



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

## Education

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN COMBATING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN GUWAHATI CITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PANDU COLONY

**KEY WORDS:** Environment, Environmental Awareness, Environmental Issues, Public Participation

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#### ABSTRACT

A global concern of the present century pertains to the environmental hazards and degradation. In the pursuits of conquering over the Mother nature man has led to the overall lowering down of the qualities of the environment through his exploitative activities. It is high time that man develops awareness about the problems of environment and changes his attitude towards the environment and its components. The present paper attempts to know about the involvement and participation of the people of Pandu Colony, Guwahati in effective solution of the environmental problems. For the purpose of the study, the investigator administered a self-constructed interview schedule on a sample of 100 respondents selected purposively. The data was then analysed using simple percentage. Few observations made during the investigation have been put forward and suggestions are given accordingly.

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The environment is one of the most dominating issues of the present century. It signifies the survival of life of all living beings on the Earth in general and for human beings in particular. Thus there exists a reciprocal relationship between man and his environment. This concept of man's harmony with nature was believed by the Greeks, Romans and the Rig Vedic seers. However in the later times, the doctrine of 'Brahma Satya, Jagat Mithya' divorced man from his natural environment. Man got the license to exploit nature which was no longer considered sacrosanct. He thereby attempted to conquer the nature thus upsetting the mutual relationship between man and his environment. This has led to the imbalance of the ecology, threatening the survival not only of man himself but also other living organisms. To meet such a difficult situation, there is the need to think globally and participate in the mission of sustaining the environment. The Tbilisi Conference also addresses Environmental awareness and participation as major objectives of environmental education. The environmentally aware public has to join hands together in order to implement the programmes of rebuilding the Earth successfully. Instead of depending on the Government and bureaucrats, the public need to form a positive attitude towards the environment and participate in the issues of environmental protection and conservation.

#### 1.2 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Man's unlimited wants for comfort has gradually led him to exploit nature's resources to the extent of reducing its natural capacity for self-stabilization. As a consequence, there is a rise in the environmental problems like degradation, pollution, soil erosion, imbalance in the ecosystem and climatic change, thereby threatening the survival of all living organisms, specially man himself. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, popularly known as the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held at Johannesburg in 2002, have highlighted the key issues concerning the global environment. These have even attracted the attention of the general public towards the deteriorating environment. The problems relating to the environment are so vital that if the general public does not show concern, the government policies and schemes cannot be successful. There is an urgent need of public participation to preserve and conserve the environment. Problems of environment are global and Guwahati city is no exception to it. In the recent times the city has faced numerous problems of environment starting from water logging and flood to pollution and landslides. So it was thought necessary to study about the public participation in combating the environmental problems in the the area under study.

#### 1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is entitled as "Public participation in combating environmental problems in Guwahati city with special reference to Pandu Colony".

#### 1.4 AREA OF STUDY

The present study was undertaken in Pandu, Guwahati. Pandu is a locality in Guwahati named after Pandunath Temple located in hilly part of locality. It is situated towards the north of Maligaon and has Brahmaputra River to north.

#### 1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the main issues related to environment faced by the people in the area of study.
- To know about the public participation in combating the environmental problems in the area of study.

#### 1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

- ENVIRONMENT:** Derived from the French word 'Environer', the term 'Environment' refers to all the physical and biological surroundings and their interactions.
- AWARENESS:** It refers to the consciousness of the individual about issues concerning environment.
- ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES :** They refer to the various problems of the environment, including, population explosion, environmental degradation, pollution, threats to the biodiversity, global warming and climatic change.
- PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** It refers to involving, informing and consulting the public in the processes of planning, management and decision making. In the present study, public participation confines to public involvement in environmental issues.

#### 1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is delimited to the public of Pandu colony of Guwahati city only.

#### 2. METHODOLOGY USED

The present study will fall under Descriptive Survey Method. Descriptive Survey Method is conducted to collect detailed descriptions of existing phenomena with the intent of employing data to justify current conditions and practices or to make more intelligent plans for improving them.

