



An analysis of students' environmental awareness at the high secondary school level in Murshidabad district

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Abstract

The study was carried out with a sample of 180 students from Standard XII using environmental awareness scale for assessing the significance difference in the mean scores of environmental awareness. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students belonging to science group and arts group, there existed significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students belonging to science group and vocational group, there existed no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students belonging to vocational group and arts group. There existed no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students in terms of gender and in terms of types of institution.

Keywords: environmental awareness, significance difference, type of institutions, gender

Introduction

Environmental Education involves the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness among man, his culture and his bio physical surrounding (UNEP, 2012).

It is in this light that students understanding and level of awareness on various environmental concepts and problems is important. Environmental awareness is defined as the sum total of responses that people make to various thematic aspects of the construct environmental education.

In simple terms it means knowledge and understanding of facts and concepts related to environment and consequences of various environmental problems like pollution, population explosion, deforestation, ecological disruption, energy crises etc. Environment has become the concern of all academicians, intellectuals, scientists, policy makers and government across the continents.

Widespread and systematic concern for environmental issues has grown world over. The U.N. World conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Global Forum 1992 and the activities organized by the international NGO forum, show that environment is in the agenda of International Community (Toili, 2007).

Following these detrimental effects resulting from environmental degradation, it has become more important to find a preventive way slow down the effects and eventually sustainably mitigating long-term environmental damage. One of the best ways of preservation is by creating environmental awareness among society especially students as they are future leaders, future custodians, planners, policy makers, and educators of the environment and its issues (Jackson, 2005).

Healthy, clean and pure environment is a precious gift of nature to the humanity. Like many other organisms, man has

to depend, for his life on this environment. He receives his basic necessities like water, air, food and shelter from it.

So neither the present generation nor the posterity has any right to obliterate its wholesomeness or pollute it.

The environmental health of a country is, in fact, an indication of the quality of life of the people.

The fields covered by environmental studies are as follows

- The multidisciplinary nature of environmental studies
- Natural resources and associated problems
- Eco systems
- Biodiversity and its conservation
- Environmental pollution
- Social issues and the environment

Study Area

My chosen Study Area is Murshidabad district which is situated on the Eastern peripheral plains of the State of West Bengal.

It forms the Eastern international boundary of State bordering Bangladesh from 1947 when India became independent.

River Padma creates the Northern and Eastern boundary, separating the district from the district Maldah to the North and Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh to the East. Districts Burdwan and Nadia are in the Southern side and Birbhum and the Pakur (Jharkhand) are on the Western side of the District.

Murshidabad District is lying almost in the middle part of West Bengal. this district is the nethermost district south Bengal Murshidabad district extends from 24° 45' 30"N - 24° 52' 30"N Latitudes 87° 57' 30"E - 88° 46' 15"E longitudes (figure 2).

The District is bounded by Malda District on the north and Bardhaman and Nadia district on the south and Birbhum District and Jharkhand on the west.

