



Environmental Awareness of Secondary Students in Coimbatore

KEYWORDS

Environmental awareness, environmental issues, understanding level

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ABSTRACT *Environmental awareness is important because it helps to spread environmental education among different sections of the society. It also facilitates the development of training materials and aids in the official education area. A study on the level of environmental awareness of secondary students in Coimbatore was carried out with 40 students studying in the ninth standard of a Government School located in a semi urban area of Coimbatore. The posttest results revealed the fact that the students had an improvement in their level of understanding of environmental issues when compared to the pre test.*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation is the overall lowering of the environmental qualities because of adverse change brought in by human activities in the basic structure of the components of the environment to such an extent that these adverse changes affect adversely all biological communities in general and the human society. The environmental damage already inflicted due to alarming ongoing population explosion, rapid movement towards urbanization and industrialization, increasing needs of energy and fast scientific and technological advancement cannot be reversed unless there is collective thinking, will and effort. These call for public awareness and participation for bringing about an attitudinal change and finally restricting further damage to the environment. The major goals of environmental education programs are to raise consciousness about environmental conditions and to teach environmentally appropriate behavior. Changes in values, attitudes and behavior towards the environment can ultimately result in a better quality of life. Environmental awareness can be provided among youths and young children through formal system of education by introducing various programmes and including the content of environment in their study-subjects. The environmental scenario of India is very wide indeed. At the first level, special attention must be paid to the school going children and women (about 50% of the population). They are to be made aware of health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, development, water and food contamination, fodder and fuel wood etc. Over-exploitation of exhaustible resources, continuation of exploitation of those natural resources whose reserves have reached a critical limit and are at the verge of exploitation, excessive use of those resources whose generation is a very slow process (like soils) etc, are a few examples of rapacious use of natural resources by greedy economic man. Such human actions make the environment sick and degrade the environmental quality to such an extent that the degraded environment endangers the very existence of human beings. An attempt has been made in this paper to bring out the level of understanding of secondary students about environmental issues.

COMPONENTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The spectrum of environmental education encompasses the following components:

- Awareness:** To help social groups and individuals so as to get awareness and sensitivity to the total environment and its allied problems.
- Knowledge:** To help social groups and individuals so as to gain variety of experience and get a basic understand-

ing of the environment and its associated problems.

- Attitude:** To help social groups and individuals achieve a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment and their motivation for actively participating in environmental improvement and protection.
- Skill:** To help social groups and individuals so as to acquire skills to identify and solve environmental problems.
- Evaluation Ability:** To help social groups and individuals so as to evaluate environmental awareness and education programmes in terms of ecological, economic, social, aesthetic and educational factors.
- Participation:** To give social groups and individuals an opportunity so as to be actively involved at all levels in working towards the resolution of environmental problems.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Environmental awareness is to understand the fragility of our environment and the importance of its protection. Promoting environmental awareness is an easy way to become an environmental steward and participate in creating a brighter future for our children. Environmentalism is an ideology that evokes the necessity and responsibility of humans to respect, protect, and preserve the natural world from its anthropogenic (caused by humans) afflictions. Environmental awareness is an integral part of the movement's success. By teaching our friends and family that the physical environment is fragile and indispensable we can begin fixing the problems that threaten it. There are many environmental issues in India. Air pollution, water pollution, garbage, and pollution of the natural environment are all challenges for India. The situation was worse between 1947 through 1995. According to data collection and environment assessment studies of World Bank experts, between 1995 through 2010, India has made one of the fastest progress in the world, in addressing its environmental issues and improving its environmental quality. Still, India has a long way to go to reach environmental quality similar to those enjoyed in developed economies. Pollution remains a major challenge and opportunity for India. The children and youth of India have a major role to play in realizing the importance of preserving the natural resources and in creating a better India. Keeping this view in mind, an attempt has been made in this study to test the knowledge level of secondary students in the area of environmental issues.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the current level of knowledge of the students on environmental issues.
- To assess the influence of gender and locality of students

on their understanding of environmental issues.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference in the level of environmental awareness of students based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of environmental awareness of students based on locality.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 40 students was drawn from VCV Government Higher Secondary School in Thudiyalur in Coimbatore. Purposive sampling technique was adopted. A self-designed questionnaire was employed to collect the necessary information. The tool consisted of 50 items. A pre test was conducted to test the existing level of environmental awareness of the students. After a detailed discussion on environmental issues a post test was conducted. The obtained data was tabulated and statistically analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are presented below under the following sections.

Table 1.
P VALUE AND 'T' VALUE FOR THE PRE TEST AND POST TEST SCORES ON THE BASIS OF GENDER

Gender	Test	Mean	SD	SE(M)	't' value & df	'P' value	Sig. Level
Male N(14)	Pretest	30.34	12.40	3.04	16.87	<0.0001	0.05
	Posttest	55.64	13.88	3.52	(13)		
Female N(26)	Pretest	27.63	17.45	3.44	17.99	<0.0001	0.05
	Posttest	52.33	20.32	3.80	(25)		

The two-tailed P value is less than 0.0001. This difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. Hence,

the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is significant difference in the level of environmental awareness of the male and female students.

Table 2.
P VALUE AND 'T' VALUE FOR THE PRETEST AND POST-TEST SCORES ON THE BASIS OF LOCALITY

Locality	Test	Mean	SD	SE(M)	't' value and df	'P' value	Sig. level
Urban N(13)	Pretest	30.64	18.16	4.0	14.64	<0.0001	0.05
	Posttest	60.30	21.44	6.3	(12)		
Rural N(27)	Pretest	23.55	15.00	3.22	19.01	<0.0001	0.05
	Posttest	52.47	18.12	6.45	(26)		

The two-tailed P value is less than 0.0001. This difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is significant difference in the level of environmental awareness of the students based on their locality.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. There is significant difference in the level of environmental awareness of the male and female students.
2. There is significant difference in the level of environmental awareness of the students based on their locality.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed the fact that there is an increase in the level of environmental awareness of the students after the post test. Advanced teaching methods in the area of environmental studies would furthermore help in improving the understanding level of students thus making them realize their responsibility in protecting the environment for the benefit of themselves and for the betterment of the generations to come.

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