International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management (IJSREM)
Volume: 09 Issue: 08 | Aug - 2025 SJIF Rating: 8.586 ISSN: 2582-3930

Environmental Education and It's Influence on Public Awareness and Behaviour

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Abstract

This study emphasizes the role of environmental education (EE) in creating awareness, shaping attitudes, and promoting sustainable practices. It highlights the lack of awareness among Indian citizens, the challenges it poses, and the potential benefits of widespread EE adoption. Findings reveal the need for curriculum integration, teacher training, and community participation. The study concludes that EE is a key driver for sustainability and essential for building an environmentally responsible society.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development requires public awareness and education on environmental issues. Environmental education (EE) develops awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Since the 1977 Tbilisi Declaration, EE has evolved into education for sustainability, engaging students and communities in building partnerships and fostering eco-friendly practices.

Objectives of Environmental Education

EE aims to raise awareness, impart knowledge, build positive attitudes, develop skills, and encourage participation in solving environmental challenges. It motivates individuals and groups to adopt sustainable behaviours and contribute actively to conservation.

Benefits of Environmental Education

EE enhances creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. It empowers teachers and students, encourages collaboration, and links learning with real-world experiences. It integrates multiple disciplines while promoting tolerance, responsibility, and civic engagement.

Importance of Environmental Education

EE helps individuals understand environmental functions, conserve resources, and develop decision-making abilities. It builds responsibility, sensitivity, and the skills needed to address environmental problems at local and global levels.

Review of Literature

1. Kaur Harjit Pal (1992) conducted a study on population awareness among professional teachers and found no relationship between population awareness and attitudes toward environmental education.

2. Leslie Pasby and Joanna Weis (2001) evaluated an environmental program for grade 5 students in Toronto. Children showed more concern for local issues than global ones, expressed fairness in resource use, empathy for humans, but largely held anthropocentric and utilitarian views of the environment.

3. Gul Hanim Erol and Kutret Gezer (2006) studied prospective elementary teachers' attitudes and found generally low environmental concern, with girls showing stronger attitudes than boys.

4. Amy T. Parlo and Malcolm B. Butler (2007) reported that classroom inclusion of environmental topics post-workshops remained minimal, stressing the need for stronger links between training and science instruction.

5. Mustafa Dogru (2008) in Turkey applied problem-solving methods for science teacher trainees and showed improvements in scientific skills, problem-solving attitudes, and environmental test performance.

6. Josiah O. Ajiboye and S.O. Ajitoni (2008) examined participatory strategies with Nigerian secondary students. Environmental education improved knowledge, and quasi-participatory learning outperformed full participation.

7. R. Anaconda (2008) found that environmental education packages enhanced awareness, interest, and long-term concern among high school students in Coimbatore.

8. M. Asha Rosaline (2008) revealed limited awareness among teacher educators about environment and health, suggesting a stronger focus in pre-service training programs.

9. S.P. Rageshwari (2008) emphasized that pollution is a global challenge and recommended orientation programs, seminars, and workshops to increase awareness among students and decision-makers.

10. R. Venkataraman and A. Selvaraj Gnanaguru (2008) found high awareness among unemployed youth in Tamil Nadu, largely due to television, recommending more broadcast-based awareness programs.

11. P. Lalitha (2008) stressed the role of teachers in shaping environmental responsibility, advocating practical knowledge for teacher trainees.

12. T. Nagavalli (2008) described environmental education as the "need of the hour," highlighting its role in creating responsible environmental citizens.

13. Jeronen et al. (2008) reported that Finnish Nature Schools served mainly primary and lower secondary students, focusing on outdoor, inquiry-based learning. Evaluation was often overlooked, and girls showed stronger attitudes than boys.

14. S. Ahmad Mohammad Qablan et al. (2009) suggested workshops and faculty learning communities to strengthen university staff awareness and pedagogy in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

15. Gaye Teksoz et al. (2009) showed that pre-service chemistry teachers had limited environmental understanding but were willing to integrate such issues into teaching, making them potential environmental educators.

16. S. Davidson Saruman (2010) argued for participatory programs at primary and middle school levels, recommending activities like campus greening, clean-up campaigns, exhibitions, and use of audiovisual materials.

