

A Study On Environmental Awareness Among Elementary School Students In Lakhimpur District Of Assam

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to find out the level of environmental awareness of elementary school students of Lakhimpur district in Assam. A sample of 200 adolescent students were taken. The Environmental Awareness Test for Elementary School Going students developed by Dr. Akash Keyong (2012) was used here. Results for the study were calculated using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Results indicated that no significant difference was found in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the gender of the elementary school students while urban area students depicted more environmental awareness than the rural area students.

KEYWORDS: Environmental awareness, Elementary school students, Settlement, Gender

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INTRODUCTION

Everything that surrounds us may collectively be termed as environment. It is the sum total of all external conditions and influences affecting the organism. It includes the physical and biological components. The physical components of the environment are soil, water, air, light and temperature. These are termed as abiotic and abiotic components. The plants and animals including human beings are referred to as biotic components. All these components of the environment work together, interact and modify the effect of each other. Our planet earth is the only planet which has life on it. It consists of three components: the land (Lithosphere), water (Hydrosphere) and air (atmosphere) It is because of this unique combination that life originated, and is still sustaining on this planet.

The meaning of environment has been defined in different ways by different people who have viewed it from varied perspectives but it may be safely argued that 'environment is an inseparable whole and is constituted by the interacting systems of physical, biological and cultural elements inter-related in myriad ways, individually as well as collectively. Some definitions are;

According to Oxford advanced Learner's dictionary, the meaning of environment is (a) conditions, circumstances, etc. affecting people's life; (b) natural conditions, eg. Land, air, water in which we live.

According to Boring, "A person's environment consists of the sum total of the stimulation which he receives from his conception until his death."

According to Anastasi, "The environment is everything that affects the individual except his genes."

According to M.V.V. Rao, "The environment is the sum of all; physical, chemical, biological and sociological factors which compose the surroundings of man."

Basically we can categorize environment into three types:-

Physical Environment: It refers to the geographic climate and weather and physical conditions in which an individual lives.

Social and Cultural Environment: it includes the social, economic and political conditions of an individual in which he lives.

Psychological Environment: The person and his goals form his psychological environment. Sometimes due to certain obstacles a person may not be able to achieve his goals, leading him to frustration or to change his goals for a new psychological environment. This mechanism helps the individual in his adjustment to the environment.

CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The concept of Environmental Education was first introduced by President Nixon in the United States. Nixon emphasized that systematic study should be done on environmental issues. It was in 1969 that a council for environmental quality was formed. This made people aware of the fact that environmental conditions play an important role in the life of the child, particularly in the educational process. Since then a great many researches are being pursued in this area.

Environmental education has been defined differently by different people. The definition of Environmental education in the draft of US Environmental education act is considered to be very authentic and is frequently quoted. It states that:

"Environmental Education is an integral process which deals with man's interrelationships with his natural and man-made surroundings, including the rate of population growth, pollution resource allocation, and depletion, conservation technology and urban and rural planning to the total human environment. Environmental Education is a study of the factors

influencing eco-systems, mental and physical health, living and working conditions, decaying cities and population pressures. Environmental education is intended to promote among citizens the awareness and understanding of environment, our relation to it and the concern and responsible action necessary to assure our survival and to improve the quality of life.”

Our country has accepted the need for environmental education with the recommendation of the Tiwari Committee (1980). The Education commission (1964-66) and the National Policy on Education (1986) also emphasized on the value of environmental education. The development of environmental education as a discipline was the product of a series of meetings and discussions. Some of them were:

1970 – April 22nd earth day was observed. The US Environmental act defined the goal of Environmental Education. The IUCN sponsored ‘International Conference on Environmental Education in School Curriculum’ at Nevada

1972 – UN sponsored ‘Conference on human Environment’ at Stockholm, Sweden. In October United Nation environment Programme (UNEP) was established with its headquarters at Nairobi, Kenya.

1975 – Unesco in co-operation with UNEP launched the UNESCO-UNEP International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP) Paris.

In October under IEEP and ‘International Environmental Education Workshop’ was held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, which led to Belgrade Charter Formation.

