

# Human Rights Education and the Role of Teachers in Eastern Rajasthan

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the association between teacher behaviour and the effectiveness of human rights education in schools across Eastern Rajasthan. Through classroom observations and interviews, it investigates how teachers' actions and attitudes align with or diverge from established human rights principles. The findings highlight both positive examples of human rights-conscious practices and significant challenges, including societal pressures, resource constraints, and limited professional development. The study underscores the need for sustained institutional support to empower teachers in fostering inclusive, non-discriminatory classroom environments and advancing human rights education.*

**Keywords:** Teacher behaviour, human rights education, Eastern Rajasthan, inclusivity, non-discrimination, classroom dynamics, professional development, societal norms, educational policy, student engagement

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## Introduction

Human rights education is not merely about imparting theoretical knowledge; it plays a pivotal role in shaping behaviours and attitudes that uphold principles of equality, dignity, and non-discrimination (Robinson, Phillips, and Quennerstedt, 2022). Teachers, as influential role models, are considered important in creating an environment of inclusivity and respect through daily interactions with students (Jayakumar, 2007). This study explores the association between teacher behaviour and the delivery of human rights education, acknowledging that while teacher practices appear to be linked to student perceptions of equality, the qualitative approach does not establish a direct causal effect.

India, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), bears the responsibility to align its educational practices with international

human rights standards. Eastern Rajasthan, known for its rich cultural diversity and socio-economic challenges, offers a compelling context for understanding the dynamics of human rights education. This study explores how teachers navigate their roles in fostering inclusive educational practices, often in the face of societal pressures and cultural expectations.

## The Role of Teacher Behaviour in Human Rights Education

Teacher behaviour is considered an important factor in human rights education as it is associated with students' understanding and internalisation of fundamental rights and values (Panda, 2001). Teachers who consistently demonstrate respect for all students, irrespective of caste, gender or socio-economic background, model the principles of equality and non-discrimination that are central to human rights education.

However, the presence of biases or the failure to address discriminatory behaviours within the classroom can undermine these efforts, perpetuating inequality and exclusion (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011).

In Eastern Rajasthan, cultural norms and social hierarchies significantly influence teacher behaviour and attitudes. Societal pressures related to caste and gender often creates challenges for educators committed to promote equality. Teachers are tasked not only with delivering curriculum content but also with fostering a classroom environment that upholds the principles of justice, inclusivity and mutual respect (Chouhan and Yadav, 2024). This study investigates how teachers navigate these responsibilities and the challenges faced in creating equitable and inclusive classrooms.

By analysing the behaviours and attitudes of teachers in Eastern Rajasthan, this research highlights their dual role — as educators imparting knowledge and as role models shaping students' social and ethical values. The findings underscore the need to provide training and support to teachers to enable them to overcome societal barriers and promote a culture of respect and dignity in schools.

## Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between teacher behaviour and the implementation of human rights education in Eastern Rajasthan
2. To identify challenges and barriers that affect teacher behaviour and its alignment with human rights principles
3. To recommend actionable strategies for enhancing teacher training and policy frameworks that support the effective delivery of human rights education

## Context and Methodology

The study was conducted in government (no-fee-paying) and private (fee-paying) upper primary schools across four districts

in Eastern Rajasthan — Alwar, Bharatpur, Dausa and Dholpur. A purposive sampling technique was employed to capture a diverse socio-economic and cultural landscape, representing both urban and rural settings. This selection ensured a comprehensive exploration of varying educational environments and their impact on human rights education practices.

A qualitative research approach was employed, integrating classroom observations and teacher interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of how teacher behaviour aligns with human rights principles. Qualitative methods were selected for their ability to explore complex, context-specific phenomena in depth. Classroom observations assessed teacher-student interactions, inclusivity practices and responses to conflict or discriminatory behaviour. Interviews provided insights into teachers' perceptions, challenges and strategies related to the implementation of human rights education.

## Teacher and Student Backgrounds

The sample included 50 teachers (25 male and 25 female), ensuring a gender-balanced perspective. Most teachers held a B.Ed degree, while several also had postgraduate qualifications in education or related disciplines. Their teaching experience ranged from three to 20 years, with an average of 10 years. The schools served diverse student populations, including children from Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs). Government schools primarily catered to children from lower-income groups, while private schools had a mix of children coming from middle- and higher-income backgrounds.