17. Georgia Liarakou et al. (2010) found that environmental education programs in Greece positively influenced secondary students' views on climate change.

18. Maria Del Carmen Conde and J. Samuel Sanchez (2010) emphasized the importance of curriculum audits in strengthening participation and motivation in schools.

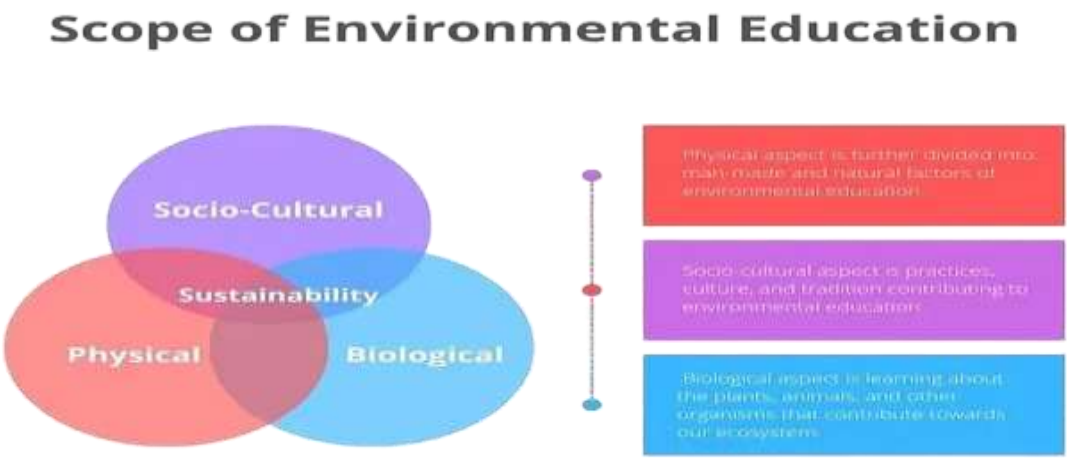
19. Gokhan Bas (2010) showed that using multiple intelligence strategies in science classes improved students' environmental awareness and motivation compared to traditional methods.

20. Hong Xia Duan and Rossanne Fortner (2010) compared environmental risk perceptions in China and the U.S., suggesting new strategies for formal and non-formal education in China.

21. Astrid Steele (2010) examined secondary science teachers in Ontario, Canada, showing that embedding environmental education in curricula was mandated and increasingly practiced.

22. M. Sakku Bhavya (2011) analyzed the role of government and NGOs in promoting environmental education, stressing the need to accelerate awareness programs and teacher training.

Scope of Environmental Education



1. Biological Aspect

The biological aspect of environmental education focuses on the study and conservation of living organisms and their interactions within ecosystems. Human beings are a prime example of biological aspects, along with animals, birds, insects, microorganisms, and plants. These elements are crucial for maintaining biodiversity and ensuring the balance of natural ecosystems. Biological aspects also include understanding genetic diversity, species interactions, ecological roles, and the impact of human activities on biological systems. Environmental education aims to foster a deep appreciation for the variety of life forms and the necessity of preserving them for future generations.

2. Physical Aspect

The physical aspect of environmental education is divided into natural and man-made elements. Natural aspects encompass air, water, land, climate, and geological formations. These elements are essential for sustaining life on Earth and play a significant role in shaping the environment. Understanding physical processes, such as the water cycle, weather patterns, and soil formation, is crucial for comprehending how natural systems function and interact. On the other hand, man-made aspects include infrastructure such as roads, highways, airports, railroads, buildings, bridges, dams, and reservoirs. These structures impact the environment in various ways, including altering landscapes, affecting natural habitats, and contributing to pollution. Environmental education emphasizes the need for sustainable development practices that minimize negative impacts on the physical environment.

3. Socio-cultural Aspect

The socio-cultural aspect of environmental education involves examining the practices, cultures, and traditions humans develop to live in society. This includes rules, laws, religious beliefs, and social norms that influence how communities interact with the environment. Human beings have created these socio-cultural frameworks through collective efforts and shared values. Environmental education highlights the importance of understanding diverse cultural perspectives on environmental stewardship, promoting community engagement, and fostering environmental ethics. It also addresses the role of policies and governance in shaping sustainable practices and encourages individuals to participate in environmental decision-making processes. By integrating socio-cultural aspects, environmental education aims to create a more inclusive and equitable approach to addressing environmental challenges .

