



# EVALUATING THE STATE OF CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE DARJEELING REGION OF WEST BENGAL

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## ABSTRACT

Knowing the facts and concepts about the environment and being aware of the serious repercussions of current environmental issues such as pollution, population boom, deforestation, ecological disturbance, energy crises, etc. constitutes environmental awareness. Self-awareness of one's own environmental philosophy (Bocher, 2005), as noted by Schmidt, is an essential part of this process, as is an understanding of how current challenges harming nature globally and locally may be applied locally (Schmidt, 2007). According to Shobeiri (2001), citing the work of Shukla, environmental experts, campaigners, and educators have all stressed the need of instilling a strong sense of environmental awareness and knowledge in students from an early age. The main goal of this research is to examine the gender and geographical differences in Environmental Awareness among Darjeeling's college students and to determine how well-informed college students are about environmental issues. Due to its status as one of India's most visited tourist destinations, Darjeeling is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. The survey data was compiled using a random sampling of field investigation data. In order to perform the study, a random sample of 120 students from the participating universities was selected. Because of this, only two schools in the district were selected, reducing the sample

size to 120 pupils. Descriptive survey data was analysed with the use of statistical tools like the t-ratio for this study.

**Keywords:**

Environment, Environmental Issues, Ecological Disturbances, Awareness, Darjeeling, Flora and Fauna, Descriptive survey

**1.0 Introduction**

At all levels of education, including college, environmental education has been recognised as an effective strategy for raising awareness of environmental concerns and helping students identify complex environmental problems (Fernandez - Manzanal, Rodriguez-Barreiro, & Carrasquer, 2007; Tuncer, 2009). Therefore, environmental education is essential in order to produce environmentally literate graduates who will take an active part in conserving the environment via the adoption of ecologically favourable lifestyle choices (UNESCO, 1980; Roth, 1992). Deterioration of the natural environment is now recognised as a major international issue. Academics, thinkers, scientists, policymakers, and governments all around the world are interested in it. It is clear that environmental issues are high on the international community's agenda due to events such as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Global Forum in 1992, and also the activities organised by the international NGO forum (Maikuri and Uniyal, 2008). The goal of environmental education has been to create individuals “who are informed concerning the environment, and its related difficulties, aware of how to address these problems, and motivated to act towards the solution” (Stapp, 1969, p.30) over the past fifty years.

In order for life to be conceivable, it must be on our planet, but only if favourable and pleasant climatic conditions are present. No matter how hard people try to strike a better balance, it never seems to hold for very long, and this causes untold hardships for all of humanity. Thus, such unfavourable effects ought to be either completely eradicated or brought under maximum control as soon as possible. Large-scale reforestation projects, garbage recycling, and new environmental regulations are all part of a comprehensive plan to save our planet. Therefore, it is important to immediately launch an environmental education campaign in order to halt the growing degradation and damage to people's healthy living circumstances. The purpose of

environmental education is to create a global citizenry that cares about the environment and the issues it faces, and that is equipped with the information and motivation to contribute to the collective and individual efforts necessary to address these challenges and prevent further environmental degradation. More emphasis was placed on environmental education in the National Policy of Education in 1986, the Programme of Action in 1992, and the Parliament Bill in 1995. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 mandates that students be introduced to environmental science in early elementary school, with a focus on the need of protecting the natural environment and the steps that may be taken immediately to reverse the damage that has been done. NCFTE (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education), 2009 has made a concerted effort to ensure that environmental education is an integral element of the formal education of all teachers and students. A major focus is on making sure the content is relevant to children's lives and the things they encounter on a daily basis.

Deterioration of the natural environment has recently become a major global problem. Many environmental problems, which might eventually become dangerous to people and other forms of life, have their roots in human activity (Gore, 1993). Because of worldwide bad actions or a lack of environmental regulation in countries, these environmental problems may worsen significantly.

But those whose outlook on the environment is negative will always be a source of environmental concerns (Uzun and Saglam, 2006). Those with environmental knowledge, understanding, and empathy may help find answers to these issues.

