

## **BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

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**Abstract:** Our earth is experiencing numerous environmental issues, which should be handled at the individual and global levels. Pakistan is a country having over 58% of the youth population is. This research aimed to examine the attitude of university students toward ecological issues and their behavioral practices toward ecological sustainability. The universe for this study was the university students and the population was the students studying in universities of the province of Punjab. For this investigation, information was gathered from 17 universities. The sample consisted of 130 students from different universities and different departments. 60% of students were female and 40% were male. Results showed that the students have a positive attitude and behavior regarding the environment. Findings also resulted that female university students are more sensitive toward the environment than male ones. University students are willing to study environmental courses and they want universities should offer environmental courses and programs.

**Keywords:** Environmental education, environmental attitude, and behavior, environmental issues

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## **Introduction**

From the beginning of humanity on the planet, human beings are in search of better living standards through industrialization and advancement in technology. Human activities have brought problems to the environment through different activities. During the last thirty years, environmental issues have gained much importance and are under discussion worldwide. The world is confronting major ecological issues like deforestation, loss of biodiversity, ozone exhaustion, worldwide environmental change, contamination, and overutilization of natural assets. Long-term consequences may affect human life which is why it is very important to protect and sustain our environment. (Budak, 2005)

Awareness of environmental issues has gained much attention at the international level. Many debates and discussions are being carried out at local and global levels to find out the applicable solutions and approaches to solve an environmental problem. Pakistan is among developing countries; development is still in progress and increasing rapidly, especially in the technological field and industrial fields. Even though ecological issues are highlighted in many policies and regulations and discussed on many platforms, when it comes to actions the right values toward the environment are always neglected. The young generation is the group that will determine the future of Pakistan, are not properly aware of environmental sustainability. Future generations of Pakistan and all over the world, need to increase their information and understanding about environmental problems

and their sustainability and be aware of the world's ongoing situation.

The world these days portrays several doomsday scenarios. Numerous societies especially European Union set forward different projects and try to take safety measures so that people could live in a healthier environment. Today, too many arrangements taken to secure the natural environment and one of them is environmental education. Education regarding the environment is comprised of all society. In such a manner, environmental training could be described as creating environmental mindfulness in all societies, providing positive and permanent behavioral alterations towards the environment and protecting historical, natural, cultural, socio-aesthetic values, and provision of active participation of the people that have taken place for solving ecological problems. Education and awareness regarding the protection of nature and natural assets is the core concern of ecological education. The point of education for the protection of the environment is to make humans not only aware of the environmental settings but also to make them volunteers by increasing their capacities on environmental issues. The negative strategy of the specialization of undergraduates in a particular field in advanced education is that they become strangers to the impression of any social issue taken by the public. Likewise, educated students will satisfy a specific task, however; they will vanish from abilities and talents of tackling very problematic issues that society faces.

Especially, to have accomplishment in studies of solving environmental issues the importance of tending primarily to education among disciplines as well as specific fields in higher education (Aslanova, 2018).

There is a difference between verbal and actual commitment to environmental issues and we can conceptualize the attitude of undergraduates toward the human environment as their verbal commitment and actual actions, motivation, and its effects concerning nature and human ecological problems. Attitude is a complex mental perception and it emerges from the integration of the belief and values system of an individual. (Harun, 2011). A few analysts contend that formal ecological education encourages students to grow more great mentalities towards environmental current conditions. Environmental Education (EE) and Consciousness in Pakistani Society applicable solutions and approaches to solve an environmental problem. Pakistan is among developing countries; development is still in progress and increasing rapidly, especially in the technological field and industrial fields. Even though ecological issues are highlighted in many policies and regulations and discussed on many platforms, when it comes to actions the right values toward the environment are always neglected. The young generation is the group that will determine the future of Pakistan, are not properly aware of environmental sustainability. Future generations of Pakistan and all over the world, need to increase their information and understanding about environmental problems

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It is essential to consider that in Pakistan, environmental education is not instructed as a different or particular subject. Notwithstanding, basic concepts of EE like vitality, greenhouse effect, contamination, microorganism, reusing of resources, and environment have been fused in the science educational plan at the school and school level. There is little attempt to make associations between ecological awareness and education at the school and university levels. Besides that, there is an absence of guidelines for teachers in Pakistan to teach about

environmental issues to not only create mindfulness and develop mentalities, interests, and aptitudes among undergraduates yet additionally to outfit undergraduates with procedures to make a move to spare and continue the world's regular assets and to manage natural issues (Yousuf. and Bhutta, 2012).

