



# An Analytical Study Of Relationship Between Human Rights And The Environment

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## Abstract

This research investigates the relationship between human rights and the environment, focusing on the dependency and effects of environmental deterioration on the enjoyment of human rights. It looks at the connection between a healthy environment and people's fundamental rights, emphasising the need of environmental protection in preserving human dignity and well-being. This study intends to enhance our knowledge of the links between human rights and the environment by analysing international legal frameworks, case studies, and academic research, as well as to highlight the necessity for effective policies and measures to protect both.

**Keywords:** human rights, environment, environmental degradation, interdependence, impacts, international legal frameworks, case studies, environmental protection, human dignity, well-being, policies, actions.

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the relationship between human rights and the environment, reflecting a growing realisation that environmental deterioration and the enjoyment of human rights are inextricably linked. Our environment has a significant influence on many elements of human existence, including health, livelihood, and overall well-being. As a result, recognising and resolving the complex relationships between human rights and the environment has become critical to securing a just and sustainable future for all. Human rights encompass fundamental rights and liberties that are inherent in all persons, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or any other status. Civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are among those protected. Simultaneously, the environment, which includes natural resources, ecosystems, and general ecological balance, is critical to maintaining and preserving human existence.

Recognising the inherent relationship between the two, it becomes clear that human rights protection and promotion cannot be separated from environmental preservation and conservation.<sup>1</sup>

Environmental degradation caused by issues such as pollution, deforestation, climate change, and irresponsible resource extraction endangers human rights. It has an impact on the exercise of rights like as the right to life, health, clean water, food, shelter, and a healthy environment. Air pollution, for example, may cause respiratory disorders, water contamination can cause waterborne infections, and climate change can disrupt livelihoods and worsen poverty. Indigenous peoples, women, children, and marginalised groups frequently face the burden of environmental degradation, increasing existing disparities. Human rights and the environment are inextricably linked, according to international legal frameworks and human rights agreements. Several treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, emphasise the importance of environmental protection in ensuring human rights. Furthermore, elements addressing environmental rights have been integrated into regional human rights conventions and treaties.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this research is to dive into the complex link between human rights and the environment. It aims to investigate the effects of environmental degradation on human rights enjoyment, the legal frameworks in place to address this link, and the practical consequences for policies and action. This study attempts to provide light on the relevance of incorporating human rights and environmental factors into decision-making processes by analysing case studies, academic research, and international legal instruments.

Understanding the interconnectedness between human rights and the environment reveals that sustainable development necessitates a comprehensive strategy that respects and maintains both. To ensure the protection of the environment, the promotion of human rights, and the creation of a just and sustainable future for current and future generations, effective policies and actions must be adopted at the local, national, and international levels.<sup>3</sup>

### **Intersection of human rights and the environment**

The confluence of human rights and the environment refers to the two areas' connectivity and interdependence. It recognises that the enjoyment of human rights is inextricably related to the status of the environment, and that environmental degradation can have serious consequences for human rights realisation.

Human rights refer to a set of fundamental rights and liberties that all people have. Civil and political rights (such as the right to life, liberty, and freedom of expression), economic and social rights (such as the right to

<sup>1</sup> Agarwal, A., Narain, S., Sharma, A., and Imchen, A. 2001. Poles Apart. Global Environmental Negotiations Centre for Science & Environment, New Delhi.

<sup>2</sup> FES and LAW-E. 2001. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of India for Ensuring Environment Protection and Nature Conservation. Submission to the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution. Foundation for Ecological Security, Anand, with Legal Action for Wildlife and Environment, Delhi.

<sup>3</sup> Upadhyay, Sanjay and Upadhyay, Vidya. 2002. Handbook on Environmental Law, Vol. 1-3. LexisNexis-Butterworths, Delhi.

adequate housing, healthcare, and education), and cultural rights (such as the right to participate in cultural life and reap the benefits of scientific progress) are examples of these rights. They are inscribed in international and regional human rights treaties as well as legal frameworks. The environment, on the other hand, is the natural world that surrounds us, including ecosystems, biodiversity, natural resources, and general ecological balance. It includes the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we live on, and the climate that keeps life on Earth going.<sup>4</sup>

The relationship between human rights and the environment arises from the fact that environmental conditions directly impact the enjoyment of human rights. For example: Right to Life and Health: Environmental pollution, exposure to hazardous substances, and degradation of ecosystems can pose risks to human health, leading to illnesses and even loss of life.