## Sample Size and Selection Criteria

The study employed purposive sampling technique, selecting 25 schools and 50 teachers (25 from urban and 25 from

rural areas) to ensure a balanced and representative perspective.

## Schools

- 1. Diverse Socio-Economic Regions:** The schools were selected from regions across Eastern Rajasthan (Alwar, Bharatpur, Dausa and Dhoulpur) to capture variability in societal norms, resource availability and cultural practices.
- 2. Institution Types:** Both government (no-fee-paying) and private (fee-paying) institutions were included to compare approaches to human rights education across socio-economic contexts.
- 3. Human Rights Initiatives:** Priority was given to schools actively participating in government or non-governmental human rights education programmes to better understand the practical application of these principles.

## Teachers

- 1. Experience:** Teachers with a minimum of three years of teaching experience were selected to ensure familiarity with classroom dynamics and community expectations.
- 2. Gender Representation:** The sample was equally divided between male and female teachers to incorporate gender-specific perspectives on human rights education practices.
- 3. Active Classroom Role:** The focus was on educators actively involved in regular classroom teaching to reflect the day-to-day realities of implementing human rights principles.
- 4. Exclusion Criteria:** Administrative staff and newly appointed teachers were excluded to ensure that the study focused on experienced educators with substantial classroom exposure.

## Permissions and Protocols

**Permissions:** Formal permissions were obtained from the school managements, followed by consent from individual teachers.

The participants were briefed on the study's objectives and methods, ensuring their informed consent. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymising participant identities by using pseudonyms.

**Observation Protocols:** Structured classroom observations were conducted using a comprehensive framework designed to assess key dimensions of human rights education within a cohesive narrative. During each 45-minute session, the researchers documented how teachers facilitated inclusive participation by actively engaging all students, especially those from marginalised groups. The observations captured instances of conflict resolution where teachers addressed bullying, exclusion or classroom disputes by applying human rights principles to create a respectful environment. Moreover, teachers' efforts to integrate human rights themes into lessons were noted through activities, such as group work, discussions on equality, justice and inclusion, as well as their responses to disciplinary situations. This holistic approach enabled a nuanced understanding of complex classroom dynamics and the association between teacher behaviour and the delivery of human rights education.

## Selection of Classrooms and Grades

Grades 6–8 were chosen for their developmental relevance, as students at this stage begin to understand abstract concepts like equality and human rights. These grades often include civics, ethics or social studies lessons that naturally address themes of justice, fairness and equality. Classrooms within these grades were randomly selected to minimise bias and ensure diverse teaching practices.

## Interviews with Teachers

To complement classroom observations, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into teachers' attitudes,

challenges and motivations related to human rights education. During these interviews, teachers elaborated on their understanding of human rights principles and discussed their responsibilities as role models for instilling these values in students. They reflected on the impact of external factors, including societal norms, school policies and parental expectations, on their teaching practices. The teachers also identified key barriers, such as limited training opportunities, societal pressures and rigid curricula that hinder the effective promotion of human rights in the classroom.

## Data Analysis Methods

A thematic analysis approach was employed to identify patterns in teacher behaviour and attitudes. The analysis incorporated the following components.

- 1. Qualitative Coding:** Observation notes and interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes, such as inclusivity, bias and external influences.
- 2. Frequency Counts:** Quantitative summaries were generated from the coded data to measure the prevalence of specific behaviours (e.g., 15 teachers explicitly addressed stereotypes during observations).
- 3. Contextual Analysis:** The findings were interpreted within the socio-cultural context of Rajasthan to understand how local norms and values influence teacher behaviour.

## Findings

The study revealed diverse teacher behaviour in Eastern Rajasthan, reflecting varying levels of commitment to human rights principles. These behaviours — shaped by personal beliefs, professional training, cultural norms and broader social contexts — appeared to influence how human rights education was implemented. For example, teachers, in some settings, actively promoted inclusivity by challenging stereotypes and encouraging

equitable participation, whereas in others, external pressures and resource constraints limited such practices. Notably, the findings suggest an association between teacher participation in human rights training programmes and the adoption of inclusive teaching strategies, without indicating a direct causal relationship.

