



Environmental Awareness and Practice among Undergraduate girl Student of Purulia District, West Bengal, India

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Abstract

This paper mainly focused to understand the environmental awareness related to global and local environmental problem, health hazards, idea about environmental laws, among undergraduate girl students. The survey was conducted on 122 rural and urban undergraduate girl student randomly selected from different stream and class in the district of Purulia, West Bengal, India. The study is questionnaire in nature. The study is also design to know girl students environmental practices with regard to the preference of types of cosmetics uses, plastic bags, its uses and disposal, alternative uses against plastic bags and their participation in various environment related awareness programmes. For successful implementation of environment protection strategy, community especially women's participation is much more needed. For this purpose a holistic understanding of the current status of environmental awareness and practice among undergraduate girl student of Purulia district is evaluated.

Keywords: Environmental awareness, Health hazards, Undergraduate, Student, Community.

Introduction

In recent time human civilization has facing some challenging problems like environmental degradation due to the cost of population exploitation and industrialization. In most cases anthropogenic activities are responsible for environmental degradation. This type of impact is increasing rapidly as the population in the recent times has increased quickly¹. Rapid Increase and emission of green houses gases not only create pollution but also increase in global warming, acid rain, ozone layer depletion, biodiversity degradation and many other environmental problem which in turn increases many health hazard not only human but also in other organism too. In India main environmental threats are encroachment of forest due to human habitation, degradation of rural land due to uncontrolled use of inorganic fertilizer and pesticide, accommodating fast growing population in congested cities. In India although various national and international strategies adopted to mitigate environmental issues like ban on harmful pesticides and plastic bags, solar energy commission, national river action plan, prohibition of smoking in public places, and to promote environment friendly products. Till now many environmental problems remain unsolved so for better management and protection of environment, pupil has to be aware about their surrounding environment and this is only possible through proper education. People's knowledge about environmental awareness increases through continuous learning process. It also develops the necessary expertise and skills to overcome or reduce such hazards and also the valuable observation and

knowledge transmit from one generation to other generation who has to live into the future.

Therefore, formal educational system in the school and college play an important role to raise the environmental educational process for the students. For this reason level of educational awareness and practice among undergraduate rural and urban girl student of Purulia district, West Bengal, India need to be evaluated. In a similar type of study which shows no significant difference in environmental pollution awareness score among undergraduate, post graduate and research scholar students². In a survey among secondary school student it is observed that they did not have a high level of environmental interest. A differential effect of gender and locale was observed in their environmental study. The boys and urban students were found to have more interest compared to girls and rural counterpart's respectively³. Urban school teacher has highly aware than their rural counterpart as well as male teacher has higher awareness than that of its female counterpart⁴. Therefore environmental education has an immense impact for successful implementation of protection of natural resources. For these purpose there is an urgent need for new approach to protect environment. Everybody has to come forward to protect environment before it is too late. For these reason an attempt has been made to assess the environmental awareness and practice of rural and urban undergraduate girl students of a College of Purulia district West Bengal (India). If students are properly educated with appropriate skills then it will help them to prepare better decisions and choices⁵.

Study area: Purulia district is situated in the western most part of West Bengal State (Figure-1), which belongs to the eastern plateau region of India. The geographical location of this district is between 22°42'35" and 23°42'0" North latitude and 85°49'25" and 86°54'37" East longitude. It is surrounded by Bankura, Midnapore and Burdwan district of West Bengal and Bokaro, Dhanbad, Ranchi Hazaribagh, East Singbhum district, West Singbhum of Jharkhand State bound this district. Total geographical area of this district is 6259 sq. kms, out of which the urban areas are 79.37 sq. kms (1.27%) (Municipalities and Non-Municipalities) and rural areas are 6179.63 sq. kms (98.73 %) respectively. Climatically this area is sub humid with hot wet summer and cool dry winter. The monsoon is the main source of precipitation and it has an annual average precipitation of 13393 mm⁶.



Figure-1
Location of Purulia District (Study area) within West Bengal, India

Objectives: The main objective of this work is to find out the effect of courses of study on environmental awareness among undergraduate girl student. It also investigate the environmental practice of undergraduate girl student in relation to their habitat and to find out the role of media for creating of environmental awareness to undergraduate girl student.

