

Communal Prejudice of Undergraduate Students in Relation to their Gender and Locality in the Bareilly District

Mohini Singh Vishen

Madan Mohan Malviya PG College, Bhatpar Rani, Deoria

Corresponding author: mohini.bisen@gmail.com

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Abstract

Communal prejudice is bias or discrimination based on religious or ethnic group identity. It fosters division, mistrust, and hostility between communities, often fuelled by stereotypes, misinformation, or historical conflict. This prejudice undermines social harmony, promotes inequality, and can escalate into violence, making peaceful coexistence and unity difficult within diverse societies. The present study was conducted to learn the Communal Prejudice of male and female undergraduate students studying in various urban and rural degree colleges of Bareilly City. The descriptive survey approach was employed to achieve this goal. A sample of 60 female and 60 male undergraduate students was chosen using a random sampling method. The data was collected using the Communal Prejudice scale constructed and standardised by Dr R. L. Bharadwaj and Dr H. Sharma (Revised in 2006). The data were analysed by applying means, standard deviations (SD), and t-tests. The data analysis explained no significant differences in communal prejudice between male and female students. The findings reveal a significant difference in communal prejudice between urban and rural undergraduate students in Bareilly District.

Keywords: Communal Prejudice, Undergraduate Students, Gender and Locality.

Communal prejudice is a bias that involves having negative stereotypes in the form of conservative or bigoted behaviour towards people of other religions, ethnicities, or cultural origins. It arises from stereotypes, rumours, misconceptions, and sometimes civil, social, or political rivalry. In a country like India that comprises people belonging to different communities, prejudices based on such a foundation are as much a manifestation of social unrest as they provoke it. Students, particularly in universities and colleges, display a high level of change in their attitudes and behaviour, and this is because they spend most of their time in these institutions. Because of the above reasons, prejudices monopolise undergraduate students' formative intellectual and social stages. They offer views that reflect the cultures in which they are raised. This implies that the current range of undergraduate attitudes towards different communities may be influenced by gender and locality. Gender can also be described as strongly influencing the type and amount of socialisation involved. For this reason, gender should be considered because male and female students may have different ways of regarding communal identification and prejudice. For instance, the culture may require men to be more aggressive in the expression of prejudice as compared to women, who may keep such sentiments to themselves or deny them. Also, the experiences of different genders in communal

environments influence their perception and the degree of latitude or lack thereof. Thus, the type of living environment is one of the significant determinants of the citizens' attitudes in communal matters. Students in urban schools are exposed to multiculturalism daily, so there is a high likelihood that they will be more open-minded in their outlook. On the other hand, poor or semi-urban students may spend their childhood and adolescence in neighbourhoods where they rarely, if ever, come across other people of different religions or colours. This occurrence can also lead to the continuation of negative gender-related stereotyping and the intensification of existing communalism. In addition, socio-political factors, media, and education also play essential roles in influencing the communal attitudes of communities. This study examines the nature and extent of communal prejudice among undergraduate students, with a focus on how gender and locality influence these attitudes. By understanding these relationships, educators and policymakers can develop more effective strategies to foster communal harmony, promote inclusivity, and create a more accepting and empathetic academic environment for students from all backgrounds.

Review of Literature

Gender has been examined as a determinant in developing communal attitudes, with mixed findings. Some studies suggest that males tend to exhibit higher levels of overt prejudice compared to females due to sociocultural conditioning that normalises dominance and intergroup competition (**Allport, 1954**). Conversely, female students often report lower levels of communal prejudice, possibly due to higher empathy and prosocial orientation (**Enaytullah, 1980**). However, other studies, such as **Gough (1951)**, have found no significant gender-based differences, highlighting the need for further localised investigations.

