In the published abstract, the objective and legal instruments are mentioned while specific findings need to be considered after reading the whole article.

In their study, Duran et al. (2026) assessed the awareness of child maltreatment and neglect amongst 125 pre-service preschool teachers in Türkiye. In this study, Duran et al. (2026) utilized a cross-sectional and descriptive/comparative approach, using a scale for measuring child abuse and neglect awareness developed through vignettes. Results showed moderate to relatively high levels of awareness overall. Fourth-year students possessed higher levels of awareness than first-year students and those with previous training had significantly higher awareness than those with no previous training.

RESEARCH GAP

The review of studies published between 2021 and 2026 indicates that research has examined children's rights education, Right to Education awareness, child abuse prevention, and child protection legislation. Studies by Karataş and Öztürk (2023), Badhesha and Sarwal (2025), Prabhu et al. (2023), Singaraju et al. (2024), Kaunain et al. (2025), Duran et al. (2026), and Sreenivas et al. (2026) addressed different aspects of these issues among teacher candidates, practising teachers, and parents. However, the reviewed studies differ in their populations and specific research focuses. A comprehensive understanding of B.Ed. student teachers' awareness across the four major dimensions of child rights—survival, development, protection, and participation requires further investigation. Evidence concerning differences based on gender, locality, subject specialization, sibling status, and parents' educational qualifications also warrants examination. Therefore, the present study aims to assess child rights awareness among B.Ed. student teachers and examine differences associated with these selected demographic variables.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the level of child rights awareness among B.Ed. student teachers.
- To assess the awareness of B.Ed. student teachers regarding the major dimensions of child rights, including survival, development, protection, and participation.
- To examine the awareness of the Right to Education and child protection legislation among B.Ed. student teachers.
- To find out whether there is a significant difference in child rights awareness between male and female B.Ed. student teachers.
- To find out whether there is a significant difference in child rights awareness between Arts and Science B.Ed. student teachers.

- To find out whether there is a significant difference in child rights awareness between rural and urban B.Ed. student teachers.
- To find out whether there is a significant difference in child rights awareness among B.Ed. student teachers based on sibling status and parents' educational qualifications.

METHODOLOGY

Method

The survey method was adopted for the present study. This method was considered appropriate for collecting data from a selected group of respondents to assess their awareness of child rights and to examine differences in awareness based on selected demographic variables.

Population

The population of the study consisted of B.Ed. student teachers studying in colleges of education in Salem District, Tamil Nadu. The study focused on assessing their awareness of child rights, including relevant educational rights and child protection provisions.

Sample

A sample of B.Ed. student teachers was selected from colleges of education, using the stratified random sampling technique. The sample was drawn from the identified strata to ensure representation of the relevant groups within the population. The final sample size and the strata used were determined according to the sampling plan adopted for the study.

Tool Used

A self-constructed Child Rights Awareness Questionnaire was used as the research tool. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher to assess B.Ed. student teachers' awareness of child rights. It covered the relevant dimensions of child rights and applicable legal provisions, in accordance with the objectives of the study. The suitability of the tool was to be established through appropriate validation and reliability procedures.

PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The researcher obtained the necessary permission from the concerned authorities of the selected colleges before collecting data. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and the questionnaire was administered to the selected B.Ed. student teachers. The completed questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, and organized for statistical analysis. Appropriate measures were taken to maintain the confidentiality of the participants' responses.

Statistical Techniques

The collected data were analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the level and variability of child rights awareness among B.Ed. student teachers. The independent-samples t-test was used to examine differences in awareness between two groups, where appropriate. For demographic variables containing more than two categories, one-way ANOVA or another suitable statistical procedure was considered, depending on the research objective and the assumptions of the test.

