



Exploring the Links between Legal Literacy and Pedagogical Self-Efficacy among Secondary Level School Teachers

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy among secondary-level school teachers in Kerala, India, addressing a critical dimension of teacher development and educational policy. This comprehensive survey across schools reveals significant variability in teachers' levels of legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy. A notable finding is the higher awareness and efficacy proved by female teachers, suggesting potential gender-based differences in professional engagement and knowledge acquisition. The study establishes a strong positive correlation between legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy, highlighting the role of legal awareness in enhancing teachers' confidence and effectiveness in the classroom. These findings underscore the need for professional development programs to improve legal awareness, thereby empowering school teachers to navigate complex educational environments with greater assurance and competence. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers and educational leaders seeking to strengthen teacher capacity and improve overall educational outcomes..

Keywords: *Legal Literacy, Pedagogical Self-Efficacy, Teacher Professional Development.*



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1. Introduction

Legal awareness and legal competencies on education related matters are indispensable for school teachers because they cater education to the students to become efficient individuals to live in a society with the rule of law. Legal knowledge provides teachers with a framework that guides them to achieve meaningful and authentic integration of constitutional and legal information into the pedagogy of the classroom. A teacher

must take care the students' legal rights in the educational context, right to avail education, right to enjoy equality of educational opportunities, and the right as an individual. The awareness of student rights will enable the teacher to plan teaching more positively (Taylor, 2001). In other words, it helps to frame legally relevant pedagogy to make the individual learners self-aware of their rights and duties. Legal awareness of teachers will filter to the classroom students through the

teaching learning tasks, and it will promote legal sensitization of learners.

Legal literacy refers to the awareness and understanding of legal rights, responsibilities, and processes. Legal awareness is particularly important because it plays a dual role: as educators shaping the minds of students and as employees governed by various laws and regulations. (Wagnor, 2007; Suvarna, 2023) Understanding of educational laws is supportive to any teacher, irrespective of the subject of teaching and level of profession. Factually, the legal literacy of teachers is not only limited to laws related to students and educational institutions but also to laws like acts upon issues related to harassment at the workplace; for e.g., the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal). In the present study, the phrase 'legal literacy' refers to teachers' awareness of laws related to students and their educational rights. The laws related to teachers' professional rights are not referred to here. Legal literacy in the school context refers to teachers' knowledge of laws, policies, rights and procedures that shape school life (Perry, 2020). Knowledge on child rights, disciplinary rules, mandatory reporting, child labour rules, and school governance are to be acquired and transacted by the teachers (Zhou, et al. 2023).

An Indian teacher needs to be familiar with laws related to education because it is essential to offer equality of educational opportunities to the deserving individuals of all strata of the society (Sufiana, Shamsa, & Hamid, 2011). Some of the essential rights those are abide with the education of children in India are (i) Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE) that is ensuring free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14, (ii) Regulations related to child labour, school safety, and inclusive education, (iii) The laws on protecting Child Rights such as awareness of the Juvenile Justice Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO-2012), (iv) The laws related to corporal punishment and child welfare, (v) The laws promoting equality, such as the Right to Equality under Article 14 of the constitution and anti-discrimination laws, (vi) Regulations on school infrastructure and child safety under the RTE Act & Supreme Court-mandated safety measures (e.g., fire safety, transportation, and CCTV monitoring), and (vii) Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. There are some other acts related to

students and education. They are the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion Laws Article 14, 15, and 21A of the Indian Constitution, The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and Anti-Ragging Laws. Teachers must be aware and instill constitutional values like secularism, democracy, and equality, especially as enshrined in Articles 14, 15, 21, and 21A, and the laws that promoting environmental awareness in line with Article 51A(g) of the Indian Constitution, encouraging eco-friendly practices in schools, and Cyber and Digital Safety Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. Potential awareness on the legal matters of a nation, like these, is equipping the teachers to pedagogical planning, content analysis, pedagogic analysis of the syllabus, and to manage the whole system of school accurately (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Thomaskutty & Mary, 2009; Celik, 2011)

