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Relationship between Environmental Awareness and Eco-Friendly Behaviour among Higher Secondary Students

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ABSTRACT

Especially for young learners who will have an impact on ecological outcomes in the future, understanding of the environment is a critical aspect in promoting sustainable conduct. This review paper assesses the environmental awareness and eco-friendly behavior of Higher secondary school pupils by synthesizing studies conducted at both the national and international levels. According to the findings of the research, students who have a greater understanding of environmental issues, have positive attitudes, and place a high value on ecological principles are more likely to recycle, save energy, and consume in a sustainable manner. Students' awareness and actions may be improved by a variety of factors, including environmental teaching at school, the impact of their families, peer groups, exposure to the media, and participation in environmental activities. Additionally, the research draws attention to the discrepancies that exist between awareness and practice, which are commonly brought about by limits on one's lifestyle, a lack of facilities, characteristics that are socioeconomic in nature, and insufficient experience in the realm of learning. There is evidence of a moderate to large positive correlation between understanding of environmental issues and conduct that is eco-friendly, according to research. This suggests that Higher secondary

environmental education might be beneficial in the development of a generation that is more ecologically responsible and sustainable. This article advocates combining experiential learning, community engagement, and education based on values as a way to bridge the awareness-action divide.

INTRODUCTION

As the severity of environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity, and depletion of resources continues to increase, it has become more important to comprehend the reasons for people's adoption of environmentally friendly behaviors. Environmental consciousness is one of the numerous elements that influence sustainable activities, and it has a key place among these aspects. A person's environmental awareness may be defined as their comprehension of environmental problems, their concern for the maintenance of ecological equilibrium, and their acknowledgment of the duty that humans have toward the natural world. On the other hand, eco-friendly behavior refers to acts that are taken in a practical manner with the intention of limiting the negative impact on the environment. These actions include saving energy, minimizing trash, recycling, and adopting sustainable consumption habits. The connection between these two ideas is a topic that is extensively explored in the fields of environmental education and behavioral research. This is due to the fact that awareness is often considered to be the basis upon which responsible environmental behavior is constructed.

Concept of Environmental Awareness

The term "environmental awareness" refers to a multifaceted notion that encompasses knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and sensitivity toward environmental challenges. This requires having an awareness of sustainable behaviors, a feeling of duty toward the protection of natural resources, and a grasp of the factors that lead to environmental deterioration and the repercussions of that degradation. The term "awareness" refers to more than just the possession of factual information; it also encompasses feelings of concern and an ethical attitude toward the natural world.

Meaning of Eco-Friendly Behaviour

The term "eco-friendly behavior," which is also known as "pro-environmental behavior," refers to behaviors that are made voluntarily by people in order to reduce the amount of destructive influence they have on the environment. These kinds of behaviors may be broken down into three categories:

consumption-related decisions (such as purchasing items with an eco-label and avoiding waste), everyday home routines (such as conserving water and energy and minimizing the amount of plastic used), and participation activities (such as initiatives to plant trees, promote cleanliness, and advocate for environmental protection). These behaviors are essential for attaining sustainable development on both the individual and social levels, since they constitute a manifestation of the translation of environmental concern into tangible action.

Theoretical Link between Awareness and Behaviour

Multiple behavioral theories provide support for the hypothesis that there is a connection between environmental consciousness and environmentally responsible behavior. The understanding–Attitude–Behavior paradigm proposes that individuals' attitudes are shaped by their understanding of environmental concerns, which in turn influences their behavior. From a similar perspective, the Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that awareness plays a role in the formation of positive attitudes and intentions, which in turn lead to real behavior, given that people believe they are capable of carrying out the activities in question. According to these many points of view, environmental consciousness is seen as an essential prerequisite for eco-friendly behavior.