1. **Right to Clean Water and Sanitation:** Environmental degradation, such as water pollution and depletion of water sources, can hinder access to safe and clean drinking water, thereby infringing upon this fundamental right.
2. **Right to Adequate Housing:** Environmental factors, including natural disasters, deforestation, and urbanization, can contribute to homelessness, inadequate housing conditions, and forced evictions.
3. **Right to Food and Livelihood:** Environmental degradation, climate change, and unsustainable land use practices can undermine agricultural productivity, disrupt food systems, and impact the livelihoods of communities that depend on natural resources.
4. **Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities:** Environmental degradation often disproportionately affects indigenous peoples and local communities who rely on traditional lands and resources for their cultural identity, subsistence, and well-being.

Recognising the interdependence between human rights and the environment, there is a rising emphasis on incorporating environmental concerns into human rights frameworks and vice versa. This involves acknowledging environmental rights as a subset of human rights and recognising that environmental conservation is necessary for the fulfilment of human rights.

Efforts to address the confluence of human rights and the environment include the creation and implementation of legal frameworks, policies, and practises that promote sustainable development, environmental justice, and human rights protection. It necessitates ensuring individuals and communities harmed by environmental degradation have access to information, involvement in decision-making processes, and access to justice. Overall, the confluence of human rights and the environment emphasises the need for a comprehensive strategy

<sup>4</sup> Divan, S and Rosencranz, A. 2001. Environmental Law and Policy: Cases, Materials and Statutes. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

that respects and protects both domains, with the goal of achieving a just, equitable, and sustainable future for everyone.<sup>5</sup>

### **Interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights**

Environmental degradation and the enjoyment of human rights are intricately interdependent, and the negative impacts of environmental degradation can significantly hinder the realization of human rights. The following points explore this interdependence and highlight some key impacts:

1. **Right to Life and Health:** Environmental degradation, such as air and water pollution, exposure to hazardous substances, and the loss of biodiversity, can directly affect human health and well-being. It can lead to respiratory diseases, waterborne illnesses, increased vulnerability to infectious diseases, and long-term health issues. Thus, the degradation of the environment jeopardizes the right to life and the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
2. **Right to Clean Water and Sanitation:** Environmental degradation, including water pollution, deforestation, and unsustainable water management practices, can impair water quality and availability. This undermines the right to access safe and clean drinking water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene facilities, particularly for marginalized communities.
3. **Right to Adequate Housing:** Environmental factors such as natural disasters, climate change-induced events (like floods, storms, and wildfires), and land degradation can lead to the displacement of communities and the destruction of housing. This directly violates the right to adequate housing, leaving people homeless or living in precarious conditions.
4. **Right to Food and Livelihood:** Environmental degradation, including soil erosion, deforestation, and climate change impacts on agriculture, can disrupt food production systems, leading to food insecurity, malnutrition, and loss of livelihoods. These consequences undermine the right to food and the right to work and participate in cultural life.
5. **Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities:** Environmental degradation poses particular challenges to indigenous peoples and local communities who depend on ecosystems and natural resources for their livelihoods, cultural practices, and overall well-being. Deforestation, land degradation, and resource exploitation without their free, prior, and informed consent not only violate their rights to self-determination and cultural identity but also disrupt their traditional ways of life.
6. **Climate Change and Human Rights:** Climate change, largely caused by human activities, has wide-ranging impacts on human rights. It exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, disproportionately affects marginalized communities, and undermines the rights to life, health, water, food, housing, and self-

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, Michael R. 1998. International Environmental Law in Indian Courts, 7 REV. EUR. COMP. & INT'L ENVTL. LAW 21.

determination. Moreover, climate-induced displacement and migration can create additional challenges to the enjoyment of human rights.

