

ASSESSING STUDENTS' LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS: THE WAY FORWARD

ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study was to assess the level of students' human rights awareness at the University of Education, Winneba. It further determines the benchmark for the improvement of human rights awareness. The research paper adopted a pragmatic research paradigm type of study. A mixed-method approach with an explanatory sequential design was employed for the study. The population for the study was the level 400 students of UEW for the 2022/2023 academic year. Knowing the population for the level 400 students, a total of 375 students were carefully selected hinging on the Krejcie and Morgan tabulation formula from the total population of 12,622 final year students for the quantitative data. Sixteen (16) students were purposively selected from the sample size of 375 for a focus group discussion. Standard-based students' academic rights and freedom questionnaires were adopted and adapted to merit the research setting. The focus group discussion guide was coined from the quantitative questionnaire for triangulation purposes. The quantitative data was triangulated with the qualitative data to check for consistency. Quantitative data analysis was done by using SPSS statistics analytical software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for the quantitative analysis, whilst thematic / content analysis was used for the qualitative analysis. As an insider, positionality issues and ethical considerations were professionally addressed so as not to influence the outcome of the research. The findings showed that students had a high level of human rights awareness about awareness of the right to life, while awareness of the right to a speedy trial was moderate and the least about human rights awareness. Overall, it was realized that students of the University of Education, Winneba had a high level of human rights awareness. The implications are that all the forms of human rights awareness outlined in the study were predominant among the students even though there were varying degrees of magnitude. It was inferred from their discussion that courses offered in the domain of human rights, seminars, conferences, flyers, newsletters, and basic school rules from students' handbooks were some of the sources for human rights awareness creation.

Keywords: Awareness Creation, Constitution, Constitutional Rights, Human Rights, Students, Students' Rights

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is organised under the following outline: 1) Introduction and Background; 2) Materials and Methods; 3) Findings and Discussion on students' level of human rights awareness; 4) The way forward in promoting students' human rights awareness; and 5) Conclusion. Rights and freedoms are inalienable entitlements that all persons are supposed to admissibly access and enjoy. Accessing these rights and freedoms has its challenges.

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, the professing of human rights and fundamental freedoms became the clarion call for many institutions to recognise the need for protecting the rights of persons of all walks of life. These institutions further helped in developing and defining the scope and content hinging on the various treaties, declarations and resolutions adopted by the UN and its regional bodies including the AU. There are still several voices which are helping to define the nature and scope of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) promulgation was premised on the intention of bringing on board people from all walks of life no matter what or where a person comes from. This is why Article 2 of UDHR asserts that “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made based on the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.” This indicates that the UDHR purposely cleave for one common standard for all persons in this world. Dissemination of the rights to all manner of people is now the issue as the majority of folks are not aware of the universality and inalienability of rights naturally bestowed on them.

There is a continual critical debate about the concept of human rights within the scope of time and space. This makes the inalienability and the universality nature of human rights depend on the large extent the individual or group of persons involved. With this, however, qualities of human rights bothering the concepts of universality and inalienability are debatable in their understanding and legal operation.

Natural law or moral standards, such as human rights even stipulate that we do unto others what we desire to be done unto us. In our daily activities, we gain acceptance and respect from people we meet and interact with. So, we should also extend the same to others. Husak (1985) believes that “Without the appeal to human rights, democratic champions would have to argue the desirability of values such as equality and freedom of speech across the often-incomparable circumstances of the world's societies, rather than asserting that such benefits just inherently flow from human existence” (Husak, 1985).

Chapter Five of the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution speaks about the promotion of fundamental human rights. For instance, Article 21 (1) provides that “All persons shall have the right to - (a) freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media; (b) freedom of thought, conscience and belief, which shall include academic freedom; (c) freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice; (d) freedom of assembly including the freedom to take part in processions and demonstrations; (e) freedom of association, which shall include freedom to form or join trade unions or other associations, national or international, for the protection of their interest; (f) information, subject to such qualifications and laws as are necessary for a democratic society; (g) freedom of movement which means the right to move freely in Ghana, the right to leave and to enter Ghana and immunity from expulsion from Ghana.” Article 21 laid down the rights everyone is supposed to enjoy as a citizen of Ghana.

For this discourse, there is the need to briefly bring to light the classifications of human rights. The broader Human Rights concept is classified into the following sub-strands: Natural Rights, which are rights that are inherent to humans at birth; Fundamental Rights, which are rights that are basic and most important for human enjoyment; Moral Rights, which are rights that deal with fair and just principles of law; Legal Rights, which are rights that are laid down in law; Social Rights, which are rights which aid in eradicating social inequalities; and Civil and Political Rights, which are rights laid down by the government for better economic growth of a country.

