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## Assessing the Nexus between Ecocentric Attitude and Pro-environmental Behaviour among Secondary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Secondary School students' ecocentric attitude and pro-environmental behaviour. Many people think that a person's ecocentric attitude, reflects a way of thinking and living in which nature is valued not merely for its usefulness to humans but for its intrinsic worth, is a good predictor of their pro-environmental behaviour, or their attempts to reduce their impact on the environment and make it last longer. The study aims to find the significant variations between ecocentric attitude and pro-environmental behaviour levels among Secondary School students. A sample of 120 students from the Palakkad district of Kerala's Secondary Schools took part in the survey-based research. The data was collected using two scales: one that measures ecocentric attitude and the other that measures pro-environmental behaviour. Students' estimates of their own ecocentric attitude and pro-environmental actions differed considerably, according to the findings. These results suggest that Secondary School students would benefit from more targeted orientation and training sessions if they adopted more environmentally concerned attitudes and behaviours.

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### Introduction

An individual's ecocentric attitude represents a viewpoint and way of life where nature is valued for the existence beyond usefulness to humankind. The philosophy of ecocentrism is based on the idea that



all living beings - plants, animals, and microorganisms, as well as non-living things such as rivers, mountains, and soil - have the right to exist and flourish (Næss, 1973; Leopold, 1949). An individual's ecocentric attitude represents a viewpoint and way of life where nature is valued for the existence beyond usefulness to humankind. The philosophy of ecocentrism is based on the idea that all living beings - plants, animals, and microorganisms, as well as non-living things such as rivers, mountains, and soil - have the right to exist and flourish (Næss, 1973; Leopold, 1949). Because of the crucial role that Secondary School plays in forming students' attitudes and actions toward environmental conservation, ecocentric attitude are especially important among this demographic. Promoting environmentally conscious principles among the youth of today is crucial in light of the critical nature of environmental issues including pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss. Students in Secondary School, on the cusp of puberty and entering adulthood, are in a prime position to acquire the understanding, awareness, ethics, and competence required for ecological conservation. Family, education, cultural traditions, and curriculum exposure are some of the variables that influence students' environmental views, according to research. Schools can be instrumental through a well-developed curriculum, extracurricular activities and learning experiences in socializing students to be responsible citizens. However, not all students will be environmentally literate. Some students may have been exposed insufficiently to environmental education or positive role modeling which can explain their poor appreciation and knowledge. If we are to make sure that Secondary School children become knowledgeable, responsible and environmentally literate adults who can address the environmental challenges of the future, we need to understand and improve how they view the environment.

Human greed is the root cause of all the environmental crises we are now experiencing. As a matter of basic human decency, the next generation should know that all forms of life on Earth deserve the same basic protections against the forces of nature. "When people act in a way that is both ecologically and socially responsible, it's called pro-environmental behaviour. This should start in childhood and continue throughout life. According to Ramus (2007), there is a subset of pro-social activity known as pro-environmental behaviour. Environmental education and community-based social marketing are two examples of tactics that aim to increase people's pro-environmental behaviour, although people's environmental knowledge and beliefs are the most important variables (Akpan. 2003). The major purpose of this research is to get a better understanding of the importance of ecocentric attitude and how to encourage pro-environmental actions among Secondary School students. As a byproduct of urbanization and industrialization, huge pollution and climate change pose serious threats to the environment, which the current research seeks to shed light on. Additionally, it helps us understand the extent of our



responsibility for environmental protection and the weight of our duty to do so. We can make a difference in our environment and teach our children to be environmentally conscious if we adopt an ecocentric attitude.

### **Need and significance of the study**

Educating people about environmental issues is one of the most powerful ways to raise awareness about the environment. The environment supplies everyone with needs for life, including food, water, and air. If the environment is not managed properly, there will be issues with it becoming defective components. As the environment is degrading, we are also witnessing the degradation of the weather from what we are accustomed to. Crop yields are lower, patterns of rainfall have become erratic, and emerging disease patterns have appeared. Prioritizing environmental sustainability for the next generation is an important issue. Basic ecological processes must be preserved so the next generation can obtain food, drink, and be sheltered from the weather. In order to create and sustain the contemporary world, we must recognize and apply scientific and technological ideas.