Methodology

The main purpose of this work to measure the environmental awareness level and natural practices towards environment among the undergraduate regular rural and urban girl student from a college of Purulia district, West Bengal.

A survey was conducted among rural and urban undergraduate girl student from a girls college of Purulia District, West Bengal, India. This study also helps to understand the various environment practices among girl students. The study also fulfills the above mentioned objectives. The respondent girls are from various economic and social backgrounds. The respondents are also from various streams like Science, Arts and also from three different study years. Data collection is done

through questionnaire, observation, and discussion with the respondents answer. Questionnaires were conducted during the period of August, 2015 to December, 2015. Before answering all the questions are discussed with them to avoid error. We asked questions to the girls in their leisure time who are not stressed and willing to take their time for answering all the questions. It will take between 20 to 30 minutes time in each respondent. The questionnaire was prepared about the different aspects of environment, like local, global environmental problem and environmental practice among them were asked. For knowing environmental practice among girls, they were asked their individual preference of cosmetics used and alternative use of plastic bags, whether they know about various environmental laws and which agency deal with it. They were again asked to know about any official and personal measures for protection of environment.

Results and Discussion

Women form a major part of the world population and have shaped environmental campaigning in profound and important ways. Women in the rural areas live in very close association with the environment in relation to their overall daily activities. Although women can play big roles in the field of environment conservation but their role is often undervalued and ignored⁷. In Mexico city the first world conference on women was held in 1975 where Indian Physicist and environmental campaigner Vandana Shiva raised the issue "Women and Environment " into public consciousness. There she highlighted the "Chipko movement" in the Himalaya region, which became a very well known example of the role of women in environmental conservation. So the role of women in protecting environment is not less important. For understanding environmental awareness level and practice of undergraduate girls, a survey was conducted. Among the respondent 69% are from rural background and 31 % urban background, although in each class the ratio is different (Figure-2).

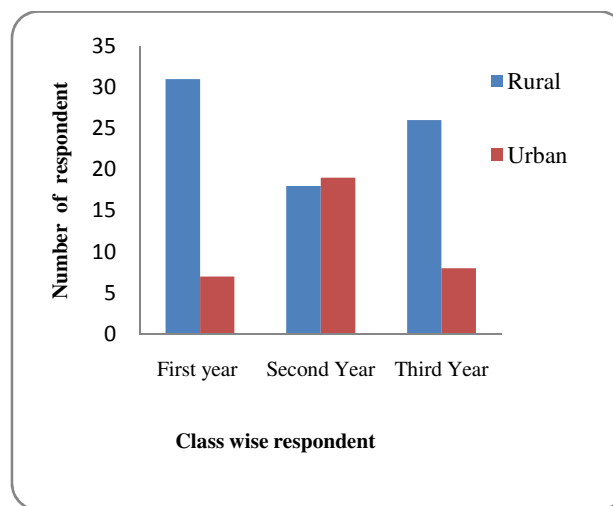


Figure-2
Comparison of rural and urban respondent

Among the first year students the ratio between rural and urban respondent is 5:1 where in third year it is 4:1 but among second year students the difference is negligible. In a similar type of study among college students of Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh, shows no significant difference in environmental awareness between male and female students⁸. In a study report from West Bengal, only a negligible difference of environmental scores observed between boys and girls student⁹. In a comparative study of environmental awareness among secondary school students from Kolkata reveals that girl students were more environmentally aware than boy students¹⁰. In Iran and India (state of Mysore) the students in Iran or India showed no significant difference between girl and boy students as regards their environmental awareness¹¹.

Similar type of study was conducted among teacher trainees which reveals that teacher trainees in Tiruchirapalli district have average level of environmental awareness with regard to back ground variables such as gender, locality and teaching competence¹². A study in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu reveals that arts and science group B.Ed. trainees, male and female trainees, rural and urban area trainees had significant difference in respect of their environmental knowledge¹³. In case of global environmental problem detection, 55% respondent detects global warming as the main burning environmental issue now a days. Few know about ozone layer depletion and its hazards. Only 23% respondent is aware of the problem of ozone layer depletion and its consequences. Very few of the respondent, only 15%, are aware about biodiversity degradation. Awareness about the importance of the use of non renewable resources among the respondent is only 7% (Figure-3). For detection of local environmental hazards different views arises.

