

A Study of Environmental Attitude of Secondary School Students in Relation to their Mass Media Exposure

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ABSTRACT

The present study entitled “A Study of Environmental Attitude of Secondary School Students in Relation to their Mass Media Exposure” was undertaken to examine the relationship between environmental attitude and mass media exposure and to identify differences in environmental attitude with respect to sex and locality. The study employed the descriptive survey method and was conducted on a sample of 163 secondary school students selected from Bangalore district through random sampling. Standardized tools, namely the Environmental Attitude Scale and Mass Media Exposure Scale, were used for data collection. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, coefficient of correlation and ‘t’ test were applied for analysis. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between environmental attitude and mass media exposure, indicating that higher media exposure contributes to better environmental attitudes. No significant difference was found between boys and girls, whereas a significant difference was observed between urban and rural students, with rural students showing more positive environmental attitudes. The study highlights the important role of mass media and educational experiences in developing environmental awareness and suggests strengthening environmental education programmes to promote responsible environmental behavior among students.

Keywords: Environmental Attitude, Mass Media Exposure, Environmental Education, Secondary School Students, Environmental Awareness.

I. Introduction

Environmental degradation, climate change, depletion of natural resources and pollution has become serious global concerns that demand immediate attention and collective responsibility. Protecting and restoring the environment requires not only policies and regulations but also the development of positive environmental attitudes among individuals from an early age. Education plays a significant role in changing knowledge, values and behaviors related to environmental conservation. Formal education systems help students acquire scientific understanding and awareness of environmental issues, while environmental education encourages responsible behavior toward sustainable development. Studies have shown that environmental education positively influences pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors among learners (Aminrad et al., 2010; Hassan & Ratnakar, 2012).

Along with schools, mass media has emerged as a powerful agent of socialization that influences people’s perceptions, beliefs and actions. Media platforms such as television, radio, newspapers and the internet provide information about environmental problems, conservation strategies and sustainable practices to a wide audience. Mass media campaigns effectively raise awareness and promote behavior change across populations (Wakefield, Loken & Hornik, 2010). However, media exposure may also change values and lifestyles that are not always environmentally responsible (Ura, 2006; Richards, 2010). Thus, media both supports and hinder environmental consciousness depending on the nature of content and exposure.

Secondary school students represent the future citizens and decision-makers of society. Developing positive environmental attitudes at this stage is crucial, as adolescents are highly influenced by both educational institutions and mass media. Understanding how mass media exposure relates to students’

environmental attitudes helps to educators and policymakers design effective strategies that integrate environmental education with responsible media use. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the environmental attitude of secondary school students in relation to their mass media exposure.

II. Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because it highlights the combined role of formal education and mass media in changing environmental awareness and attitudes among secondary school students, who are future nation builders. As mass media has become a major source of information and influence, understanding its impact on students' environmental attitudes will help educators, curriculum planners and policymakers design effective environmental education programmes and media-based awareness strategies. The findings may assist schools in integrating media resources for conservation education, guide the development of responsible media content and contribute to strengthening environmental values and sustainable behaviors among young learners.

III. Literature Cited

Several studies have examined environmental awareness and attitudes among students and teachers. Sony Kumari et al. (2012) found that teachers possessed positive attitudes toward environmental education and media and personal reading were important sources of environmental information. Similarly, Kulasekara Perumal Pillai (2012) reported significant differences in environmental awareness among higher secondary students based on gender, locality and academic stream. Hassan and Ratnakar (2012) revealed a positive relationship between environmental awareness and scientific attitude, with science students showing higher awareness levels. These studies emphasize the importance of education in developing environmental knowledge and attitudes.

Research has also explored environmental attitudes in relation to responsible behavior. Lahiri (2011) found a low correlation between environmental attitude and responsible environmental behavior among pupil teachers, suggesting the need for improved training programmes. Aminrad et al. (2010) observed moderate environmental awareness and high environmental attitude among university students and concluded that media exposure positively influenced both awareness and attitudes. Smith (2009) reported that environmental education programmes increased children's knowledge and maintained positive attitudes, though behavioral change was limited. These findings suggest that awareness and attitude development require both instructional and experiential support.

Studies related to mass media indicate its strong influence on values and behavior. Kapoor (2011) emphasized that television and radio play a significant role in spreading environmental awareness among rural populations. Richards (2010) examined media's influence on adolescents' values and found that different types of media affect behaviors differently, while parental guidance moderate negative effects. Wakefield, Loken and Hornik (2010) concluded that mass media campaigns effectively changes public behavior when supported by appropriate strategies and services. These studies demonstrate the persuasive potential of media in changing social and environmental consciousness.