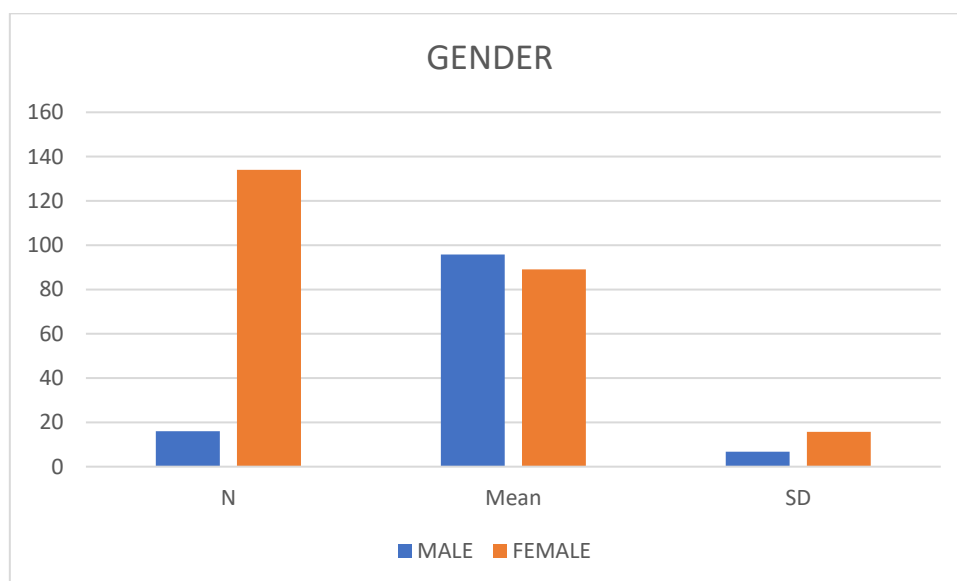
RESULT

Table: 1 Reliability of the Child Rights Awareness Questionnaire

scale	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω
	0.985	0.985

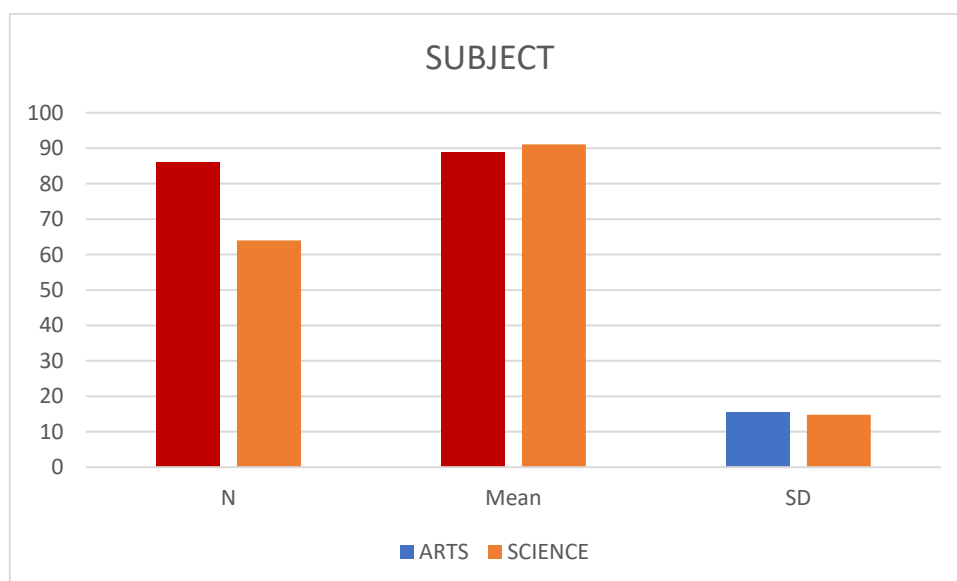
Internal consistency of the 25-item Child Rights Awareness Questionnaire was assessed through the calculation of Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega. The results showed that the Cronbach's alpha was .985 and the McDonald's omega was also .985. High internal consistency of the questionnaire items is evidenced by the values of both coefficients since they demonstrate very high internal consistency of the questionnaire items within the sample used. The identical values of the reliability coefficients confirm high internal consistency of the questionnaire. However, high values of the coefficients need to be interpreted cautiously since they can also represent high redundancy of the items in question. In addition, the internal consistency does not imply validity of the test or one-dimensionality of the questionnaire.