Few detect air pollution, few air and noise pollution but most of the students detect deforestation as main local environmental problem. Most of the first year degree course student detected deforestation, second year student detected air pollution and third year student detected deforestation and pollution caused by house hold activities as the main local environmental problem. Most of the rural student detect scarcity of water is the main problem in their area. But if the combined view of the respondents of three years is regarded collectively then it is found that the problem of noise pollution is given less importance by them all (Figure-4). The respondent was asked to name different health problems related to environmental degradation. Both first and second year students detected breathing trouble as the main hazards in their area but to the third year students, unexpected illness caused by environmental pollution is the main health problem. As regarding stomach problem both second year and third year students are unanimous. It is observed that all the respondents fail to relate cancer, skin disease and other illness which may cause due to environmental hazards (Figure-5).

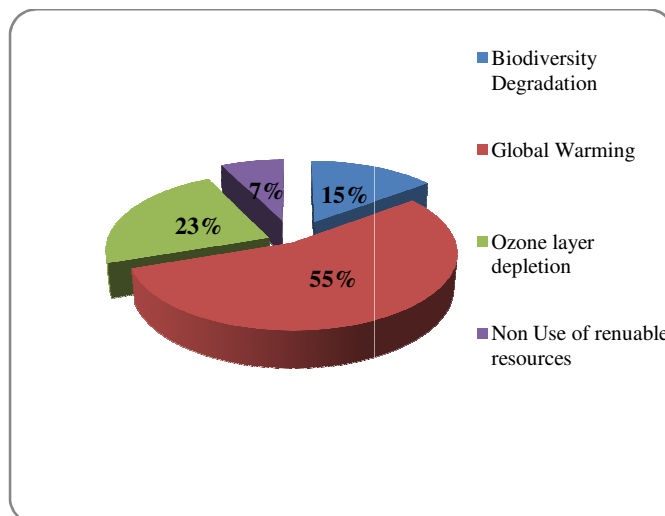


Figure -3
Global environmental problem detected by respondent

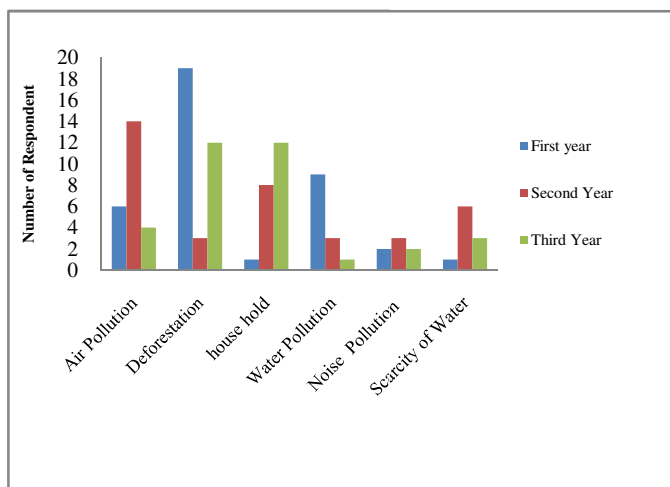


Figure-4
Main local environmental problem detect by Respondents

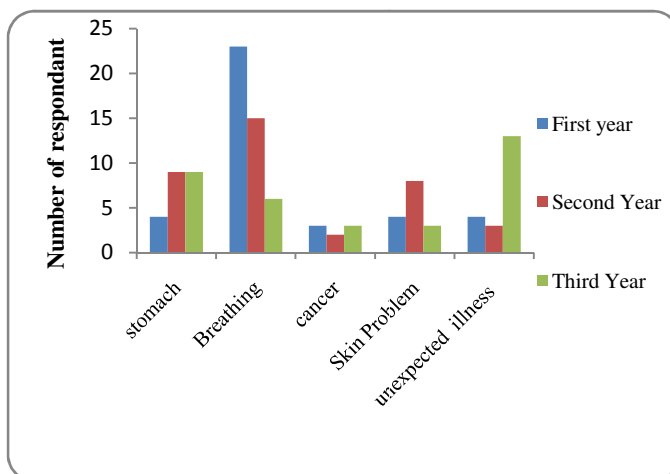


Figure -5
Specific health problem detect by respondents

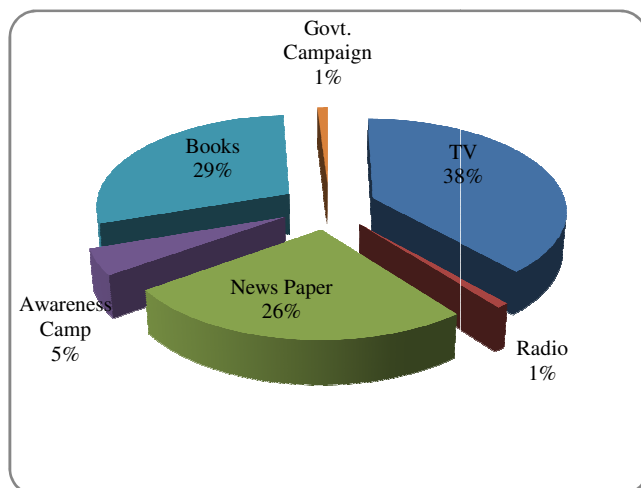


Figure-6

Different medium creating awareness among respondent

Mass media playing very significant role in creating environmental awareness and information related to new agricultural technologies among the rural people. Similarly information channels also play a significant role to bridge the gap between science and society¹⁴. From this study it is observed that media also play an important role in creating awareness among undergraduate girl students. Among girls all have TV in their house but only 26% purchase newspaper daily. When asked about the source of knowledge about the environment and related issues 39% gain information from TV, 29% from books and 26% from newspaper. Environmental awareness camp or governmental campaign have very little impact among these undergraduate girl students (Figure-6). If local people know the environmental laws and its implementing authority very well only then successful conservation strategy may be apply locally¹⁵. Among all respondent 73% believes that environmental laws were not properly introduced in their areas.