Secondary schooling plays an instrumental part in the educational system of today. Secondary school is the culmination of all the learning a student has accumulated in eleven-twelve years of schooling. In addition, it is a launching pad for students to enter the world of work, have a positive impact on the planet, and possibly save the planet. Thus, this spectrum presents an unusual opportunity to learn about and examine how environmental education in schools can be a determinant for changing the mind of a youth who is already aware of environmental issues and the necessity of environmental laws and ethics. Young people today must learn to live in harmony with the natural world, rather than taking advantage of it. These youth must learn to value all living things in the natural world. Research like this is essential to ensuring safety for future generations because it will help us find out how to fix all these issues. This research will examine Secondary School students' ecocentric attitude and their pro-environmental behaviours.

Kopnina and Cocis (2017), explored university students' views of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism in sustainability across higher education settings. They found that students with an ecocentric worldview were generally more likely to exhibit pro-environment attitudes and behavior than those that were anthropocentric. They attributed this to the ecocentric notion that nature has intrinsic value, fostering a sense of empathy and responsibility towards nature. Furthermore, the researchers noted that ecocentric attitude were not entirely contingent upon academic performance, and were genuinely influenced by



educational experiences directly related to environments and value-laden learning. Moreover, the study noted that taking and forming networks in environmental initiatives and projects while enrolled within higher educational institutions strengthened student ecocentric orientation and value for ecological sustainability.

The study titled "Pro-environmental Behaviour of Secondary School Students: A Topographical Analysis," the study was conducted by Behra and Samal (2015). The objectives of this study were to compare the pro-environmental behaviour of Secondary School students by gender and geography, to identify regional patterns in this behaviour, and to offer alternatives to enhance student's pro-environmental behaviour. The key findings revealed that there was no meaningful difference in pro-environmental behavior between genders. In terms of environmentally responsible behaviour, Secondary School students in urban areas and rural areas are polar opposite. When it came to environmentally responsible actions, the results determined that Secondary School students residing in rural areas care more about the environment compared to their urban Secondary School counterparts. This cursory analysis could be easily integrated into larger, more purposefully designed discussions of main findings and implications for people's behaviours and attitudes toward the environment.

### **Objectives**

- To findout the extend of Ecocentric Attitude of Secondary School students.
- To findout the extend of Pro-environmental Behaviour of the Secondary School students
- To find out the relationship between Ecocentric Attitude and Pro-environmental Behaviour of Secondary School students

### **Hypothesis**

- There is no significant difference in the level of Ecocentric Attitude of Secondary School students.
- There is no significant difference in the level of Pro-environmental behaviour of Secondary School students.
- There is no significant relationship between Ecocentric Attitude and pro-environmental behaviour of Secondary School students.

**The procedure of the study**

The goal of this research is to find out how Secondary School students' Ecocentric attitude affects their pro-environmental actions. Researchers were able to make broad conclusions because they employed the normative survey technique, which is part of the descriptive quantitative methodology. The study's population consists of students from higher Secondary Schools in Kerala's Palakkad district. Hundred and twenty students from GVHSS Vattenad and HSS Vattenad, Palakkad, Kerala were selected for the research.

**Tools used for the study**

1. New Ecological Paradigm Scale constructed by Dunlap et al (2000)
2. Pro-environmental Behaviour Scale (PERS-SA) constructed by Dr. Prof Mercy Abraham & Arjunan N K

**Statistical techniques used for the study**

The data collected from the students was examined to meet the objectives of the study. A quantitative analysis of the data was performed. Detailed information on each objective is given below.

**To find out the extend of Ecocentric Attitude of Secondary School students.**

The data and the results of the first objective are given below.

**Table 1. Details of Level of Ecocentric Attitude**

Level of Environmental Attitude	Range of Scores	Frequency	Percentage
High	46 and above	15	12.95%
Average	37-45	83	68.24%
Low	36 and below	22	18.81%
Total	Total	120	100.00%



From Table: 1, 12.95% of the Secondary School students in the research had a high degree of Ecocentric Attitude, In addition, the survey found that 68.24% of students had an average Ecocentric Attitude (scores between 37 and 45), whereas 18.81% had a bad Ecocentric Attitude (scores 36 and below).

### To find out the extent of Pro-environmental Behaviour of Secondary School students.

The data and the results of the second objective are given below.

