

Research Paper

Gender Sensitivity and School Environment as Predictors of Academic Achievement: A Study of Higher Secondary Students of Tripura

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ABSTRACT

In this investigation, the researchers attempted to investigate the influence of gender sensitivity and school atmosphere on the academic success of higher secondary students of west district Tripura. A sample of 300 students was selected using stratified random sampling from both urban and rural schools. For collecting data pertaining to said constructs standardized tools were used to measure gender sensitivity, insight of the school climate, and academic performance. Different statistical techniques including Pearson correlation, t-test, percentile and multiple regression analysis were applied. The results specify significant positive relationships among the variables, suggesting that gender-sensitive practices and a supportive school environment contribute to improved academic achievement.

Keywords: *Gender Sensitivity, School Environment, Academic achievement, Higher Secondary Education, Tripura*

Certainly, education is a fundamental for every individual of our society. Regardless all girls and boys enjoy equal opportunity to access worth education, with reasonable entrance and not including prejudice. Gender bias passes through society are approved into the school environment. Nevertheless, Gender equality in education sort out different issues prevailing within school campus encountered by both genders and take part in the learning environment. This process emphasizes to bring desirable change of the school culture, policies and practices in education intrusions to organize the several requirements and capabilities of both types of learners. It is also a fact that still we are witnessing gender bias and differentiation across the schools. For example, both boy and girl student get exceptional comments from their teacher in the classroom. A boy student gets reaction for good performance in scholastic activities, while girl students receive for staying quiet and their impressive handwriting (Brodkin, 1991) Hence, sensitizing gender-based education became crucial if we are determined to secure quality education each and every one. Gender based education plays pivotal role among boys and girls students of all the stages to access pertinent and defensive educational opportunities. It is worthy to mention here, school environment act as vital part in schooling, modifying, and strengthen gender roles. Evans

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(1999) of the view that to empower women school climate can play a significant role: the prevailing practices across the schools such as physical and mental punishment towards children impede their academic excellence. It is also known by all that boys and girls students never gets equal treat in respect to educational opportunities, since teachers sometimes intentionally and unintentionally practices stereotypes. Kane (2004) specified that girl students shows a bit concern to quality of schools than the boys. Fortunately, a few schools initiated gender sensitization process with the students to eliminate stereotype, poor academic expectations from girls, and beliefs such as, domestic chores and cleaning as well. A study was done in Bihar state of India comprising thirty govt. secondary schools where they found that physical infrastructure had no effect on academic success for both genders (Santhya, Zavier and Jejeebhoy, 2015). Another study illustrated Girls students are termed as dull and poor achievers who are incompetent of answering questions whereas boys are categorized as bright and acknowledged for time keeping and ringing the school bell (Kendall, 2006). Nevertheless, education plays an important role in strengthening individual mind and action. Meanwhile, the school itself creates the opportunity where young minds gain knowledge of social ethos, norms and values. Although education has still many challenges like to make students more humble, responsible citizen for the betterment of the society. Therefore, sensitization regarding gender issues is important for schools to defend emerging challenges at the individual and community levels. Thus, we are of the view incorporating gender related issues in school curriculum will make the school environment more conducive wherein academic and physical environment look after the needs of both genders.

Rationale of the investigation:

Needless to say education performs as weapon in changing the socio-economic and cultural landscape of a society at large. If we look at the context of India, social equity and inclusive education has been a top priority, particularly in the light of NEP 2020, it also gives stress on gender equality, safety learning environments, and holistic development (Ministry of Education, 2020). In spite of efforts made by Govt. educational disparity still exists in our society, In fact it persists across the states like Tripura. In the present study the, the researchers attempts to explore how gender sensitivity and climate of the educational institute jointly effects academic achievement of students of Tripura, a state which is culturally rich but facing educational challenges such as, poor infrastructure, socio-cultural differences, and gender stereotype.

Gender sensitivity refers to the awareness and responsiveness to gender-based differences in needs, experiences, and treatment, particularly within institutions such as schools. Several research studies shows that gender-sensitive policies and practices in schools such as equitable teacher-student interactions, inclusive curricula, and safe infrastructure significantly enhance the academic involvement and performance of students, especially girls (Unterhalter et al., 2014). Nevertheless, in many Indian schools, implicit biases and gender stereotypes continue to marginalize female students and reinforce traditional gender roles (Chopra & Jeffery, 2005). States like Tripura, where socio-economic development is patchy and tribal communities coexist with other social groups, the need to examine gender dynamics in education becomes more crucial.

Besides, school environment an important element of school system comprising physical infrastructure, teacher behavior, peer relationships, discipline policies, and emotional climate plays pivotal role in determining a student's academic journey. A positive school

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environment has been associated with increased motivation, better attendance, reduced dropout rates, and improved academic achievement (Thapa et al., 2013). Conversely, poor school infrastructure, lack of adequate sanitation (especially for girls), and unsafe school conditions contribute to educational exclusion. Studies in the North Eastern region have highlighted how inadequate school facilities and teacher absenteeism hinder learning outcomes (Azim Premji Foundation, 2019).