Awareness as a Predictor of Eco-Friendly Behaviour

There is a substantial amount of research that suggests that there is a beneficial connection between environmental consciousness and environmentally responsible behavior. It is usually true that individuals who have a greater awareness of environmental concerns are more likely to participate in actions that are sustainable. The cultivation of awareness heightens sensitivity to the deterioration of the environment, heightens worry for the generations who will come after us, and deepens moral responsibility. Individuals are often motivated to undertake ecologically responsible behaviors, such as minimizing waste, preserving natural resources, and supporting environmental efforts, as a result of this heightened awareness. In this way, awareness serves as a cognitive and motivational motivator of environmentally conscious behavior.

Role of Attitudes, Values, and Motivation

It is possible to increase the connection between environmental awareness and environmentally responsible behavior by ensuring that environmental awareness is accompanied with good environmental attitudes and values. Awareness that results in emotional concern, ethical commitment, and intrinsic drive is more likely to result in action than awareness that comes without these elements. When people

internalize environmental ideals, environmentally responsible behavior becomes a part of their identity rather than a habit that is imposed upon them or that is only present temporarily. Both intrinsic (personal enjoyment) and extrinsic (social recognition, incentives) motivation serves as a bridge between those who are aware of something and those who actually do it.

Importance of Environmental Education

The connection between environmental consciousness and environmentally responsible actions may be strengthened via the implementation of environmental education. An effective environmental education extends beyond the acquisition of academic information and places an emphasis on practical learning, problem-solving, and active engagement and participation. Awareness is more likely to change into regular eco-friendly behavior when people are provided with opportunity to undertake sustainable behaviors, notice the beneficial effect such acts have, and reflect on their experiences. The gap between comprehending environmental challenges and taking action to address them may be bridged via education that incorporates fundamental principles, practical skills, and practical applications.

Mediators and moderators of the relationship

In order to comprehend the reasons behind why some students' awareness leads to behavior while others do not, it is necessary to pay attention to mediators and moderators. The factors that explain the process are referred to as mediators. Some examples of mediators are self-efficacy, intentions, and pro-environmental views. To provide one example, awareness may lead to an increase in environmental concern, which in turn leads to an increase in the intention to act, which ultimately leads to behavior. One of the most powerful mediators is perceived behavioral control, which may be defined as the perception that one's activities have an effect. Students who have the sense that their actions matter are more likely to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors.

There are elements known as moderators that alter the degree to which a link is strong. The manner in which awareness is translated into behavior is moderated by factors such as socioeconomic level, the school environment, peer norms, and the behavior of parents. An example of this would be a kid who is environmentally conscious but whose family does not have recycling facilities or whose parents do not encourage sustainable behaviors. This student may exhibit minimal eco-friendly behavior. Furthermore, the link is influenced by gender, the environment of urban vs rural settings, and cultural values: In certain situations, females report more acts that are environmentally friendly, whereas in other situations, the differences are almost nonexistent.

School and curriculum influences

When it comes to influencing the awareness-behavior relationship, schools are very effective locations. The curriculum that incorporates environmental science with practical activities (such as trash audits, school gardens, and eco-clubs) has a tendency to yield more robust behavioral consequences than classroom lectures alone. Students' capability to take action is strengthened by the training of teachers, the provision of resources (such as bins, water stations, and saplings), and supportive school policies (such as laws that encourage energy conservation and awards for becoming green). Peer leadership, also known as student ambassadors for the environment, often results in the formation of social norms that make environmentally conscious acts visible and socially rewarded. This further increases the possibility that conscious knowledge will be converted into habitual behavior.

Role of family and community

Practices inside the family and the infrastructure of the community are crucial. Students pick up behaviors from their parents and siblings; as a result, it is simpler for adolescents to adopt comparable behaviors when they are raised in a household that prioritizes the separation of trash and the responsible use of water. In order to establish whether or not certain environmentally friendly options are feasible, community amenities, such as recycling centers, safe cycling pathways, or efficient public transportation, are taken into consideration. It is possible for awareness to become a cause of annoyance rather than a source of action if supportive surroundings are not there.