Although many studies have investigated environmental awareness and attitudes or examined the role of mass media independently, very few studies have specifically explored the relationship between mass media exposure and environmental attitudes among secondary school students. Most research focuses either on teachers, university students or rural populations rather than adolescents at the secondary level. Therefore, there is a need for empirical research to understand how mass media exposure influences the environmental attitudes of secondary school students. The present study attempts to fill this gap by examining the relationship between these two variables.

IV. Statement of the Problem

Environmental degradation has become a major global concern and developing positive environmental attitudes among young learners is essential for sustainable development. Schools play an important role in imparting environmental education, while mass media such as television, radio, newspapers and the internet serve as powerful tools in spreading environmental awareness and influencing students' perceptions and behaviors. Secondary school students, being highly receptive to both formal education and media exposure, may develop their environmental attitudes through these sources. However, the extent to which mass media exposure influences environmental attitude and whether such attitudes differ based on demographic factors like sex and locality remain unclear. Hence, the present study is stated as: **"A Study of Environmental Attitude of Secondary School Students in relation to their Mass Media Exposure."**

V. Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To find out the relationship between environmental attitude and mass media exposure of secondary school students.
2. To study the difference in environmental attitude between boys and girls of secondary school students.
3. To study the difference in environmental attitude between urban and rural secondary school students.

VI. Hypotheses

Based on the objectives, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant relationship between environmental attitude and mass media exposure of secondary school students.
2. There is no significant difference in environmental attitude between boys and girls of secondary school students.
3. There is no significant difference in environmental attitude between urban and rural secondary school students.

VII. Methodology

The present study adopted the descriptive survey method to investigate the environmental attitude of secondary school students in relation to their mass media exposure. The study was conducted on secondary school students studying in Bangalore district. The population consisted of all secondary school students of the district, from which a sample of 163 students was selected using random sampling technique to ensure fair representation. The variables considered in the study were environmental attitude and mass media exposure. Environmental attitude served as the dependent variable, while mass media exposure was treated as the independent variable. The Environmental Attitude Scale developed by Dr. Haseen Taj and the Mass Media Exposure Scale developed by Dr. M. Narayanaswamy and Dr. Haseen Taj were used for data collection. The tools were administered personally to the students and the responses were scored according to the scoring keys provided in the manuals. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, coefficient of correlation to determine the relationship between variables and 't' test to find differences between groups based on sex and locality. The results were interpreted in the light of the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

VIII. Analysis of Data and Interpretation

The data collected from 163 secondary school students were analyzed to examine the relationship between Environmental Attitude and Mass Media Exposure and to identify differences in environmental attitude with respect to sex and locality. Statistical techniques such as the coefficient of correlation and the 't' test were employed. The coefficient of correlation was used to determine the relationship between the two variables, while the 't' test was applied to compare group differences. The results are presented and interpreted below.

Section-I: Coefficient of Correlation

Table-1: Relationship between Environmental Attitude and Mass Media Exposure

Variables	N	df (N-2)	r-value	Level of Significance
Environmental Attitude and Mass Media Exposure	163	161	0.590**	(Significant at 0.01 level)

Table-1 shows the relationship between environmental attitude and mass media exposure among secondary school students. The calculated 'r' value is 0.590, which indicates a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that the relationship is statistically significant. This means that students who have higher exposure to mass media tend to exhibit more positive environmental attitudes. Therefore, mass media plays an important role in influencing environmental attitudes among students.

