ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

The relationship between environment and society is a symbiotic one. Environmental education is a process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and added tools necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relationship among man, his culture and his bio-physical surroundings. Even with all the emphasis given to ecology and environment in recent years in the school and college curricula, the institutions provided still remain confined to theoretical knowledge on the subject. Learning opportunities are rarely provided in real life a situation, which in the case of environment education becomes meaningless and even counterproductive. The present paper focuses its study on the need and importance of environment awareness among college students. Results from the study revealed high level of environmental knowledge and positive attitude towards the environment among college students, but low level participation in environmental protection activities.

Key words: Environmental education, Environmental awareness, Students, Environment protection.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid increase of population, global warming and climate change, destruction of natural vegetation, degradation of soil, agricultural lands proportion for per person, decreasing of water sources, depletion of atmosphere, decreasing of biodiversity could be named as major environmental problems, appear to be the most urgent issues which are necessary for the support and contribution of all humanity (Kibert, 2000). As a result of the increasing environmental problems, environmental concerns have dramatically increased among the public over the last few decades (Decamps, 2000).

A long time is needed to create a particular thing than destroying it. It is therefore necessary to address the environmental issues and take appropriate action to prevent further damage. Environmental education is a process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and added tools necessary to understand

and appreciate the inter-relationship among man, his culture and his bio-physical surroundings. It should be inter-disciplinary and examine major environmental issues from local, national and international points of view. It should utilize various educational approaches to teach and learn about and form the environment with stress on practical activities and first-hand experience.

Even with all the emphasis given to ecology and environment in recent years in the school and college curricula, the institutions provided still remain confined to theoretical knowledge on the subject. True, students these days have more access to information on environment problems but such information does not necessarily provide awareness that can lead to action much of the learning is unfortunately text book and examination oriented. Learning opportunities are rarely provided in real life a situation, which in the case of environment education becomes meaningless and even counterproductive. On this background the present paper focuses its study on the need and importance of environment awareness among college students.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present paper is to analyze the level of environmental awareness and attitude towards environment among the under graduate students with special reference to Smt. C. B. Shah Mahila Mahavidyalaya Sangli.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives set for the present study are as follows:

1. To find out the general socio-economic profile of students.
2. To find out the level of environmental awareness and attitude towards environment among the students.
3. To find out the students participation and level of engagement in environmental activities.

SAMPLING:

The respondents for this study have been selected by using accidental method from the female learners who were studying at Smt. C. B. Shah Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Sangli. The 60 learners from the college were sampled to analyze the level of environmental awareness and attitude towards environment.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION:

This study is mainly based on primary data. The primary data were collected by using structured questionnaire. The secondary data were collected from various secondary sources such as: books, journals, magazines, office documents, internet, etc.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The results of the study were limited to under graduate students at Smt. C. B. Shah Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Sangli.

ANALYSIS OF DATA:

The collected data were transferred to code sheets and statistical analysis was carried out. For open-ended questions such data were edited and coding. The whole data was analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) and excel. The out-put was used for interpretation of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General socio-economic characteristics of respondents:

This part of the survey aimed to determinate the general socio-economic characteristics of respondents i.e. their age, gender, caste category and family's monthly income.
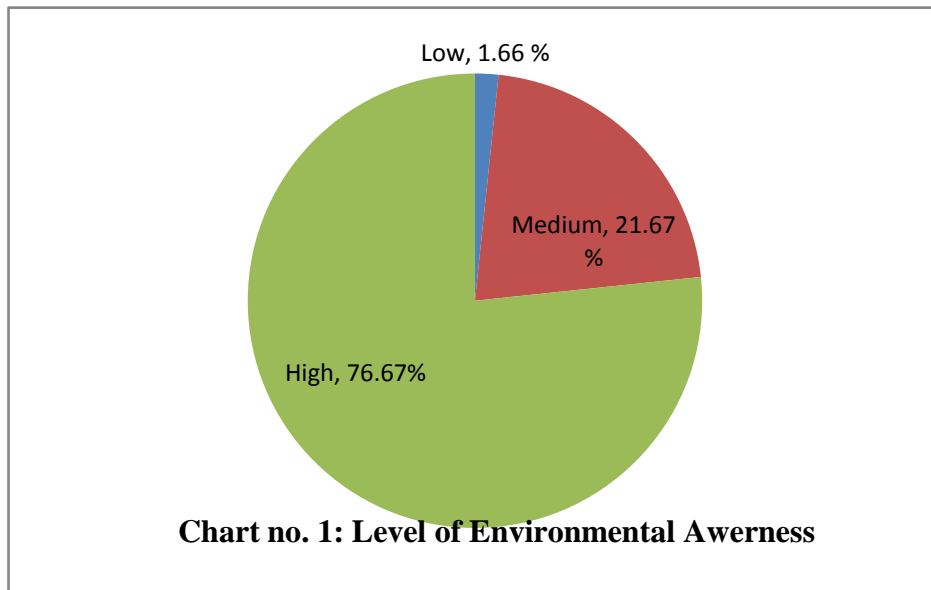
Table No. 1: Student's General Profile

