

An Evaluative Study of Environmental Awareness among College Students in the Baksa District of Assam

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ABSTRACT: As environment can be defined as the surroundings or conditions in which a person, an animal, or plant lives or operates. It plays a pre-eminent role in the life cycle of human being as human life is highly dependent on the environment. Although we are living in a modern world, the natural world is under threat. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat – everything is polluted or has contaminants. The question is arising here now, how far the students of higher education are aware of environment. So, in this paper an attempt has been made to analyze awareness of environment among the college student especially in the Baksa District of Assam.

KEYWORD: Awareness, Environment, College Students.

Introduction

Environment refers to anything that is immediately surrounding an object and exerting a direct influence on it. Environment and the organisms are two organized and complex component of nature. The environment controls the life of the organisms including human beings. Human beings interact with the environment more vigorously than other living beings. The term “environment” refers to all elements of the physical and biological world, as well as the interactions between them. Environment plays a pre-eminent role in the life cycle of human being as human life is highly dependent on the environment. The chief components of the environment are soil, water, air, organisms and solar energy. Thus, the environment may be natural, artificial, social, biological and psychological.

In recent years, environmental awareness has gained increased attention in each and every corner of the world. Basically, environmental awareness means the fragility of our environment and the importance of its protection. The term awareness means exactly what you expect it to: being aware of the natural environment and making choices that benefit--rather than hurt--the earth. Taking seriously the matter, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently instructed its affiliated universities and colleges to introduce a compulsory six-module course on Environmental Studies at all branches of undergraduate degree course. The module, however, has been existent since 2013, and the new directive to implement it, is a part of a routine task by UGC to remind universities or colleges who either have not implemented the instruction or are not aware of the same. Earlier, the decision to create a six-module course on Environmental Studies was taken by the Supreme Court of India in 1991 after a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by an advocate, MC Mehta. According to the court order, UGC had to prescribe the environment as the mandatory subject in colleges. It took UGC over two decades to conceptualize and introduce a course on Environmental Studies all over the country. Anyway, UGC has been trying to create awareness of the environment among students at

340	ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC" under Volume: 4 Issue: 3 in Mar-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr
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undergraduate level. So, it is the need of the hour to study how far the students of higher education are aware of environment. Hence, in this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the awareness about environment the among college students.

Statement of the problem

The present problem is stated as, “An Evaluative Study of Environmental Awareness among College Students in the Baksa District of Assam”. Through this study an attempt has been made to highlight the awareness of the environment among the college students.

Objective

To find out the level of the environmental awareness of college students in the Baksa district of Assam.

Assumptions

The present study assumed that the students of college in the Baksa district are aware of the environment. However, there is need of improvement in the level of environmental awareness among the students.

Need and significance of the study

The threat of global climate change is becoming more evident than ever before, for the impacts of climate change are increasingly being felt in various parts of the world, and it is already or will soon be the major environmental threat. Considering this issue in mind the University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently instructed its affiliated universities and colleges to introduce a compulsory six-module course on Environmental Studies at all branches of undergraduate degree. Therefore, there is an urgent need to study the awareness of the environment among the students at this level. Hope, this paper will help all the concerned relating to the issue.

Delimitation of the study

The present study is limited to the Baksa district of Assam only.

Literature Review

The present study is an attempt to find out the environmental awareness of students at undergraduate level. The investigator has gone through a number of related studies of the problem, e.g.-

Gina et al. (2020) had done a study where they conducted an investigation on the environmental awareness of 200 graduate and postgraduate students of various colleges around Kothamangalam, a town in the Ernakulam District, Kerala, India in order to assess their attitudes and activities related to environmental concerns. The survey had 22 questions that MZUJHSS, Vol. VII, Issue 1, June 2021 161 tested their knowledge, awareness, behavior and attitude of college students on environmental pollution which was statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS 20. The study was designed in such a way that the students were able to analyze, evaluate and draw inference about concerns related to environmental issues. The study finds out that students had high levels of knowledge of issues of environmental pollution and comprehend the harmful effects of human activities towards the environment; and the null hypothesis that indicate no significant difference in awareness of environment pollution among college students with respect to gender was retained.