Fig: 1 Gender-wise Analysis of Child Rights Awareness



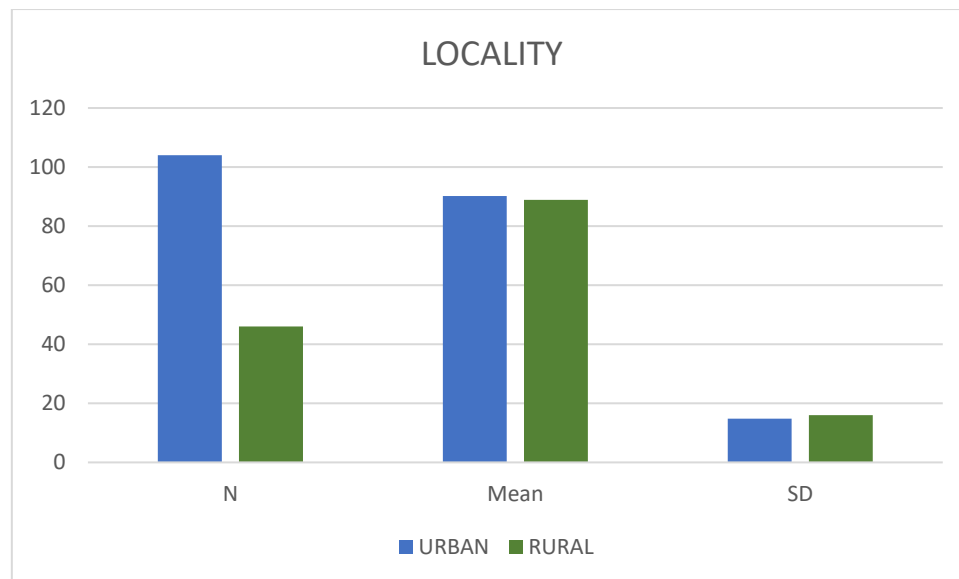
The results indicated that male student teachers ($n = 16$) obtained a mean awareness score of 95.80 ($SD = 6.73$), whereas female student teachers ($n = 134$) obtained a mean score of 89.10 ($SD = 15.70$). The mean score for male student teachers was therefore 6.70 points higher than that of female student teachers. In addition, the standard deviation was lower among male student teachers, indicating less variability in their awareness scores within this sample than among female student teachers.

Fig: 2 Subject Specialization-wise Analysis of Child Rights Awareness



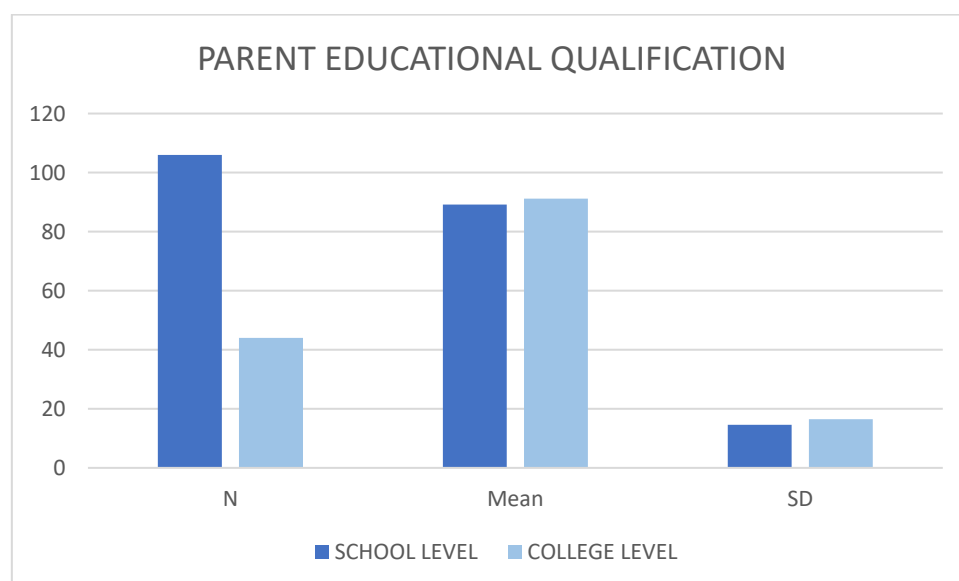
The results revealed that Science student teachers ($n = 64$) obtained a mean awareness score of 91.10 ($SD = 14.80$), whereas Arts student teachers ($n = 86$) obtained a mean score of 88.80 ($SD = 15.40$). The mean score of science student teachers were 2.30 points higher than that of Arts student teachers. The standard deviations were relatively similar across the two groups, indicating comparable variability in their awareness scores. These findings suggest a modest descriptive difference in favour of science student teachers within the present sample.