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the attitude and the actual conduct of university students toward environmental issues?
2. Do the environmental attitude and behavior of university students in Pakistan differ based on their gender?
3. What is the association between the level of knowledge of university students and their attitude toward the environment?
4. Is there any difference between the environmental attitude and behavior of students studying in different universities?

### **Hypothesis**

$H_1$ : There is a significant association between age and behavior of the university students towards environmental issues.

$H_2$ : There is a significant relationship between gender and the attitude of university students toward environmental issues.

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the mentalities (attitudes) and behavior of university students towards the habitat in Pakistan.
2. To find out the differences in attitude and behavior towards the environment among university students about their gender.
3. To analyze differences in behavior and attitude of the understudies of different universities and faculties towards the environment.
4. To assess the level of information (knowledge) about the environment and the attitude of the students towards environmental issues.

### **Materials and Methods**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the behavior and attitude of university students toward environmental issues. Likewise, I selected the quantitative approach, which appeared to be generally suitable as it aims to distinguish what a situation resembles and how it is going. This study employed the quantitative research design: data is collected through a structured mailed questionnaire from the respondents on the variables of the study. In the process of sampling, a small set of respondents is selected from the large population. In this study, 130 respondents are selected through a convenient sampling technique. Students were conveniently selected to gather data about the research. The process of data analysis used computer software named Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Using this software, the data was analyzed through the computer and results

are computed through frequencies and percentage scores. The demographic characteristics of Respondents are given below:

**Table 1 Demographic Variables of Respondents**

| Variables                                       | Frequency | %age  |
|---|-----------|-------|
| <b>Gender</b>                                   |           |       |
| Male  | 52        | 40%   |
| Female  | 78        | 60%   |
| <b>Age</b>                                      |           |       |
| 18-20   | 33        | 33%   |
| 21-23   | 67        | 51.6% |
| 24-26   | 18        | 13.8% |
| 26 above  | 2         | 6%    |
| <b>University</b>                               |           |       |
| AIOU  | 1         | .8    |
| Allama Iqbal Medical College Lahore             | 1         | .8    |
| COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad Campus | 1         | .8    |
| COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus     | 3         | 2.3   |
| GCU Faisalabad                                  | 5         | 3.8   |
| KFUEIT Rahim Yar Khan                           | 3         | 2.3   |
| Lahore Medical & Dental College                 | 1         | .8    |

|   |    |      |
|---|----|------|
| Punjab University Lahore                                    | 14 | 10.8 |
| Sargodha University   | 85 | 65.4 |
| The Islamic University of Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan Campus | 1  | .8   |
| UMT Lahore  | 4  | 3.1  |
| The University of Agriculture Faisalabad                    | 2  | 1.5  |
| University of Education                                     | 1  | .8   |
| University of Education JBD Campus                          | 1  | .8   |
| University of Karachi                                       | 1  | .8   |
| University of Lahore  | 3  | 2.3  |
| Virtual University  | 3  | 2.3  |
| <b>Department</b>   |    |      |
| Law & Arts  | 22 | 17.0 |
| Engineering   | 7  | 5.4  |
| Earth and Environmental Sciences                            | 13 | 10.0 |
| Food Science and Nutrition                                  | 2  | 1.5  |
| IT and Computer Science                                     | 5  | 3.9  |

|                                  |    |      |
|----------------------------------|----|------|
| Business and Management Sciences | 5  | 3.9  |
| Natural Sciences                 | 5  | 3.9  |
| Medical and Health Sciences      | 15 | 9.3  |
| Social Sciences                  | 50 | 37.8 |
| Sports Sciences                  | 2  | 1.5  |
| <b>Study Program</b>             |    |      |
| B.A/B.Sc.                        | 1  | .8   |
| BS                               | 88 | 67.7 |
| M.A/M.Sc.                        | 21 | 16.2 |
| M.Phil.                          | 3  | 2.3  |
| Others                           | 15 | 11.5 |
| <b>Residence</b>                 |    |      |
| Rural                            | 62 | 47.7 |
| Urban                            | 68 | 52.3 |