Environmental Degradation: A Call for Awareness and Eco-Friendly Practices

Park (2020) describes the environment as "the complete assortment of situations that exist in the area that encircles people at any particular point in time and space." When it is used in a generic sense, the term "environment" is regarded to be a synonym for the word "nature," which is defined as the physical components of the planet Earth, including land, air, water, soils, and so on, that offer nourishment to life in the biosphere and have an influence on it (Singh, 2022). The natural world has a profound effect on every living creature, and it is likewise impacted by living things, especially people, in turn. There is a point at which the limitations of our activities are determined by the environment; yet, in the last several decades, we have gone beyond those boundaries, and this has resulted in the degradation of the ecosystem. This deterioration is a challenge to humankind as it endangers our capacity to live in a way that is beneficial to our health on this planet. As a consequence of this, it is our responsibility to make

sure that we do all in our power to protect our surroundings in order to maintain a comfortable and healthy environment in which we may spend our lives.

The current setting is quite unlike to how it was before. To a much larger extent than before, the planet has been polluted as a result of the industrialization, urbanization, modernity, and extravagant actions of human beings. Environmental concerns have emerged as an extremely significant matter in recent decades, and they have been the subject of discussion on a global scale. Nowadays, we do not live in a stable environment. Instead, the environment is becoming increasingly unrecognizable and diminishing before our very eyes. This is solely due to the actions of humans, such as the widespread cutting down of trees, the overuse of natural resources, pollution, waste disposal, population explosion, and many other issues (Kumar, Talawar, and Kafi, 2023).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: For the purpose of this investigation, the researcher has examined studies that were conducted both in India and abroad. Those individuals are:

Anbalagan G. & Viswanathan, S. (2023) carried out a study investigation with the title "An Investigation into Environmental Awareness and Associated Behaviors Among High School Students in the Madurai District of Tamil Nadu." examination The purpose of the research was to determine the likelihood that the pupils would become environmentally conscious by taking into consideration a wide range of environmental issues. Furthermore, it was meant to advocate aggressive roles for the National Green Corps, Eco clubs, green clubs, and other analogous creative initiatives in schools to encourage environmental awareness and sustainable action in society in order to solve environmental challenges.

Chaudhari, D. (2023) Research was conducted on "Secondary School Students' Awareness and Attitudes Towards the Environment." In order to find out what degree of knowledge pupils in secondary school have about environmental modifications and environmental contamination, that is the objective of the study. The stratified random sampling method was used to choose a total of 750 samples that would be used for the purpose of the investigation. The selection of five schools from each of the three talukas was part of this strategy. A questionnaire was used as the major instrument of this research, and it was separated into four distinct components. These sections had the following titles: "Knowledge About the Environment," "Knowledge About Environmental Pollution," "Knowledge About Environmental Changes," in addition to "Other." The data that were collected from the questionnaire were examined using statistical methods, and the average scores were determined. In order to display the opinions of the students, the responses that were provided to the question were collated into a frequency distribution, which was then turned into percentages.

Danielraja, R. (2019) was responsible for conducting the study that was titled "A Study of Environmental Awareness of Students at Higher Secondary Levels." The fundamental goal of the study is to raise students' awareness of the social issues that are related to environmental pollution, as well as to highlight the importance of environmental education. The results of the investigation demonstrated that there was a statistically significant discrepancy in the average scores of environmental awareness when comparing the students who were members of the scientific group to the students who were members of the arts group. In addition, the average scores of environmental awareness among the students who were members of the scientific group differed significantly from those of the students who were members of the vocational group.

Gummadi, S., Latha, S., & Rao, P. B. (2020) carried out an investigation on the piece of work that is named "A Study on Level of Environmental Awareness Among Secondary School Students in Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh." For the aim of this investigation, which sought to explore the environmental consciousness of students in secondary schools, a total of 240 students were selected from six different schools situated in the Guntur area of Andhra Pradesh. The selection process for these students was conducted utilizing a random sampling approach. The normative survey technique is used to assess the amount of awareness that students have. The calculations of the mean, standard deviations, and test of significance were performed by the investigator, who was also responsible for the construction and validation of the scale. The results of the study provided evidence that the students' level of environmental awareness was not significant and that it differed depending on the students' gender as well as the location where they resided.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. In order to determine the degree to which students in Higher secondary schools exhibit environmentally responsible behavior.
2. To evaluate pupils' eco-friendly behavior according to gender.
3. To assess the pupils' environmentally conscious behavior in relation to their community.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This inquiry made use of the "Survey Method." A questionnaire titled "Interest in Greening Initiatives" was sent to a total of 350 students; however, not all of the forms were filled out completely. The final sample consisted of 300 Higher secondary school students in the Siddharth Nagar district of Uttar