Meanwhile, both gender sensitivity and school environment have individually been associated to educational achievements, their interaction remains less researched, particularly in land locked state like Tripura. For sure the interaction between these two constructs may produce compounding effects. For instance, the schools which are physically safe but lacks gender-inclusive pedagogy may still fail to empower all learners uniformly. Similarly, a school with well-articulated gender policies may see limited impact if the broader environment is hostile or lacks basic resources. Understanding this interaction can offer nuanced insights for policy and practice.

If we talk about state Tripura the region presents a distinctive case for such a study. The state have tribal and non-tribal populations, urban and rural divides, and a growing focus on education post-NEP 2020, Tripura offers productive ground for examining how school-level factors affect student achievement. According to (UDISE+), Tripura succeeded in improving gross enrollment ratios and reducing gender gaps at the secondary level, but disparities persist in terms of learning outcomes and school conditions (UDISE+, 2022). In addition, Tripura's multi-ethnic social structure, tied with economic constraints, presents complex dynamics that influence both gender relations and educational access.

Hence, this study becomes relevant in the wake of growing global and national recognition of the need for gender transformative education an approach that not only includes girls but actively challenges gender inequalities through curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional culture (UNESCO, 2021). Tripura, like many side lined regions, risks being left out of national-level importance unless context specific research is conducted. By giving importance to students at higher secondary level, a crucial stage before higher education or employment—the study can shed light on factors that either support or hinder academic transition, especially for girls and marginalized groups.

It is expected the result of the present research work will enlighten researchers, policy planners, and curriculum constructors about the integrated role of gender sensitivity and school environment in fostering academic excellence. The findings of the present study could assist in designing more inclusive teacher training modules, improving school management policies, and advocating for gender audits in educational institutions. In a nutshell, the present study is justified on multiple grounds, like lack of empirical research in the stated field in Tripura, to bridge gender gaps in academic achievement, and critical function of the school atmosphere in shaping student success. It is believed by investigating the interaction between gender sensitivity and school climate; this study will contribute original insights to the fields of educational psychology, gender studies, and regional development, with practical implications for policy and institutional reform.

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Research Objectives:

In the light of study nature, following objectives are composed:

1. To appraise the level of gender sensitivity among higher secondary students of West district Tripura.
2. To oversee the academic achievement of higher secondary learners of West District Tripura.
3. To analyze the association between gender sensitivity and academic achievement.
4. To investigate the correlation between school environment and academic achievement.
5. To examine the combined predictive power of gender sensitivity and school climate on academic success.

Hypotheses of the present research:

To have statistical assertion on the present work null hypotheses are framed:

- H₀1: No noteworthy variation found in gender sensitivity in term of gender.
- H₀2: There is no meaningful difference in academic attainment between boys and girls in respect to their academic achievement.
- H₀3: Gender sensitivity does not significantly relate to academic success.
- H₀4: There is no statistically considerable link between school environment and academic achievement.
- H₀5: Gender sensitivity and school environment together do not significantly predict academic achievement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

To carry out the research, descriptive survey technique was adopted to examine the influence of gender sensitivity and school environment on academic achievement.

Population and Sample:

The population comprised higher secondary students of West district Tripura. And a sample of 300 students was selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation from both urban and rural schools and both genders.

Tools for Data Collection:

1. Gender Sensitivity Scale: A self standardized test consisting 40 items was utilized to gather data.
2. School Environment Inventory: a standardized test by Vandana Singh and Anubuthi was utilized to gather data on school environment in selected schools.
3. Academic Achievement: For determining and setting academic achievement, marks obtained in recent exams were collected.

Statistical Techniques:

Descriptive statistics (mean, SD), Percentile, Pearson correlation, t-test and Multiple regression analysis were employed for statistical analysis.

RESULTS

Objective 1: To explore the level of gender sensitivity belonging to senior secondary students of West District, Tripura

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In order to check the levels of gender sensitivity, students were classified into three categories: Low, Average, and High, based on their scores on the Gender Sensitivity Scale.

Table 1.1: Distribution of Students According to Level of Gender Sensitivity

Category	No of students	Percentage
Low	42	14%
Average	204	68%
High	54	18%
Total	300	100%

As presented in Table 1.1, the majority of students (68%) exhibited an average level of gender sensitivity. A smaller proportion of students were found in the low (14%) and high (18%) categories, indicating a moderate awareness concerning to gender oriented amid the students overall.

Objective 2: To study the academic achievement of higher secondary of West District Tripura.

Table 1.2: Distribution of Academic Achievement Levels among Higher Secondary Students in West District Tripura

Achievement level	No of students	Percentage
High	75	25%
Average	165	55%
Low	60	20%
Total	300	100%

Interpretation: The result depicts that average category comprises the majority (55%) of students, indicating that most students perform at a moderate academic level. And High achievement group includes 25% of the students, showing that a considerable number of students are performing well. Most surprisingly, the low achievement group is the smallest at 20%, indicating that fewer students are lagging behind compared to those in the high-performing group.