Variables		(%)
1) Gender	Female	100.00
2) Age	18-21	55.00
	22-25	28.33
	26-30	11.66
	30 and above	05.00
3) Caste Category	Open	30.00
	SC	33.33
	OBC	28.33
	Other	08.33
4) Family residence	Urban	43.33
	Rural	56.67
5) Family's monthly income	Below 5000	11.66
	5000-10000	65.00
	10000-15000	20.00
	Above 15000	03.33

According to table no.1- 100% of respondents are female (60) and majority of participants were between the age of 18-21 (55%), 28.33% of them were between 22-25 and 5 % are more than 30 years old. The majority of respondents were socially backward category 70 %. The majority lives in rural area (56.67%), 43.33% of them live in urban area. Family income 39, 65% of respondents families were in between Rs. 5000-10000 and less income of respondents were 7, 11.66%. As it can be seen from the numbers the majority of the participants grown up in rural area and their families have low living standards with low income.

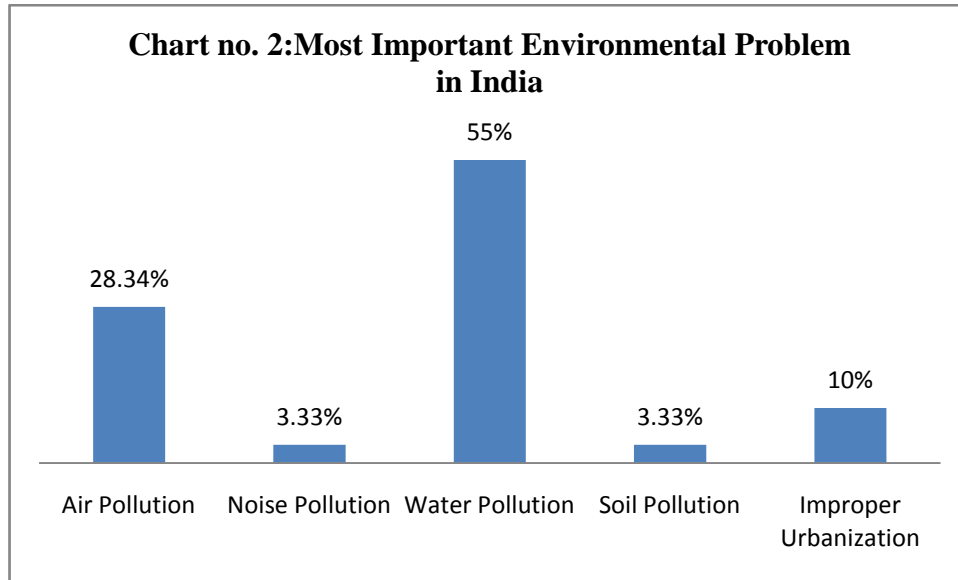**Level of Environmental Awareness:**

The level of environmental knowledge of the respondents was ranked from Low, Medium to High.

Chart no. 1: Level of Environmental Awerness

From the above chart no. 1, it was found that out of the total 60 students investigated, only 1(1.66%) student fall under the low category of Low environmental awareness. A number of 13 students fall under the Medium category of awareness level amounting to 21.67%. The students with higher level of environmental awareness made the largest count of 46 out of the 60 total respondents. Thus, data from the study generally revealed high level of environmental awareness among the college students with 76.67% total.

Attitude on Most Important Environmental Problem in India:

Students were asked to write what they thought was the most important environmental problem in India. Water pollution seems to be the most important environmental problem for the students (55%) and air pollution took the second place with 28.34%. Chart no. 2 shows the distribution of the results.