Locality, specifically the urban-rural divide, has also significantly influenced communal attitudes. Rural populations often experience limited intergroup interaction and exposure to diverse cultural settings, which may foster more substantial in-group bias and negative stereotyping of out-groups (**Adinarayan, 1935**). In contrast, urban settings typically offer greater opportunities for intercultural engagement, promoting more liberal attitudes and reduced prejudice (**Radloff & Evans, 2002**). A study by **Engstrom and Sedlacek (1991)** demonstrated that university students from urban backgrounds scored lower on prejudice scales, suggesting a correlation between exposure to diversity and lower communal bias. Furthermore, **Jahan, Bharadwaj, and Zafar (1987)** developed a Prejudice Scale that is widely used in Indian contexts to measure the level of communal bias among students. Their findings support the argument that sociocultural context, education, and peer influence are critical in shaping attitudes toward religious communities. **Qamar Jahan (1986)** examined the

relationship between communal prejudice and self-disclosure among Hindu and Muslim youth. However, it is noteworthy to admit that there were certain severe prejudices. The study found that higher self-disclosure was associated with greater communal prejudice compared to lower self-disclosure. This supported the author's hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between the level of self-disclosure and the level of communal bias. However, it is noteworthy to reluctantly admit that some participants in the high self-disclosure group exhibited severe prejudices; thus, it is possible to regard additional personality factors as crucial to developing a communal orientation. Jahan's findings align with **Cozby's (1973)** assertion that extreme levels of self-disclosure are linked to psychological maladjustment, which may, in turn, foster rigid and biased thinking.

Kuppuswamy and Kumar (1982) examined communal attitudes among students and noted that education moderates' prejudice. Their research suggested that higher levels of education and socio-economic awareness often correlate with more inclusive and tolerant views, though exceptions persist due to ideological and social conditioning. Gender has also emerged as an influential factor in communal attitudes. According to **Verma (2001)**, male students are often more vocal or expressive about their communal biases, possibly due to traditional gender norms that encourage assertiveness. Female students, while not immune to prejudice, may internalise their biases, which makes their attitudes less overt but equally impactful.

Although the literature provides a foundational understanding, there is a limited amount of empirical research that focuses specifically on the Bareilly district or the Rohilkhand region. Given its unique socio-religious composition and a mix of urban and rural populations, examining communal prejudice in this localised context offers valuable insights. Such research can help identify context-specific variables influencing student attitudes and inform targeted educational interventions.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study were as follows-

- (1) To study the Communal Prejudice of undergraduate students in relation to their Gender.
- (2) To study the Communal Prejudice of undergraduate students in relation to their Locality.

Hypotheses

The present study is based on the following hypotheses-

- (1) There is no significant difference between the Communal Prejudice of undergraduate students based on Gender.
- (2) There is no significant difference between the Communal Prejudice of undergraduate students based on their Locality.

Methodology

Research Model- A descriptive survey model was used in this study.

Participants: A random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample. The sample consisted of 120 final-year college students, 60 male and 60 female, belonging to urban and Rural degree colleges in the Bareilly District.

Tool Used

In the present investigation, the researcher employed the Prejudice Scale (Pr Scale) developed by Dr R. L. Bharadwaj and Dr H. Sharma to assess prejudiced behaviour among college students. The scale construction involved applying correlation analysis and the critical ratio technique for item selection, with a significance level of 0.01. The final version of the scale comprises 36 items that address various dimensions of prejudice, each designed to capture participants' responses effectively. Two methods were utilised to establish the instrument's reliability. The test-retest method was applied with 100 students to assess temporal consistency, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.69 between the initial and follow-up administrations. The split-half reliability was also calculated using the Guttman formula, yielding a high-reliability coefficient of 0.94 (N = 100).

The validity of the scale was also verified through two approaches. Theoretical validity was computed based on the square root of the reliability coefficient, which was 0.83. For construct validity, the scale was correlated with the Prejudice Scale developed by Q. Jahan et al. (1988), producing a validity coefficient of 0.66. These results confirm the appropriateness of the scale for measuring prejudice among undergraduate students.

Statistics Used

Mean, standard deviation, and "t" test were used to analyse the data. Administration of the Tool and Data Collection: This is a self-administered scale suitable for both individual and group administration. It should also be stated that all items should be answered based on any of the five choices provided for that item. For this specific test, it is also desirable that the tester provide explicit instructions to the test regarding their community, caste, or religion, to which they are being asked to respond. The prejudice scale is relatively easy to score, with a scoring of a quantitative nature. Each item on the scale has five response options, but the examined person has only checked one among the five response options. For each item, consider five options, with a score of five on the left side of the scale as the most agreeable and the first option at the rightmost as the least agreeable.

