

ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS OF HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

Since the teaching of environmental education is an important vehicle for students to develop a sense of environmental conservation, the investigator got interested in studying the level of environmental awareness in and attitude towards environment of higher secondary students studying in different schools in Kanchipuram District. The main purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between environmental awareness and attitude towards environment. The sample of the study consisted of (153) male and female higher secondary students whose attitude towards the environment and environmental awareness were analyzed by standardized tools of environmental awareness ability scale and environmental attitude scale. The results indicate that there exists a significant difference between male and female higher secondary students in environmental awareness and environmental attitude. It is also revealed that male students are more conscious in environmental concerns as male students scored high in environmental attitude awareness. When Government and private schools are compared, private school students have a higher than Government school students. A statistically significant correlation was found between environmental attitude and environmental awareness of higher secondary students.

INTRODUCTION

Young people today are facing issues and problems relatively unknown to previous generations. Environmental humiliation is a serious issue in the world today. As the human factor is the largest contributor to environmental degradation the relationship between environment and mankind is indeed deep and has been recognized from the Vedic period. Furthermore, non-violence towards both animate and inanimate components of the biosphere has been ingrained as a guiding principle in the Indian psyche. Therefore, awareness of environmental education is the paramount concern of all the citizens of the Indian society. Education should inculcate values necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relationship among men, his culture and his bio-physical surrounding. It should consider the environment in its totality and should be a continuous lifelong process beginning at the pre-school level and continuing through all stages of life. It should be inter-disciplinary and examine major environmental issues from local, national and international points of view. It should utilize various educational approaches to teach about and learn from the environment with stress on practical activities and first-hand experience. It is through

this process of education people can be sensitized to the environmental issues. Zoos and aquariums have the potential to raise environmental awareness and encourage community involvement through conservation education. Emergence of environmental education as a compulsory subject at the school level is a welcome development. India can protect and restore environmental resources by spreading awareness on such issues to its citizens. The importance of sensitizing students to environmental issues has led the Supreme Court to pass a judgment on 18th December 2003 and directed the government to prepare a model syllabus for environmental education for different classes, which has been prepared under the title 'Environmental Education in Schools, June 2003'. From the academic session 2004-2005, environmental education has been introduced as a compulsory subject at all levels in the school curriculum. Through the school curriculum we have to create awareness about the environment and an attitude of caring and sharing of environmental resources in the minds of those children who are the

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OBJECTIVES

1. To find out whether there is significant difference in environmental attitude and environmental awareness between
 - a. Tamil medium and English medium
 - b. Male and female
 - c. Government and private higher secondary school students
2. To find out whether there is significant relationship between environmental attitude and environmental awareness in higher secondary school students.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference in environmental attitude and environmental awareness between
 - a. Tamil medium and English medium
 - b. Male and female
 - c. Government and private higher secondary school students
2. There is no significant relationship between environmental attitude and environmental awareness of higher secondary students.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

To answer the problems thereby testing the hypotheses, the ex post facto research design is followed by the researcher which is an empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control over independent variables, because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulated. A single variate research design, cross sectional in nature was used with personal variables such as gender, medium of instruction and type of school and attitude towards environment and environmental awareness as the ultimate research variables. A representative sample of 300 students studying in XI standard was selected from two different schools in Kanchipuram District. A convenience random sampling technique was used based on the objectives of the research study. For the present investigation, standardized tools of Environmental Awareness Ability Scale (EAAS) by Praveen Kumar Jha and Environmental Attitude Scale (EAS) by Hasee Taj were used for collecting the data on the selected variables.