According to the International Convent on Civil and Political Rights (1966), The above classification of human rights can be subsumed into three, namely, "Human Rights fused in the International Convent on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and Collective Rights. This signifies that Human Rights are seen as an eternal part of the nature of human beings." Emphasis is laid on the natural rights. The natural school of thought describes human rights as a concept that human beings possess simply because they are human beings (Dembour, 2010). It is believed that throughout time and space, different societies and cultures have clarified the concept of 'human rights' to fit their contexts. In some societies, the concept consists of a defined set of laws and legislation, whilst in others, it may be seen as mere guidelines that reflect the morals and expectations of persons within a given community. The concept of natural rights arises from the belief that there is an inherent human ability to differentiate right from wrong. Its processes task people to right individual and societal wrongs. Natural law thinkers see rights as the same for everyone (universal) and that nobody should be deprived of or taken away from anyone (inalienable). This implies that natural rights theories sit in the notion that all human beings are equal and should be treated equally.

Article 17 of the Ghanaian Constitution directly addresses the issue of inequality and the illegality of discrimination based on the "grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or economic status." Section 3 of Article 17 explains "discrimination as the means to give different persons attributable only or mainly to their respective descriptions by race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, gender occupation, religion or creed, whereby persons of one description are subjected or restrictions." This is not negotiable. The state is mandated to respect and protect.

Claiming these rights, however, should accompany duties that incorporate civil, political, economic, social, and cultural practices that Ghanaians should engage in as citizens. Article 41 urges individual Ghanaians to be duty-oriented as citizens by stating that "the exercise of rights and freedoms, guaranteed in the Constitution, are inseparable from the citizen's performance of their duties." Being duty-bound cannot be overly done without sensitization of one's responsibilities.

Coming from different works of life with diverse thoughts simply means that education in human rights should be tackled seriously. Sharma (2002) asserts that "With an acceptance of human rights, Moslems, Hindus, Christians, capitalists, socialists, democracies, or tribal oligarchies may all legitimately censure each other. This criticism across religious, political, and economic divides gains its legitimacy because human rights are said to enshrine universal moral standards.

Without fully universal human rights, one is left simply trying to assert that one's way of thinking is better than somebody else's" (p. 10). This shows the need for students to be educated about concepts in human rights to fully embrace the essence of dignity enshrined in the UDHR provisions. There have been arguments on how best Human Rights Education (HRE) can be integrated into the national school curriculum or education systems.

Robinson, Phillips and Quennerstedt (2020) jointly authored "Human Rights Education: Developing a Theoretical Understanding of Teachers' Responsibilities" stressed that "Developing a classification of teachers' responsibilities around HRE is an important component of the systemic change we believe is needed if HRE is to be embedded at scale in education systems." Teachers have the responsibility of delivering the desired content of the curricular document on human rights to realise that students have the content to effect attitudinal change. A positive attitude can be realized in the teaching and learning of human rights when the interest of the child or student is brought to the fore. All this can be done when the curriculum is student-friendly. It is on this that the World Programme for Human Rights Education resolutely endorsed the necessity for value-laden HRE in schools and reiterated a declaration made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child that "the education to which a child has a right is one designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child's capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values" (United Nations, 2006, p. 6).

In addition, it was made clear that HRE within schools ought to be "an integral part of the right to education . . . [and that] human rights should be learned through both content transmission and experience, and should be practised at all levels of the school system" (United Nations, 2006, pp. 6-7). The World Programme encompasses three imperative but equal elements: 'Knowledge and skills which includes learning about human rights and acquiring the skills to apply them in daily life; Values, attitudes and behaviour which incorporate developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour in alignment with human rights; and Capacity for action which is concerned with developing the capacity to defend and promote human rights' (United Nations 2006, p. 12).

Also, the World Programme's principles for HRE activities advocate "a more holistic conception of human rights and assert that this should include the promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights" (United Nations 2006, p. 14). It also states that educational activities should foster respect for, and appreciation of, differences and opposition to discrimination; they should develop knowledge and skills to enable the protection of human rights; and should create teaching and learning environments free from want and fear that encourage participation and enjoyment of human rights. It emphasises that "HRE should be relevant to the daily lives of the learners, engaging them in dialogue about how abstract expression of human rights can be realised in practice in learners' particular social, economic, cultural and political contexts" (United Nations 2006, p. 14). This indicates that HRE in our educational system will go a long way to help learners.

However, this ideal thing (HRE) seems to be lacking. Deliberately doing this will help to inculcate in learners the real teaching and learning of human rights concepts. Students learning human rights concepts will help them raise their level of awareness of human rights principles.