1977 - The International Conference on Environmental education was organized in October in Tbilisi, Georgia, USSR that resulted in formation of ‘The Tbilisi Declaration’. USSR 1977 Report on inter-governmental conference on environmental education has summarized the ultimate aims of environmental education as:

- i. To enable human beings to understand the complex nature of the environment as this results from the interaction of its biological, physical, racial and cultural aspects.
- ii. To provide the individual and the community with the means of interpreting the interdependence of these various elements in the environment so as to create a greater sense of awareness of their place in the environment.
- iii. To provide a more considerate and cautious use of the universe to satisfy the present and future material and spiritual needs of mankind.
- iv. To contribute to the development of a national awareness of the importance of the environment in the economic, social and cultural processes.

- v. To provide a clear awareness of the economic, social, cultural, political interdependence of the modern world and develop a spirit of responsibility and of solidarity between countries and regions.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Shahnawaj (2017) conducted a study on awareness and attitudes of students and teachers and found out that female students possess higher level of awareness than the male students towards environmental education. The same findings were found in the studies of LarijiniMariyam (2010), Maghenda (1975). The opposite result was found in the studies of Patel and Patel (1994), Reidk, Ivan and Sadi, Imad (1997), suggested that male students have higher level of awareness than girls.

In the studies of ShitaljitKeisham (2008), BhutiaYodida (2010), Benner (1973) suggested that there is no significant difference between male students and female students in the level of awareness and attitude towards environmental education

Patel and Patel (2015) found that there exists significant difference in the awareness of urban and rural area school students. The urban area school students possess higher level of awareness than the rural area school students possess higher level of awareness than the rural area school students.

Gupta et.al (2018) suggested that children from urban and rural area schools are having same level of awareness and attitude towards environmental education and they do not differ in their level of awareness towards environmental Education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the difference in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the gender, settlement, and race of elementary school students .

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the gender of the elementary school students .
2. There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the settlement of the elementary school students .

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The present study was delimited to

1. Lakhimpur district of Assam
2. Class V and Class VI students.
3. Variables like gender, settlement.

SAMPLE :

A total of 200 elementary school students of Lakhimpur district formed the sample for this study. The sample

was selected using the stratified random sampling technique.

TOOLS USED:

To find out the environmental awareness score of the students, the Environmental Awareness Test for Elementary School Going students developed by Dr.AkashKeyong (2012) was used.

METHODOLOGY:

TABLE-1The results of the study are shown with the help of the tables as follows:

	TOTAL(N)	MEAN	S.D.	df	t-value	REMARK
MALE	58	34.7	12.3	98	0.67	NOT SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL
FEMALE	42	33.1	11.3			

COMPARISON OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS' ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS TEST SCORES:

Since the aim of this study was to obtain precise information concerning the current status of environmental awareness from the present sample of students, the descriptive research method was found to be the best suited method for this study.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

For analysis of the data, the statistical measures of mean, standard deviation and t-test were utilized.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Here, the obtained t-value is less than the criterion t-value. So the first hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the gender of the elementary school students is accepted.

TABLE- 2 COMPARISON OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF URBAN AND RURAL STUDENTS' ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS TEST SCORES :

	TOTAL(N)	MEAN	S.D.	df	t-value	REMARK
URBAN	51	36.7	11.6	98	2.40	SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL
RURAL	49	31.2	11.3			

Here, the obtained t-value is higher than the criterion t-value. So the third hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the gender of the elementary school students is rejected.

Thus the main findings of the study were:

1. No significant difference was found in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the gender of the elementary school students .
2. Significant difference was found in the environmental awareness mean score in relation to the settlement of the elementary school students and urban area students depicted more environmental awareness than the rural area students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From an overall point of view, the results of the study points out that the elementary school students have exhibited low level of environmental awareness. If the results are taken seriously, this points out that the teachers and concerned authorities should pay special attention to inculcate high amount of environmental awareness in them. The findings of this study can be of much use for policy makers, different research bodies, educational administrators, curriculum designers for enhancing the general environmental awareness among students. Discussions, seminars, workshops, refresher courses, orientation programmes etc. on environment, its allied problems, conservation etc. should be conducted right from the elementary school level to the higher education levels.

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