Fig:3 Locality-wise Analysis of Child Rights Awareness



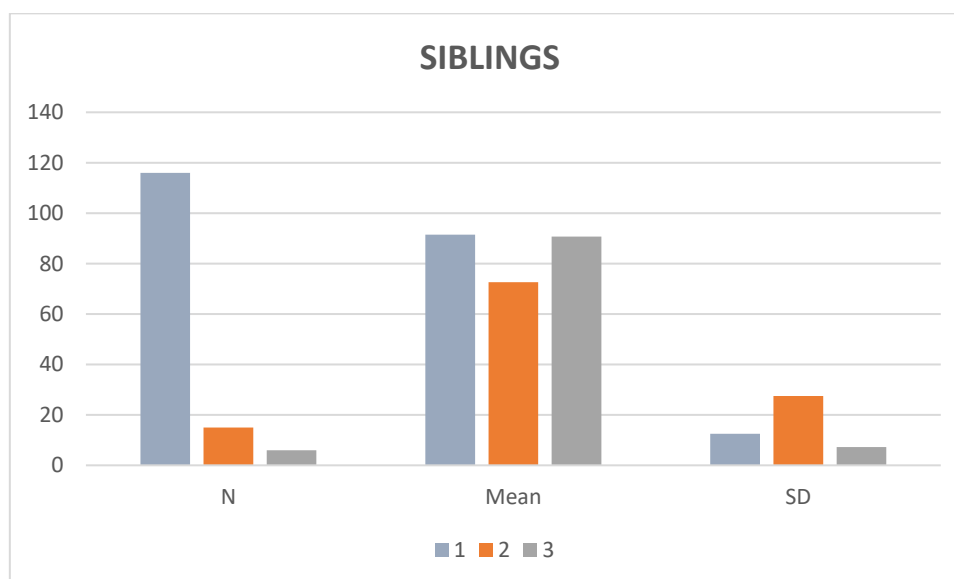
The findings show that the average awareness level for urban student teachers ($n = 104$) was 90.20 ($SD = 14.80$), compared to 88.90 ($SD = 16.00$) for rural student teachers ($n = 46$). This shows that the average awareness level for urban student teachers was 1.30 more points than that of rural student teachers. The standard deviation was higher for rural student teachers, showing that there was more variability in the awareness levels of rural students compared to urban students.

Fig: 4 Parent Educational Qualification-wise Analysis of Child Rights Awareness



It can be seen from the table above that those students who had a graduate parent ($n = 44$) had a mean awareness score of 91.20 ($SD = 16.50$), whereas those students who did not have a graduate parent ($n = 106$) had a mean awareness score of 89.20 ($SD = 14.60$). This means that the mean awareness score of those students with a graduate parent was 2.00 points higher. It is also noticeable that there was a relatively higher standard deviation within this group.

Fig: 5 Sibling Status-wise Analysis of Child Rights Awareness



From the findings it can be seen that the student teachers with 1 sibling ($n = 116$) had the highest mean awareness score of 91.50 ($SD = 12.50$). Next were the student teachers with 3 sibling ($n = 6$) with a mean awareness score of 90.70 ($SD = 7.23$). The student teachers with 2 sibling ($n = 15$) produced a much lower mean awareness score of 72.60 ($SD = 27.49$). Overall, this suggests there is some variation in the awareness scores between the three groups. The scores from group 2 have the lowest mean and are the most variable.

Discussion

The present study examined child rights awareness among B.Ed. student teachers and explored variations in awareness scores according to selected demographic variables, including gender, subject specialization, locality, parental educational qualification and sibling status. The findings provide a descriptive account of child rights awareness within the sample and offer insights into the extent to which awareness scores vary across these groups.

Overall, it appears that although the average scores differed between demographic categories, there were no significant differences in terms of gender, subject specialism, location and parents' education level (all p -values were above the 0.05 value). This cannot be taken to mean that these groups are all the same, but simply that there was not enough evidence to show significant differences between the groups. It shows how important it is to understand the difference between differences in means within a sample and significant differences between groups.

