



International Journal of Advance Studies and Growth Evaluation

Constitutional Awareness among Secondary School Students: An Empirical Assessment

^{*1}Minakshi Mishra

^{*1} Professor, School of Education, S.L.B.S.N.S. University, New Delhi, India.

Article Info.

E-ISSN: 2583-6528

Impact Factor (QJIF): 8.4

Peer Reviewed Journal

Available online:

www.alladvancejournal.com

Received: 19/May/2026

Accepted: 23/June/2026

Abstract

Even after 76 years as a Republic, democracy in India has not fully transformed into a way of life. Misuse of power, subversion of democratic institutions, and persistent inequalities of caste, creed, sect and gender indicate a gap between constitutional ideals and social reality. Though the Preamble enshrines socialism, secularism, and democracy, these values have not attained their expected position in society due to illiteracy and social dissensions. Since schools are primary agencies of political socialisation, this study assesses the level of constitutional awareness among Class XI secondary school students. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 500 students across 10 government and private schools in Delhi through a self-developed Constitutional Awareness Test (CAT) and semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers. Findings reveal that 76% of students were unaware of the meaning of 'Socialism' in the Indian context, 74% defined secularism as "all religions equal", 62% could not identify all the Fundamental Duties, and about 81% could not identify all the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. However, 62% showed high awareness of the right to vote. Thematic analysis of interviews identified three barriers: (1) Textbook-centric rote learning, (2) Lack of dialogic pedagogy on controversial issues, and (3) Disconnect between course content and students' lived realities. The study concludes that constitutional literacy requires pedagogical shifts from information transfer to critical inquiry, lived citizenship projects, and teacher preparation in constitutional morality.

*Corresponding Author

Minakshi Mishra

Professor, School of Education,
S.L.B.S.N.S. University, New Delhi,
India.

Keywords: Constitutional Awareness, Constitutional Morality.

1. Introduction

The Constitution of India, adopted on 26th November 1949, is not merely a legal document; it embodies the hopes, aspirations, and expectations of the people. The preamble of the Constitution highlights the basic features of the Indian Polity. It emphasises the fundamental values of Democracy, Socialism, Secularism, Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, in his final Constituent Assembly speech, emphasised constitutional morality—the habit of adhering to constitutional forms and ethics—as essential to democracy's survival.

Yet, after 78 years of Independence, democracy often remains procedural rather than substantive. Instances of misuse of power, electoral malpractices, and communal polarisation suggest that constitutional values have not become a "way of life". To promote the values enshrined in the constitution, there is a need for improved citizenship, fair play, democratic participation, with a sense of commitment

and responsibility. For cultivating the unfailing powers of character and vision to build a greater future, the youth must be aware of constitutional values. Everyone looks to education to orient its citizens in democratic ways. Students, as prospective citizens, should know their rights, duties & responsibilities, as well as the political process. Besides the theoretical knowledge of government and the constitution, they should have a programme of co-curricular activities for practical training. Different Commissions & Committees from time to time have also emphasised the need to develop proper habits, attitudes, qualities of character, and knowledge of constitutional provisions to counteract all fissiparous tendencies. The National Policy on Education (1986) further emphasised the need to inculcate constitutional values, which could only be achieved through the study of appropriate courses in civics, citizenship, and the constitution. In this context, Prof. Nurul Hassan once remarked:

"I have mentioned civics as I hope it will not only create a civic sense among the young people, but also an understanding of socialism, so that the young people are armed with knowledge which will enable them to chart the course of the nation towards the goal of socialism. The capacity to understand socialism is inculcated at the school level, which will largely determine the efforts of the Indian people to achieve it. Still, socialism is not enough if studied only theoretically. You must give proof of the dedicated service to the nation by identifying yourself with the bulk of the countrymen & women."

1.1 Need of the Study

As outlined in the problem description, the roots of persistent inequality lie in illiteracy and discrimination based on caste, creed, and sect. If schools fail to foster a constitutional understanding, future generations may inherit the same contradictions: speaking of democracy on the one hand, while perpetuating social hierarchies or discrimination on the other. The NEP 2020 recognises this and mandates "Knowledge of India" and "constitutional values" as essential components.