Delimitation of the Study

The study is limited to the Bareilly District of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and measures the Communal Prejudice of final-year undergraduate male and female students. It involves no more than five colleges in urban areas and five in rural areas, and is limited to a sample of 120 college-going students.

Result and Discussion

H01: There is no significant difference between the Communal Prejudice of undergraduate students based on Gender.

Table 1 Comparison of Communal Prejudice Between Male and Female Undergraduate Students Using t-Test Analysis

S.N.	GROUP	N	M	S.D.	“t”	Remark
1	Male	60	86.13	19.44	0.348	Insignificant
2	Female	60	84.63	27.20		

An independent samples t-test was used to examine gender-based differences in communal prejudice among undergraduate students. The sample included 60 male and 60 female students. The results showed that male students had a slightly higher mean score ($M = 86.13$, $SD = 19.44$) than female students ($M = 84.63$, $SD = 27.20$). However, the calculated t-value of 0.348 did not reach statistical significance ($p > 0.05$). This finding indicates that the observed difference in communal prejudice between male and female students is not statistically meaningful. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is accepted, suggesting that gender does not significantly influence communal prejudice among the sampled undergraduates.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the Communal Prejudice of undergraduate students based on their Locality.

Table 2 Comparison of Communal Prejudice Between Urban and Rural Undergraduate Students Using t-Test Analysis

S.N.	GROUP	N	M	S.D.	“t”	Remark
1	Urban	60	81.23	17.01	1.990	$**=0.05$
2	Rural	60	87.98	20.03		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether the locality of undergraduate students influences their level of communal prejudice. The results revealed that rural students ($M = 87.98$, $SD = 20.03$) reported significantly higher levels of communal prejudice than their urban counterparts ($M = 81.23$, $SD = 17.01$). The difference between the two groups was statistically significant, with a t-value of 1.990 at $p < 0.05$, suggesting that the students' geographical background plays a meaningful role in shaping communal attitudes.

Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H02) is rejected, and it is concluded that locality significantly influences the level of communal prejudice among undergraduate students.

Major Findings

A significant difference was found in locality-based Communal Prejudice. However, the researcher found no significant difference in students' communal prejudiced behaviour concerning gender at a 0.05 significance level.

Conclusion

The above study led the researcher to conclude that "Prejudice" is an opinion or judgment formed without due examination. The study's findings highlight communal prejudice among undergraduate students in the Bareilly district, with notable differences across localities. Educational institutions should incorporate programs that focus on value education, interfaith understanding, critical thinking, and exercises that foster empathy into their curricula. Moreover, exposure to culturally diverse environments and open dialogue should be encouraged, particularly in rural areas where students may lack such experiences. Addressing communal prejudice at the undergraduate level is essential for students' individual development and for fostering a more inclusive and socially cohesive society.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study reveal that communal prejudice among undergraduate students in the Bareilly district is influenced more significantly by locality than by gender, with rural students demonstrating higher levels of prejudice. This highlights a critical need for educational policies and interventions that are responsive to the socio-cultural context of rural areas. Integrating value education, civic awareness, and interfaith dialogue into the curriculum can help nurture tolerance and mutual respect among students. Furthermore, while gender differences were statistically insignificant, it remains essential to ensure that both male and female students are equally engaged in efforts that promote social harmony. Colleges and universities should implement workshops, seminars, and inclusive student activities that challenge communal stereotypes and encourage critical thinking. The study also suggests broader implications for policymakers and educators to strengthen community engagement and awareness campaigns, particularly in areas where traditional and communal biases are more deeply ingrained.

Fostering an environment of inclusivity and cultural understanding within academic settings can significantly reduce communal prejudice and build a more cohesive and tolerant youth population.

Further Recommendations

This work, therefore, highlights several subjects that require further research. Some follow-up

Research areas include communal prejudiced behaviour at the primary, secondary, district, and state levels of education and research on other religions such as Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, etc. Research may be conducted to investigate the impact of institutions on prejudiced behaviour. Research is needed regarding the effect of the attitude adopted by students towards other religions, except for the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian faiths. Future research could explore additional variables, such as educational background, parental influence, socioeconomic status, and exposure to diverse communities, which may also significantly contribute to the development of communal attitudes. A longitudinal study could help determine how these attitudes evolve and whether interventions such as diversity training or value education lead to lasting changes.

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