Therefore, the crux of the issue under discussion is to assess students' level of human rights awareness in Ghana; narrowing it down to the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). This study, therefore, sought to assess students' awareness of human rights, and ways in which human rights responsiveness can be promoted in Ghana, using the University of Education, Winneba as a case study. The research questions which acted as a blueprint for the study are as follows: 1) What is the level of human rights awareness among students of the University of Education, Winneba? and 2) How will students' human rights be promoted in the University of Education, Winneba?

Significantly, the main goal of assessing the human rights awareness of students was to: ascertain their level of awareness and how they can be promoted in an unhindered manner. The outcome of the collected data would, in turn, be used to: Intensify public awareness of human rights; Categorise areas where public education on human rights is needed; and Inform policymakers on human rights issues. The study was delimited in terms of content to a level of human rights awareness and how it can be promoted at the University of Education, Winneba. It was further delimited to students in the Departments of Social Studies Education and the Department of Political Sciences Education in the Faculty of Social Sciences Education. It is further delimited in terms of jurisdiction or location to the University of Education, Winneba which is in the Central Region of the Republic of Ghana.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE HRE MODEL AND AWARENESS CREATION

This section reviews relevant literature in the domain of human rights education models and the nexus of awareness creation with its relevance and application to human rights education. There are Charter of Rights enshrined in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

Article 17(1) and (2) of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana guarantee "the equality of all persons before the law. It also prohibits discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin, race, gender, religion, colour, creed or economic or social status." It is then clearly written that the 1992 Constitution forbids acts or behaviours that "give unequal treatment to different persons mainly based on their respective descriptions by law, political opinions, gender, place of origin, colour, occupation, creed or religion." It again bars "a situation where a group or class is granted privileges or is subjected to restrictions to which another group or class is excluded." Being abreast with the constitutional content should not be the sole responsibility of the judiciary when it comes to its interpretation but its content must also be well-known to the rank and file of the general population. Being aware of the human rights provisions in the constitution as prescribed codes will certainly let people (students) understand the common benefits and treatment the Republic of Ghana is supposed to provide for all its citizens simply because they are all humans. Several acclaimed yardsticks are used to measure the level of human rights in institutions and nations all over the world. This is making human rights awareness very important in our contemporary era. Awareness creation can be applied to human rights education in several ways. According to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, human

rights education aims to promote universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, clear understanding, attitudes, and right behaviours to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society.

Nonetheless, it is believed that “even where schools integrate programmes with a rights-based focus within their curriculum, there is still concern that the nature and amount of HRE received by pupils are inconsistent” (Robinson, 2017). The inconsistencies in the content of HRE may result in lesson delivery variations by teachers. The outcome becomes worse when the content is not familiar to the human rights educator. Robinson (2017) further asserts that “teachers interpreted and implemented their curriculum responsibilities for HRE in different ways depending on “how they socially construct notions of children, the related values, beliefs and prejudices they hold, and how they are encouraged at school level by school leaders to interpret HRE responsibilities” (pp. 134-135).

In addition, research by Tibbitts and Kirchsclaeger (2010) acknowledged that “teachers were not familiar with HRE content and lacked HRE professional development.” Because of the inconsistencies in both the content and delivery of HRE, a topical global and all-inclusive dialogueresearch by Russell and Suárez (2017) declares that “further research is needed on the mechanisms through which human rights curricula and policies are implemented hence adding to our key argument that HRE needs to be an embedded feature of national education systems” (p. 39). This indicates a more consensual conceptualization of the content and delivery of HRE by teachers. This will result in student forming a concrete conception of human rights and being able to raise their awareness level both in the school setting and in their communities.

This then calls for a concrete development of a distinct HRE framework for teachers and students. Two distinctive existing models can be drawn for the classification of HRE for the responsibilities of teachers. These models of HRE are the World Programme for HRE (United Nations, 2006) and Tibbitts’ (2002) model of HRE. Considerations are therefore given to Tibbitts’ models of HRE based on their qualities and limitations.

Tibbitts (2002) cited in Robinson et al. (2020) states that “HRE is ultimately about building human rights cultures within the communities in which individuals belong.” Tibbitts (2002) came out with three significant models which are: “1) the Values and Awareness Model; 2) the Accountability Model; and 3) the Transformational Model as the classification for HRE practices.” The three models when employed will help achieve attitudinal and behavioural change. From her, the processes are achieved through:

- (i) Values and Awareness, which is the main focus within the Tibbitts Model. According to her, HRE is “to transmit basic knowledge of human rights issues and to foster its integration into public values” (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 163). It is preempted on the fact that the values and Awareness model is characteristically designed like Social Studies to nurture critical thinking skills among learners. This framework is typically coined to raise awareness on issues among learners with the capability to apply right in life. Robinson et al. (2020) assert that the awareness and values model “places relatively little emphasis on the development of skills such as those related to conflict resolution and activism.” With

the HRE in the school curriculum, Tibbitts argues that “the transition of knowledge of human rights must avoid the ‘banking’ model of education outlined by Freire (1990), in which the learners’ risk ‘superficial exposure to the human rights field’ and do not develop an understanding of the value or meaning of human rights” (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 164).