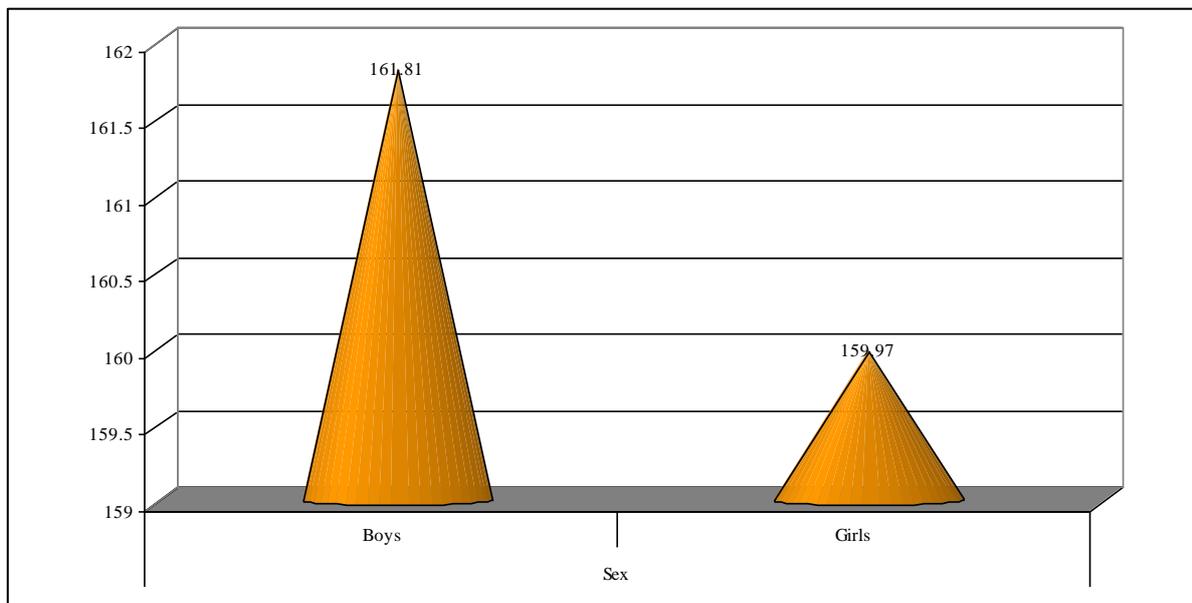
Section-II: 't' Test Analysis

Table-2: Difference in Environmental Attitude between Boys and Girls

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of Significance
Sex	Boys	84	161.81	12.93	0.84	NS
	Girls	79	159.97	14.72		

NS - Not Significant

Table-2 presents the comparison of environmental attitude scores between boys and girls. The mean score of boys (161.81) is slightly higher than that of girls (159.97). However, the obtained 't' value of 0.84 is not significant, indicating that the difference between boys and girls is statistically insignificant. Hence, it was concluded that sex does not have a significant influence on the environmental attitude of secondary school students. Both boys and girls possess similar levels of environmental attitude.



Graph-1: Comparison of Environmental Attitude scores between boys and girls

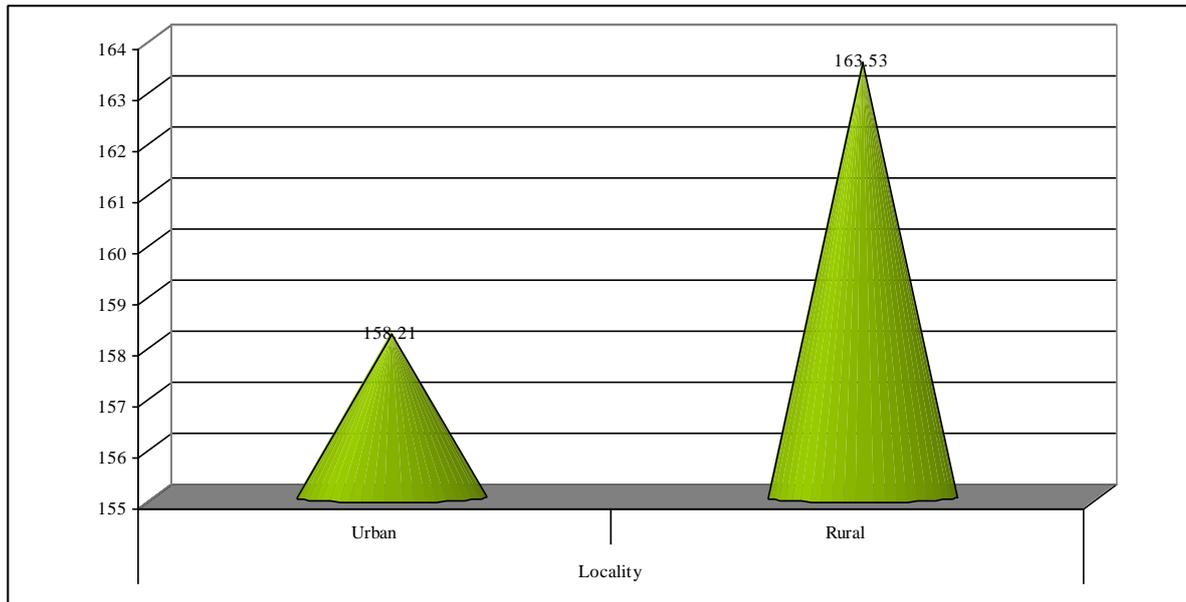
Table-3: Difference in Environmental Attitude between Urban and Rural Students