Pedagogical self-efficacy is a teacher's confidence in their capability to organize and perform teaching activities required to achieve desired student outcomes (Tschannen & Woolfolk, 2001; Gálvez, López, Hernández & Araneda, 2023). Self-efficacy in a pedagogical context indicates the realization of teachers in their own capabilities and skills to plan a teaching process by taking care the students' capacities and learning skills (Newlyn, 2019). In addition, highly self-efficacious teachers are commiserative to students, passionate about new ideas, committed to teaching, approachable by the school inmates, and adaptable to new teaching methods and contexts. Self-efficacy is an essential quality that teachers must assimilate. Teacher self-efficacy is a foundation of confidence in their ability to enhance and promote students' learning capacities (Boer & Gleeson, 1982; Ball, 2010)

2. Review of Related Studies

Self-efficacy of teachers is one of the vital determining factors for the teachers' confidence and learners' success in the classroom. Teachers must have a strong judgment of their capabilities and their ability to plan, implement, motivate, and execute student achievement (Mon & Oo, 2023). The self-efficacy of teachers includes six factors like (i) self-efficacy in instruction, (ii) self-efficacy in adapting to students' needs, (iii) self-efficacy in motivating students, (iv) self-efficacy in

responsibility and discipline, (v) self-efficacy in cooperating, and (vi) self-efficacy in adapting to changes and challenges (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). The factors of self-efficacy are directly influenced by the knowledge in collateral areas of education, and that includes legal awareness too (Wagnor, 2007). A study conducted by Duff (1999) revealed that education lawsuits impact upon education, and there are too many school lawsuits that affect the functions of schools. Teachers' law awareness plays a significant role in protecting students' academic rights and personal interests. It is better to have a sound understanding of school law by the teachers, studies proved. Knowledge of teachers on school law is a protector rather than a solution. Educators are often required to make decisions that affect children directly, and for that, functional knowledge of the law is essential. Such awareness is important to provide an orderly, productive, and humane school for students and facilitate a democratic society in the school life (Strickland, Phillips & Phillips, 1986; Reglin, 1992; Bounds, 2000).

The available research indicates that while the importance of legal awareness among teachers is increasingly recognized, there is still a need for more comprehensive and effective training programs. Researches on the legal literacy of teachers are scarcely researched. The association between legal awareness of teachers and the pedagogic confidence or capacities or teaching skills, or teacher self-efficacy are not addressed by the researchers. The research gap is being addressed by this research.

3. Advantages of Legal Literacy to a Teacher

Legal literacy is a crucial element of a teacher's pedagogical and professional interactions with students. It empowers them to protect student rights, manage their classrooms effectively, address legal issues, promote civic engagement, and defend themselves from legal liabilities. The advantages of legal literacy as an essential factor for teachers are detailed below;

3.1. Protecting Student Rights: Teachers are responsible for the effective learning and well-being of their students. Legal literacy helps teachers understand and uphold the rights of their students, including their right to a safe and

inclusive learning environment, freedom of expression, and protection from discrimination.

3.2. Effective Classroom Management: Legal literacy equips teachers with the knowledge to manage their classrooms effectively while respecting the rights of their students. They can understand disciplinary procedures, student privacy laws, and other legal guidelines that impact their daily interactions with students.

3.3. Addressing Legal Issues in the Classroom: Teachers may encounter various legal issues in the classroom, such as copyright infringement, defamation, or issues related to student discipline. Legal literacy helps them navigate these situations appropriately and avoid potential legal consequences.

3.4. Promoting Civic Engagement: Teachers can use their legal knowledge to promote civic engagement and critical thinking among their students. By teaching about laws, rights, and responsibilities, they can empower students to become informed and active citizens.

3.5. Personal Protection: Teachers themselves are subject to various laws and regulations. Legal literacy helps them understand their rights and responsibilities as employees, including workplace safety, discrimination protection, and contract negotiation.

3.6. Ethical Decision-Making: Legal literacy helps teachers make ethical decisions in their profession. They can understand the legal implications of their actions and make choices that align with both legal and ethical standards.

3.7. Confidence in Pedagogical Interactions: Teachers' ability to educate will be improved by their knowledge of the law. They will be confident to create all pedagogical activities, including learning tasks, lesson plan preparation, communication techniques, interaction, and the creation of teaching aids, in accordance with the needs and rights of the students. In the classroom, it will serve as a foundation for respect and sincere reciprocity between educators and learners.