- (ii) The second is the Accountability model which places tasks on authorities to “directly monitor human rights violations . . . [and take] special care to protect the rights of people (especially vulnerable populations) for which they have some responsibility” (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 165). There is the assumption created in the school setting that “teachers will have to acknowledge, and have an interest in, upholding and protecting the rights of pupils and in taking action when rights are violated and that pupils will be directly involved in the protection of individual and group rights” (Robinson et al., 2020).
- (iii) The third is the Transformational model. This model has the intention to empower learners to be aware and understand their individual and group rights and to “recognise human rights abuses and to commit to their prevention” (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 166). The Transformational model adopts that learners have had individual experiences of human rights abuses and, within the school setting, this model is manifest when human rights abuses perpetrated against young peoples and children's rights are seriously taken notice of, deliberated upon and, possibly, act on behalf of in redressing the violation. Tibbitts (2002) acknowledges that “the transformational model is the most difficult to implement and requires support from teachers on an ongoing basis” (p. 167).

The foregoing discourse on Tibbitts’ Models of HRE namely, the Values and Awareness Model; the Accountability Model; and the Transformational Model for human rights practices depict that they can be employed to help in knowledge and skill acquisition of the rights of a person and group of people. The crux of the relevance and application of the three models when employed will help to achieve attitudinal and behavioural change in helping to solve individual and group issues in human rights education. Insights drawn from the discourse indicate that the models can be employed to create human rights awareness among people across time and space.

From the inferences made, here are some examples of how awareness creation can be applied in human rights education drawing inspiration from the Tibbitts (2002) HRE Model:

1. **Self-awareness:** HRE can help students develop self-awareness by recognizing their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and how they relate to their learning process. This flows in tandem with the objectives and nature of social studies as a subject of which human rights can be subsumed as a concept that can help raise the awareness of students. Human rights education comes in handy in sensitizing and empowering learners about the provisions in the constitution that speak to their rights.
2. **Metacognition:** Awareness creation in HRE can help students develop metacognitive skills by reflecting on their learning process, setting goals, and monitoring their progress. Under this theoretical umbrella, values are learnt in social studies that necessitate that learners are equipped to set targets with laid down benchmarks.
3. **Mindfulness:** Awareness creation can help students develop mindfulness skills by focusing on the present moment, accepting their thoughts and feelings without judgment, and cultivating a sense of calmness and clarity. Social studies help learners to be mindful of their environment. Keeping their environment clean. It helps us to be environmentally

friendly. In human rights, it helps students to possess the principles of fairness, integrity and dignity.

4. **Social awareness:** HRE can help students develop social awareness by recognizing the perspectives and feelings of others, empathizing with them, and communicating effectively. Teaching Social Studies inculcate in learners the spirit of social cohesion, which is finding strength in the diverse nature of people and flowing free with people of different thoughts and ethnic background. It teaches stress to participatory citizens and decision-making-oriented learners.
5. **Critical thinking:** HRE can help students develop critical thinking skills by questioning assumptions, analyzing evidence, and evaluating arguments. Critical thinking skills are one of the 21st-century skills that students of Social Studies in their foundational courses taught them.

The foregoing discourse hinging on the awareness creation lens indicates the essence of why ascertaining the level of human rights of students was imperative for many reasons. By incorporating awareness creation into human rights education, learners can gain a deeper understanding of human rights issues and develop the skills necessary to promote respect for human rights in their communities. This will result in people living in peaceful co-existence. Knowing one's rights equips the individual to become responsible in society. This is because provisions and protecting individuals' rights must go with the people exhibiting responsibilities. This proves why probing into the level of human rights awareness of students was necessary.

The lack of it was to intensify the knowledge base of learners for them to understand that nobody can deny or abuse their constitutional rights. There should be a deliberate effort to incorporate the ideals of knowing individuals' rights in our school curriculum. This will go a long way to empower students in their daily lives.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research paper adopted a pragmatic research paradigm type of study. Using the mixed method approach with an explanatory sequential design, this study, therefore, sought to assess the level of human rights awareness at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. Explanatory sequential mixed method design “starts with the quantitative data collection and analysis of findings that have the priority to answer the questions of the research and then continues with a corresponding qualitative data collection and analysis.” The design helps interpret how the qualitative results help explain the initial quantitative results.