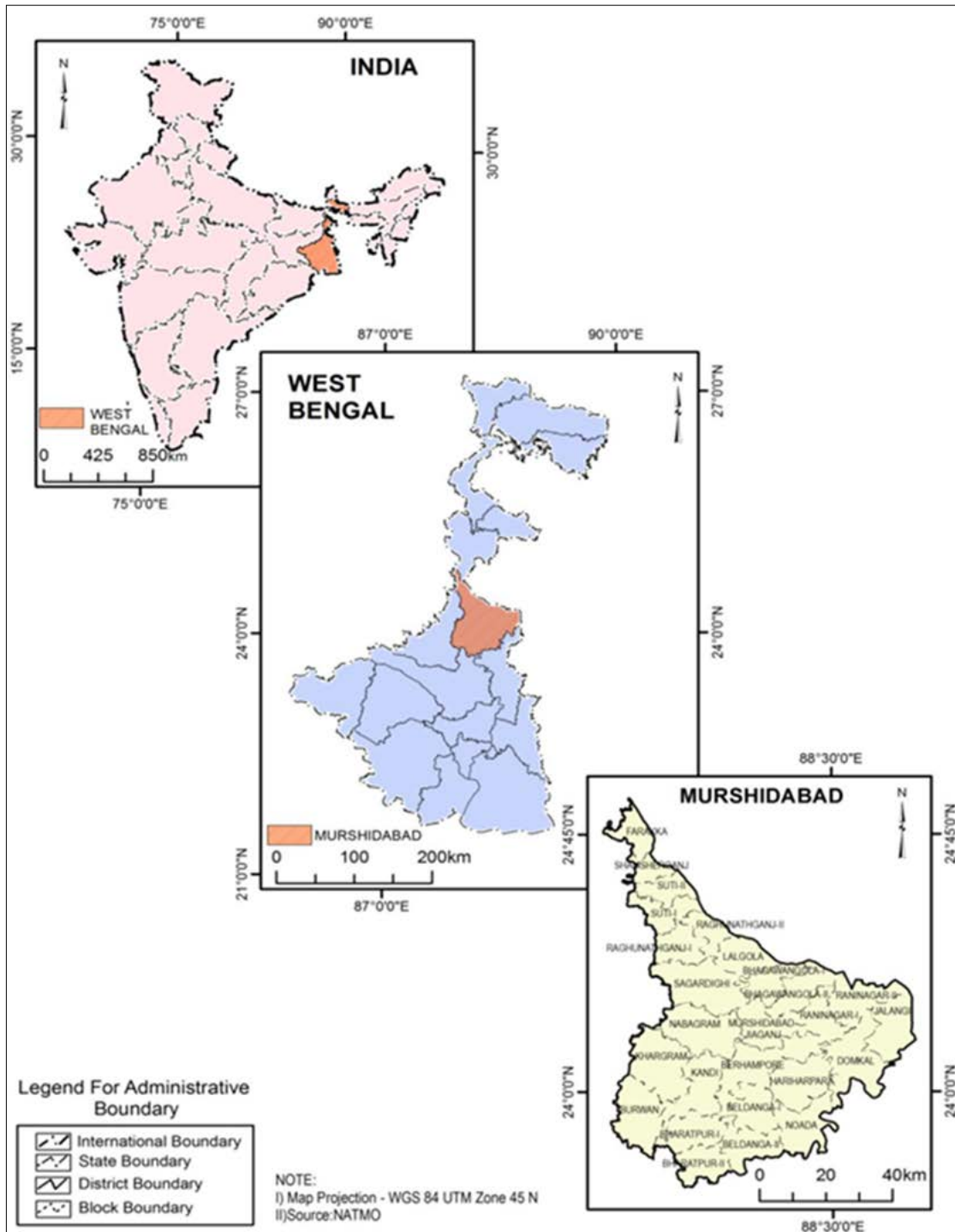


Fig 1: Location of the Study Area

Objectives of the study

- To study the extend of awareness of students to environmental education.
- To study the extend of awareness of students to social issues related to environmental pollution.
- To offer a few suggestions to get over the problems related to environmental pollution.
- To throw light on salient features of environmental education.

Hypotheses

H1: There exists signifi cant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students belonging to science group and arts group’

H2: There exists signifi cant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students belonging to science group and vocational group.

H3: There exists signifi cant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students belonging to vocational group and arts group.

H4: There exists signifi cant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students in terms of gender

H5: There exists signifi cant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students in terms of types of institution.

Significance of the study

Environmental issues became international priorities all though they were seen as local or regional concerns, because they have become extraneous to economic growth, health, nature and aesthetics. Consumption of resources for products produced for world market (dominated by the North) causes primarily local environmental degradation - not global. Every human being has the right to decent life, but today there are elements in our environment that tend to militate against the attainment and enjoyment of such a life. The exacerbation of the pollution of environment can cause untold misery. Unhappiness and suffering to human beings crop up simply because of our lack of concern for the common good and the absence of a sense of responsibility and ethics for sustaining a balanced ecosystem. If we are to aspire to a better quality of life - one which will ensure freedom from want, from disease and from fear itself, then we must all join hands to stem the increasing codification of the earth. We need to defuse this environmental problem, but such needed action will come only if we reorient the citizenry's values, i.e. imbibe them with proper attitudes and values (ethics), specially those that will lead to a greater concern for preserving balance in the ecosystem. Besides we should teach them how to save the environment from further degradation, and help make it a healthier and progressive place to live in; this springs from a strong sense of social responsibility. Hence, it becomes obligatory on the part of each individual citizen to develop environmental ethics that, while we aspire for the good life, should not sacrifice the future of the generations to come.