## 2.0 Review of Related Literature

The five-factor attitude and behaviour measure has been studied by Tarrant and Cordell (1997). To examine the impact of the following six respondent factors on the inter correlation of five attitude and behaviour scales: gender, location, education, income, age, and political leaning. The Environmental Concern, New Environmental Paradigm, and Awareness of Consequences scores showed the strongest correlation with actual behaviour, while there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between all five scales. Eilam and Trop (2012) conducted research to investigate whether or not the acquisition of environmentally positive behaviours is a more important goal of education than the acquisition of environmentally positive attitudes, which is often viewed as secondary to the more important goal of fostering a well-rounded person. In this context, a survey study was conducted, with the resulting hypotheses being: (1) among adults, the approach

necessary for manipulating attitudes is distinct from those essential for manipulating behaviours; (2) among children, the mechanism aimed at achieving impact is distinct from that among adults; and (3) a conservative scholastic approach, such as behaviour modification, can influence behaviour more easily than it can effect attitudes.

An undergraduate research was undertaken by (Cortes, Dias, Fernandes, and Pamplona, 2016) to see if increased access to environmental information influences students' green habits. Concern about the environment is the progenitor of environmental views. The findings of the survey study revealed that respondents are worried about the future impacts their decision-making about economic development regulation, which is reinforced by their eco-centric stance. However, the goal of preventing green depletion is not met. To investigate students' perspectives on environmental issues before and after receiving environmental education, Dutt and Kumari (2016) performed a research. It was discovered that students' attitudes might be influenced through environmental education.

Hausebeck, Milbrath, and Enright (1992) conducted a study on "Environmental Knowledge, Awareness and Concern among 11th Grade students: New York State." The study's goal was to rate the environmental knowledge, awareness, and concern of the 32,000 students enrolled in the 30 participating secondary schools. The research was conducted via a survey. Students showed low levels of environmental knowledge, but high levels of environmental awareness and care were among the study's most important findings. Saxena and Srivastava (2012) carried out a study on "Environmental Awareness of Senior Secondary Students In Relation To Their Eco-Friendly Behaviour." The major objective of the study was to assess pupils' level of environmental awareness and propensity to engage in environmentally responsible practises. A descriptive survey approach was employed for the research. A modest relationship between environmental awareness and eco-friendliness was found in this analysis. Therefore, a rise in environmental awareness tends to be followed by an increase in eco-conscious actions. Cynk (2017) carried out a research on "The State of the Environmental Awareness of Students from Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine." He examined students' levels of environmental awareness, values, and commitment across three European countries: Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The researcher employed a descriptive survey approach. It was shown in this research that the greatest concentrations of students whom it has been reported strong degree of environmental awareness have their origins in the locality in the Slovak Republic.

The awareness of environmental issues among secondary school teachers was investigated by Pradhan (2001). The results indicated that secondary school educators lacked a fundamental understanding of environmental issues. It also revealed wide gaps in ecological literacy between educators in the social sciences, the humanities, and the natural sciences. Science educators have a far higher environmental consciousness than their social science counterparts. The environment level of scientific professors was likewise much greater than that of language teachers. But there was no discernible difference in environmental consciousness between the social science and language educators. Educators in urban settings were shown to be more environmentally conscious than their counterparts in rural schools. There was no discernible difference in environmental consciousness between male and female educators. According to the findings of Bohl (1977), whose study examined the link between academic success and environmental stewardship, the correlation between the two was, on average, negative but often positively skewed.

### 3.0 Objectives of the Study

Climate change, biodiversity loss, industrial pollution, and improper waste disposal are only few of the environmental problems caused by globalisation. This research aims to inspire a new generation of environmentally aware individuals who will play an active role in raising public consciousness about environmental issues. What we hope to accomplish with this research is as follows.

- To examine the gender and geographical differences in Environmental Awareness among Darjeeling's college students.
- The goal of this research is to determine how well-informed college students are about environmental issues.

### 4.0 Hypothesis of the Study

- HO<sup>1</sup>: There is no significant difference between male and female students with regard to environmental awareness.
- HO<sup>2</sup>: There is no significant difference between male and female students with regard to environmental awareness.

## 5.0 Sample of the Study

The outcomes of this study were determined using a random sampling method. The sample for this research consisted of college students from the Darjeeling area. More specifically, two institutions in the Darjeeling area of West Bengal were sampled, yielding a total of 120 students.

Table: 1

Details of the Sample Distribution:

Variable	Group	Sample no.	Total
Gender	Male	60	120
	Female	60	
Locale	Rural	60	
	Urban	60	

The sample distribution for this study is represented in Table no. 1, which includes a total of 120 students: 60 male and 60 female students, and from those 120 students, a random selection of 60 students from rural regions and 60 students from urban areas were used for this research.

