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Gender Equity Attitudes among Postgraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

Gender equity plays an important role in promoting fairness, equal opportunities and inclusive participation in society. Higher educational institutions contribute significantly to shaping gender-related attitudes among young adults. The present study aimed to assess gender-equity attitudes among postgraduate students and examine differences between male and female students. A quantitative descriptive-comparative research design was adopted. The sample comprised 30 postgraduate students, including 15 males and 15 females, selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Gender Equity Scale (GES) and analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and Welch's independent-samples t-test. The findings revealed that female students obtained a higher mean gender-equity score (M = 93.93, SD = 7.05) compared with male students (M = 73.33, SD = 15.09). The difference was statistically significant, t (19.83) = -4.79, $p < .001$. The results indicate that female postgraduate students in the present sample demonstrated higher gender-equity scores than their male counterparts. The findings suggest that gender-related attitudes may continue to differ among young adults despite their exposure to higher education. The study emphasizes the importance of promoting gender awareness, challenging traditional stereotypes and strengthening gender-sensitive educational practices to encourage equitable attitudes among postgraduate students.

Keywords: Gender equity, Gender Equity Scale, Gender differences, Postgraduate students, Gender-equitable attitudes

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity is an important foundation for creating a fair and inclusive society. It refers to ensuring fairness in opportunities, responsibilities, participation, decision-making and access to resources, irrespective of gender. Gender equity recognizes that individuals may experience different social expectations and barriers and emphasizes the need to provide fair opportunities for personal, educational and professional development.

Educational institutions play an important role in shaping students' attitudes, values and perceptions of gender. Higher education provides opportunities for young adults to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, exchange ideas and develop awareness of contemporary social issues. However, gender-related beliefs are also influenced by family upbringing, cultural traditions, peer groups, media and societal expectations.

Postgraduate students represent an important group for examining gender-equity attitudes because they are preparing to assume professional, family and social responsibilities. Although higher education may encourage progressive thinking and awareness of equality, traditional gender stereotypes and expectations can continue to influence attitudes and behaviour.

Previous research has indicated differences between male and female students in their perceptions of gender roles and equality. Nath *et al.* (2023), in a study involving 200 university students in Punjab, reported that female students generally demonstrated more egalitarian gender-role attitudes, whereas a considerable proportion of male students expressed transitional attitudes. These findings suggest that gender-related perceptions may continue to vary among educated young adults.

Understanding gender-equity attitudes among postgraduate students is important because these attitudes may influence their future relationships, workplaces, family responsibilities and participation in society. Assessing

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differences between male and female students can also help identify areas requiring gender-sensitive educational initiatives.

Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess gender-equity attitudes among postgraduate students and examine differences between male and female students using the Gender Equity Scale.

Review of Literature

Cho *et al.* (2022) developed and validated the Gender Equity Scale in Nursing Education through a quantitative psychometric study involving 341 senior nursing students. The final instrument consisted of 23 items covering four dimensions: personal experiences of gender inequity, perceptions of gender roles, gender discrimination and gender biases in the classroom. The findings demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, supporting the use of the instrument for assessing gender equity in educational settings.

Nath *et al.* (2023) conducted a quantitative study among 200 university students at Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, to examine gender differences in attitudes towards gender roles. The findings revealed that 50 per cent of respondents demonstrated egalitarian gender-role attitudes, while 40.5 per cent exhibited transitional attitudes. Female students showed comparatively more egalitarian attitudes, whereas a substantial proportion of male students demonstrated transitional attitudes. The study highlighted continuing gender differences in gender-role perceptions among university students.

Kamran *et al.* (2025) validated a 35-item Gender Equity Scale in educational settings in Pakistan using data from 659 participants. The study employed exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses and reported excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$). Five dimensions were identified, covering educational and sociocultural aspects of gender equity. The findings supported the usefulness of the instrument for examining gender-equity perceptions in educational environments.

Sharif-Nia *et al.* (2025) conducted a quantitative methodological study among 621 Iranian nursing students to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Persian version of the Gender Equity Scale in Nursing Education. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were employed to examine construct validity, while internal consistency was assessed to establish reliability. The study supported the assessment of gender-equity perceptions among students and emphasized the importance of cultural validation of measurement instruments.

Research Gap

Existing quantitative studies have examined gender equity and gender-role attitudes among students in different educational and cultural contexts. However, there remains scope for focused assessment of gender-equity attitudes among male and female postgraduate students. Understanding these differences is important for identifying prevailing gender-related perceptions and encouraging equitable attitudes within higher education. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess gender-equity attitudes and examine differences between male and female postgraduate students.

Objectives

1. To determine the level of gender-equity attitudes among postgraduate students.
2. To examine gender differences in gender-equity attitudes among postgraduate students.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant difference in gender-equity scores between male and female postgraduate students.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

There is a significant difference in gender-equity scores between male and female postgraduate students.

Level of Significance

The hypothesis was tested at the 5 per cent level of significance ($p < .05$).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design to assess gender-equity attitudes among postgraduate students. The design was considered appropriate for examining the existing gender-equity scores and comparing differences between male and female respondents.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted among postgraduate

students at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, Karnataka.

Sample

The sample consisted of 30 postgraduate students, including 15 male and 15 female respondents. Equal representation of both groups was maintained to facilitate comparison of their gender-equity scores.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was adopted for selecting respondents. Postgraduate students who were accessible and willing to participate were included in the study.

Tool Used

The Gender Equity Scale (GES) was used to assess gender-equity perceptions and attitudes among postgraduate students. The instrument focused on students' attitudes regarding gender equity and was administered to both male and female respondents under similar conditions.