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of Significance
Locality	Urban	80	158.21	11.91	2.50	*
	Rural	83	163.53	15.04		

Significant at 0.05 level

Table-3 shows the difference in environmental attitude between students from urban and rural schools. The mean score of rural students (163.53) is higher than that of urban students (158.21). The calculated 't' value of 2.50 is significant at the 0.05 level, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two

groups. This result suggests that rural students possess a more positive environmental attitude than urban students, possibly due to their closer interaction with nature and environmental resources.



Graph-2: Comparison of Environmental Attitude scores between students from urban and rural schools.

The statistical analysis reveals that mass media exposure has a significant positive relationship with environmental attitude. While sex does not influence environmental attitude, locality shows a significant effect, with rural students demonstrating higher environmental concern than urban students. These findings highlight the importance of mass media and environmental context in changing students' environmental attitudes.

IX. Major Findings

The present study revealed a significant positive relationship between environmental attitude and mass media exposure among secondary school students. The coefficient of correlation showed a moderate positive correlation, indicating that students who are more exposed to mass media tend to develop more favorable attitudes toward environmental conservation. The analysis of differences based on sex showed no significant difference between boys and girls in their environmental attitudes, suggesting that both groups possess similar levels of awareness and concern for environmental issues. However, a significant difference was observed based on locality, where rural students demonstrated higher environmental attitude scores than urban students. This indicates that the living environment and direct interaction with nature may influence students' environmental sensitivity.

X. Discussion of Results

The findings of the present study support earlier research that highlights the positive role of media and education in changing environmental attitudes. The significant positive relationship between mass media exposure and environmental attitude is consistent with the findings of Aminrad et al. (2010), who reported that media positively influenced students' environmental awareness and attitudes. Similarly, Kapoor (2011) emphasized that television and radio play a crucial role in spreading environmental information among rural populations. Wakefield, Loken and Hornik (2010) also concluded that mass media campaigns bring about

positive behavioral changes at the population level. Thus, the current study confirms that mass media serves as an effective tool for promoting environmental consciousness among adolescents.

The finding that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in environmental attitude aligns with the results of Sony Kumari et al. (2012), who observed generally positive environmental attitudes among educators irrespective of demographic differences. It suggests that environmental education and awareness are equally accessible to both genders in schools today. However, the significant difference observed between rural and urban students supports the findings of Kulasekara Perumal Pillai (2012), who reported differences in environmental awareness based on locality. Rural students' closer contact with natural surroundings may provide them with more practical experiences and sensitivity toward environmental protection. Overall, the results indicate that both educational exposure and environmental context influence students' attitudes toward the environment.

XI Conclusion

From the analysis and interpretation of the data, it was concluded that mass media exposure plays a meaningful role in developing positive environmental attitudes among secondary school students. While gender does not significantly affect environmental attitude, locality has a notable influence, with rural students showing greater environmental concern than urban students. Therefore, both media and environmental experiences contribute to changing students' perspectives and responsibilities toward environmental conservation. The study highlights the importance of integrating mass media and environmental education to nurture environmentally responsible citizens.

XII Educational Implications

The findings of the study have several educational implications. Schools should strengthen environmental education programmes and integrate environmental themes into the curriculum across subjects. Teachers effectively utilize mass media tools such as documentaries, educational television programmes, newspapers, radio talks and internet resources to create awareness and develop positive environmental attitudes among students. Environmental campaigns, eco-clubs, field visits and community-based conservation activities should be encouraged to provide experiential learning. Special attention should be given to urban students by creating opportunities for direct interaction with nature to enhance their environmental sensitivity. Thus, combining classroom instruction with mass media and practical experiences significantly improves environmental consciousness among learners.

XIII Suggestions for Further Study

Further studies may be conducted with larger samples covering different districts or states to obtain more generalized results. Comparative studies may be undertaken at different educational levels such as primary, higher secondary and college students. Future research also explores the impact of specific types of mass media, such as social media, television or digital platforms, on environmental attitudes. Additional variables such as socio-economic status, parental influence, school environment and environmental knowledge may

also be included to gain deeper knowledge. Experimental studies may be designed to assess the effectiveness of media-based environmental education programmes in changing attitudes and behaviors.

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