Pradesh. The Purposive Random Sampling Technique was the method that was used to collect the samples. Examples were offered by seven different educational institutions. The container contains thirty items. The students enrolled in Higher secondary school are individually awarded a score between zero and two for each individual question in order to determine their level of environmental awareness. These scores correspond to the following responses: zero for negative answers, one for neutral replies, and two for positive replies. There is a range of possible scores, from zero to sixty. In order to categorize the extent to which the behavior is environmentally beneficial; the final score is separated into four different groups.

- Above 50 = High
- Between 40-50 = Above average
- Between 30-40 = Average
- Below 30 = Low

The data were analyzed using inferential analysis, which was carried out with the assistance of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The procedures of mean, standard deviation, and t-test were all used in the statistical analysis in order to achieve the desired objectives.

Tool Used

The purpose of developing the "Interest in Greening Initiatives" questionnaire was to assess the environmentally responsible actions of students enrolled in Higher secondary school. Each question in the tool provides three possible answers: a positive reaction, a neutral response, and a negative response. There are thirty components in all, and they include six different dimensions: (a) conserving water; (b) managing pollution; (c) conserving energy; (d) cleanliness and sanitation; and (f) using poly products.

Inferential Analysis:

Testing of Hypothesis:

Hypothesis-1: Eco-friendly activities don't appeal to upper school pupils.

Table-1: Showing Mean and SD of the total sample

Scale	N	Mean	SD

Interest in eco-friendly activities	300	50.51	5.668

The whole sample's mean score for environmentally friendly behavior was 50.51, as determined by the data shown above. As a consequence of this, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This is an indication that students who are enrolled in Higher secondary schools have a significant level of environmentally aware conduct.

Hypothesis-2: It is not possible to distinguish any differences in environmentally conscious actions between pupils who are male and those who are female.

Table-2: Comparing the eco-friendly behavior of male and female pupils

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Boys	164	49.10	6.333	4.920	NS
Girls	136	52.21	4.169		

The tabulated value is 1.97 when the level is 0.05.

As can be seen in the table that is shown above, the calculated t-value comes to a total of 4.920. It is higher than the tabulated value when the significance threshold is set at 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted as true. There are noteworthy discrepancies in the environmentally conscious conduct of males and girls, as shown by this.

Hypothesis-3: Students in urban and rural areas do not significantly vary in their eco-friendly behavior.

Table-3: Comparing the eco-friendly behavior of students in urban and rural areas

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	Level of Significance
Rural	132	49.90	5.871	1.653	NS
Urban	168	50.99	5.474		

The tabulated value is 1.97 when the level is 0.05.

1.653 is the calculated t-value that can be found in the table that is located above. It is below the tabulated value at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. The null hypothesis has been accepted. As a result, the environmentally friendly conduct of students who live in urban and rural areas is same.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Examination of Higher Secondary Students' Environmental Consciousness and Behavior

Evaluating the relationship between students' environmental awareness and their pro-environmental actions was the primary goal of the research. After adjusting for missing data, the final sample of 350 students from the Siddharth Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh's Higher Secondary Schools was selected from the original pool of 350 using the "Interest in Greening Initiatives" questionnaire. To guarantee sufficient representation, participants were chosen using the Purposive Random Sampling Technique. They were drawn from seven different educational institutions. The pupils' environmental awareness was measured by thirty questions on the questionnaire. Each item was evaluated from 0 to 2; negative answers were rated as 0, neutral as 1, and positive as 2; total scores ranged from 0 to 60. We divided the total scores into four categories to show the level of eco-friendly actions, with higher scores indicating more environmental consciousness. In order to analyze the data and draw conclusions about the students' environmental consciousness, descriptive statistics were used. These statistics included the standard deviation (SD) and the mean to summarize the data.