Scoring Procedure

Responses were scored according to the scoring procedure applied to the Gender Equity Scale in the study. Individual item scores were combined to obtain an overall gender-equity score for each respondent. These scores were subsequently used for descriptive analysis and comparison between male and female students.

The specific item-wise scoring key, reverse-scored items, and score ranges should be documented from the version of the GES actually administered before interpreting higher scores as greater gender equity.

Data Collection Procedure

Before data collection, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. The Gender Equity Scale was administered to the selected postgraduate students, and necessary instructions were provided for completing the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was maintained. Completed questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, coded and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the distribution of respondents according to gender. Mean and standard deviation were calculated to examine the average gender-equity scores and their variability.

Welch's independent-samples t-test was employed to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the mean gender-equity scores of male and female postgraduate students. The hypothesis was tested at the 5 per cent level of significance ($p < .05$).

Ethical Considerations

Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality of individual responses was maintained, and the collected information was used for academic and research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented in terms of the distribution of respondents according to gender, mean and standard deviation of gender-equity scores, and comparison between male and female postgraduate students using Welch's independent-samples t-test.

Table 1 indicates that the study comprised 30 postgraduate students, with equal representation of male and female respondents. Both groups accounted for 50 per cent of the total sample, enabling a balanced comparison of gender-equity scores.

Table 1 : Distribution of postgraduate students according to gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	15	50.00
Female	15	50.00
Total	30	100.00

Table 2 reveals that female postgraduate students obtained a higher mean gender-equity score (M = 93.93) compared with male students (M = 73.33), with a mean difference of 20.60 points. Male students showed greater variability in their scores (SD = 15.09) than female students (SD = 7.05). Assuming that higher scores

Table 2 : Mean and standard deviation of gender-equity scores among male and female postgraduate students

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	15	73.33	15.09
Female	15	93.93	7.05

Note: SD = Standard Deviation.

represent more gender-equitable attitudes, the findings suggest that female students in the present sample demonstrated comparatively higher gender-equity attitudes.

Fig. 1 illustrates the difference in mean gender-equity scores between male and female postgraduate students. Female students recorded a higher mean score of 93.93 compared with 73.33 among male students, indicating a noticeable difference in their overall scores.



Mean scores from the study (n = 15 per group)

Fig. 1 : Comparison of mean gender-equity scores among male and female postgraduate students

Table 3 reveals a statistically significant difference in gender-equity scores between male and female postgraduate students, t(19.83) = d4.79, p < .001. Female students obtained significantly higher mean scores than male students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in gender-equity scores between male and female postgraduate students was rejected.

Table 3 : Gender differences in gender-equity scores among postgraduate students

Statistical parameter	Value
Mean difference (Male ? Female)	?20.60
t-value	?4.79
Degrees of freedom (df)	19.83
p-value	< .001
Inference	Significant

Note: Welch's independent-samples t-test; significant at p < .05.

Overall, the findings indicate that gender-equity scores differed significantly between male and female postgraduate students in the present sample.

The present study examined gender-equity attitudes among postgraduate students and identified a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents. Female students obtained higher mean gender-equity scores (M = 93.93) compared with male students (M = 73.33), with the difference being statistically significant (p < .001).

The findings are consistent with Nath *et al.* (2023), who reported that female university students demonstrated comparatively more egalitarian gender-role attitudes than male students. This suggests that gender-related attitudes may continue to differ between males and females even at higher levels of education.

The higher gender-equity scores among female students may be associated with greater awareness of gender-related expectations and experiences of inequality. Differences in family upbringing, cultural practices, peer influence and socialization may also contribute to variations in attitudes between male and female students. However, these factors were not directly examined in the present study.

Male students demonstrated greater variability in their scores (SD = 15.09) compared with female students (SD = 7.05), suggesting that gender-equity attitudes were less consistent among male respondents. This variation indicates that students within the same gender group may hold differing perceptions regarding gender equity.

The findings highlight the importance of higher educational institutions in encouraging gender-sensitive attitudes through awareness programmes, classroom discussions and opportunities for equal participation. Educational experiences that challenge rigid gender stereotypes may help students develop more equitable perspectives.

However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study involved only 30 postgraduate students selected through convenience sampling. Therefore, the results are specific to the respondents included in the study and cannot be generalized to the wider postgraduate student population.

Conclusion

The present study revealed a statistically significant difference in gender-equity scores between male and female postgraduate students. Female students obtained higher mean scores than male students, and the difference was statistically significant (p < .001).

The findings suggest that gender-related attitudes may continue to vary among postgraduate students despite their exposure to higher education. The study emphasizes

the importance of promoting gender awareness, challenging traditional stereotypes and encouraging equitable attitudes within educational institutions.

Gender-sensitive educational practices, awareness programmes and opportunities for open discussion may contribute to creating a more inclusive academic environment characterized by equality, mutual respect and fair participation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Gender-sensitization programmes may be organized in higher educational institutions to promote awareness and understanding of gender equity.
- Workshops, seminars and discussions may be conducted to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and encourage equitable attitudes.
- Gender-equity concepts may be integrated into academic and co-curricular activities to encourage equal participation and mutual respect.
- Educational institutions may provide opportunities for students to discuss gender-related experiences and social expectations.
- Future studies may include larger and more diverse samples from different universities and academic disciplines.
- Further research may examine the influence of family background, socioeconomic status, peer groups and cultural practices on gender-equity attitudes.

Limitations

The present study was limited to 30 postgraduate students, comprising 15 males and 15 females. Convenience sampling was adopted, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The study was based on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by individual perceptions and social desirability. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not establish causal relationships between gender and gender-equity attitudes.

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