4. Research Questions

The school teachers' knowledge on legal matters those are related to educational and professional rights of students and teachers are essentially a supporting factor to develop the pedagogical confidence of teachers. The legal knowledge is a supportive component of pedagogic self-efficacy.' These assumptions led to the formation of research questions to pursue the study. The research questions are;

- What are the secondary school teachers' legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy levels?
- Does there exist any significant gender difference among teachers in legal literacy?
- To what extent does the legal literacy correlate with the pedagogical self-efficacy of secondary school teachers?

5. Research Objectives

This research is aimed to explore the legal literacy levels and pedagogical self-efficacy among school teachers and the relationship between these variables. The research objectives are primarily limited to the context of Kerala State, India. Specific objectives of the study are;

- To explore the legal literacy levels of school teachers
- To explore the self-efficacy levels of school teachers
- To find out the gender difference among school teachers on legal literacy and pedagogic self-efficacy
- To examine the correlation between legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy among teachers

7. Methodology

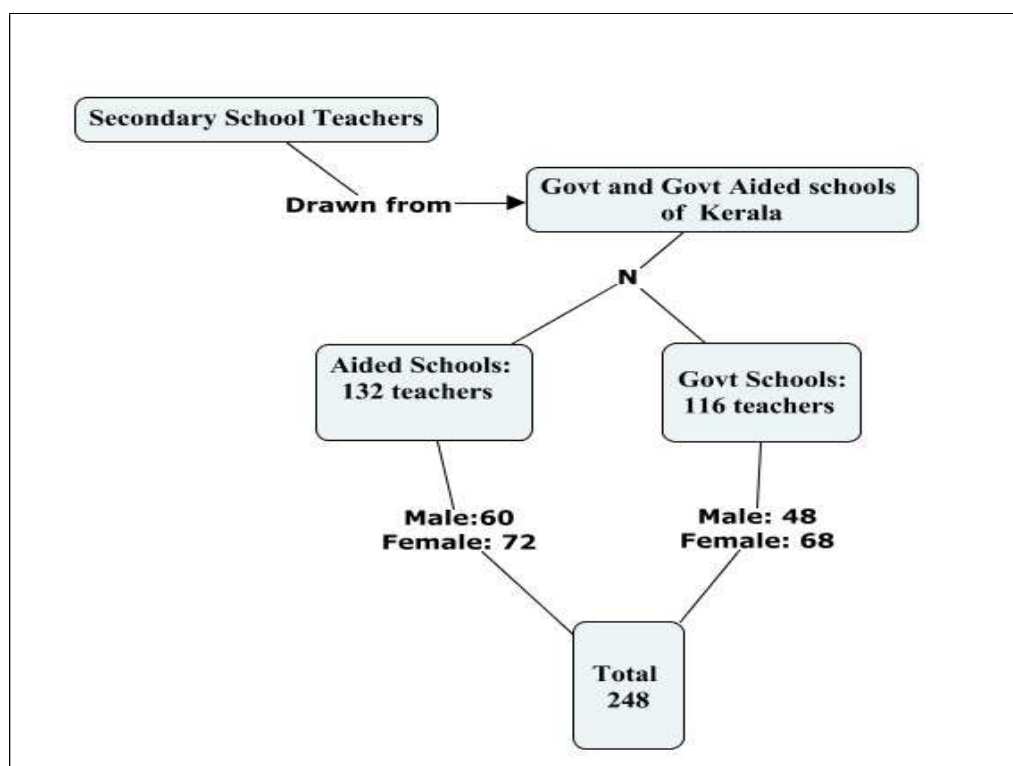
This research follows a survey design. Data collected from secondary level school teachers who work in government or government-aided schools of Kerala state, India.

7.1. Tools and Materials

Data for the study are collected by administering two major tools. They are a) Legal Literacy Inventory and b) Pedagogical self-efficacy assessment scale. The Legal Literacy Inventory is a Likert-type tool with 33 statements. The items with a t-value of 2.56 and above (acceptable at 0.01 levels) are selected to frame the final tool. The same process is adapted to construct the Pedagogical Self Efficacy Assessment Scale (included 34 statements) and was constructed by adapting the scale of self-efficacy assessment for teacher educators administered in research on self-efficacy in Myanmar (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Mon and Oo, 2023). The pedagogical self-efficacy scale assured representation of the dimensions such as self-efficacy in instruction, adapting with students' needs, motivating students, responsibility and discipline, cooperation, and adaptability with changes and challenges. Both tools had five options to respond. To assure the reliability, the internal consistency of the tools was determined by Cronbach's Alpha, and values were 0.83 and 0.85 respectively, for the inventory and the scale.