Table 1 reflects about demographic variables of respondents. There were 78 female respondents, which is 60% of the total, and 52 male respondents which are 40% of the total. Our age group of respondents falls into 18-29 years. 22 years old respondents are on the top with several 30 in total which is 23.1% of the total 130 respondents. We have only 1 respondent of age 29 and 28. The respondents of this study belong to 17 different universities. 16 universities in total are in Punjab and only one is in Sindh province. Sargodha University has the highest number of responses 85 out of a total of 130 which is 65.4 of the total responses. Punjab University is the second number with 14 responses which is 14.8 of the total. A total of eight universities have the lowest response, which is only 1 with 0.8%. Respondents were studying in 10

different faculties as shown in the table. The faculty of Social Sciences is at the top with 50 responses which are 37.8% of the total. Law and Arts are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> number with 22 responses which is 17.0% of the total. Other faculties have lesser responses with respect. 88 respondents are studying in the BS program which is 67.7% and M.A/M.Sc. The category has the second number of respondents which is 16.2%. B.A/B.Sc. program has the least number of 1 which is 0.8% of the total. The number of respondents who are studying in other departments is 15 which is 11.5% of the total. 68 respondents belong to urban setup with 52.3% of the total. 62 respondents live in rural areas that are 47.7% of the total.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

Since the tabulated significant value (0.737) is greater than pre supposed significant value (0.05) therefore null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the behavior of the respondents toward environmental issues

*Table 2: H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant association between age and behavior of university students towards environmental issues...*

|                    | Value                   | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 43.30<br>6 <sup>a</sup> | 50 | .737                              |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 36.27<br>3              | 50 | .927                              |
| N of Valid Cases   | 130                     |    |                                   |

Since the tabulated significant value (0.444) is greater than pre supposed significant value (0.05) therefore null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, we conclude that there is a significant relationship between gender and the behavior and attitude of the respondents toward environmental issues. Any student of university has the privilege and the commitment to get minimum environmental knowledge, anyway rudimentary this is. As it were, natural instruction at the university ought not to be restricted to a couple of selected degrees, anyway a significant number of these could deliver experts, and analysts committed altogether to the earth. The University does not just need to attempt to create specialists, professionals and researchers prepared in nature, yet additionally people that know about the need to acknowledge and regard it.

### **Results and Discussions**

One of the essential drivers of ecological debasement in a nation could be the fast

*Table 3: H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between gender and the attitude of university students toward environmental issues.*

|                    | Value                  | Df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 4.77<br>1 <sup>a</sup> | 5  | .444                              |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 5.41<br>8              | 5  | .367                              |
| N of Valid Cases   | 130                    |    |                                   |

development of the populace, which influences directly the regular assets and environment. Populace development squeezes land, land debasement, woods, environment demolition, and loss of biodiversity. Changing utilization patterns of human beings have led to rising interest in energy. The results of rapid population growth and consumption patterns are air contamination, global warming, global environmental change, water shortage, water contamination, exhaustion of the ozone layer, desertification, deforestation, loss of the planet's biological diversity, and eruptions of wastes and chemicals. These are all major ecological problems that touch every country and directly affect the lives and health of their populace. (Anand, 2013)

The report of Pakistan Environment and Climate Change Outlook (ECCO) 2013 presents that due to climate change and ecological degradation food, freshwater and the livelihoods of the Pakistani people are under threat. This report reveals that there are some primary factors to undermine progress toward environmental sustainability in Pakistan. These factors are inadequate capacity, unsustainable consumption, and production, poverty, and inequity. (UNEP, 2013)