The population for the study was the level 400 students of UEW. The Krejcie and Morgan Table for sample size determination from a given population was employed to sample from a total of 12,622 final-year students. The ever-increasing requirement for a fair representation of statistical samples for ideal empirical research has created the need for an effective method of determining sample size. In addressing the existing gap in academic research, “Krejcie and Morgan (1970) came up with a table for determining sample size for a given population for easy reference.”

It has then become easy to use the formula since the table of determining sample size has all the provisions a researcher requires to arrive at a definite sample size. Knowing the population for

the level 400 students, a total of 375 students were carefully selected hinging on the Krejcie and Morgan tabulation formula from the total population of 12,622 final year students for the quantitative data. Sixteen (16) students were purposively selected from the sample size of 375 from the eight colleges/faculties/schools of the university for the qualitative data. The criterion for inclusion in the study was solely hinged on core courses students in certain departments are tasked to offer that are laced in the context of teaching and learning with human rights. The cursor fell on two departments in the University of Education which are the Department for Social Studies Education and the Department for Political Science Education, both in the Faculty of Social Sciences Education. This came in handy to ascertain whether or not there is an appreciable level of human rights awareness as students. Questionnaires and semi-structured focus group discussion guides were the instruments for the collection of data employed. Standard-based students' academic rights and freedom questionnaires were adopted and adapted to merit the research setting. Four groups of four members were guided through a focus group discussion guide coined from the quantitative questionnaire for triangulation purposes. The quantitative data was triangulated with the qualitative data to check for consistency. Quantitative data analysis was done by using SPSS statistics analytical software. Inferential and descriptive statistics were employed for analysing the quantitative (questionnaire) data, whilst thematic / content analysis was applied for the qualitative (focus group discussion) data. As an insider, positionality issues and ethical considerations were professionally addressed so as not to influence the outcome of the research.

According to Holmes (2020), "positionality requires the researcher to acknowledge and allow their views, values, and beliefs about the research design, conduct, and output to be located." In the issue of positionality, I questioned myself and reflected throughout the research process and this helped me to do away with my biases and to maintain some critical distance from the issue I researched which is students' awareness of human rights and how best to promote the rights of students. The needed issues carved around the research questions were infused into a constructed questionnaire to probe for the outcome in the quantitative data outcomes from the respondents and also, interacted with the research participants, and allowed their views to inform this work. Bell (2005) maintains that ethical considerations are research practices that ensure clarity in terms of the nature of agreement that the researcher has secured from the research participants.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

Three hundred and seventy-five (375) questionnaires were administered to the students, but three hundred and thirty-nine (339) were retrieved, representing a response rate of 90.4%. The study therefore realized a response rate of 90.4% which was valid to be used. The researcher could not attain a 100% response rate because a few of the students did not return the questionnaire after several attempts were made to retrieve them. Besides, some of the questionnaires returned were not answered while others had incomplete answers that were eliminated from the analysis. The researcher attempted to collect all the questionnaires sent out but was unable to get the questionnaires back. Nevertheless, this rate of data response was considered suitable based on the recommendation of Babbie (2001) that "a response rate of 50% is enough in a survey." The

response rate obtained in this study was therefore very good. The next section presents the demographic characteristics of the students.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Students

The demographic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, educational attainment/level, and departments of students were examined and the results are accessible in Table1.

Table 1 Demographic Information of Students

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	161	47.5
	Male	178	52.5
	Total	339	100.0
Age	21-30	322	95.0
	31-40	17	5.0
	Total	339	100.0
Level of Educational Attainment	Senior High School	119	35.1
	Post-Secondary / Teacher Training Certificate	220	64.9
	Total	339	100.0
Department of Student	Social Studies	197	58.1
	Political Science	142	41.9
	Total	339	100.0

Source: Fieldwork Data, September 2023

The demographic representations of the students in Table 1 disclosed that more male students participated in the study (n=178, 52.5%) as compared to their counterparts who were females (n=161, 47.5%). The information further showed that in terms of age, the majority of the students were between 21-30 years bracket (n=322, 95.0%) than those who were between 31-40 years age bracket (n=17, 5.0%). Besides, the study showed that more than half of the students had post-secondary/teacher training certificates (n=220, 64.9%) while the remaining students had senior high school (n=119, 35.1%) respectively. Finally, the statistics showed that over half of the respondents or students for the quantitative study came from the Department of Social Studies Education (n=197, 58.1%) while the rest 142 students representing 41.9% came from the Department of Political Science Education.

The distribution of demographic characteristics of the students was vital to the research since data came from learners with varied backgrounds. The authenticity of the data was assured by avoiding anything that would have resulted in biases in the data collected. This gave rise to enhanced findings. Furthermore, demographic factors like students' gender, age, educational attainment, and department of students assisted in defining the extent to which each of the factors influenced the human rights awareness of students. This helps in providing answers to the study's research questions.