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In addition to the collection of primary and secondary data, this study employs various analytical tools to interpret the data comprehensively. Quantitative data from the questionnaires are analysed using statistical software such as SPSS or R, enabling the identification of patterns, correlations, and trends that highlight the

economic and environmental outcomes of sustainable practices. Qualitative data, on the other hand, are subjected to thematic analysis to uncover underlying themes, perspectives, and attitudes among the respondents.

The study also integrates Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to map and visualize the spatial distribution of sustainable agricultural practices and their associated impacts on quality of life across different regions. This spatial analysis aids in understanding the regional variations and localized effects of sustainable agriculture.

Furthermore, the research incorporates a comparative analysis of case studies from different geographical areas to draw insights from diverse contexts and identify best practices. These case studies include regions that have successfully transitioned to sustainable agriculture, as well as those facing challenges, providing a balanced perspective on the factors that drive or hinder the adoption of sustainable practices.

Finally, the study explores policy implications and recommendations based on the findings, offering actionable insights for policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, and communities. By synthesizing the evidence from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, this research aims to contribute to the development of strategies that promote sustainable agriculture and enhance the overall quality of life.

Challenges in Promoting Environmental education in India

Barriers include limited curriculum integration, inadequate teacher training, urban-rural disparities, lack of awareness campaigns, economic and social constraints, insufficient policy implementation, and low media coverage. Cultural factors and rapid industrialization also hinder EE adoption.

Consequences of Lack of Awareness

Ignorance of EE leads to pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, climate change, resource depletion, and poor health outcomes. It increases economic costs, reduces quality of life, and threatens sustainability.

Advantages of Widespread EE

When widely adopted, EE enhances knowledge, promotes behavioural change, creates green jobs, supports biodiversity, mitigates climate change, and fosters resilience. It empowers citizens to participate in policy-making and adopt sustainable practices.

Ideas for Public Awareness

Strategies include eco-friendly merchandise, campaigns, workshops, citizen science projects, nature walks, environmental ambassadors, school programs, art projects, media partnerships, and green certifications.

Districts	Pollution Level
Hyderabad	127
Nizamabad	134
Bodham	142
Vikarabad	127
Gadwal	129

What is the pollution level in different districts of Telangana?

The table displayed presents the pollution levels in various districts of Telangana. The data indicates that Bodham has the highest pollution level at 142, followed by Nizamabad with a pollution level of 134. Gadwal records a pollution level of 129, while both Hyderabad and Vikarabad share the lowest pollution level of 127.

This variation in pollution levels may be attributed to factors such as industrial activities, vehicular emissions, population density, and waste management practices in each district. Bodham's higher pollution level could signify more industrialization or denser traffic compared to the other districts. The uniform pollution level in Hyderabad and Vikarabad might indicate similar environmental conditions or regulatory measures in place.

Findings

1. Awareness gaps exist in basic environmental knowledge.
2. EE is vital for sustainable practices and behavioural change.
3. Students show strong participation, making schools key drivers.
4. Public favours hands-on and community-based approaches.

Suggestions

Government: integrate EE in curricula, train teachers, launch campaigns, support rural areas, and incentivize green businesses.

Public: participate in community efforts, adopt sustainable lifestyles, attend workshops, and support eco-friendly policies.

Conclusion

Environmental education is not just a tool; it is the cornerstone for transforming public awareness and behaviour toward sustainability. By seamlessly integrating environmental education into both formal and informal education systems, fostering robust community involvement, and implementing supportive policies, both the government and the public can play pivotal roles in achieving environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, this study underscores the need for a holistic approach that encompasses education, policy-making, and active participation. This comprehensive strategy is essential for creating a society that values and actively contributes to the preservation of the environment for future generations.

In conclusion, environmental education holds the transformative power to shape a sustainable future. It is through our united efforts, continuous learning, and unwavering commitment to sustainability that we can ensure a healthy and thriving planet for generations to come. Let us embrace this responsibility and work together to create a world where environmental values are deeply ingrained in every aspect of our lives.

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