DATA ANALYSIS

The raw scores of the respondents were analyzed using SPSS for Windows version 11.0. Statistical techniques, namely 't' test, and Correlation Coefficient

citizen of our nation. Policy makers, educators, administrators, teachers must be alert in sensitizing students on various types of environmental issues. Environmental attitudes should serve for three purposes such as to understand the world in terms of knowledge functions. This should be accomplished by simplifying knowledge about the objects in the natural surroundings. Environmental attitude can serve to extend and reaffirm our understanding of the surrounding environment and our place in it. Environmental attitude allows to be better able to cope with intrapsychic conflicts generated by threatening environmental conditioning. Thus, the environmental awareness programme will be organized in school and out of school encompassing all levels of education, directed towards the general public, in particular the ordinary citizens living in both rural and urban areas, youth and adults alike, with a view to educating them to manage and protect the environment.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Children are not naturally aware of their changing environment and often do not have the background that adults have to understand their environment. From the time a child is a pre-schooler, and throughout his school years, the job of exposing children to the world around them is an essential pre-requisite. Foundation to learning attitude towards the environment is often neglected by parents who are not conscious of this need. It is essential for forming a good foundation upon which children can learn and understand about environmental concerns. There is no end to the places that children should be taken by their parents in order to build this firm foundation. The most important aspect of environmental awareness involves parents and teachers pointing out and talking to children about nature and issues involved with enthusiasm. Talking about students, what is really interesting is that their knowledge about environmental problems is far from concrete and is only at a superficial level. Though, environmental issues are of vital importance, students have little knowledge about these and most of them are confused as to how to work towards preserving the environment for a better tomorrow. They have little idea of what to do to protect natural ecology. So it is in the hands of the teachers to impart desirable attitudes towards environment through the subject.

test were used for data analysis. 't' test was used to compare the mean difference between groups. Correlation coefficient was used to find out the relationship between environmental attitude and environmental awareness of higher secondary students. The interpretation along with statistical analysis is discussed below.

Table 1
SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE MEAN SCORES OF HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDE - PERSONAL VARIABLE WISE

S.No	Variables	N	Mean	S.D	't'	Sig
1.	Male	153	158.54	16.71	1.999	0.05*
2.	Female	147	156.95	12.53		
3.	Tamil	146	157.27	13.02	0.607	NS
4.	English	154	158.22	14.19		
5	Government	153	152.61	12.90	2.25	0.05*
6.	Private	147	159.00	15.50		

Table 2
SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE MEAN SCORES OF HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS -PERSONAL VARIABLE WISE

S. No	Variables	N	Mean	S.D	't'	Sig
1	Male	153	35.63	6.17	2.66	0.01*
2	Female	147	33.64	6.75		
3	Tamil	146	34.34	6.39	0.814	NS
4	English	154	34.95	6.66		
5	Government	153	150.09	12.00	2.00	0.05*

It is observed from the above tables that there exists a significant difference between Male and female, Government and private higher secondary students in their environmental attitude and environmental awareness. It is also observed that male higher secondary students scored higher on environmental attitude and awareness. Likewise private school higher secondary students scored higher on environmental attitude and environmental awareness. It could be due to the teaching conditions, teacher competencies and teaching methods followed in private schools. The t-value also shows that there is no significant difference between Tamil medium and English medium higher secondary students in their environmental attitude and environmental awareness.

Table 3
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES OF HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

S.No	Variables	'r' value
1	Environmental awareness ability Environmental attitude	0.436**

It is understood from the above table that there exists a significant relationship between environmental awareness and environmental attitude of higher secondary students. It shows that environmental awareness helps in increasing their desire to save and protect the environment.

FINDINGS

1. There exists a significant difference between male and female and Government and private higher secondary students in their environmental attitude at 5% and 1% level. It is also observed that there exists a significant difference between male and female and Government and private higher secondary students in their environmental awareness.
2. The t-value shows that there is no significant difference between Tamil medium and English medium higher secondary students in their environmental attitude and environmental awareness.
3. There exists a significant relationship between environmental awareness and environmental attitude of higher secondary students at 1% level.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Environmental education can be a means to improve the values and attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary to being aware of the environmental issues.
2. Environmental education is a process of learning experience to obtain knowledge about natural and man made surroundings. Environmental education is a global concept today and priority in environmental education is to be given to creating environmental awareness. Teachers should be the key in influencing and encouraging students about environmental issues.
3. Increasing the level of environmental knowledge of tomorrow's teachers may be both possible and necessary to help improve environmental education.

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