6. Sample of the Study

The sample of the study is drawn from secondary-level school teachers of Kerala. A total of 248 teachers were randomly included in the final sample who are from government or government aided schools. They are randomly selected from six districts of Kerala, representing the middle, north, and south regions of the state. Teachers of unaided schools and central schools are not considered to constitute the sample group. The sample frame is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Framework of sample selection for the study

7.2. Procedure of Data Collection and Analysis

Data are collected from teachers in face-to-face mode. The printed tools were given to teachers during their school hours and collected back after giving sufficient time to respond. The collected data was entered into a data sheet and tabulated properly. Jamovi is the statistical software used for analysis. The norm-based analysis, independent sample t-test, and correlation analysis are employed to explore the data.

7.3. Analysis, Results, and Interpretation

The collected data were analyzed in a suitable method to realize the objectives of the study. The tabulated data utilized separately for the procedure of analysis. The results of the analysis and findings are described under appropriate titles.

7.4. Legal Literacy Levels among School Teachers

The legal literacy among the secondary school teachers was assessed by administering a

norm-based analysis. The total number of items in the legal literacy inventory is 33. Participants have five options to mark their responses. The most favourable/appropriate response carried 05 marks, and the most unfavourable response carried 01. So the scores for the tool ranged from 165 to 33 ($33 \times 5 = 165$ and $33 \times 1 = 33$). The level of legal awareness is determined based on the norms as noted in Table 1. Those teachers (respondents) who score 80% or above of the total score (132 or above out of 165) are considered teachers with high legal literacy. Those who scored in between 99 to 131 out of 165 (60% or above but below 80%) are being considered teachers with an average level of legal literacy. Those who scored below 60%, that is, the score 98 or below, are being considered teachers with low-level legal literacy. The norms and revealed results of the analysis are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Scores to determine levels of legal literacy among school teachers and 'n' of teachers in each level (N-248)

Levels of legal literacy	Score range	Percentage of score	n of teachers in each level	Percent
High	132- 165	80% or above	76	30.65%
Average	99- 131	60% or above - below 80%	117	47.18%
Low	33- 98	Below 60%	55	22.17%

Table 1 explains the legal literacy levels of school teachers. A considerable portion of teachers (30.65%) are with high legal literacy, whereas 47.18% of teachers possess average, and 22.17% of teachers possess a low level of legal literacy. The result revealed that teachers are varied in their awareness on legal matters related to education. This result is further illustrated in Figure 2, along with the graphical representation of the analysis of the variable pedagogical self-efficacy.

8. Pedagogical Self-Efficacy among School Teachers

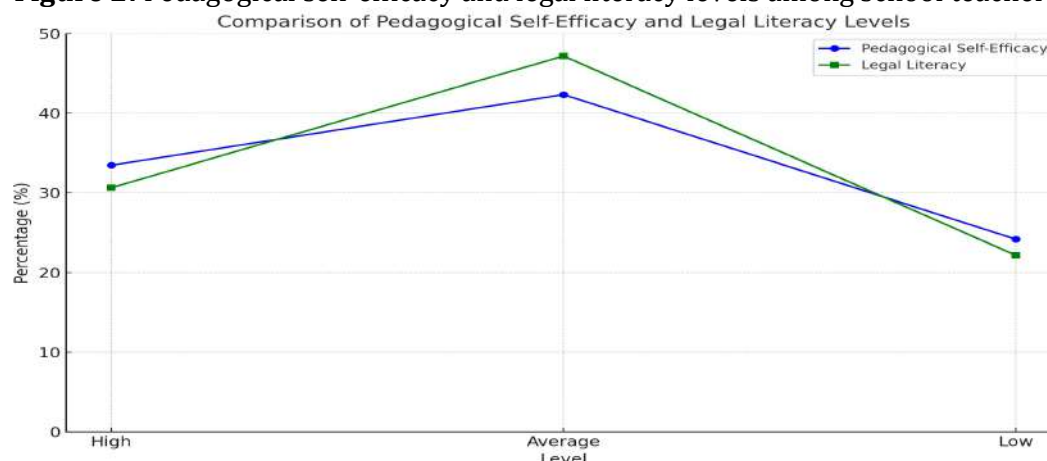
Pedagogical Self-Efficacy is a compound whole, and in this research, six factors were considered to define self-efficacy. As explained

