A STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter focuses on the crucial elements of environmental awareness. It is an approach of teaching about man's relationship with his environmental; it can well understood as a system which includes all living and non-living things. In the mad race of development, natural resources have been ruthlessly consumed and the environment polluted. This research contains the summary of the findings and conclusions drawn from the study. Good (1972) also suggests that these summarization and conclusion look backward and forward through considerations of application recommendations and further research.

Environmental awareness is crucial as it divides the fate of all living beings. To save the environment and living beings, it is necessary to develop awareness and positive attitudes. Environmental education is essential at all levels, as the future of every nation is being shaped in its schools. Research indicates that although environmental education is taken up as a subject, the curriculum faces limitations regarding proper implementation. We must create awareness and an attitude of caring and sharing natural resources in the minds of children who are the future citizens of our nation.

KEYWORDS

- ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS, RURAL, URBAN

INTRODUCTION

The environment is the foundation of life on Earth, consisting of all living and non-living components that interact to sustain existence. It includes physical, biological, and social factors that influence human life from birth to death. This study highlights the concept of environment, its importance, and the role of environmental education in creating awareness and promoting sustainable development. Over time, the relationship between humans and the environment has changed significantly, shifting from harmony in early societies to exploitation in modern times.

In earlier periods, human beings lived simple lives in close connection with nature. Natural resources were used in a balanced way, allowing ecosystems to maintain stability.

However, with industrialization, urbanization, and technological progress, this balance has been disturbed. The increasing desire for comfort and materialistic lifestyles has led to overuse of resources, pollution, and environmental degradation. Problems such as deforestation, climate change, and loss of biodiversity have become serious concerns. These issues emphasize the need for responsible human behaviour and sustainable practices.

The environment provides essential resources like air, water, and food, while also supporting economic and social development. At the same time, it acts as a sink for waste produced by human activities. Excessive use of resources and improper waste management have put great pressure on environmental systems. Population growth has further increased the demand for limited resources, leading to ecological imbalance. If these trends continue, they may cause irreversible damage to the planet.

Environmental education plays a key role in addressing these challenges. It helps in developing awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for environmental protection. It encourages individuals to participate actively in solving environmental problems and promotes sustainable lifestyles. Environmental education is not limited to theoretical knowledge; it focuses on practical learning through real-life experiences, field visits, and activities that help learners understand environmental issues deeply.

One of the main goals of environmental education is to strengthen the relationship between humans and nature. It helps individuals understand that they are part of the ecosystem and that their actions directly affect the environment. By promoting values such as conservation and responsibility, it motivates people to adopt eco-friendly habits in their daily lives.

The integration of environmental education into the school curriculum is essential. Schools play an important role in shaping the attitudes of young learners. Teachers act as guides in developing awareness and responsibility among students. However, effective implementation requires proper training, resources, and support for educators.

Environmental education focuses on four key components: awareness, real-life situations, conservation, and sustainable development. Awareness makes individuals conscious of environmental issues. Real-life situations connect knowledge with practical experiences. Conservation emphasizes the responsible use of resources. Sustainable development ensures a balance between economic growth and environmental protection for future generations.

Environmental awareness is essential for bringing positive change. It helps individuals make informed decisions and take responsible actions. Small steps like saving water, reducing waste, and planting trees can collectively make a big difference. Community participation and collective efforts are necessary to address environmental problems effectively.

Environmental issues are global in nature and require cooperation at all levels. Governments, organizations, and individuals must work together to protect the environment. Although awareness is increasing, challenges such as lack of resources, limited practical exposure, and the gap between knowledge and action still exist.

In conclusion, the environment is essential for human survival, and its protection is a shared responsibility. Environmental education is a powerful tool to create awareness, develop responsible behaviour, and promote sustainability. By encouraging individuals to take action, it can help restore the balance between humans and nature and ensure a healthy environment for future generations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mishra Bihari Bana (2006)

This study investigated the environmental awareness of central school students in relation to their intelligence and school background. Using a sample of 297 tenth-grade students from Orissa and applying ANOVA for statistical analysis, the researcher found that students with average intelligence displayed significantly better environmental awareness than both low-intelligent and high-intelligent students. Additionally, the study noted that school background and intelligence both significantly impact environmental awareness across four key aspects: air, water, soil, and noise.