The purpose of this survey was to gauge the environmental consciousness and conservation stances of forty-six pupils. All four dimensions of the survey had four possible answer options: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree; the findings are shown in Table 4. This synopsis gives a concise assessment of the many ways in which pupils approach and understand environmental protection.

Table 4. Percentage results from respondents.

Dimension	Responses			
	SA	A	D	SD
Environmental impact on health	67%	30%	2%	0%
Impact on environment	68%	32%	1%	0%
Self-awareness	66.6%	32.2%	0.3%	0%
Action to protecting the environment	71.4%	28.2%	2.1%	0%

According to Table 4, there was widespread agreement among respondents on all aspects of environmental consciousness. In particular, when asked if environmental variables have an effect on health, 67% of respondents gave their enthusiastic approval, 30% gave their cautious approval, 2% gave their disapproving opinion, and 0% gave their very negative opinion. The following percentages of respondents were in agreement or strong agreement with regard to the effect on the environment: 68%, 32%, 2%, and 0%, respectively. Regarding the self-awareness dimension, the following percentages of respondents were in agreement: 66.67%, 32.25%, 0.36%, and 0%, respectively. Lastly, when asked about

measures done to save the environment, 71.42% of people gave their enthusiastic approval, 28.26% gave their agreement, 2.17% gave their disapproval, and 0% gave their very negative response. Based on the total scores for each answer choice, Figure 4 graphical depiction summarises the frequency distribution of student replies across all categories.

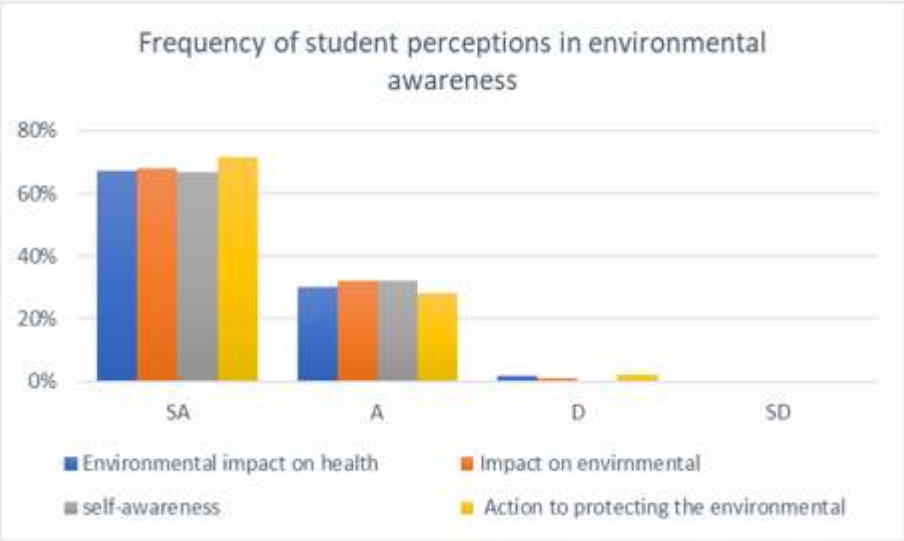

Figure 1. Percentages of students' environmental awareness

Regarding self-awareness, the third dimension of the survey, 66.67% of respondents were in agreement, 32.25% were in disagreement, and 0.36% were neutral. No one was in a significant disagreement. Regarding the last aspect, measures to safeguard the environment, 71.42 percent of participants were in agreement, 28.26 percent were in disagreement, and 0 percent were in extreme disagreement. The frequency distribution of student replies, based on the total scores for each response category, is graphically summarized in Figure 1.

Health is an essential part of human existence, and the first part of the study looks at how students think the environment affects it. A total of 67% of students were in strong agreement, 30% were in agreement, and 2% were in disagreement, according to the statistics. It seems that the students have acknowledged the substantial influence of environmental variables on health. In spite of this knowledge, the issue of inappropriate trash disposal persists. The ecosystem is deteriorating because some people don't think it's important to properly dispose of trash. Environmental neglect poses major health hazards, since frequent ailments including diarrhea, dysentery, worm infections, malaria, elephantiasis, and dengue fever may result from poorly handled trash.