Helping all understudies, paying little mind to the extent that they will get, to get adequate information to arrive at a judicious comprehension of ecological issues to empower them. To set up their affectability in such a manner and to receive individual positions based on willfully acknowledged qualities and with a basic and free soul of

judgment; ought to be a fundamental motivation behind the university environmental education. (Ibanez et al. 2017). The present study was conducted to explore the behavior ad attitude of university students toward environmental issues in Pakistan. 60% of the surveyed students were female and 40% were male. The average age of the respondents was about 23.1 years. More than half of the students 52.3% have resided in urban areas while 47.7% were in rural settings. Students' knowledge, behavior, and attitude were measured by the responses on a Likert-type scale. Each of the values was from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

This study provides information about the environmental perception of university students in Pakistan. The samples for this study were chosen from 17 different universities using a convenient sampling technique. Data was collected from those who are easily accessible. The outcomes of the investigation uphold the discoveries of the previous writing, which shows that understudies are growing more inspirational attitudes about the need to minimize environmental issues (Al-Rabaani& Al-Mekhlafi, 2009).

The findings of this study indicated positive behavior and attitude of university students towards environmental issues. This is promising, indicating that youngsters are getting more aware of and are demonstrating an additional understanding of the threat confronting our planetary environment and their role in controlling ecological debasement

and its results. Students are willing to study environmental courses in Pakistan and they demand to universities to offer environmental programs. Ozden (2008) also concluded that Female students are more sensitive to the environment and their practices are safer for the environment than the male ones. Overall results show that the students are aware of the sensitivity of environmental degradation.

Descriptive findings of this investigation show that there were critical contrasts in the ecological attitude and environmentally responsible practices among the university students studying the ecological sciences and students that did not consider the course. The students in the course of environmental sciences present +ve ecological mentalities and pro-environmental conduct (Budak et al., 2005). Discoveries likewise demonstrate that female undergraduates have higher positive ecological perspectives and practices than male undergraduates. These outcomes uphold past investigations, which saw that students who had ecological training or concentrated in any environmental course were more aware of ecological attitudes than different undergraduates were (.

There are numerous elements influencing sensibility and awareness about ecological problems. It was attempted to research the sensibility and awareness of Turkish undergraduate tutors regarding four components of the questionnaire (Akkor & Gunduz, 2017). These measurements have various items in the poll. It might be imagined that they portray the awareness and attitude of Turkish student

instructors. Female undergraduate educators had a more uplifting attitude in all components of environmental perspectives. This outcome is predictable with the past writings and positive regarding the function of female undergraduate instructors as mother-student tutors (Sakari et al., 2013).

### **Conclusion**

These days, ecological issues have expanded quickly. At that point, educating individuals is the principal approach to reducing natural issues by creating consciousness and reasonableness toward the environment. Education is a long-life measure, so it is pivotal to teach subjects about the environment starting from pre-school and proceeding to higher degrees, etc. Inside the context of higher education, it is by all accounts more significant because students at universities today will drive our life later on. Some of them might be engineers in huge industrial zones or authoritative staff in private and public spots later on as direct policymakers or applying pressure on strategy creators in reducing ecological issues. Numerous variables could influence them, environmental education could be one of the most significant variables that influence their behavior and attitudes toward the environment. Consequently, universities for all programs ought to give educational programs covering ecological science to nurture consciousness and sensitive alumni students toward the natural or fabricated environment.

## **Recommendations**

After this study, the researcher recommends that:

- There ought to be increased awareness-raising avenues on ecological education for the general population of Pakistan.
- Environmental education contents should be brought into the general curriculum for studies in tertiary institutions in the country.
- Research grants and scholarship opportunities should be provided for instructors and understudies for environmental research in the country.
- There should be a full and effective usage of environmental education in the school system of Pakistan.

## **Limitations**

There were so many **limitations** and difficulties while conducting this research. The pandemic situation was a major limitation and because of that, data was collected through mailed questionnaires. We forward the questionnaire to more than 1200 students through Facebook, WhatsApp, and Gmail but received just 130 responses. We were unable to give them incentives or gifts so, financial limitations were also there.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

For these Research Papers authors hold no conflict of Interest with any individual, Group, or organization. This paper was not sent anywhere for any type of publishing process.

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