#### 2.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of the present study includes all the residents of Pandu, Guwahati. For the purpose of the present study, 100 residents (50 male and 50 female) were selected using purposive sampling technique.

**TABLE-1: DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE SELECTED FOR THE STUDY**

AGE GROUP	TOTAL NUMBER OF SAMPLE SELECTED
15-25	18
26-36	30
37-47	26
48-58	18
59-69	6

69 and above	4
GRAND TOTAL	100

## 2.2 TOOLS USED

For the purpose of the present study, the investigators prepared an Interview Schedule consisting 30 questions.

## 2.3 ANALYSIS AND TREATMENT OF THE DATA

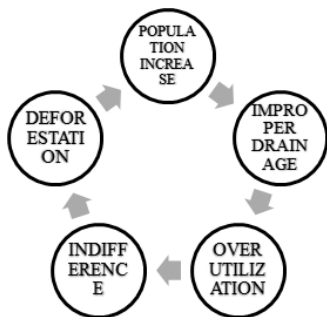
In the present investigation, the data was carefully analyzed and treated quantitatively in the light of the objectives set for investigation. Simple percentage was used for analysis and interpretation of the data.

## 3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### A. FINDINGS BASED ON OBJECTIVE-1

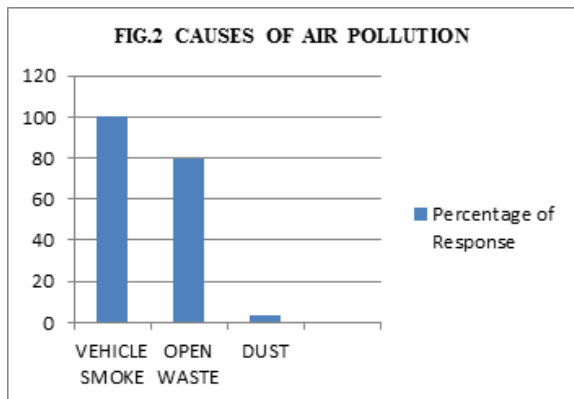
**OBJECTIVE-1:** To find out the main issues related to environment faced by the people in the area of study.

- All the 100 selected samples opined that air pollution is a major environmental problem in their area, 48% identified water pollution as a major problem, 94% responded in favour of noise pollution, 86% viewed the problem of soil pollution and all the respondents were of the opinion that climatic change and water logging posed as major environmental problems of the area.
- All the respondents thought that the reasons behind the environmental problem of the area were increase in population, improper drainage system, deforestation and indifferent attitude of the people. 86% respondents thought that environmental problems of the area also resulted from the over utilization of natural resources.



**FIG.1 CAUSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS**

- All the respondents viewed that environmental problems of pollution has led to health hazards like fatigue, headache, hearing impairment, etc among the residents.
- According to all the respondents, air pollution in this area resulted from the smoke emitted by the vehicles. 80% and 30% respondents mentioned about the open waste and dust, respectively as the causes of air pollution.



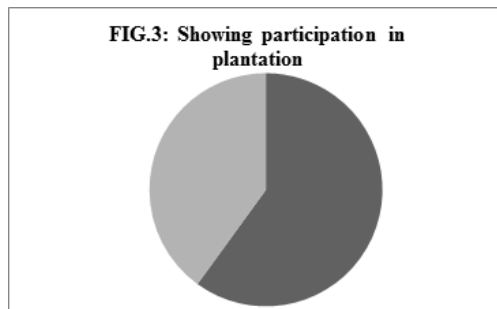
- Regarding the causes of water pollution in the area, 82% identified passing of urine and stool to the water, 40% regarded bathing of animals and 64% viewed washing of clothes and dishes, respectively.