**Table: 2. Details of Level of Pro-environmental Behaviour**

Range of Raw Scores	Range of Raw Scores	Range of Raw Scores	Frequency	Percentage
76-80	+2.00 and above	Extremely Favourable	0	0%
69-75	+1.26 to +2.00	High Favourable	10	7.92%
62-68	+0.51 to +1.25	Above average Favourable	30	25.29%
53-61	-0.50 to +0.50	Average Favourable	51	43.06%
45-52	-0.51 to 1.25	Below Average Favourable	15	12.33%
39-44	-1.26 to 2.00	Unfavourable	8	6.47%
33-38	-2.01 and below	Extremely Unfavourable	6	4.93%

From Table 2 none of the Secondary School students surveyed exhibited very positive pro-environmental behaviour. The percentage of Secondary School students whose actions were positively impactful on the environment was 7.92%. An additional 25.29 % of Secondary School students exhibited pro-Ecocentric attitude and actions that were above average. The percentage of Secondary School students whose pro-environmental behaviour was moderately positive was 43.06%. 12.33% of Secondary School students exhibited less than ideal levels of pro-environmental behaviour. There was



a significant disparity between the pro- and anti-environmental conduct of 6.47 percent of Secondary School students and 4.93 percent of those students.

### To find out the relationship between Ecocentric Attitude and pro-environmental behaviour of the Secondary School students

Investigating the relationship between Ecocentric Attitude and pro-environmental behaviour was the study's main goal. We tested the hypothesis that there is a substantial association between Ecocentric Attitude and pro-environmental behaviour of Secondary School students by analyzing and interpreting the data using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ).

**Table: 3 Correlational analyses between Ecocentric Attitude and Pro- environmental Behaviour of Secondary School students.**

		EE	PEB
EE	Pearson Correlation	1	0.306**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.062
	N	120	120
PEB	Pearson Correlation	0.306**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.062	
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson's correlation coefficient ' $r$ ' for the correlation between Ecocentric Attitude and Pro-environmental Behaviour is 0.306. This indicates that there exists a relationship between Ecocentric Attitude and the Pro-environmental Behaviour of Secondary School Students. Hence the third hypothesis is accepted and there exists a significant relationship between Ecocentric Attitude and Pro-environmental Behaviour among Higher Secondary School Students

### Discussion



While a minority of Secondary School students in this survey had a very negative attitude towards the environment, the overwhelming majority had an average opinion. It appears that most students had a fair understanding of the value of environmental welfare, however, the results reflect the need for us to inspire and promote a change within students' attitudes of environmental preservation. Parents, educators and school administrators can work together to foster a proactive, constructive, environmentally-considerate attitude in children.

According to the survey, most Secondary School students indicated a moderate degree of environmental awareness, with only a very small percentage indicating very unfavorable attitudes or behavior. Therefore, it is important to inspire students to take an action consistent with their Ecocentric Attitude. Providing students with a strong environmental ethics of positive, proactive and constructive actions is no small task, and is a role for parents, educators, and policymakers. The research suggests there is likely a positive correlation of environmental awareness and behavior among Secondary School students. These findings could be useful to policymakers and school administrators and decision makers in making needed changes to environmental education and general education curriculum.

Students' environmental consciousness may be more fully integrated into their everyday lives if these programmes are made more effective, relevant, and practically applicable. When it comes to solving environmental problems, institutions may provide a remarkable example. They may greatly lessen their impact on the environment and promote a culture of sustainability by evaluating their present strategy and implementing the recommended changes. Not only do these initiatives help the environment, but they also teach kids to be future leaders who care about the planet. Institutions may have a significant impact on global sustainability objectives via working together and continuously improving.

## Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between students' Ecocentric Attitudes, and their supporting actions, among Secondary School students. While the majority of students showed a strong environmental commitment, their supporting actions reflecting that commitment received average scores according to this study. Therefore, when considering school reform and curriculum design, administrators and curriculum designers need to re-design environmental education curriculum in such a way that teaches students environmental ethics and eco-conscious actions that will have meaning for generations to come. The research shows a strong correlation between environmental mindset and pro-environmental behaviour, showing how interconnected the two ideas are. These results highlight the necessity for new



approaches to environmental education in the classroom. More engaging and interactive methods of teaching should replace or at least be added to more traditional methods of lecturing. Teachers should use suitable teaching resources to stimulate their students and teach important environmental knowledge and values.

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