Chart no. 2:Most Important Environmental Problem in India

Attitude on Factor Responsible for Environmental Problems:

Respondents were asked to write most important factor for the environmental problems in India (Table no. 2). Majority students think that lack of environmental awareness is the most important factor (48.34%) responsible for environmental problems. Other important responsible factors for environmental problems are global warming (26.67%) and population explosion in India (20%).

Table No. 2: Factor Responsible for Environmental Problems

Factor	Frequency	(%)
Government Policy	01	01.66
Lack of Environmental Education	02	03.33
Lack of Environmental Awareness	29	48.34
Global Warming	16	26.67
Population Explosion	12	20.00
Total	**60**	**100.00**

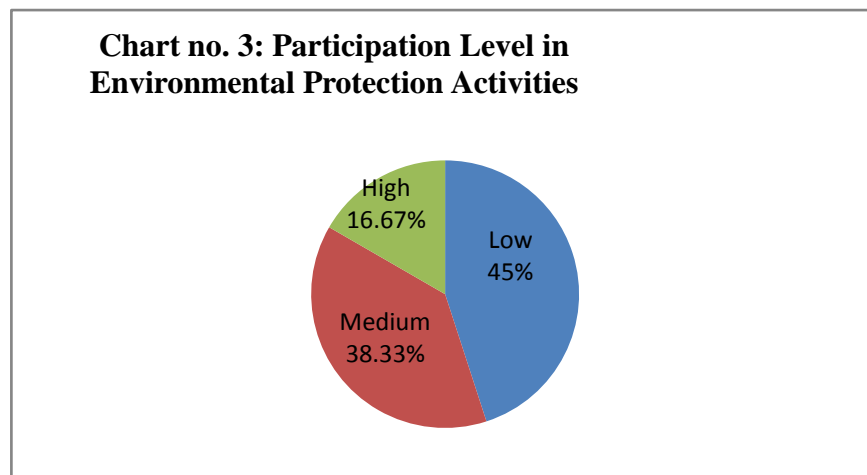## Attitude on Solution for Environmental Problems:

Students were asked that what is the most practical solution towards environmental problems and it is clear from table no. 3 that, majority (35%) respondents said it would be education for raising the environmental awareness of public. Technological improvements for sustainable use of Natural Resources and effective implementation of environmental laws took the second and third place with 28.33% and 23.33% respectively. Students also suggest that there is need for ban on use of hazards products (10%) and need of regular activities of government and NGO's on environment protection.

Table No. 3: Solution for Environmental Problems

Solution	Frequency	(%)
Effective implementation of Environmental Laws	14	23.33
Education for raising the Environmental awareness of public	21	35.00
Technological Improvements for Sustainable use of Natural Resources	17	28.33
Ban on use of Hazards Products	06	10.00
Regular Activities of Govt. and NGO's on Environment Protection	02	03.34
Total	**60**	**100.00**

Students Participation Level in Environmental Protection Activities:

The level of student's participation in environmental protection activities was ranked from Low, Medium to High and it was shown in chart no. 3.

Chart no. 3: Participation Level in Environmental Protection Activities

As shown in the above chart no. 3, the level of student's participation in environmental protection activities majority (27 or 45%) respondents falls under low participation. Similarly, 23 respondents (38.33%) were ranked among the medium category. Thus, combining all together (Low and Medium categories) has 83.33%. The respondents with high level of participation in environmental protection activities are only 16.67%. This indicates less number of people participating fully in environmental activities and protection. Thus, from the data, the study revealed that, environmental knowledge alone may not be the only stimulating factor to instigate active participation in environmental protection activities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As a result it was found that the students had positive attitude about environmental awareness level and attitudes towards the environment. Results from the study revealed that a significantly higher proportion of students exhibited high awareness level by 76.67% of the total sampled population. Students were aware about various environmental problems and their responsible factors. In the contrary, the study also revealed that, in spite of high level of knowledge and awareness on environment but also low level participation in environmental protection activities by about 83.33%. In other words, results from the study imply that, students being aware about their surroundings and having knowledge about their environment may not be the only factor to stimulate participation in environmental improvement and protection activities. Research findings show that knowledge, awareness and responsible behavior are not always influential on each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with above results, it is suggested that:

- There is need to revision of higher education curricula and it should include transformative approaches; activities helping students to be informed about nature, increasing their awareness about environmental problems, and developing environmental sensitivity should be increased.
- There is urgent need of more research in effective learning and affective approach in environmental education.
- There is need of well planned national strategies about environment protection and increasing the awareness of environment. Environmental awareness programme can be raised with collaboration of public and private partnership.

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