

A Comparative Study of Environmental Awareness among Secondary School Students in Government and Private Schools in Uttar Dinajpur District of West Bengal

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Abstract: *Abstract: Environmental degradation has emerged as one of the most critical challenges confronting contemporary society. Issues such as air and water pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, climate change, depletion of natural resources, improper waste disposal and unsustainable consumption have created an urgent need to develop environmental awareness among younger generations. Schools have a particularly important role in this process because secondary school students are at a formative stage of intellectual, social and behavioural development. Environmental awareness at this stage can influence not only students' understanding of environmental problems but also their attitudes towards conservation and their willingness to participate in environmentally responsible practices. Against this background, the present study proposes to examine and compare the level of environmental awareness among secondary school students studying in government and private schools in Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal.*

The study adopts a descriptive-comparative research design. For the proposed study, secondary school students of Classes IX and X constitute the target population. A sample of 200 students, comprising 100 students from government schools and 100 students from private schools, may be selected through stratified random sampling from selected schools of Uttar Dinajpur district. Environmental awareness may be assessed through a standardized environmental awareness scale covering major areas such as causes of pollution, conservation of soil, forests and air, energy conservation, human health, and wildlife conservation. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics such as the independent-samples t-test may be employed.

The proposed analysis is expected to provide evidence regarding whether school management is associated with differences in environmental awareness. A model analysis presented in this paper indicates a higher mean environmental-awareness score among private-school students than government-school students. However, the interpretation suggests that school type alone should not be treated as the sole determinant of environmental awareness; exposure to environmental activities, teaching-learning practices, family background and opportunities for experiential environmental education may also contribute. The study is particularly significant because earlier work in North Bengal identified weaknesses in practical and field-based environmental education, including in Uttar Dinajpur. The study therefore recommends strengthening activity-based environmental education, field observation, school environmental clubs, waste-management activities, plantation programmes and locally relevant environmental projects in both government and private schools.

Keywords: Environmental awareness, secondary school students, government schools, private schools, environmental education, Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal, comparative study.