Among all respondent most of the students agree that introduction of environmental science in their curriculum helps a lot to understand and detect the environmental hazards. They also express that if environmental education introduced in school curriculum then it would be more helpful for them. From the collected data it is observed that most of the girls prefer to use valuable cosmetics whose brand use herbal preparation rather than synthetic cosmetic. They are influenced by various electronic media which suggest herbal product is superior and harmless than synthetic cosmetic product. For collecting such herbal cosmetic product they spend lots of money also. From different electronic media girls have a conception that use of natural plant product is safe and useful than chemicals. Similarly most of the respondent aware about the harmful effect of that plastic bag as is non biodegradable in nature and it creates lots of hazards in environment but due to lack of alternative way they are bound to use such plastic bags in their daily life. Similarly out of all respondent only 43% respondent participated environmental awareness camp organized by

various agencies but other students avoid such type of programmes.

Conclusion

From the study it has been observed that there is no basic difference of environmental awareness among undergraduate rural and urban girl student. Both of them possess almost equal type of ecological practices. It may due to the fact that both rural and urban students constantly receiving information from mass media so they receives equal amount of information about environment and its hazards from these modern communication system. The relationship among gender and environmental awareness and practice level, practice level is moderate but the level of awareness is much higher among students but there are little differences between gender and practice level among college students¹⁶. Introduction of environmental study in college curriculum helps a lot to create environmental awareness among undergraduate girl student. Although the awareness regarding the need to protect the environment cannot be implemented after a person reaches adulthood. It has to be start at early level through an educational process in school. If not possible then we recommends if more field base environmental study, awareness camp and celebration of special days like World Environmental Day, Wildlife Day, World Biodiversity Day, World Water Day observed in school and college, then girl student, future mother may know and protect their surrounding environment better and their acquired knowledge may transmit easily to their offspring. This hard task can be only achieved if Govt., Non Governmental agencies working with environmental issue, social activist and also modern communication system come forward and create such awareness only then the level of environmental awareness as well as practice level also increases which ultimately helps to create better environment for future generation. Similarly if girls, future mother are properly environmentally educated then the child of near future as well as society becomes environmentally educated.

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