As the Nation progresses towards Viksit Bharat@2047, it represents India's collective aspiration to emerge as a fully developed, inclusive, and sustainable nation by the centenary year of its Independence. This national goal is deeply rooted in the values, principles, and institutional framework of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, it is necessary to empirically assess students' constitutional awareness.

1.2 Research Problem

What is the current level of constitutional awareness among secondary school students, and what pedagogical factors enable or constrain it?

1.3 Objectives

1. To assess secondary school students' awareness of key constitutional provisions.
2. To explore teachers' perspectives on barriers to developing constitutional morality.

1.4 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in constitutional awareness between Government and Private Secondary School Students.
2. There is no significant difference in constitutional awareness between Female and Male Secondary School Students.

2. Review of Literature

To locate the present study, the literature is organised into three strands:

1. Constitutional Morality vs Constitutional Literacy
2. Civics Education in India: Policy and Practice
3. Empirical Studies on Students' Awareness

2.1 Constitutional Morality vs Constitutional Literacy:

Austin (1966) called the Indian Constitution a social document. Ambedkar distinguished constitutional morality from constitutional law—the former is a culture of self-restraint and respect for institutions.

Mehta, Bhanu Pratap (2010) argues that India suffers from "constitutional illiteracy," in which citizens know their rights but not their responsibilities.

Kumar, Ajay (2022) mentioned in his study that Justice ES. Venkataramiah said: "A convention is a rule of constitutional

practice which is neither enacted by Parliament as a formal legislation nor enforced by courts, yet its violation is considered to be a serious breach of constitutional morality leading to grave political consequences to those who have indulged in such violations." In *Islamic Academy of Education v. State of Karnataka*, Justice SB. Sinha held that: 48 [An] affirmative action may, therefore, be constitutionally valid by reason of articles 15(4) and 16(4) and various directive principles of state policy, but the court cannot ignore the constitutional morality which embraces in itself the doctrine of equality. It would be constitutionally immoral to perpetuate inequality among the majority people of the country in the guise of protecting the constitutional rights of minorities and the constitutional rights of backward and downtrodden.

Constitutional morality refers to adherence to the Constitution's core principles, including justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism, and the rule of law. It is a guiding principle that ensures the actions of the government and individuals align with the values and spirit of the Constitution, rather than simply its written words. Constitutional morality is more abstract than statutory laws, which are fixed and can be directly enforced. It demands respect for the Constitution's values even when they conflict with certain social norms, beliefs, or practices. It aims to uphold the integrity of democracy and protect individual rights. (IILS)

2.2 Civics Education in India: Policy and Practice

NCERT's Position Paper on Teaching of Social Sciences (2006) critiqued civics textbooks as "dry, legalistic, and disconnected from children's lives." It recommended shifting from "civics" to "political science" with a focus on issues, debates, and local governance. It is suggested to bring a change in nomenclature from civics to political science. Civics as a subject had appeared in the Indian school curriculum in the colonial period, in the background of increasing 'disloyalty' among Indians towards the Raj. Emphasis on the obedience and loyalty of the citizens and creation of civil society according to the universal values of progress were the key features of the colonial civics. At the same time, political science suggests dynamism, involving the processes that produce the structures of domination and their contestations by social forces. Political science imagines civil society as the sphere in which more informed, receptive, and responsible citizens could be produced.

However, Kumar (2016) found that in most classrooms, the Preamble is still memorised

Without discussion.

2.3 Empirical Studies on Student Awareness

Anil Kumar & Rupansh Rana (2025). A study reveals that while a considerable number of students in Himachal Pradesh have heard about Fundamental Rights, their actual understanding remains partial and, in many cases, superficial. High awareness was observed for commonly discussed rights such as the Right to Equality and Freedom of Speech and Expression. However, awareness levels dropped significantly for rights like Cultural and Educational Rights and the Right to Constitutional Remedies.