Penny Singh (2013) conducted a study on environmental Education: Enhancing Learning and Awareness through Assessment. The major findings of the study were-

Awareness of environmental issues among Environmental Education students and the community at large, this study situated assessments within communities of practice around the university. Using action engagement within action research students had to work with insiders from the community to identify, formulate action or intervention plans and find solutions to problem situations in the community. Using

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action engagement within action research in this study definitely enhanced the student's knowledge of their community's problems. Their personal involvement and the cyclical approach adopted, enhanced students' emotional understanding and gave them an insider perspective into the situations and problems that required intervention; and trust was built between students and members of the community as they worked together to accomplish a common goal.

Leela Gnanalet and Ramakrishnan (2010) conducted a study on the effectiveness of multimedia programme teaching environmental education and found that the multimedia programs had helped the students to score more marks in the post-test.

Sarojini (2010) conducted a study on environmental awareness of school students.

The major findings of the study were -

- i. The level of environmental awareness in terms of sub components namely, knowledge, awareness, attitude and participation is average, expect for the sub components skill is low.
- ii. Urban students have high level of environmental awareness than rural students.
- iii. There is no significant difference in environmental awareness of students due to sex and medium.
- iv. There is a significant difference in environmental awareness among students due to differences in type of school, annual income of parents and education of parents.

Sarala (2008) conducted a study on Environmental awareness of higher secondary school students.

The major findings of the study were-

- i. Boys and girls did not differ significantly in environmental awareness.
- ii. Higher secondary student from urban and rural areas differ significantly in environmental awareness. Higher secondary students from rural areas have more environmental awareness than the students from urban areas.
- iii. Higher secondary students residing in own houses and in rental houses did not differ significantly in environmental awareness.

Sushma Pande (2007) conducted a comparative study on environmental awareness among rural and urban children.

The major findings of the study were -

- i. The students were not aware of the importance of environmental issues.
- ii. Students from urban areas were having better knowledge about natural resources, nature's balance, ecosystem and biotic and non-biotic environment.
- iii. The urban students had much better knowledge of the environment and its related problems than their counterparts who faired badly.
- iv. The children from the urban areas are fairly well acquainted with the problems of environment and its depletion.
- v. The rural child is not even conscious of the population explosion and its disadvantages.
- vi. Both urban and rural teachers are aware of the environment and know all about its protection and preservation.

Gnanadevan (2007) conducted a study on environmental awareness of higher secondary students.

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The findings of the study were-

- i. The environmental awareness of higher secondary students is high
- ii. The higher secondary boys and girls differ significantly in their environmental awareness
- iii. The higher secondary students studying in government and private schools differ significantly in their environmental awareness
- iv. The higher secondary students residing rural and urban area differ significantly in their environmental awareness
- v. The higher secondary students whose parents have school education and those who have a college education differ significantly in their environmental awareness
- vi. The higher secondary students whose parents are employed and those who are unemployed differ significantly in their environmental awareness
- vii. The higher secondary students belonging to nuclear and joint family differ significantly in their environmental awareness.

Santosh kumar Rout and Sukirti Agarwal(2006) conducted a study on environmental awareness and environmental attitude of students at high school level

The major findings of the study were-

- i. The students of science stream have more environmental awareness than the students of non-science stream.
- ii. The students of urban background are comparatively better than rural background students.
- iii. The male and female students do not differ significantly in terms of their environmental awareness and environmental attitude.

Snehlatha Verma(2006) conducted a study on awareness and attitude of pre-service teachers and teacher educators . The study found that the below average in their awareness of environmental problem and pre-service teachers and in-service teachers and teacher educator were neutral in their attitude towards environmental problem.

Abraham and Arjunan (2005) conducted a study on Environmental interest of secondary school students in relation to their environmental attitude and a high positive and significant correlation was found to exist between environmental interest and environmental attitude in all the sample groups studied the study likes nine references.

Selvan (2003) conducted a study on environmental awareness among rural and urban teacher trainees and found that the teacher trainees from the urban area had no significant difference between them in terms of their sex, age, qualification, the type of school studied and their marital status. The teacher trainees had a significant difference with respect to their age.