## 6.0 Method of the Study

This study's overarching objective was to measure environmental awareness among college students. Dr. (Mrs.) Haseen Taj's Environmental Awareness Scale (EAS) field survey of college students is the primary data source and the tool used for this investigation. Darjeeling, being one of India's most well-known hill stations, is home to a wealth of cultural artefacts and a diverse array of plant and animal life. Information for the survey was drawn at random in the field investigation. To conduct the research, 120 students from the chosen colleges were chosen as a representative sample. Only 2 colleges in the district were chosen for this due to the time constraints and feasibility of the researchers, and 120 students total were included in the research. The information for this study was analysed using a descriptive survey and statistical methods like the t-ratio.

## 7.0 Results and Discussion

In order to determine whether or not there were statistically significant differences between the various aspects of this study's variables, a t-test was carried out. A test of the null hypothesis, which was presented earlier on in this investigation, was performed in order to determine whether the null hypothesis will be confirmed or refuted based on the results of two variables that are present in this investigation, namely Gender and Locale. The results of the test indicated that the null hypothesis will either be confirmed or refuted.

**Table no.2**

Sl.no	Variables	Group	Mean	SD	t-Test	Level of significance
1.	Gender	Male	13.90	1.41	0.657	Non-significant
		Female	13.81	1.80		
2.	Locale	Rural	13.13	1.14	3.89	0.001 Significant
		Urban	12.52	0.08		

- It was discovered that the null hypothesis no. 1, which was stated as “There is no significant difference between male and female students in environmental awareness,” was validated by the findings shown in the aforementioned Table no.2. According to the degree of significance that was applied, it was discovered that the male mean score was 13.90, the standard deviation was 1.41, the t-test was 0.657, and consequently it was found that the female mean score was 13.81, the standard deviation was 1.80, and the t-test was 0.657. This was determined by using the degree of significance that was considered appropriate. Hence, the result was deemed to be non-significant. As a result, the hypothesis that there is no substantial difference between male and female college students with regard to gender variation is accepted. This is because the findings indicate that there is no such difference.
- It was discovered that the null hypothesis no. 2, which was stated as “There is no significant difference between Rural and Urban students in environmental awareness,” was not validated by the findings shown in the aforementioned Table no.2. According to the degree of significance that was applied, it

was discovered that the rural mean score was 13.13, the standard deviation was 1.14, the t-test was 3.89, and consequently it was found that the urban students' mean score was 12.52, the standard deviation was 0.08, and the t-test was 3.89. This was determined by using the degree of significance that was considered appropriate. Hence, result was deemed to be significant at 0.001 level of significance. As a result, the hypothesis that there is no substantial difference between male and female college students with regard to gender variation is accepted. This is because the findings indicate that there is no such difference.

### 7.1 Major Findings of the Study

It was determined that the null hypothesis no. 1, which said, "There is no significant difference between male and female students' environmental awareness," was supported by the data shown in Table no.2. According to the applicable level of significance, it was determined that the mean score for males was 13.90, the standard deviation was 1.41, and the t-test was 0.657, and that the mean score for females was 13.81, the standard deviation was 1.80, and the t-test was 0.657. This was calculated using the level of importance that was deemed suitable. Consequently, the outcome was judged insignificant. Therefore, the premise that there are no significant gender differences between male and female college students is accepted. This is due to the fact that the results reveal there is no such difference.

It was determined that the second null hypothesis, which stated, "There is no substantial difference between rural and urban pupils in environmental awareness," was not supported by the data shown in Table no.2. The rural students' mean score was 13.13, the standard deviation was 1.14, and the t-test was 3.89; thereafter, the urban students' mean score was 12.52, the standard deviation was 0.08, and the t-test was 3.89. This was calculated using the level of importance that was deemed suitable. Consequently, the result was considered significant at the 0.001 level of significance. Therefore, the premise that there are no significant gender differences between male and female college students is accepted. This is due to the fact that the results reveal there is no such difference.



## Conclusion

The purpose of environmental education is to create a global citizenry that cares about the environment. Large-scale reforestation projects, garbage recycling, and new environmental regulations are all part of a comprehensive plan to save our planet. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 mandates that students be introduced to environmental science in early elementary school. Deterioration of the natural environment is now recognised as a major international issue. Academics, thinkers, scientists, policymakers, and governments all around the world are interested in it. Therefore, environmental education is essential in order to produce environmentally literate graduates who will take an active part in conserving the environment via the adoption of ecologically favourable lifestyle choice.

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