The effects of human actions on the environment and methods for mitigating such effects are discussed in Section 2. In this case, 68% of people were in agreement, 32% were in disagreement, and 0% were in a strong disagreeing position. These findings highlight the significance of being environmentally conscious in preserving the natural world and ensuring ecological harmony. Pollution and damage to ecosystems and human health may arise from an ignorance of the environment. Therefore, it is critical to promote environmental education in order to encourage environmentally responsible conduct among people and groups.

Children that are in Higher secondary schools have been shown to have a significant amount of environmentally concerned conduct. It is possible that the answer lies in the fact that the school curriculum is giving due consideration to the prioritization of environmental education. The findings of the research, on the other hand, demonstrate that the environmentally responsible conduct of pupils in Higher secondary school is influenced by their gender. Females have been shown to have a greater level of environmentally aware conduct than their male counterparts. The reason might be the difference in perspectives. This finding is consistent with studies that indicate that compared to male students, female students were found to be more ecologically sensitive (Kumar, Talawar, & Kafi, 2023; Pillai, 2022; Shahnawaj, 2020).

Male students had a greater awareness of their surroundings than their female classmates did. This phenomenon might be explained by the tendency of male students to be more socially connected and so more mindful of environmental issues. However, the research found no discernible difference in eco-friendly behavior between pupils in urban and rural areas based on their geographic location. Compared to pupils in rural areas, urban students exhibit somewhat more eco-friendly behavior. The disparity can result from the urban pupils' shifting cultural norms and views. Urban dwellers are more conscious of the environment these days since they deal with several environmental issues in their everyday lives, such as pollution and trash disposal. Urban residents are more likely to suffer from several illnesses just as a result of environmental deterioration, and as a result, they are becoming more conscious of environmental problems. metropolitan students are developing an eco-friendly mindset as a result of the many environmental initiatives that have recently been developed by various institutions and organizations in metropolitan regions.

All survey parameters showed strong environmental awareness and pro-environmental attitude among respondents. Only 0.36% of respondents disagreed on self-awareness, while 66.67% strongly agreed and 32.25% agreed. This suggests that most pupils understand their environmental responsibilities. However,

even a little disagreement implies that environmental knowledge is not yet assimilated by everybody, stressing the need for ongoing educational efforts.

Educational Implications

Based on the investigation's results, the following recommendations are made to help students develop environmentally conscious behavior:

The curriculum of schools must include environmental education as a required topic.

1. To increase students' awareness of current environmental challenges, a sufficient number of environmental initiatives must be included into the curriculum.
2. At the school level, a participative strategy may be used to help all pupils develop an environmentally conscious mindset.
3. Every class's curriculum should include the idea of eco-friendly conduct.
4. Students should be made aware of the significance of using green practices or eco-friendly items. Environmental education should be prioritized at the school level using a variety of strategies.
5. Forming eco-clubs and environmental clubs to plan different programs with an environmental focus in schools. It is important to take steps to educate people about eco-friendly activities via the media, including social media, newspapers, and television.
6. Students should be taught to save the environment by using natural resources as efficiently as possible, cutting down on waste, conserving natural resources, and engaging in many other activities.
7. It is necessary to raise awareness among students of the significance of sustainable development.
8. Regular group discussions, debates, lectures, seminars, poster creation, and other activities pertaining to contemporary environmental concerns must to be held at the school level.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the current study have been intriguing, and they augment the body of information that is already available in this area of research. The Higher secondary school pupils show a high degree of environmentally responsible conduct, according to the findings. On the other hand, it is discovered that

the degree to which pupils in Higher secondary school exhibit environmentally friendly behaviors is dependent on their gender. When compared to male pupils, female students exhibit a higher level of environmentally conscious behavior. Additionally, it was shown that there is not a statistically significant difference in eco-friendly behavior between students who attend urban high schools and those who attend rural high schools. The pupils who hail from either area exhibit environmentally friendly behaviors that are almost identical to one another.

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