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## A STUDY OF STUDENTS' OPINION TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AT SECONDARY LEVEL IN HISSAR DISTRICT

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**Abs tract:**-The present study was conducted to examine the students' opinion towards environmental education at secondary level in Hissar district. Random sampling was used to select the participants. A sample of 100 students studying in class 10th has been taken from the schools containing 52 male and 48 female students. A self made questionnaire containing 24 items were used to collect data. Data was analysed through t-test. It was observed that opinion towards most of statements of male and female students differ significantly. Male students have higher mean value in comparison to female students indicating that agreement towards stopping migration of people from rural to urban areas and sensitivity towards environmental problems is significantly higher than the latter. For rest of the statements opinion of male and female students do not differ significantly.

**Keyw ords:**Environmental Education, Opinion of Students.

### INTRODUCTION

Increases in global population and the imbalanced distribution between urban and rural areas are putting more and more pressure on the world's available resources. The environment quality has undergone deterioration due to pollution. Environmental education has long been viewed as a critical step in the process of creating an environmentally literate population, leading to changing attitudes and behaviours of the population and a more environmentally sustainable way of life. The Tbilisi Conference (1977), which followed soon after the launch of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), is known to have spearheaded clarification on the nature of environmental education. This conference resulted in a declaration which listed seven directive principles for environmental education (EE) programmes. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines environment as "the entire range of external influence acting on an organism, both the physical and biological i.e. other organisms, forces of nature surrounding an individual". Environmental education generally refers to curriculum and programs which aim to teach people about the natural world and particularly about ways in which ecosystems work. Environmental education programs often aim to change people's perceptions about the value of the natural world and to teach how to change environmental behaviours, such as getting people to recycle or how to build eco-friendly dwellings. In Western-style environmental education, the focus is mostly on understanding ways in which humans and human systems impact on the environment and non-human natural systems. However, it is also important to teach and understand the impact of natural systems on humans and human society.

A vast country like India faces formidable challenges in the form of exploding population, widespread poverty, recurring natural disasters and a dwindling natural

resource base. A majority of the population lives below the poverty line and are illiterate. They depend exclusively on our diminishing natural resource base. So we need to think and act now. The education system in India had incorporated some aspects of EE in school curricula as early as 1930. The roots of the present status of EE in formal education can be traced back to the report of the education commission (1964 - 66) Kothari commission, this report also incorporated the best that basic education had to offer so as to relate it to the life needs and aspirations of the nation. For primary stage the report recommended that "the aims of teaching science in the Primary schools should be to develop proper understanding of the main facts concepts principles and processes in physical biological environment". Environmental education at primary, secondary, Higher secondary was treated in different way. Environmental education is an essential part of every pupil's curriculum. It helps to encourage awareness of the environment, leading to informed concern for and active participation in resolving environmental problems. The objectives of environmental education is to increase the public awareness of the problems in this field, as well as possible solutions, and to lay the foundations for a fully informed and active participation of individual in the protection of the environment and the prudent and rational use of the natural resources. The National Policy on Education (1986) of India states that protection of environment is a value which, along with certain other values, must form an integral part of the curriculum at all stages of education. The Indian Constitution laid down the responsibility of Government to protect and improve the environment and made it a "fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife". On this background Department of Environment was established by the Government of India in 1980 and a Ministry was formed

in 1985.

#### **JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

The physical environment has undergone degradation caused by unchecked industrialisation, urbanisation, mining activities, focus on physical comfort, life style etc. The environment degradation has achieved a level where it has started hurting the quality of air, water, soil necessary for maintaining healthy surroundings for well-being of living organisms. The environmental problems are global in nature as concerted efforts are made by the countries to reduce emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, notorious oxide etc. causing global warming, climate change, pollution etc. The United Nations Climate Change Conference, Durban 2011, delivered a breakthrough on the international community's response to climate change. The amount of damage and degradation done to environment in pursuit of economic goals is irreversible and hard to achieve in the sense that it will take longer duration to reverse the process of environmental degradation. Everyone has contributed in it. Therefore everyone has a role and duty to improve the environment. The public carry a lot of responsibility in performing their roles. Their understanding of environment, attitude and perception of environmental problems, readiness and preparedness to improve their lifestyle impacting the environment are some of the issues which need efforts and exploration in order to devise some methodology for protecting the environment. Environmental education is an approach to create awareness about environmental problems and finding ways to address them. Many researches had been conducted in this field. Parenteau (1994) has pointed that Environmental management and planning is now considered as a new field of professional expertise. Michael (1995) has looked into the differences and similarities in institutional leaders' opinions with respect to environmental concerns based on the size, age, location, and sector of their institutions. Filho (1997) has shown that environmental education and environmental management, two major tools in promoting sustainable development, need to be integrated and has outlined the common features of environmental education and environmental management. Strong (1998) has asserted investigating and understanding children's knowledge and awareness of environmental issues, and their selection and use of information about environmentally friendly products through primary school education. Wolfe (2001) has discussed different approaches to impart environmental education at different levels of education and observed differences among responses of various institutions. Tahir (2001) has reviewed the role of distance education mode in imparting environmental education and pointed that training of staff at institution of higher education is a critical factor and linkage between environmental education and sustainability is important for environmental awareness.. Skanavis and Sarri (2002) have examined the social structure and public services in Cyprus and have stressed the need for an environmental awareness assessment of the citizens in order to determine how critical thinking and problem solving skills on issues of environmental significance could be promoted. Sabah et.al. (2003) have realised that sustainable development policies,