before, six dimensions were incorporated to develop the pedagogical self-efficacy assessment scale with 34 items. Scores obtained by teachers on the scale are utilized to determine the levels of pedagogical self-efficacy among them. A score of 01 was carried for the least favourable response and 05 for the most favourable response. Thus, the scores of the tool ranged from 34 to 170, i.e., $34 \times 1 = 34$ and $34 \times 5 = 170$. The teachers who scored 80% or above are placed in the high level, and those who scored below 80% and above 60% are placed in the average level, and those who are with scored below 60% are fell in the low level in the pedagogical self-efficacy. Based on these norms, the scores of the respondents were analyzed, and the details are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Scores to determine levels of pedagogical self-efficacy among school teachers and 'n' of teachers in each level (N-248)

Levels of pedagogical self-efficacy	Score range	Percentage of score	n of teachers in each level	Percent
High	136-170	80% or above	83	33.47%
Average	102-135	60% or above - below 80%	105	42.34%
Low	34-101	Below 60%	60	24.19%

Table 2 indicates that 33.47% of teachers possess a high level of pedagogical self-efficacy. Among the teachers, 42.34% of teachers are with an average and 24.19% have a low level of pedagogical self-efficacy. The analysis proved that teachers are varied in pedagogical self-efficacy. The result is illustrated in Figure 2 for a critical understanding.

Figure 2: Pedagogical self-efficacy and legal literacy levels among school teachers

9. Discussion

The result revealed that approximately 34% of teachers exhibited high pedagogical self-efficacy, slightly surpassing approximately 31% with high legal literacy. The congruence of scores among teachers in the assessment of both variables at high, average, and low levels indicates that there is reciprocity among these attributes. The largest proportion of teachers fell within the average category for both variables, with 42.34% for pedagogical self-efficacy and 47.18% for legal literacy. The higher percentage of average-level legal literacy suggests a broader but less advanced understanding of legal concepts among teachers. A smaller proportion of teachers reported low levels in both areas, with 24.19% for pedagogical self-efficacy and 22.17% for legal literacy. This reflects a slightly greater deficit in teaching confidence compared to legal literacy. The trends reveal that most teachers are clustered in the average category for both competencies, while fewer teachers reach high proficiency levels, particularly

in legal literacy. Although both variables follow similar distributions, legal literacy consistently lags slightly behind pedagogical self-efficacy at both the high and low levels.

10. Comparison of Legal Literacy among Female and Male Teachers

Legal literacy, irrespective of gender differences, equips teachers to navigate legal challenges in educational settings effectively (Mon & Oo, 2023). The present study investigates the differences in legal literacy levels between female and male teachers, utilizing the independent sample t-test to test the Mean difference.

As explained previously, the study included a total of 248 teachers, comprising 140 female and 108 male participants. The mean scores, standard deviations (SD), and t-value of the obtained scores were computed to determine the significance of differences between the male and female groups. Details of the analysis are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Comparison of legal Literacy among Female and Male Teachers

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	P
Female	140	124	21.9	5.29	< .001
Male	108	107	28.7		

The descriptive statistics revealed a marked difference in the legal literacy levels between female and male teachers. Female teachers demonstrated higher legal literacy levels

(Mean = 124, SD = 21.9) compared to their male counterparts (Mean = 107, SD = 28.7). This difference is statistically significant, with a t-value of 5.29 at the 0.001 level.

11. Discussion

The finding is that female teachers possess significantly higher legal literacy than male teachers. Several factors could contribute to this difference, including variations in learning interest, anxiety of female teachers towards legal responsibilities, exposure to legal training, or differences in pedagogical interests. The higher legal literacy among female teachers may reflect a greater emphasis on compliance, risk management, or a heightened awareness of legal obligations in their professional roles. It is contradictory to the common assumption that

male people have more engagement with legal matters (Suvarna, 2023; Mon & Oo, 2023).