Shahnawaj (1990) conducted a study on environmental awareness and environmental attitude of secondary and higher secondary school teachers and students and revealed that the teachers had more awareness on the environment than the students. Trained and untrained teachers did not differ in environmental awareness.

Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature. A survey has been conducted to draw the relevant data. However, for primary data collection a self prepare questionnaire was developed and used by the investigator to 100 (50

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male and 50 female) ongoing undergraduate students from the different semester of two colleges in the Baksa district of Assam. Two colleges were Gyanpeeth Degree College and Mushalpur College. Percentage technique was applied to analyze the data and to interpret the result. For secondary data collection the sources were journals, books, internet etc.

Analysis And Interpretation of Data

The results of the present study are presented and analyzed in the order of objective of the study.

Objective- To find out the level of environmental awareness of college students in the Baksa District of Assam.

To understand this objective a self prepared questionnaire was used. The collected information is tabulated in the table no 1.

Table 1. Opinion of students about environmental awareness

Description of Query	Opinion of students (% response)							
	“Yes”				“No”			
Knowledge regarding biodiversity	61				39			
Need to protect our environment for our livelihood	65				35			
Need to maintain our ecosystems	60				40			
Environment has the effect on our health	58				42			
Aware about the current situation and future prospects of nature	59				41			
Knowledge of Flora and Fauna	61				39			
Aware about environmental threats	51				49			
Knowledge of environmental pollution	70				30			
Environment has been degrading day by day	55				45			
Reasons of environmental degradation	Opinion of students (% response)							
	Industrialization	Population growth	Rise in standard of living of people	Global warming	Urbanization	Pollution	E-wastage & electronic products	Deforestation
	20	29	3	4	3	36	2	3

The above table indicates that 61% students have knowledge regarding Biodiversity, 65% students have opined that there is need to protect our environment for our livelihood, 60% students have opined that there is need to maintain our ecosystems, 58% students have opined that environment has the effect on our health, 59% students have opined that they are aware of the current situation and future prospects of nature, 61% students have opined that they have knowledge of Flora and Fauna, 51% students have opined that they are aware about environmental threats, 70% students have opined that they have knowledge of environmental pollution, 55% students have opined that environment has been degrading day -by-day. The above table indicates that 36% students have opined that pollution is the main reason of environmental degradation, 29% students have opined that population growth is the main reason of environmental degradation and 20% students have opined that industrialization is the main reason of environmental degradation.

Major findings

After discussion and result analysis following facts are observed-

1. It has been observed that the majority of students have knowledge regarding biodiversity.
2. It has been observed that the majority of students have opined that there is need to protect our environment for our livelihood.
3. It has been observed that the majority of students have opined that there is need to maintain our ecosystems.
4. It has been observed that the majority of students have opined that environment has the effect on our health.
5. It has been observed that the majority of students have opined that they are aware of the current situation and future prospects of nature.
6. It has been observed that the majority of students have knowledge of Flora and Fauna.
7. It has been observed that the majority of students have opined that they are aware of environmental threats.
8. It has been observed that the majority of students have knowledge of environmental pollution.
9. It has been observed that the majority of students have opined that environment has been degrading day-by-day.
10. It has been observed that the majority of students have opined that pollution is the main reason of environmental degradation and it is followed by population growth and industrialization.

Conclusion

Now-a-days knowledge of environment is a must for everyone. In this respect, the Government of India passed several Acts and made policies, programmes, schemes and plans at different times for the development of environmental studies and to create environmental awareness. In India, environmental awareness gained importance since 1970s after the UN sponsored conference on the environment in Stockholm (1972). After then the Indian government took many environment friendly activities. Even, the ministry of environment and forest was established and laws were enacted regarding environment protection in 1986. The University Grants Commission (UGC) the apex body of higher education has also recently instructed its affiliated universities and colleges to introduce a compulsory six-module course on Environmental Studies at all branches of undergraduate degree to give enough knowledge about environmental education. But students at undergraduate level are not 100% aware of the importance of environment and how to conservation of natural resources. Moreover, the need of public awareness is a must and students can also play a crucial role in the creation of public awareness. If we want to manage our planet earth, we have to make all the persons environmentally educated. So, it's time to be serious enough how to protect our environment.

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