- All the respondents opined about the horn of vehicles and the use of loudspeakers, microphones and sound box as causes of noise pollution in the area. On the other hand, 94% and 8% of the sample said that celebration of frequent festivals and ceremonies, and construction work respectively contributed to sound pollution.
- 86% of the sample viewed improper garbage disposal as the cause of soil pollution, while 5% regarded human and animal excreta as contributory factors of soil pollution.
- All of them regarded increase in human habitat and indiscriminate felling of trees as the causes of threatening the biodiversity. 6% of the sample was of the opinion that indiscriminate hunting of birds took place in the area.
- Water logging, according to 100% of the respondents, occurred due to improper housing, improper drainage, improper garbage disposal and increase in solid wastes.

### B. FINDINGS BASED ON OBJECTIVE-2

**OBJECTIVE-2:** To know about the public participation in combating the environmental problems in the area of study.

- All the respondents agreed about using the polyethylene bags for various purposes, inspite of knowing about its harmful effects due to its availability in the market.
- All the respondents agreed about using dustbins for disposing their garbage.
- 98% respondents agreed that they throw solid wastes in the municipal dustbins while 2% opined that they burn out such wastes.
- All the respondents showed interest in playing an important role in preventing environmental degradation.
- 32% of the respondents agreed to participate in reduce, reuse and recycle of environmental resources, 62% showed no awareness regarding the concept of 3 Rs and 6% were undecided about it.
- 60% of them agreed to plant flowers and fruit trees while 40% mentioned that they did not do any plantation due to lack of space.



- All of them showed awareness about the Government initiatives like Swach Bharat Abhiyan to improve the Environment but denied participation in such initiatives in their locality.
- 48% of the respondents agreed to use resources sustainably while 52% were undecided about their role in sustainable use of resources.
- None of the respondents are member of any Environmental Organisation. Thus, they have never participated in any environmental programmes.
- All of them agreed to create environmental awareness at homes but all of them disagreed on taking such initiatives in the neighbourhood.

### OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING THE STUDY

The respondents kept dustbins at their homes but the garbage was mostly dumped openly near the municipal bins. Their existed solid wastes here and there in the locality, just giving a dirty picture to the environment here.

The drains were over flooded with solid wastes like paper and plastics.

The religious ceremonies are held frequently in this particular area and there is the use of loud speakers and music on such

occasions.

The idols of various Gods and Goddesses worshipped during the religious ceremonies were then dumped here and there with solid wastes.

The houses are built in a very congested manner with little open space and no drainage system.

It was observed that though people were aware about the environmental problems, they lacked participation in programmes of environmental protection.

#### 4. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study reveals that the area under study is facing major environmental problems. The general public is aware about the situation but lacks awareness about the environmental protection programmes. Their indifferent attitude and lack of participation is posing as a great threat to the environment of the area in particular and the global environment in general. In the light of the above findings, the following suggestions are given:

- Acquaint the public about the rules of health and sanitation through mass awareness programmes.
- Make them conversant with the rights and duties towards the environment.
- Provide them opportunities to join Environmental Organizations and help take initiatives in protecting environment.
- Use mass media to motivate the people in participating in Environment management programmes.
- Develop in them the motto of 'Live and Let Live'.
- Hold NCC and NSS programmes to create awareness about sustainable use of resources.
- Discuss about the policies and Laws related to the conservation and protection of the environment.
- Held street plays and dramas to develop knowledge about proper means and ways of garbage disposal.
- Paste pamphlets and posters on 10 R's-respect, refuse, reduce, reuse, renew, recycle, responsibility, rethink, replant, restore.
- Initiate community services on cleanliness and afforestation.
- Celebrate Earth Day and Environment Day.

In conclusion, it can be said that awareness of the public regarding the environment and their participatory role towards sustainability can only raise the standard of the environment and combat environmental problems. The government schemes on environmental protection cannot be successful until the public is motivated and conscious about it. They need to understand the environmental ethics and develop a positive outlook towards the environment. Thus there is an urgent need of providing environmental education to the masses through formal, informal and non-formal means.

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