Rishit Grover *et al.* (2025). Throughout the survey, nearly 80% of respondents (students and adults) reported having heard of Fundamental Rights. But when prompted to identify one of the rights correctly, only about 50% did so. The Right to Equality and the Right to Freedom of Speech were the most

commonly cited. This suggests that people may have heard of the term, but their understanding is shallow. Students: The majority (65%) reported school education as their initial source of information. Social media (10%) and family/friends (5%) ranked second and third, respectively.

These studies indicate a persistent gap, but do not explore why it exists. The present study addresses pedagogical processes behind the gap.

3. Methodology

A mixed-method descriptive survey design was used to address the research problem.

3.1 Population & Sample

500 students of Class XI from 10 schools in Delhi. Stratified random sampling: 5 Government Schools (125 Female and 125 Male) and 5 Private Schools (125 Female and 125 Male). 20 Political Science teachers were purposively selected for interviews.

3.2 Tools

1. Constitutional Awareness Test (CAT): Self-developed 60-item MCQ-type test which covers the Preamble,

Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, Fundamental Duties, and Elections. Validated by 5 experts. Reliability: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$.

2. Teacher Interview Schedule: Semi-structured, questions on pedagogy, challenges, and textbook use.

3.3 Data Collection

CAT was administered to students in 1-hour sessions. Interviews were recorded through a schedule and transcribed.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics, t-test

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis of interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. Results and Analysis

Students' CAT scores were quantitatively analysed. Comparison between school types and gender was also analysed using the t-test.

Qualitative Analysis (Thematic analysis) of interview responses given by teachers was done to explore teachers' perspectives on barriers to developing constitutional morality.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

Table 1: Mean of the CAT scores of Secondary Schools Students.

Domain	Govt. School (Female)	Govt. School (Male)	Private School (Female)	Private School (Male)
Preamble	3.4	3.6	4.8	4.6
Fundamental Rights	26.5	28.9	28.9	27.9
Directive Principles of State Policy	10.7	11.0	12.6	14.7
Fundamental Duties	9.8	6.8	13.8	14.3
Elections	14.9	16.7	15.5	18.9
Total	36.9	38.7	42.2	41.4

Inference

1. Constitutional Awareness of Government and Private Secondary School Students differs significantly at the 0.01 level (t-value = 13.75)
2. Constitutional Awareness of Female and Male Secondary School Students does not differ significantly at the 0.01 level (t-value = 1.56)

Findings of Key Item Analysis

- 76% of students were unaware of the meaning of 'Socialism' in the Indian context.
- 74% of students defined secularism as "all religions equal"
- 68% of students supported banning religious practices in schools, indicating conceptual confusion.
- 72% of students could not identify all the Fundamental Duties
- 81% of students could not identify the Fundamental Rights
- 81% of students could not identify the Directive Principles of State Policy
- 92% of students correctly identified the voting age as 18.

4.2 Qualitative Findings: Teacher Perspectives

Based on data gathered from interviews and in-depth conversations with school teachers. Finally, three themes emerged as barriers to the development of constitutional morality.

Theme 1: Textbook-Centric Rote Learning

According to 5 teachers, they are completing the chapters because SA exams are coming up—no time to discuss. A preamble is given for memorisation. Textbooks present Articles as lists, not stories of struggle.

Theme 2: Fear of Controversy

According to 16 teachers, if they discuss secularism and give current examples, parents complain. So they stick to the definition. Teachers avoid Articles 25-28, Ayodhya, or the uniform civil code. Constitutional values thus remain sanitised.

Theme 3: Disconnect from Lived Reality

According to 9 teachers, students face caste-related issues regarding the reservation policy, but the textbook says 'Equality'. Students also have confusion about the ideologies of political parties and their agendas, the parliamentary process, and National development. Thus, the students' lived experience of Constitutional Provisions and Values remains abstract.