Comparison of Pedagogical Self-Efficacy among Female and Male Teachers

Pedagogical self-efficacy refers to teachers' confidence in their ability to effectively teach and engage students in the classroom. This research investigates whether gender influences teachers' pedagogical self-efficacy levels. The Mean values of the scores on pedagogical self-efficacy among the Female and Male teachers were compared. The details of the analysis are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean comparison of pedagogical self-efficacy among female and male teachers

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	P
Female	140	125	24.8	2.46*	< .016
Male	108	117	27.5		

* Significant at 0.05 levels

12. Discussion

The analysis indicates a significant Mean difference in pedagogical self-efficacy between male and female teachers. Female teachers exhibited a higher Mean self-efficacy score (M = 125, SD = 24.8) compared to male teachers (M = 117, SD = 27.5). The independent sample t-test is administered, and the obtained t-value (2.46) and p-value (< 0.016) confirm the significance of this difference at the 0.05 level. The gender difference is not so high as in the case of legal literacy. The

findings suggest that gender may play a role in shaping teachers' pedagogical self-efficacy, with female teachers reporting higher confidence levels than their male counterparts.

13. Relationship between Legal Literacy and Pedagogical Self-Efficacy

This study examined the relationship between teachers' legal literacy and their pedagogical self-efficacy. Utilizing statistical correlation analysis, the study explored the strength and significance of the relationship between these two variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to assess the linear relationship between teachers' legal literacy scores and their pedagogical self-efficacy scores. Spearman's rho, a non-parametric measure of correlation, was also calculated to confirm the findings. The details of the correlation analysis are provided in Table 5.

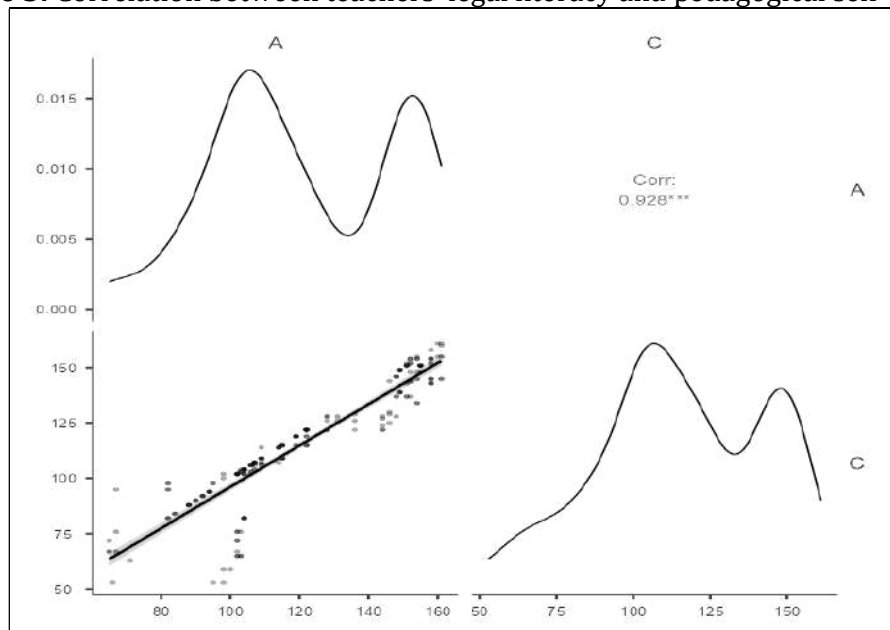
Table 5: Correlation analysis between legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy among school teachers.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient -r	P	Spearman's rho
Legal literacy	248	0.93	< .001	0.96
Pedagogical self - efficacy				

The analysis revealed that a strong positive correlation exists between teachers' legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy. (Pearson's $r = 0.93$, $p < .001$; Spearman's $\rho = 0.96$). The relationship is statistically significant at a confidence level of 99.9%. Teachers with higher legal literacy tend to demonstrate greater confidence and competence in their teaching roles. This may be due to an increased ability to navigate legal challenges, create a safe learning environment, and

understand students' rights and responsibilities. The Spearman's rho coefficient was 0.96, further confirming the strong positive association between the two variables. This high values of relationship and association strengthen the reliability of the findings, demonstrating a robust relationship even when considering potential non-normality in the data. This can be further observed in the figure 3

Figure 3: Correlation between teachers' legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy



14. Discussion

The high positive correlation between legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy indicates that the variables are essentially cornered by teachers.