Teachers identified marginalised students using socio-economic indicators, school records and direct interactions. Some teachers expressed the need for additional institutional support to effectively integrate these students into mainstream classroom activities. Furthermore, schools that had participated in human rights training programmes demonstrated higher engagement with inclusive teaching strategies. The training programmes covered topics like anti-discrimination policies, conflict resolution, gender sensitivity and student empowerment.

## Examples of Human Rights-Conscious Behaviour

Several teachers demonstrated a strong commitment to creating an inclusive and respectful classroom environment through proactive practices. For instance, one rural teacher challenged traditional gender stereotypes during a career guidance session by encouraging both boys and girls to explore a wide range of career options, emphasising that professional roles should not be defined by gender. This approach not only fostered gender equality but also broadened students' perspectives regarding the opportunities they may get. In another instance, an urban teacher made efforts to ensure that students from marginalised communities actively participated in classroom discussions, reinforcing the principles of equality and dignity by recognising and validating their contributions. These examples illustrate how, with appropriate training and a commitment to equity, teachers can effectively promote human rights in classrooms.

## Challenges and Barriers to Human Rights-Conscious Behaviour

Despite these positive examples, teachers in Eastern Rajasthan faced significant challenges that hindered their ability to consistently promote human rights. Societal pressures, including deeply rooted caste and gender norms, often compelled teachers to modify their practices to align with local expectations — 40% teachers in rural areas reported making such adjustments. Additionally, community expectations sometimes resulted in resistance from parents and local stakeholders, with 64% teachers stating that fear of community disapproval limited their efforts, particularly when supporting lower-caste students or addressing issues related to gender equality. Resource constraints, such as a rigid curriculum and the limited availability of human rights education materials, coupled with insufficient time for broader social and ethical discussions, further hindered the effective integration of human rights principles in the classroom. Moreover, gaps in professional development — reflected in limited access to specialised workshops — underscored the need for sustained institutional support.

## The Role of Professional Development and Support

The study underscored the urgent need for ongoing professional development and robust institutional support to equip teachers to promote human rights effectively in classrooms. Teachers who participated in dedicated human rights training programmes reported greater confidence in addressing societal challenges and creating inclusive learning environments. These training programmes were delivered through interactive workshops that incorporated role-playing activities, follow-up sessions and practical assessments. They covered key topics, such as anti-discrimination policies, conflict resolution strategies,

gender sensitivity and methods for student empowerment. The teachers emphasised that such training not only enhanced their instructional practices but also equipped them with the tools necessary to challenge and overcome deep-rooted societal biases. Additionally, the teachers advocated for implementing clear institutional anti-discrimination policies and establishing partnerships with human rights organisations and community leaders to strengthen and sustain these efforts.

## Conclusion

The study underscores the importance of teacher behaviour as a key factor influencing the delivery of human rights education within the sociocultural landscape of Eastern Rajasthan. While the findings indicate an association between teacher practices and the implementation of human rights education, they do not demonstrate a direct causal relationship. Societal pressures, limited resources and gaps in professional development highlight areas requiring additional support. A comprehensive approach, including targeted training, supportive policies and enhanced resource allocation, may further help strengthen the association between teacher behaviour and the effective promotion of human rights education.

## Recommendations

To strengthen human rights education and support teachers in creating inclusive classrooms, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. **Enhanced Teacher Training Programmes:** Introduce structured, continuous training programmes that focus on human rights principles, societal norms and inclusive classroom practices.
2. **School Policy and Administrative Support:** Develop and implement institutional policies that promote inclusivity and non-discrimination, empowering teachers to address societal challenges effectively.

3. Resource Allocation and Accessibility: Ensure wider access to human rights education materials, particularly in rural schools, and collaborate with NGOs to provide additional resources.
  4. Community Engagement and Awareness: Organise awareness programmes to involve parents and community members
- in fostering an inclusive educational environment.
- By providing teachers with resources, relevant training and supportive policies, schools can foster learning environments where human rights are upheld, respected and protected.

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