5. Discussion

The data confirms Ambedkar's fear: without constitutional morality, text remains inert. Low scores on the Preamble, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy show that duties and ideals are least emphasised compared to rights. This creates "rights-conscious but duty-evasive" citizens. The high awareness of voting and Elections reflects what is visible in the media and in the family, not what the school taught.

These three barriers explain the gap. Rote learning runs counter to the NEP 2020's emphasis on 'critical thinking'. The fear of controversy runs counter to the constitutional value of freedom of speech. A disconnect from real-life realities renders citizenship meaningless.

6. Educational Implications & Recommendations

- Pedagogy: Instead of having student's rote-learn and recite the Preamble, launch a "Preamble Project." In this, students will evaluate school practices against each word of the Preamble: Is there justice in the way examinations are conducted? Is there liberty in the selection of an assignment or project? Is there fraternity in the seating arrangements?
- Teacher Education must have a compulsory component on "Constitutional Morality and Classroom Transaction." Include mock parliament sessions, field visits to Gram Sabhas, and related activities.
- Project-Based Learning should mandate one constitutional project per year.
- Implementation of NEP 2020—"constitutional values, fundamental duties, citizenship skills"—through Bal Sansad and Youth Parliament in every school.

Education is considered the most powerful tool for shaping a country's future through human resource development. The success of a democratic system depends on the participation of informed citizens.

Informed citizens who possess a sound understanding of constitutional provisions, duties and rights can enhance stability in the government and the political system.

References

1. Ambedkar BR. Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. XI. Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1949.
2. Austin G. The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a nation. Oxford University Press, 1966.
3. Basu DD. Introduction to the Constitution of India, 28th Ed; Lexis Nexis, 2026.
4. Best JW. Research in Education 7th Ed", 9th Indian Reprint; Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1995.
5. Bhaskar A. 'Ambedkar's constitution': A radical phenomenon in anti-caste discourse?, 2021.
6. <https://core.ac.uk/download/652385984.pdf>
7. Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology. 2006; 3(2):77-101.
8. Central Board of Secondary Education. Values education: A handbook for teachers. CBSE, 2012.
9. Constitutional Morality: The Pillar of Democracy and Justice in India (Blog)
<https://www.iilsindia.com/blogs/constitutional-morality-the-pillar-of-democracy-and-justice-in-india>
10. Creswell JW. Educational Research. PHI Learning Pvt Ltd. New Delhi, 2011.
11. Dewey J. Democracy and education. Macmillan, 1916.
12. Government of India. National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Education, 2020.
13. Grover Rishit *et al.* A Study on the Significance of Awareness and Accessibility of Fundamental Rights Guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, 2025.
14. <https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202509.0781>
15. Kumar Anil *et al.* Awareness and Understanding of Constitutional Fundamental Rights: A Study among Students in Himachal Pradesh University, *International*

Journal of Law, Management & Humanities, 2025.

16. Kumar K. Political agenda of education: A study of colonialist and nationalist ideas (3rd ed.). Sage, 2016.
<https://archive.org/details/PoliticalAgendaOfEducation-KrishnaKumar/mode/2up>
17. Mehta PB. The burden of democracy. Penguin Books. Imprint: India Penguin Published: Nov, 2017-2010.
18. National Council of Educational Research and Training. Position paper: National focus group on teaching of social sciences. NCERT, 2006.
19. Pandey Minakshi. Constitutional Awareness of Secondary School Students of Varanasi. Unpublished Dissertation, BHU, 1999.
20. Rapley T. Some pragmatics of qualitative data analysis in Silverman, D. (Ed.) Qualitative Research. Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 2011.
21. Roohi F. Fostering Life Skills: Role of Social Science. Gyanodaya. 2014; 7(2):6-11.
22. Ur Rehman R, Mir A. From Traditional To Modern: Evolution and Growth of Educational System in Jammu and Kashmir, 1846 To 1947. Himalayan and Central Asian Studies. 2026; 30(1/2):176-194,194A.
23. Verma JS. "The Spirit of the Indian Constitution" *Published in Employment News dated. 23-29 Jan, 1999, 1.*