From an educational perspective, the findings reinforce the relevance of examining child rights awareness as part of teacher preparation. B.Ed. programmes may provide opportunities to strengthen prospective teachers' understanding of children's rights, their professional responsibilities and the legal and educational frameworks relevant to child protection and education. However, because the present questionnaire measured overall child rights awareness and did not provide separately validated scores for survival, development, protection, participation or specific legislation, the study cannot determine participants' awareness of these individual areas. Future research could employ a clearly structured and validated instrument with identifiable subscales, a larger and more balanced sample, and additional analyses to examine the dimensions of child rights awareness more precisely.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The data collected for the present investigation were analysed and interpreted. The following are the major findings of the study:

- The Child Rights Awareness Questionnaire was found to have very high internal consistency, as indicated by the Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients of .985.
- Male B.Ed. student teachers obtained a higher mean score in child rights awareness than female student teachers. However, the difference was not statistically significant.
- Science B.Ed. student teachers obtained a higher mean score in child rights awareness than Arts B.Ed. student teachers. However, the difference was not statistically significant.
- Urban B.Ed. student teachers obtained a slightly higher mean score in child rights awareness than rural B.Ed. student teachers. However, the difference was not statistically significant.

- B.Ed. student teachers belonging to the college-level parental educational qualification group obtained a higher mean score in child rights awareness than those belonging to the school-level group. However, the difference was not statistically significant, based on the reported result.
- With regard to sibling status, with 1 sibling obtained the highest mean score in child rights awareness, followed by with 3 siblings, while with 2 siblings obtained the lowest mean score. The statistical significance of these differences requires confirmation through an appropriate statistical test.

The findings indicate that the observed differences in mean child rights awareness scores based on gender, subject specialisation, locality, and the reported parental educational qualification grouping were not statistically significant at the .05 level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Education regarding children's rights can be integrated into the B.Ed. course. This will make sure that student teachers understand their rights.
- Opportunities can be provided such as seminars, workshops and awareness sessions about children's rights, The Right to Education, child protection and relevant legislation.
- Scenarios, case studies and role plays can be presented to student teachers to give them an opportunity to investigate issues surrounding child rights violations and child protection.
- There can be a focus on informing student teachers about the correct legislation and reporting procedures regarding child abuse, exploitation, discrimination and children's right violations.
- Teacher training institutions can provide future teachers with the skills needed to create an inclusive, safe and respectful environment.
- Teachers can also encourage a rights-based approach when teaching, ensuring that children receive equal opportunities, participation, respect and protection whilst focusing on their overall development.
- Digital resources, training videos, online learning and official resources about children's rights should be included in teacher education to ensure ongoing learning.
- Teacher education should work with child protection agencies, legal experts and child welfare organisations to ensure student teachers receive accurate information.
- Teacher education should regularly test student teachers' knowledge on children's rights to ensure they are aware of what needs further teaching.
- Similar research should be conducted with student teachers from other institutions, districts and states using a larger sample.
- Researchers should create and validate tools to assess student teachers' knowledge on specific aspects of children's rights such as their right to survival, development, protection and participation. This will help to allow more in-depth analysis in future research.
- Future researchers should examine the relationship between child rights awareness and relevant educational and experiential variables, such as exposure to child rights training, teaching practice, and participation in awareness programmes.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to find out the level of awareness of child rights among B.Ed student teachers in Salem district, Tamil Nadu in the context of gender, specialization, place of residence, parents' education and siblings. It was found that male student teachers had higher mean score than female teachers. Those in science specialization had higher mean score than art specialization. The urban student teachers had slightly higher mean score than rural student teachers. Student teachers whose parents' education is at college level had higher mean score than student teachers whose parents' education is at school level. But there was no significant difference in the mean score of genders, specialization, place of residence and parents' education. There was a difference in the mean scores of students with and without siblings. This needs to be tested with appropriate statistical test to find the significance.

The study provides emphasis on including child rights education within initial teacher training. Involving workshops, hands-on training, case study learning and knowledge of child protection laws may help future teachers gain the knowledge and sense of professional responsibility needed to ensure children are protected. Further studies using valid measures with clear constructs, and more varied samples should be conducted. This could focus on examining the impact of child rights training and teaching experience to help create teachers who value children's dignity, rights and overall development.

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