4.3 Level of Students' Human Rights Awareness

The findings and discussion of the level of students' human rights awareness at the University of Education was guided by research question one - *What is the level of human rights awareness among students of the University of Education, Winneba?* This research question aimed to investigate the level of human rights awareness among students at the University of Education, Winneba. In this study, standard deviation and mean were considered to establish the perceived level of human rights awareness such that $\text{mean} < 2.50$ showed a low level of awareness, $2.50 \leq \text{mean} < 3.50$ showed a moderate level of awareness, and $\text{mean} \geq 3.50$ indicated a high level of awareness. These categorizations are consistent with Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These scholars maintain that the mean score on a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, the mean score can be ranked as very low, low, or high. The general perception of students on their perceived level of human rights awareness is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Students Level of Human Rights Awareness

Statements	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Human Rights Awareness
Awareness of the right to life	339	1	5	4.77	0.59	High
Awareness of the right to life	339	1	5	4.74	0.60	High
Awareness of the right to education	339	1	5	4.73	0.59	High
Awareness of the right to own property	339	1	5	4.71	0.58	High
Awareness of freedom and justice	339	1	5	4.63	0.73	High
Awareness of children's rights	339	1	5	4.60	0.71	High
Awareness of the right to work	339	1	5	4.57	0.75	High
Awareness of the right to work	339	1	5	4.55	0.74	High
Awareness of the right to privacy	339	1	5	4.49	0.88	High
Awareness of the right to academic freedom	339	1	5	4.47	0.93	High
Awareness of civil and political rights	339	1	5	4.40	0.87	High
Awareness of the right to information	339	1	5	4.38	0.89	High
Awareness of economic social and cultural rights	339	1	5	4.37	0.86	High
Awareness of the right to choose an occupation	339	1	5	4.36	0.90	High
Awareness of human rights abuses	339	1	5	4.33	0.97	High
Awareness of the right to form political parties	339	1	5	4.31	0.99	High
Awareness of human rights violations	339	1	5	4.30	0.94	High
Awareness of the right to establish a business	339	1	5	4.29	0.95	High
Awareness of the right to culture	339	1	5	4.19	1.07	High
Awareness of the right to safe work environment	339	1	5	4.14	1.07	High

Awareness of the right to renounce citizenship	339	1	5	4.12	1.03	High
Awareness of the right to rest and leisure	339	1	5	4.11	1.10	High
Awareness of the right to a fair trial	339	1	5	4.06	1.11	High
Awareness of the right to transfer property	339	1	5	3.92	1.19	High
Awareness of the right to counsel/lawyer	339	1	5	3.90	1.17	High
Awareness of the right to join trade unions	339	1	5	3.89	1.14	High
Awareness of the right to public trial	339	1	5	3.76	1.11	High
Awareness of international human rights law	339	1	5	3.73	1.16	High
Awareness of the right to examine evidence/witnesses	339	1	5	3.71	1.23	High
Awareness of the right to just remuneration	339	1	5	3.52	1.28	High
Awareness of the right to speedy trial	339	1	5	3.27	1.27	Moderate
Overall Level of Human Rights Awareness	339	1	5	4.24	0.50	High

Source: Fieldwork Data, September 2023

The evidence in Table 2 revealed that there were more than a few indicators of human rights awareness among the students. Particularly, the findings showed that students had high level of human rights awareness in relation to awareness of the right to life ($M=4.77$, $SD=0.59$), awareness of the right to education ($M=4.73$, $SD=0.59$), awareness of the right to own property ($M=4.71$, $SD=0.58$), awareness of freedom and justice ($M=4.63$, $SD=0.73$), awareness of children rights ($M=4.60$, $SD=0.71$), awareness of the right to work ($M=4.57$, $SD=0.75$), awareness of the right to privacy ($M=4.49$, $SD=0.88$), awareness of the right to academic freedom ($M=4.47$, $SD=0.93$), awareness of civil and political rights ($M=4.40$, $SD=0.87$), awareness of rights to information ($M=4.38$, $SD=0.89$), awareness of economic, social and cultural rights ($M=4.37$, $SD=0.86$), awareness of the right to choose occupation ($M=4.36$, $SD=0.90$), awareness of human rights abuses ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.97$), awareness of the right to form political parties ($M=4.31$, $SD=0.99$), awareness of human rights violations ($M=4.30$, $SD=0.94$), awareness of the rights to establish a business ($M=4.29$, $SD=0.95$), awareness of the right to culture ($M=4.19$, $SD=1.07$), awareness of the rights safe work environment ($M=4.14$, $SD=1.07$), awareness of the rights to renounce citizenship ($M=4.12$, $SD=1.03$), awareness of the right to rest and leisure ($M=4.11$, $SD=1.10$), awareness of the rights to fair trial ($M=4.06$, $SD=1.011$), awareness of the rights to transfer property ($M=4.06$, $SD=1.11$), awareness of the rights to counsel/lawyer ($M=3.92$, $SD=1.19$), awareness of the rights to join trade unions ($M=3.89$, $SD=1.14$), awareness of the rights to public trial ($M=3.76$, $SD=1.11$), awareness of human rights law ($M=3.73$, $SD=1.16$), awareness of the rights to examine evidence/witness ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.23$), awareness of the rights to just remuneration ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.28$), while awareness of the rights to speedy trial ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.27$) was moderate and the least in relation to human