plans and actions have a better chance of being implemented when they are supported by an educated, informed public. Holt (2003) has found that greening of universities in terms of their curriculum and operations is a logical extension of the process of environmental education initiated in schools. Lundholm (2005) has emphasised on the learning process as environmental issues are interpreted differently and values and emotions are important aspect. Clayton (2000) has shown that service learning methods are effective for imparting environmental education. Kyridis et al. (2005) have found that course on environmental education has been effective in making students aware of environmental issues and should be included in course curriculum starting from the primary level of education. Jekayinfa et al. (2008) have recommended that teachers implementing any curriculum should be given the opportunities to undergo refresher courses, seminars and workshops in that curriculum so that they are updated and exposed to new innovations in the curriculum. Evangelinos & Jones (2009) have pointed the usefulness of concept of social capital in the environmental management and have shown that higher stocks of social capital result in benefits for environmental management of Higher Education Institutes. Galang (2010) has found that in Philippines the National Environmental Education Action Plan which provides a framework to guide higher education has two national networks promoting and supporting environmental education and training and curriculum projects are well supported by government agencies and academic institutions without policy support for more widespread changes.

Based on above review, it is observed that lot of studies have been carried out on different issues of environment but no study has been found focusing on opinion of the students at secondary level. Therefore this study will fill that gap and add to the existing pool of knowledge about environment education.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

The proposed study was conducted with following objectives.

- 1)To assess the opinion of secondary school students towards environmental education.
- 2)To compare the opinion of male and female students' regarding environmental education.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study has used descriptive research design for achieving the research objective. Descriptive research design portrays the state of affairs; determine Characteristics of population or phenomenon under consideration. Due to limitations of resources, time constraints etc. census enquiry is not possible to adopt for the purpose of data collection through survey method. Therefore sampling techniques are adopted. The basic purpose of sampling is to obtain a representative sample of entire population.

#### **POPULATION & SAMPLE**

The population of this study includes the students studying at secondary level of education in Hissar district of Haryana. For the purpose of obtaining the sample, random

sampling techniques has been adopted. A sample of 100 students studying in class 10th has been taken from the schools of Hissar District containing 52 male and 48 female students out of which 48 were Hindi and 52 were English medium students. The mean age of the students was calculated 15.34 years.

**TOOL**

For the purpose of data collection from the target population, a structured questionnaire was designed in Hindi and English keeping in mind the medium of education of students. The questionnaire was pilot tested on 20 students to find comprehensibility of the questionnaire. The final questionnaire contained 24 statements on a 05 point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Apart from these 05 points on scale, the respondents were also given a choice of cannot answer.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The data has been analysed with the help of descriptive tools frequency, percentage, bar chart and mean. For carrying out the hypothesis testing, independent t-test has been applied.