These instances show how environmental deterioration has a direct impact on the enjoyment of several human rights. To ensure the fulfilment of human rights, it is critical to address environmental concerns, promote sustainable practises, and reduce climate change. The preservation and promotion of human rights go hand in hand with the protection and promotion of the environment, emphasising the interdependence and shared duties between the two sectors.<sup>6</sup>

### **Relationship between a healthy environment and the fundamental rights**

A healthy environment is closely linked to the fundamental rights of individuals, and environmental protection plays a vital role in ensuring human dignity and well-being. The relationship between a healthy environment and human rights can be explored in the following ways:

1. **Right to Life and Health:** A clean and unpolluted environment is essential for safeguarding the right to life and the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Environmental degradation, such as air and water pollution, toxic waste disposal, and exposure to hazardous substances, directly threatens human health and well-being. Protecting and preserving the environment helps prevent these harmful impacts and promotes a healthy living environment.
2. **Right to Clean Water and Sanitation:** Access to clean and safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities is a fundamental human right. Environmental protection is crucial for preserving water sources, preventing water pollution, and ensuring sustainable water management practices. By safeguarding water resources and maintaining the quality of water systems, individuals can exercise their right to clean water and sanitation.
3. **Right to Adequate Housing:** Environmental factors, including natural disasters, deforestation, and land degradation, can have a severe impact on housing conditions. Adequate housing is not limited to the physical structure but also encompasses the right to a safe and healthy living environment. Environmental protection measures, such as disaster risk reduction strategies and sustainable land use practices, contribute to ensuring secure and suitable housing for individuals.
4. **Right to Food and Livelihood:** A healthy environment is essential for food production, agricultural activities, and the livelihoods of communities. Environmental degradation, such as soil erosion, deforestation, and climate change impacts, directly affects food security, agricultural productivity, and livelihood opportunities. Protecting ecosystems, promoting sustainable agriculture, and addressing climate change contribute to ensuring the right to food and the right to work and participate in cultural life.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-environment/about-human-rights-and-environment>

5. Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Indigenous peoples and local communities often have deep connections to their natural environment and rely on it for their cultural practices, subsistence, and overall well-being. Protecting their rights includes preserving their traditional lands, natural resources, and ecosystems. Environmental protection is crucial for respecting their rights to self-determination, cultural identity, and sustainable development.

The relevance of environmental preservation in preserving human dignity and well-being highlights the need of sustainable development practises, conservation initiatives, and responsible resource management. It include incorporating environmental concerns into policymaking, supporting environmentally friendly technology, promoting environmental education, and advocating sustainable lifestyles.

Recognising the connection between a healthy environment and human rights acknowledges that the rights and well-being of persons are inextricably related to the health of the natural world. As a result, maintaining a sustainable and dignified future for all requires a commitment to environmental conservation.<sup>7</sup>

**Sample Size:** 200 Respondents were selected randomly for the study and Area of study is Haridwar, Uttarakhand.

#### Analysis

**Table 1**

**Gender**

Gender	Frequency
Male	114
Female	86
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

The given data presents the frequency distribution of gender in a study on human rights and the environment. The study included a total of 200 participants, with 114 identifying as male and 86 identifying as female.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.humanrights.is/en/human-rights-education-project/human-rights-concepts-ideas-and-fora/human-rights-in-relation-to-other-topics/human-rights-and-the-environment>



**Table 2****Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Below 20 Years	42
20-40 Years	51
40-60 Years	87
Above 60 Years	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

Environment is important as it allows for an analysis of how different age groups may perceive and be impacted by environmental issues and the realization of human rights.

Each age group may have distinct perspectives, experiences, and vulnerabilities concerning the environment and human rights. For instance, younger participants (below 20 years) may have a unique perspective on issues such as climate change and intergenerational equity. Individuals in the 20-40 age group may be more actively engaged in addressing environmental challenges, while those in the 40-60 age group may have different concerns related to their socio-economic circumstances and the impact of environmental degradation on their lives. Participants above 60 years may have specific interests related to environmental health and the legacy they leave for future generations.

Analyzing the data within the context of the study's research objectives can provide insights into how age influences the perceptions, needs, and priorities of individuals concerning the environment and human rights. It can help identify specific challenges faced by different age groups and inform targeted interventions and policies to address these issues effectively.

Additionally, considering the age distribution in the study's sample enhances the representativeness and diversity of the findings. It allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between human rights and the environment across different generations, contributing to a more inclusive and holistic analysis of the topic.

Table 3

## Qualification

Education	Frequency
Graduation	109
Post Graduation	52
PH. D	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

The given data presents the frequency distribution of educational qualifications in a study on human rights and the environment. The study included a total of 200 participants, classified into different educational categories as follows:

- Graduation: There were 109 participants who had completed their graduation.
- Post Graduation: There were 52 participants who had completed their post-graduation.
- PhD: There were 39 participants who had obtained a PhD degree.