Methodology

1. Population and sample for the study

The sample for the study consists of 180 students studying in XI and XII standard studying Government school and Management schools Madurai District with students belonging to both gender.

2. Sample design

The sample consists of 100 respondents for pilot study for the purpose of standardization of test in The sample for - final study consists of 180 students of which 90 students belong to the Government institution and other 90 to Management institutions with due representation to gender.

3. Instrumentation

The investigator employed the tool "Environmental awareness questionnaire" for this study.

Analysis and interpretation

Hypothesis 1

Null hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students belonging to science group and arts group.

Table 1: Difference in students due to groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	"t" value	Sig.
Science	60	35.15	8.75	6.00	S
Arts	60	26.50	7.07		

Source: author calculation

Hypothesis 2

Null hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students belonging to science group and vocational group.

Table 2: Difference in students due to Groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	"t" value	Sig.
Science	60	35.15	8.75	8.20	S
Vocational	60	24.66	6.54		

Source

Hypothesis 3

Null hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students belonging to vocational group and arts group

Table 3: Difference in students due to groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	"t" value	Sig.
vocational	60	24.66	7.07	1.43	NS
Arts	60	26.50	7.07		

source

Hypothesis 4

Null hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students in terms of gender

Table 4: Difference in students due to gender

Groups	N	Mean	SD	"t" value	Sig.
Boys	90	30.04	10.59	0.36	NS
Girls	90	30.51	10.27		

Source

Hypothesis 5

Null hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in the mean scores in Environmental awareness between the students in terms of types of institution.

Table 5: Difference in students due to type of institution

Groups	N	Mean	SD	"t" value	Sig.
Government	90	30.37	10.43	0.14	NS
Management	90	30.60	10.8		

Source

Findings of the study

1. There exists significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students belonging to science group and arts group
2. There exists significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between
3. the students belonging to science group and vocational group
4. There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students belonging to vocational group and arts group
5. There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students in terms of gender
6. There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental awareness between the students in terms of types of institution.

Recommendations for further study

1. Similar studies may be undertaken at different levels.
2. Correlation Studies with reference to environmental awareness and different subjects namely Botany, Zoology & Chemistry may be made.
3. Training programmes may be envisaged for teachers at post graduate level to highlight the salient features of Environmental awareness.
4. Research on environmental awareness associated with preservation of nature.
5. Student's skill for learning about environmental observation, collection & classification in school may be fostered.

Implications

1. Environmental awareness plays a vital role in preserving of nature.
2. Through Environmental Awareness we can create relationship between man and nature is established.
3. Environmental awareness enriches one's knowledge of balance of nature.
4. Environmental awareness inculcates skills among students which indirectly help one to become a nature loving scientist.
5. Through Environmental awareness whatever that is learnt in environmental awareness is applied in life situation
6. The environmental awareness skills of the learners such as manipulation of the environment, arranging things in the nature observation, collection, classification of things in nature and inference of scientific and environmental facts out of it are nourished.
7. A higher degree of environmental awareness is essential to save the world from extinction and preserve the ecosystem.
8. The issues such as global warming, soil erosion, deforestation and depletion of ozone may cause major damage to the world.

The things highlighted above are the antecedent skills for a blossoming environmental scientist.

Educational implications

Teacher (independent of gender differences) can play an important role in educating their students about environment, which is possible only when the teacher themselves have the necessary level of environmental education awareness. This suggests the need for introducing and enriching environmental education programmes in both in-service and pre-service elementary teacher education programmes. More effort has to be implemented to encourage female teachers as they get fewer opportunities than their male counterparts for performing and participating in environmental activities and actions. A possible future study would be to compare gender differences along with the area to which they belong as well as their age.

Conclusion

Teacher (independent of gender differences) can play an important role in educating their students about environment, which is possible only when the teacher themselves have the necessary level of environmental education awareness. This suggests the need for introducing and enriching environmental education programmes in both

in-service and pre-service elementary teacher education programmes. More effort has to be implemented to encourage female teachers as they get fewer opportunities than their male counterparts for performing and participating in environmental activities and actions. A possible future study would be to compare gender differences along with the area to which they belong as well as their age. The students have a higher level of scientific attitude. The achievement of the students in Environmental awareness is not of higher order. The reason may be that they have not been exposed to scientific literature at concrete stage at lower level and suddenly they find it difficult to cope with the scientific literature at the higher level which involves abstract thinking.

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