**Table I  
MEAN VALUE OF VARIABLES**

Sr.No.	Variable	Mean
1	Environment has been badly damaged.	4.4100
2	Protecting the environment is the most important issue of the decade.	4.0600
3	The greenhouse effect is the greatest danger to life on Earth.	3.7100
4	Air conditioned educational institutes are not needed.	2.9100
5	Protecting the natural environment should be given priority even at the risk of slowing down economic growth.	3.6100
6	Environmental education should be included in the curriculum as a subject in its own right.	4.0300
7	Environmental education is not imparted formally.	3.1900
8	Students are less interested in taking environmental education.	3.6800
9	Teachers take less interest in imparting environmental education.	3.3300
10	Training on environmental education should be compulsory for every teacher.	3.9800
11	Water pollution is not an important problem for people.	3.1200
12	Noise pollution is not a big problem for people.	3.1800
13	Drinking water quality has been affected.	3.7100
14	Air quality has deteriorated.	4.1400
15	Mining activities should be totally banned.	3.5900
16	Government is very less concerned about environmental problems.	3.6600
17	Urbanisation is responsible for environmental problems.	3.5400
18	Land for agricultural activities has reduced drastically.	3.7400
19	Migration of people from rural areas to urban areas should be stopped to protect the environment.	3.0200
20	People are very less sensitive towards environmental problems.	3.8900
21	Most of us do not plant any tree throughout our life.	3.7200
22	I try to use less paper.	2.2000
23	I am not affected by environmental pollution.	2.8100
24	It is difficult to perceive environmental problems.	3.1800

On observing Table I the statements can be classified into three categories viz. having mean value greater than 4.0 indicating strongly favourable opinions, more than 3.0 but less than 4.0 for favourable opinion and less than 3.0 indicating less favourable opinion.

There are only 04 variable with mean value greater than 4.0 for which students have strongly favourable opinion namely environment has been badly damaged, protecting the environment is the most important issue of the decade, environmental education should be included in the curriculum as a subject in its own right and air quality has deteriorated.

For 17 statements, mean value is between 3.0 and 4.0 indicating favourable opinion which are the greenhouse effect is the greatest danger to life on Earth, protecting the natural environment should be given priority even at the risk of slowing down economic growth, environmental education is not imparted formally, students are less interested in taking environmental education, teachers take less interest in imparting environmental education, training on environmental education should be compulsory for every teacher, water pollution is not an important problem for people, noise pollution is not a big problem for people, drinking water quality has been affected, mining activities should be totally banned, government is very less concerned about environmental problems, urbanisation is responsible for environmental problems, land for agricultural activities has reduced drastically, migration of people from rural areas to urban areas should be stopped to protect the environment, people are very less sensitive towards environmental problems, most of us do not plant any tree throughout our life and it is difficult to perceive environmental problems.

The unfavourable opinion has been observed only for 03 statements having mean value less than 3.0 which are as follows air conditioned educational institutes are not needed, I try to use less paper and I am not affected by environmental pollution.

**Table II  
INDEPENDENT T-TEST: COMPARING OPINION OF MALE AND FEMALE**

Statement	Gender	Mean	t*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Environment has been badly damaged.	Male	4.5385	1.495	.138
	Female	4.2708		
Protecting the environment is the most important issue of the decade.	Male	3.9808	-.838	.404
	Female	4.1458		
The greenhouse effect is the greatest danger to life on Earth.	Male	3.8462	1.143	.256
	Female	3.5625		
Air conditioned educational institutes are not needed.	Male	3.0000	.704	.483
	Female	2.8125		
Protecting the natural environment should be given priority even at the risk of slowing down economic growth.	Male	3.6154	.044	.965
	Female	3.6042		

Environmental education should be included in the curriculum as a subject in its own right.	Male	3.8846	-1.353	.179
	Female	4.1875		
Environmental education is not imparted formally.	Male	3.3846	1.579	.118
	Female	2.9792		
Students are less interested in taking environmental education.	Male	3.7885	.888	.377
	Female	3.5625		
Teachers take less interest in imparting environmental education.	Male	3.3846	.510	.611
	Female	3.2708		
Training on environmental education should be compulsory for every teacher.	Male	3.9423	-.472	.638
	Female	4.0208		
Water pollution is not an important problem for people.	Male	3.2692	1.146	.255
	Female	2.9583		
Noise pollution is not a big problem for people.	Male	3.2500	.556	.579
	Female	3.1042		
Drinking water quality has been affected.	Male	3.7308	.173	.863
	Female	3.6875		
Air quality has deteriorated.	Male	4.1346	-.054	.957
	Female	4.1458		
Mining activities should be totally banned.	Male	3.4808	-.948	.345
	Female	3.7083		
Government is very less concerned about environmental problems.	Male	3.5385	-1.169	.245
	Female	3.7917		
Urbanisation is responsible for environmental problems.	Male	3.5192	-.183	.855
	Female	3.5625		
Land for agricultural activities has reduced drastically.	Male	3.7115	-.273	.785
	Female	3.7708		
Migration of people from rural areas to urban areas should be stopped to protect the environment.	Male	3.2692	2.176	.032**
	Female	2.7500		
People are very less sensitive towards environmental problems.	Male	4.1731	2.547	.012**
	Female	3.5833		
Most of us do not plant any tree throughout our life.	Male	3.6731	-.453	.652
	Female	3.7708		
I try to use less paper.	Male	2.0385	-1.354	.179
	Female	2.3750		
I am not affected by environmental pollution.	Male	2.9231	.859	.392
	Female	2.6875		
It is difficult to perceive environmental problems.	Male	3.2308	.359	.720
	Female	3.1250		