Hypothesis 1: No statistically significant variation exists between boys and girls in regarding gender sensitivity.

Table 1.3: Gender-wise Comparison of Gender Sensitivity among Higher Secondary Students

Category	N	MS	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
Boys	150	72.4	8.5	1.21	0.228	Not Significant
Girls	150	73.6	7.9			

Interpretation: The t-test result ($t=1.21$, $p=0.228$) implies that boys and girls possesses comparable levels of gender sensitivity. Thus, we can claim both groups exhibit similar levels of gender sensitivity.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant disparity in academic achievement among boys and girls students

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Table 1.4: Gender-wise Comparison of academic achievement among Higher Secondary Students

Group	N	Mean score	SD	t-value	Level
Boys	150	68.45	9.12	1.87	Not Significant
Girls	150	70.28	8.64		

Interpretation: A t-test was executed to compare between boys and girls in regard to their scholastic achievement. The result revealed that boys ($M = 68.45$, $SD = 9.12$) and girls ($M = 70.28$, $SD = 8.64$). Students demonstrate equivalent levels of achievement in scholarly excellence as result depicts as $t(298) = -1.87$, $p > .05$. Although girls had a slightly higher mean score than boys, the difference was not significant.

Objective 3: To investigate the association between gender sensitivity and academic achievement.

Hypothesis 3: Academic achievement is not significantly associated with gender sensitivity

Table 1.5: Showing the connection of Gender Sensitivity and Academic Achievement

Variables	N	r	p
Gender Sensitivity and academic achievement	300	0.08	<.01

Interpretation: A Pearson's product moment correlation was employed to assess the linkage between gender sensitivity and academic achievement. The answer implies that there was noteworthy correlation among gender sensitivity and academic achievement, $r(298) = 0.08$, $p < .01$. The result indicates that gender sensitivity is significantly related to students' academic achievement.

Objective 4: To determine the extent to which a positive school environment contributes to student's academic achievement.

Hypothesis 4: Students' academic achievement is independent of the quality of the school environment.

Table 1.6: Showing the connection between S.E. and A.A.

Variables	N	r	p
School environment and academic achievement	300	0.32	<.01

Interpretation: For testing above hypothesis, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was carried out to explore the relationship between school environment and academic achievement among higher secondary students. The results showed a moderate, positive and statistically important correlation, $r(298) = 0.32$, $p < .01$. This suggests that students who experience a better school environment tend to achieve higher academic performance.

Objective 5: To examine the combined predictive power of gender sensitivity and school environment on academic achievement.

Hypothesis 5: Gender sensitivity and school environment together do not significantly predict academic achievement

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Table 1.7: Multiple Regression Analysis Summary: Predicting Academic Achievement from Gender Sensitivity and School Environment

Predictor	B	SE	T	β (Standardized)	p-value
(Constant)	240.19	33.14	7.25	0	<0.001
Gender Sensitivity	0.53	0.20	2.60	0.15	0.010
School environment	0.04	0.32	0.14	0.01	0.890

$R^2 = .022$, Adjusted $R^2 = .016$, $F(2, N-3) = 3.425$, $p = 0.034$

Interpretation:

The overall regression model was found to be statistically significant, $R^2=0.022$, adjusted $R^2=0.016$, $F(2,N-3)=3.43$, $p=.034$, indicating that gender sensitivity and school environment together accounted for a small but significant proportion of variance in students' academic achievement. This finding implies that the null hypothesis stating that gender sensitivity and school environment together do not significantly predict academic achievement is rejected at the 0.05 level.

Inspection of the regression coefficients showed that gender sensitivity come out as a important optimistic forward planner of academic achievement ($B = 0.53$, $SE = 0.20$, $\beta = 0.15$, $t=2.60$, $p=.010$), whereas school environment did not contribute significantly to the prediction ($B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.32$, $\beta = 0.01$, $t=0.14$, $p=.89$). This suggests that, after controlling for school environment, higher levels of gender sensitivity are associated with higher academic achievement scores, while variation in school environment scores does not explain additional variance in achievement within this model.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, we made effort to study how gender sensitivity and the climate of the school influence scholastic excellence among post secondary learners in Tripura. The findings suggest that, both gender sensitivity and a positive school environment are crucial elements of a holistic educational experience; they determine students' academic performance in this context. In Tripura, where diverse socio-cultural and economic factors intersect, academic success appears to be shaped by the immediate school environment or gender-related attitudes.

This study suggests that while fostering gender sensitivity and creating inclusive, supportive school settings remain important for students' emotional and social development, but sometimes they may not be sufficient to enhance academic outcomes on their own. Other factors such as home support, individual motivation, access to educational resources, and quality of teaching may also play a more decisive role. For policymakers and educators in Tripura, these findings emphasize the need for a more comprehensive approach to academic improvement of students, one that addresses both in-school and out of school influences. Consistent efforts to promote equity and sensitivity in schools should be integrated with effective strategies aimed at enhancing learning conditions and addressing socio-economic disparities among students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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