Singh Sandhya (2011)

Singh conducted a study to assess and sensitize secondary school students regarding environmental problems and attitudes. The research utilized a sample of 109 students from schools affiliated with CBSE and the Uttar Pradesh Board. Using the "Environmental Awareness Ability Measurement" tool developed by Dr. Praveen Kumar Jha, the study applied mean, standard deviation, and t-values for data interpretation. The findings revealed no significant difference in the level of environmental awareness between male and female students across different social categories (General, OBC, and SC).

- **High General Awareness but Low Action**

Recent studies, such as those by **Jha (2026),** indicate that while a vast majority of secondary students (over 90%) possess "high to above-average" environmental awareness, there is a significant "knowledge-action gap." Students understand the concepts of pollution and climate change but often fail to practice pro-environmental behaviors in their daily lives, such as waste segregation or energy conservation.

- **Influence of Demographic Factors**

* **Gender and Family**: Recent data from **Chandra and Kumar (2025)** suggest that female students and those from joint family backgrounds often demonstrate higher environmental sensitivity and awareness scores compared to their counterparts.

* **Urban vs. Rural**: Research continues to show a divide. Studies in 2026 highlight that urban students often have more theoretical knowledge due to better access to digital resources, while rural students may have a more "experiential" connection to nature but less formal information on global issues like the carbon footprint.

- **Impact of Digital and Media Learning**

The role of technology has become a central theme in recent literature. **Ganguly (2025) and ResearchGate reports (2026)** have found:

* **Digital Tools:** Virtual simulations and interactive apps significantly improve students' understanding of complex ecological systems.

* **Media Influence**: Educational films and "film circles" in classrooms are increasingly effective at shifting student attitudes from passive observation to active concern.

- **The Role of Educational Curriculum**

Current research emphasizes that environmental education is most effective when it is interdisciplinary. Rather than being a standalone subject, integrating sustainability into literature, social studies, and even art helps students see the environment as a "real-world" issue rather than just a textbook chapter (Sood, 2024).

- **Psychological Factors (The "Locus of Control")**

Newer studies in 2025–2026 have explored the "Locus of Control." Many secondary students feel that environmental problems are too big for them to solve, leading to a sense of "agency loss." Literature now suggests that school programs must focus on empowerment and student-led initiatives to turn awareness into actual behavior change.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the difference in the level of environmental awareness among rural and urban secondary school students.

HYPOTHESIS

- There will be no significant difference in the level of environmental awareness among student of rural and urban secondary school students.

The collection of data for a whole population would be expensive and time-consuming. Hence, the data are collected from the 'sample' which represents the population. The procedure for selecting the representative group is called Sampling.
Sampling is the process by which a relatively small number of individuals or measure of individuals, objects, or events is selected and analyzed in order to find out something about the entire population from which it was selected.
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE
The distribution of the various categories of sub-groups in the sample is given below. This table includes the specific data for the Roorkee region.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

ROORKEE	TOTAL STUDENTS	RURAL	URBAN
	100	50	50

In the Environment Awareness Ability Measure (EAAM), the term 'environment' was limited to the natural environment only. It does not include social aspects. Considering the obvious advantages of the objective type test with regards to its administration and evaluation, the investigator decided to prepare only objective type items in the test.

To make the test more practicable, it was decided to keep only 50 items so that it can be responded to in about 15 to 20 minutes. The items selected were related to environment awareness pertaining to the national level, state level, and local level.

The items are related to:

* Population control
* Urbanization
* Ecological balance
* Deforestation, etc.

RESULT

S.NO	STUDENT	FREQUENCY	MEAN	SD	"t" Value	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
1	URBAN	50	34.5	9.43	8.68	Significant
2	RURAL	50	18.5	9		

The result show that there is a significant difference between students from rural and urban areas. With a t-value of 8.68, we rejected the null hypothesis. This means that urban students have a higher level of environmental awareness and concern compared to rural students. A likely reason for this is that students in urban areas are more exposed to environmental issues and related concepts in their daily lives. According to the Environment Awareness Ability Measure (EAAM), urban students scored higher in overall environmental awareness.

CONCLUSION

Environmental awareness among secondary school students is essential for building a sustainable future. While students possess basic knowledge, there is a need for deeper understanding and practical involvement. Schools and educators must take active steps to promote environmental responsibility among students.

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