

From Awareness to Action: Pro-Environmental Behaviour among College Students in Dhemaji District, Assam, India

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Abstract

The study examined the environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour of college students in Dhemaji District, Assam. A descriptive survey method was adopted, and data were collected from 150 undergraduate students through standardized questionnaires. The findings revealed that most students possessed moderate environmental awareness and average pro-environmental behaviour. No significant differences were found in pro-environmental behaviour with respect to gender and stream. Further, no significant relationship was observed between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour. The study highlights that awareness alone may not lead to responsible environmental actions and emphasizes the need for practical environmental education programmes to promote sustainable behaviour among students.

Index words: Environmental Awareness, Pro-Environmental Behaviour, College Students, Dhemaji.

Introduction

Environmental sustainability has become a major concern in contemporary society because ecological degradation directly affects human health, livelihood and long-term development. Problems such as pollution, deforestation, soil erosion, floods and overuse of natural resources have increased the importance of environmental education. Environmental awareness refers to the understanding of environmental issues, while pro-environmental behaviour refers to the actions undertaken to protect and preserve the environment. College students form an important section of society because they are future professionals, decision-makers and community leaders. Their awareness and behaviour regarding environmental issues can influence the sustainability of families, institutions and local communities. In a district such as Dhemaji, Assam, where environmental vulnerability is high, it becomes especially important to examine how students understand and respond to environmental concerns.

Significance of the study

This study is significant because it provides evidence regarding the environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour of college students in Dhemaji District. It also examines

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whether awareness is translated into behaviour, which is a key concern in environmental education. The findings may help colleges, educators and policymakers design effective programmes for developing environmentally responsible behaviour among students. The study also adds to the limited body of literature on environmental behaviour in the Assamese context.

Review of related literature

Earlier studies show that environmental awareness does not always lead to environmentally responsible action. Krajhanzl (2010) reported that environmental values, attitudes and awareness influence behaviour, but awareness alone may not guarantee action. Kumari (2018) found that students with higher environmental awareness showed better environmental practices. Pahpi and Sawitri (2018) also reported a positive relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour among adolescents. Studies from Assam reveal similar patterns. Kalita and Haloi (2020) found that most students possessed moderate levels of environmental awareness and behaviour and recommended more practical environmental activities. Mahanta and Borah (2016) stressed the importance of environmental education in building ecological consciousness. Ture and Ganesh (2018) emphasized that responsibility and commitment are crucial for converting awareness into action. These studies indicate that awareness may be necessary, but it is not sufficient on its own to ensure behaviour change.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the environmental awareness of college students of Dhemaji District.
2. To study the pro-environmental behaviour of college students of Dhemaji District.
3. To compare the pro-environmental behaviour of students with respect to gender.
4. To compare the pro-environmental behaviour of students with respect to stream.
5. To examine the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour.
6. To examine the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour with respect to gender.
7. To examine the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour with respect to stream.

Hypotheses H01: There is no significant difference in pro-environmental behaviour between male and female students.

H02: There is no significant difference in pro-environmental behaviour among Arts, Science and Commerce students.

H03: There is no significant relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour.

H04: There is no significant relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour with respect to gender.

H05: There is no significant relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour with respect to stream.

Methodology The descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. The population comprised undergraduate students studying in provincialised colleges of Dhemaji District, Assam. A sample of 150 students was selected through simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using an Environmental Awareness Questionnaire and a Pro-Environmental Behaviour Questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using percentage analysis, the Mann-Whitney U test and the chi-square test. These methods were appropriate for describing the pattern of responses and examining whether significant differences or relationships existed between the variables under study.

Analysis and Interpretation

Objective-1 To study the environmental awareness of college students of Dhemaji District.

Table-1 Environmental Awareness of College Students of Dhemaji District

Level of Environmental Awareness	Number of Students	Percentage
Aware	62	41.33
Less Aware	48	32.00
Not Aware	40	26.67
Total	150	100.00

The table shows that most students are in the aware category of environmental awareness. This indicates that a relatively large proportion of the students have a better understanding of environmental issues.

Objective-2 To study the pro-environmental behaviour of college students of Dhemaji District.

Table-2 Pro-Environmental Behaviour of College Students of Dhemaji District

Level of Pro-Environmental Behaviour	Number of Students	Percentage
Very Good	18	12.00
Good	42	28.00
Average	62	41.33
Poor	28	18.67
Total	150	100.00

The table indicates that the majority of students are in the average category of pro-environmental behaviour. This suggests that most students show moderate environmental behaviour rather than highly responsible behaviour.

Objective- 3 To compare the pro-environmental behaviour of students with respect to gender.