\*t-value for equal variance assumed for male and female  
 \*\* Significant at 5 per cent

Table II compares mean value of male and female students based on independent t-test. It is observed that out of 24 statements of the study male and female students differ significantly only in case of 02 statements viz. migration of people from rural areas to urban areas should be stopped to protect the environment and people are very less sensitive towards environmental problems. In context of these 02 statements, male students have higher mean value in comparison to female students indicating that the former degree of agreement towards stopping migration of people

from rural to urban areas and sensitivity towards environmental problems is significantly higher than the latter. For rest of the statements, the opinions of male and female students do not differ significantly and they are at same level of perception.

#### **FINDINGS**

The findings presented here have been arranged according to the percentage of agreement or disagreement towards environmental issues. A vast majority of the students (89 per cent) agree that environment has been badly damaged. 80 per cent respondents agree that air quality has deteriorated. 79 per cent of the respondents support Environmental education should be included in the curriculum as a subject in its own right. Majority of the students (77 per cent) agree that environment protection is most important issue of the decade. 75 per cent respondents agree that training on environmental education should be compulsory for every teacher. 70 per cent respondents agree that drinking water quality has been affected, 69 per cent respondents agree that people are less sensitive towards environmental problems. 67 per cent respondents are of the opinion that they not plant any tree throughout their life, 66 per cent students agree that they take less interest in taking environmental education. 61 per cent are in favour of banning mining activities for environmental protection. 61 per cent agree that greenhouse effect is danger to life on earth. 60 per cent respondents agree that protecting the natural environment should be given priority even at the risk of slowing down economic growth. 59 per cent agree that government is less sensitive towards environment protection. 57 per cent agree that urbanisation is responsible for environmental problems. 57 per cent agree that Land for agricultural activities has reduced drastically. 57 per cent respondents agree that they try to use less paper. 51 per cent agree that teachers take less interest in imparting environmental education.

In relation to opinion on the following issues of environment, diffused findings on students' opinion have been obtained. 46 per respondents agree and 32 per cent disagree that they find it difficult to perceive environmental problems. 43 per cent agree and 27 per cent of the students disagree on formally imparting of environmental education. 37 per cent agree 33 per cent of the students disagree regarding the need of building air conditioned institutes. 34 per cent agree and 48 per cent of the students disagree that Water pollution is an important problem for people. 34 per cent agree and 28 per cent of the respondents disagree that Migration of people from rural areas to urban areas should be stopped to protect the environment.

31 per cent agree and 45 per cent of the respondents disagree that Noise pollution is not a big problem for people. 31 per cent agree and 38 per cent of the students disagree that they are not affected by environmental pollution.

On gender basis, male students have higher mean value in comparison to female students indicating that the former degree of agreement towards stopping migration of people from rural to urban areas and sensitivity towards environmental problems is significantly higher than the latter. For rest of the statements opinion of male and female students do not differ significantly.

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The students have strong opinion regarding damage to the environment, protecting the environment, inclusion of environmental education in the curriculum and air pollution. The students have perception of danger of greenhouse effect to the earth, protection of natural resources. They have acknowledged that they take less interest in environmental education, informal imparting of environmental education, less interest of teachers in imparting environmental education and making environmental education training compulsory for every teacher. The students do not give much importance to water and noise pollution though they are aware regarding poor quality of drinking water. They have favourable opinion regarding ban on mining activities and agreement on less concern of government and role of urbanisation in augmenting environmental problem. The students are aware of shrinking agricultural land favour stopping migration from rural to urban areas as a solution to check environment degradation. People are very less sensitive towards environmental problems. Most of us do not plant any tree throughout our life and difficulty in perceiving environmental problems. The students are not in favour of air conditioned educational institutes. They lack perception of contributing in reducing environment degradation by using less paper and effects of environmental pollution. The opinions of male and female do not show significant differences indicating same level of perception and attitude of both of them towards environmental issues.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

Environmental education should be included in course curriculum, students interest in environment education should be enhanced by making teaching of environment education interesting and training on environment should be made compulsory for every teacher so that they can play a more active role in imparting environmental education. The people should be informed of ways in which they can contribute in environment protection.

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