rights awareness. Overall, it could be realized that undergraduates of the University of Education, Winneba had a high level ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.50$) of human rights awareness. The findings suggested that the mean scores for the indicators of human rights awareness were higher than the 3.0 mean score of the questionnaire $(1+2+3+4+5/5)$. This infers that all the forms of human rights awareness outlined in the research work were predominant among the students even though there were varying degrees of magnitude.

Having determined the general perception of the students on their level of human rights awareness, the study delved into finding out if students' factors (gender, age, education level and department of students) influenced their perception of their level of human rights awareness at the University of Education, Winneba. The influence of students' gender on their level of human rights awareness was investigated, and the discoveries are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: T-test Results for Demographic Variables and Level of Human Rights Awareness

Variable	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Level of Human Rights Awareness	Male	4.21	0.51	0.889	337	0.375
	Female	4.26	0.50			
	Age					
	21-30	4.23	0.50	-1.765	337	0.079
	31-40	4.45	0.48			
	Educ. Level					
	Snr. High	4.22	0.50	-0.487	337	0.626
	Tch. Training	4.25	0.51			
	Department					
	Soc. Studies	4.28	0.45	2.085	337	0.038
	Pol. Science	4.17	0.56			

Source: Fieldwork Data, September 2023

The results in Table 3 indicated that even though female students recorded higher levels of human rights awareness ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.50$) than male students ($M=4.21$, $SD=0.51$), the independent samples t-test results showed that there were no statistically significant differences male and female students on their level of human rights awareness [$t(337) = 0.889$, $p>0.05$, 2-tailed] at 0.05. The results implied that gender did not influence students' level of human rights awareness at the University of Education, Winneba. Similarly, the results disclosed that, even though students within the 31-40 years age bracket had a higher level of human rights awareness ($M=4.45$, $SD=0.48$) than those between 21-30 years age bracket ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.50$), the independent samples t-test results disclosed that it was not statistically significant [$t(337) = -1.765$, $p>0.05$, 2-tailed].

The findings further revealed that there was a variance in the mean scores for students who came to the University of Education, Winneba with a Senior High School qualification ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.50$) and those who came with a Post-Secondary /Teacher Training Certificate ($M=4.25$, $SD=0.51$) which implied that students that came with Post-Secondary /Teacher Training Certificate had higher levels of human rights awareness than their counterpart with Senior High

School qualification even though the results was not statistically significant [$t(337) = -0.487$, $p > 0.05$, 2-tailed]. Nevertheless, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores for Social Studies and Political Science students who participated in the study concerning their level of human rights awareness [$t(337) = 2.085$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed] where the Social Studies students significantly had a higher level of human rights awareness ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.45$) than their Political Science counterparts ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.56$).

Accordingly, the outcome from research question one has demonstrated that except for the department of students where statistically significant differences were realized, gender, age, and the level of students' educational attainment did not significantly influence their perceived level of human rights awareness in the University of Education, Winneba. This suggested that these personal factors of the students were not central in the discussion of the factors that influence students' perception of their level of human rights awareness at the University of Education, Winneba.

The level of students' awareness of human rights was qualitatively discussed. Focus group discussion was also conducted to test for the consistency of the quantitative results. In a focus group discussion of four groups of four members each, students were guided to discuss the reasons why the indicators for awareness creation of students were generally ranked "High." The discussion guide for the focus group discussion was hinged on research question one which is - What is the level of human rights awareness among students of the University of Education, Winneba? The Following were some of the pertinent outcomes derived from the focus group discussion. I inferred from their discussion that courses offered in the domain of human rights and seminars they attended organized by the Department of Social Studies Education, Department of Political Sciences Education and the Centre for Human Rights and Peace Studies (CHRAPS) and other departments helped in creating the awareness for human rights. Print and electronic media, newsletters and flyers of celebration of Human Rights Day, especially the UDHR day celebrated by CHRAPS every 10th of December endorsed as one of the awareness creations. The day is recognised by the United Nations General Assembly as a day for the celebration of human rights worldwide. This Human Rights Day is distinctively celebrated every year to empower everyone to be aware of their rights as human beings. Strict adherence to basic school rules from their students' handbook was also viewed as grounds for promoting the awareness of human rights. Few of them also cited off-classroom activities, participation in rallies, readings from books, and watching films is least cited. The majority of the students held the view that teaching them directly and indirectly about human rights was the source of their awareness of the concept. Most of the students also believed that working together and learning cooperatively helps to ensure an understanding of human values, respect for one's dignity, and tolerance as diversity in opinion is tolerated in the name of human rights.