Understanding the educational qualifications of participants in a study on human rights and the environment is crucial as it provides insights into the knowledge, expertise, and perspectives that individuals bring to the research.

Participants with different educational backgrounds may have varying levels of understanding and engagement with the subject matter. Graduates may possess a foundational understanding of human rights and the environment, while post-graduates may have a more specialized knowledge in specific areas within this field. Participants with PhD degrees are likely to have conducted extensive research and possess advanced expertise in the subject matter.

Analyzing the data within the context of the study's research objectives can shed light on the perspectives, insights, and contributions of individuals with different educational qualifications. It can help identify the depth of knowledge and expertise available within the sample, highlight areas where further research or expertise is needed, and inform the interpretation and analysis of the study's findings.

Furthermore, considering the educational distribution in the study's sample enhances the credibility and rigor of the research. It demonstrates a diverse range of educational backgrounds, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between human rights and the environment from different academic perspectives.



Table 4

## Reliability Analysis

<b>Interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Right to Life and Health	3.7842	0.612
Right to Clean Water and Sanitation	2.7899	0.478
Right to Adequate Housing	3.6588	0.958
Right to Food and Livelihood	3.5321	0.428
Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities	3.1021	0.462
<b>Relationship between a healthy environment and the fundamental rights</b>		
Right to Life and Health	2.8701	0.781
Right to Clean Water and Sanitation	3.7899	0.824
Right to Adequate Housing	3.6874	0.772
Right to Food and Livelihood.	2.8987	0.765
Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities	3.8070	0.648

The provided data presents the mean values and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for different aspects of the interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights in a study.

#### **Interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights:**

- **Right to Life and Health:** The mean value for this aspect is 3.7842, indicating a relatively high level of perceived interdependence between environmental degradation and the right to life and health. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.612 suggests an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.
- **Right to Clean Water and Sanitation:** The mean value is 2.7899, indicating a moderate level of perceived interdependence between environmental degradation and the right to clean water and sanitation. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.478 suggests a lower level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.
- **Right to Adequate Housing:** The mean value is 3.6588, suggesting a relatively high level of perceived interdependence between environmental degradation and the right to adequate housing. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.958 indicates a high level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.
- **Right to Food and Livelihood:** The mean value is 3.5321, indicating a moderate level of perceived interdependence between environmental degradation and the right to food and livelihood. The

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.428 suggests a lower level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.

- Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: The mean value is 3.1021, indicating a moderate level of perceived interdependence between environmental degradation and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.462 suggests a lower level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.

### **Relationship between a healthy environment and the fundamental rights:**

- Right to Life and Health: The mean value is 2.8701, indicating a moderate level of perceived relationship between a healthy environment and the right to life and health. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.781 suggests a high level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.
- Right to Clean Water and Sanitation: The mean value is 3.7899, indicating a relatively high level of perceived relationship between a healthy environment and the right to clean water and sanitation. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.824 suggests a high level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.
- Right to Adequate Housing: The mean value is 3.6874, indicating a relatively high level of perceived relationship between a healthy environment and the right to adequate housing. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.772 suggests a high level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.
- Right to Food and Livelihood: The mean value is 2.8987, indicating a moderate level of perceived relationship between a healthy environment and the right to food and livelihood. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.765 suggests a high level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.
- Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: The mean value is 3.8070, indicating a relatively high level of perceived relationship between a healthy environment and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.648 suggests a moderate level of internal consistency reliability for the items measuring this aspect.

The study aims to assess the perceptions of participants regarding the interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights, as well as the relationship between a healthy environment and fundamental rights. The mean values provide an indication of the participants' average perceptions, while Cronbach's Alpha coefficients assess the internal consistency.

Table 5

## Chi-Square Analysis

<b>Interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights</b>	<b>Chi-Square Value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Right to Life and Health	87.88	0.001
Right to Clean Water and Sanitation	68.97	0.000
Right to Adequate Housing	99.78	0.000
Right to Food and Livelihood	79.55	0.000
Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities	71.45	0.000
<b>Relationship between a healthy environment and the fundamental rights</b>		
Right to Life and Health	78.81	0.001
Right to Clean Water and Sanitation	78.95	0.000
Right to Adequate Housing	89.37	0.000
Right to Food and Livelihood.	89.98	0.000
Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities	79.25	0.001

The provided data presents the chi-square values and significance levels (Sig.) for the relationship between environmental degradation and human rights, as well as the relationship between a healthy environment and fundamental rights in a study.