These findings (see Table 5 and Figure 3) suggest that teachers with higher levels of legal literacy tend to exhibit greater confidence in their teaching abilities. The pedagogical self-efficacy is varied among teachers, and that is influenced by the legal literacy at all levels. This correlation can be explained by several factors. Firstly, legal literacy empowers teachers with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions in challenging situations, reducing anxiety and enhancing their sense of control in the classroom. Secondly, understanding legal frameworks allows teachers to advocate effectively for their students' rights and create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment, further boosting their self-efficacy. These may then be a reason for the high positive correlation between the variables.

The positive correlation between legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy aligns with both theory and prior experimental evidence linking domain-specific knowledge and pedagogy to stronger teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The gender difference is reasonable; some studies show gender differences in self-reported efficacy.

Legal-literacy professional development is a reliable way to strengthen teacher confidence and classroom functioning (Devi & Ranjithamani, 2017; Seneviratne, 2019)

15. Findings, Scope, and Implications

The study revealed that legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy are varied among the school teachers. Most of the teachers are at an average level in both variables, and a considerable portion of teachers are having high level of legal literacy and self-efficacy, and approximately 20% teachers are at a low level. Gender is significantly differentiating teachers in the case of these

variables. Female teachers have higher legal literacy and pedagogical self-efficacy than their male counterparts. This study provides evidence for a strong positive correlation between teachers' legal literacy and their pedagogical self-efficacy. The findings of the study are digestible while analyzing with the results of former researchers (Celik, 2011; Newlyn, 2019; Mon & Oo, 2023)

Teachers operate within a complex legal framework that governs various aspects of their professional practice, including student rights, disciplinary procedures, special education regulations, and liability issues. A lack of understanding of these legal parameters can lead to uncertainty, anxiety, and potentially, legal repercussions. This interpretation is relevant in the light of a study reported by Patterson and Rossow (1997). Conversely, a strong grasp of relevant legal principles can empower teachers to make informed decisions, navigate challenging situations effectively, and advocate for their students' rights. This study explores the potential link between teachers' legal literacy and their pedagogical self-efficacy. The result is supportive of to statement that teachers with higher levels of legal literacy will demonstrate greater confidence in their teaching abilities. Incorporating legal literacy training into teacher preparation programs is crucial to equip future teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the legal complexities of the profession. Ongoing professional development opportunities focusing on legal updates and best practices are also essential for experienced teachers. Essential legal literacy training should be prioritized, particularly for male teachers, to bridge the gap and ensure all educators are equally equipped to handle legal issues in educational contexts.

16. Conclusion

Pedagogical self-efficacy is an essential part of the teachers' professional competencies. In the school education system it supports teachers to be confident and active and to effectively incorporate it into their classroom teaching. Legal awareness supports teachers to plan and practice classroom teaching and student teacher relationships positively. Progressive teaching contexts can be framed by teachers with exact legal knowledge. Teachers can apply this knowledge in their teaching profession for the better learning of students. This study explored the awareness of

teachers on legal matters and pedagogical self-efficacy in multiple ways and proved the different levels of legal awareness and self-efficacy. The gender difference among teachers in legal literacy and self-efficacy supports to state that the result is against the common observation on the quality measures of teachers in the Kerala context.

In-service training is essential for teachers to develop their legal awareness and to understand its significance in designing teacher behaviour, and to develop professional skills. Skill competency is the heart of good teaching. As legal knowledge have evolved, the pedagogical self-efficacy has to be enriched contextually. Teachers should emphasize acquiring adequate legal knowledge by linking with self-efficacy and teaching competence in an effective way and which can support the development of teachers' teacher behaviour. By investing in legal literacy initiatives, educational institutions can empower teachers to make informed decisions, protect student rights, and enhance the overall quality of education.

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