4.4 The Way Forward in Promoting Students' Human Rights Awareness

This section was guided by research question two which is - *How will students' human rights be promoted at the University of Education, Winneba?* The purpose of this section was to analytically make provisions for the model of fundamental of the promotion of students' human rights awareness at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Integration of needed value-laden human rights concepts in the curriculum of higher learning like the universities in certain subjects will automatically lead to an increase in awareness of human rights. Going forward, the dominant approach in teaching should be fused with human rights ideals. This exercise of integrating human rights both in content and pedagogy in all subjects in the institutions of higher learning will help young people understand their rights and responsibilities.

The government of Ghana with its established institutions in education and human rights like the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ghana Education Service (GES), Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) which is duty bound to oversee to the education of civic matters of Ghanaians, and the National Teaching Council (NTC), the institution responsible for improving the professional standing of teachers in Ghana should create opportunities for compulsory in-service training for professional teachers on the need to engage in regular Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes on the effectiveness of incorporating human rights in their teaching practice. A conscious effort should be made to ensure the provision of good quality education in human rights both in content and practice. Doing this will ensure human rights awareness is promoted among the youth which will in turn help to prevent discrimination in all spheres. This is a legal obligation that the government should be held accountable for failing to provide in the quest to offer quality education for all,

Promoting students' human rights awareness can easily be done and implemented when people can access their right to education. This can be realised when the State sees the need to guarantee that education in Ghana. This can be done by making available all the needed materials for learning. There must be enough classrooms and materials, adequately trained teachers that will merit an internationally accepted level of teacher-student ratio and others. This will ensure that quality education is available to every Ghanaian child. There should also be access to schools. Schools should be built taking into consideration persons with disabilities; for their easy access and enjoyment of all rights thereof and also in terms of their rights to academic freedom. Everything within the school setting must be fit for disability purposes. Quality education should be affordable to all children. There should not be any form of discrimination for religion, gender or political affiliation, and other uncalled-for reasons that do not merit institutional autonomy. The curriculum content of schools should be acceptable to stakeholders and should not be enforced on clients. Education must be of a high quality and include relevant and appropriate information. Children with disabilities also have the right to the same quality of education.

Improvement in the student's acquisition of knowledge in human rights and awareness in the university setting can be enhanced through the knowledge and application of human rights concepts. A deliberate planning and effective human rights education programme is necessary to ensure the awareness creation and proper dissemination of human rights among university students. This can be better done by including some of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and making sure that they are taught during the school year. Having a core mandate for training professional teachers for the first cycle, second cycle and the tertiary institutions in Ghana, the University of Education, Winneba should be tasked to train teachers in handling human rights discussions, including making them understand the

importance of human rights education as a necessary tool for maintaining quality daily life. Teaching methods should emphasize the application and relevance of human rights to daily life as lived by the respondents in their respective environments. The teaching of economic, social, cultural and gender rights should be enhanced. Since knowledge of human rights does not automatically translate into participation in human rights activities and practice, the university's policies should be geared towards seeing and acknowledging the gaps and bridging that of theory and practice. This should be evaluated and reviewed.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The level of students' awareness of human rights was ranked high. There were several positive indicators of human rights awareness among the students. Particularly, the findings showed that students had a high level of human rights awareness about awareness of the right to life, while awareness of the right to a speedy trial was moderate and the least about human rights awareness. Social Studies and Political Sciences Students of the University of Education, Winneba have a high level of human rights awareness. The implications are that all the forms of human rights awareness were predominant among the students even though there were erratic degrees of magnitude. Personal factors of the students were not crucial in the discussion of the factors that influence students' perception of their level of human rights awareness at the University of Education, Winneba. Sources for the awareness of human rights were the courses offered in the domain of human rights, seminars, conferences, flyers, newsletters, and basic school rules from students' handbooks were some of the sources for human rights awareness creation.

In general, teachers are not consciously trained in curriculum to teach human rights in schools. As a result, a conscious effort should be put in place by the various national institutions like the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), National Teaching Council (NTC), and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) to take supervisory roles and scrutinize curricular reforms to guide teacher training institution to infuse in curricular content aspects of human rights to help increase students' knowledge and raise their awareness in human rights.

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