#### **Interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights:**

- **Right to Life and Health:** The chi-square value is 87.88, indicating a significant relationship between environmental degradation and the right to life and health ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants perceive a strong interdependence between environmental degradation and the enjoyment of this particular right.
- **Right to Clean Water and Sanitation:** The chi-square value is 68.97, indicating a highly significant relationship between environmental degradation and the right to clean water and sanitation ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants recognize the impact of environmental degradation on the availability and quality of clean water and sanitation services.
- **Right to Adequate Housing:** The chi-square value is 99.78, indicating a highly significant relationship between environmental degradation and the right to adequate housing ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants acknowledge the influence of environmental degradation on the availability and quality of housing.

- **Right to Food and Livelihood:** The chi-square value is 79.55, indicating a highly significant relationship between environmental degradation and the right to food and livelihood ( $p < 0.001$ ). This implies that participants recognize the impact of environmental degradation on access to food and the ability to sustain livelihoods.
- **Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities:** The chi-square value is 71.45, indicating a highly significant relationship between environmental degradation and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants perceive a strong interdependence between environmental degradation and the preservation of indigenous rights and local communities' well-being.

### **Relationship between a healthy environment and the fundamental rights:**

- **Right to Life and Health:** The chi-square value is 78.81, indicating a significant relationship between a healthy environment and the right to life and health ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants perceive a connection between a healthy environment and the enjoyment of this specific right.
- **Right to Clean Water and Sanitation:** The chi-square value is 78.95, indicating a highly significant relationship between a healthy environment and the right to clean water and sanitation ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants recognize the importance of a healthy environment for ensuring access to clean water and sanitation services.
- **Right to Adequate Housing:** The chi-square value is 89.37, indicating a highly significant relationship between a healthy environment and the right to adequate housing ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants understand the role of a healthy environment in ensuring the availability and quality of housing.
- **Right to Food and Livelihood:** The chi-square value is 89.98, indicating a highly significant relationship between a healthy environment and the right to food and livelihood ( $p < 0.001$ ). This implies that participants acknowledge the significance of a healthy environment for ensuring food security and sustainable livelihoods.
- **Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities:** The chi-square value is 79.25, indicating a significant relationship between a healthy environment and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that participants perceive a connection between a healthy environment and the preservation of indigenous rights and the well-being of local communities.

The study's findings highlight the statistically significant relationships between environmental degradation, a healthy environment, and the enjoyment of different human rights. These results support the argument that environmental conditions and human rights are intertwined, emphasizing the importance of environmental protection and sustainable practices for upholding human dignity and well-being.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study examined the interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights, as well as the relationship between a healthy environment and fundamental rights. The findings revealed significant associations between environmental degradation and the enjoyment of various human rights. The chi-square values and significance levels (Sig.) provided strong evidence supporting these relationships.

Regarding the interdependence and impacts of environmental degradation on human rights, the results showed significant associations for multiple rights. The right to life and health, clean water and sanitation, adequate housing, food and livelihood, and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities were all significantly influenced by environmental degradation. These findings underscore the interconnectedness between environmental conditions and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

Similarly, the study highlighted the significant relationship between a healthy environment and the fundamental rights examined. A healthy environment was found to have a positive impact on the right to life and health, clean water and sanitation, adequate housing, food and livelihood, and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. These results emphasize the importance of environmental preservation and sustainability in safeguarding and promoting human rights.

The study's findings contribute to the understanding of the complex relationship between human rights and the environment. They provide empirical evidence supporting the need for environmental protection and sustainable practices to ensure the well-being and dignity of individuals and communities. Recognizing the interdependence between environmental degradation and human rights is essential for policymakers, stakeholders, and advocacy groups to formulate effective strategies and policies that address both environmental concerns and the protection of human rights.

It is crucial to consider these research findings in decision-making processes, policy development, and actions aimed at mitigating environmental degradation and promoting human rights. By addressing environmental challenges and protecting the environment, we can create conditions that support the fulfillment of human rights and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

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