Table-3 Pro-Environmental Behaviour with Respect to Gender

Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. Value
Male	75	73.62	1370.500	0.702
Female	75	77.38		

The Mann-Whitney U test shows no significant difference in pro-environmental behaviour between male and female students. This supports the null hypothesis that gender does not have a meaningful effect on pro-environmental behaviour in this study.

Objective-4 To compare the pro-environmental behaviour of students with respect to stream.

Table-4 Pro-Environmental Behaviour with Respect to Stream

Stream	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Sig. Value
Arts	50	72.90	1.284	2	0.526
Science	50	76.45			
Commerce	50	76.65			

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicates that there is no significant difference in pro-environmental behaviour among Arts, Science, and Commerce students. This suggests that stream of study was not an important factor in shaping students' environmental behaviour.

Objective-5 To examine the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour.

Table-5 Relationship between Environmental Awareness and Pro-Environmental Behaviour

Variable	N	df	χ^2 Value	Sig. Value
Environmental Awareness and Pro-Environmental Behaviour	150	6	8.214	0.222

Since the significance value is greater than 0.05, the result is not significant. This means there is no meaningful relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour among the students.

Objective-6 To examine the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour with respect to gender.

Table-6 Relationship between Environmental Awareness and Pro-Environmental Behaviour with respect to Gender

Gender	N	df	χ^2 Value	Sig. Value
Male	75	6	4.912	0.555
Female	75	6	5.438	0.489

The chi-square results show no significant relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour for either male or female students. This indicates that gender does not significantly influence the relationship between awareness and behaviour.

Objective-7 To examine the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour with respect to stream.

Table-7 Relationship between Environmental Awareness and Pro-Environmental Behaviour with respect to Streams

Stream	N	df	χ^2 Value	Sig. Value
Arts	50	6	2.874	0.823
Science	50	6	3.416	0.755
Commerce	50	6	3.029	0.803

The chi-square results show that environmental awareness is not significantly related to pro-environmental behaviour in any of the three streams. This suggests that stream-wise academic differences do not affect the relationship between environmental awareness and behaviour.

Findings

- Most college students possessed moderate levels of environmental awareness.
- The majority of students exhibited average levels of pro-environmental behaviour.
- No significant difference was found between male and female students regarding pro-environmental behaviour.
- No significant difference was observed among Arts, Science, and Commerce students regarding pro-environmental behaviour.

- Environmental awareness was not significantly related to pro-environmental behaviour.
- Gender did not significantly influence the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour.
- Stream did not significantly influence the relationship between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour.

Discussion

The findings indicate that environmental awareness does not automatically lead to pro-environmental action. This suggests that students may understand environmental issues but may not consistently translate that understanding into behaviour. A possible explanation is that habits, convenience, peer influence and lack of institutional reinforcement may prevent awareness from becoming practice. The absence of significant differences by gender and stream suggests that environmental behaviour is likely influenced by common contextual factors rather than demographic or academic differences. This means that environmental education programmes should be broad-based and practical in nature. Activities such as recycling campaigns, tree plantation, waste segregation and eco-club participation may help students develop stronger environmental commitment. These results also support the idea that environmental education should not remain limited to classroom teaching. Instead, it should provide opportunities for experiential learning and community involvement. Behavioural change is more likely when knowledge is reinforced through action and repeated practice.

Educational Implications

The study has several implications for college education. First, environmental education should go beyond textbook knowledge and include practical, activity-based learning. Colleges can strengthen student behaviour through eco-clubs, plantation drives, clean-up campaigns, waste-management projects and campus sustainability programmes. Second, since awareness alone did not show a significant relationship with behaviour, educational institutions should focus on behaviour formation, not just information transmission. Teachers should encourage students to connect environmental concepts with daily habits such as saving water, reducing plastic use, conserving electricity and proper disposal of waste. Third, because no meaningful differences were found by gender or stream, these programmes should be designed for all students rather than for a particular subgroup. A whole-campus approach is likely to be more effective than stream-specific or gender-specific intervention alone. Finally, the findings suggest that colleges in Dhemaji District should collaborate with local communities and environmental agencies to create real-life environmental engagement. Such partnerships can help students move from awareness to responsibility and from responsibility to action.

Conclusion

The study concludes that college students in Dhemaji District have a moderate level of environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour, but awareness does not

necessarily lead to action. No significant differences were found in pro-environmental behaviour by gender or stream and no significant relationship was observed between environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour. These findings highlight the need for environmental education that is practical, participatory and focused on real-life behaviour change. Colleges should therefore provide students with more opportunities to engage in environmental activities so that awareness can be converted into responsible action

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