



# Environmental Awareness among Undergraduate Students: A Study in Selected Districts of Upper Assam

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**Abstract:** Environment is everything that surrounds us; i.e., the biotic and abiotic components of our neighbourhood. Environment could be a combination of external, cultural, educational, economic, physical and social conditions that influence growth and development of an organism. Environment is a combination of all external forces that influence the lifespan, character and behaviour of all living organism. All living organisms alternatively influence the environment through their consumption and actions. Environmental awareness is the first step towards environmental conservation. It acts as an eye opener to the various environmental problems. Environmental awareness is not only about having knowledge about the environment. It is also about having the conscious ability to be responsible citizens. Environmental education (EE) is a process in which individuals gain awareness of their environment and acquire knowledge, skills, values, experience, and also the determination. Environmental degradation is the biggest problem in the 21st century. It leads to threatening the existence of people. As such environmental awareness is utmost essential for environment protection and its conservation for better future and makes this earth healthy and clean for a long period of time (Bala, 2016). The main objective of the paper is to find out significant difference in environmental awareness ability among undergraduate students with respect to their gender, locality of the college, and districts.

**Keywords:** *Environmental Awareness, Environmental Education, Undergraduate students, Upper Assam.*

## 1.0 Introduction

Environment is everything that surrounds us; i.e., the biotic and abiotic components of our neighbourhood. Environment could be a combination of external, cultural, educational, economic, physical and social conditions that influence growth and development of an organism. Albert Einstein have defined environment in the most simple and lucid way as “Environment is everything that isn’t me” (Aggarwal, 2005, p.116). The word environment is derived from a French word “environ” which means “encircle” and comprises within it the land, water, flora, fauna, living creatures, forests and everything on the earth. Etymologically, environment refers to “surroundings”. Environment is a combination of all external forces that influence the lifespan, character and behaviour of all living organism. All living organisms alternatively influence the environment through their consumption and actions. The environment in turns interacts with every element on its surface. Environment has a comprehensive terminology consisting of its different physical, biological, social, cultural, economic, political, and other dimensions. These dimensions are interrelated with and independent of each other.

### 1.1 Concept of Environmental Awareness:

Environmental awareness is the first step towards environmental conservation. It acts as an eye opener to the various environmental problems. Environmental awareness is not only about having knowledge about the environment. It is also about having the conscious ability to be responsible citizens. Environmental awareness is the initial step that can help humans to appreciate and value their environment and eventually develop pro-environmental behaviour which can ultimately help to restore our environment. International environmental education programme, UNESCO-UNEP, Hungary (1983), defined environmental awareness as the development and expansion of consciousness, awareness and understanding of the natural environment and its related problems and the effects of man's interaction with nature. Environmental awareness should also develop ecological thinking and ecological consciousness.

**1.2 Concept of Environmental Education:** Education plays a very important role in our life. It does not only give us knowledge but it moulds our character and shapes our personality. Education gives us a clear perception of what is right and what is wrong and encourages man to make the right decisions in life. Looking at the present scenario of our society, where environmental degradation is occurring at a very fast rate we should now turn to education as one of the important weapon for bringing about changes in man's values (ethics) and behaviour towards the environment. Educating the students about environment can help them to become aware of the total environment and its problems, to gain knowledge about its cycle and process, about how humans and the environment interact, about how problems arise, and how they might be resolved.

Environmental education developed as a response to the worldwide concern about the environmental degradation. The two significant documents that have been accepted internationally as the foundation for environmental education are the Belgrade Charter (UNESCO-UNEP, 1975) and the Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO, 1978).

Environmental education (EE) is a process in which individuals gain awareness of their environment and acquire knowledge, skills, values, experience, and also the determination. Environmental education will facilitate them to act-independently and in unison with other members of the society- to resolve present and potential environmental issues (Sungoh, 2002).

### 2.0 Review of Related Literature

**Meena (2022)** Studied on "Environmental awareness ability among college students of different streams of study-arts, science & commerce". The study revealed that there is a significant difference between the two groups i.e. arts and science students & commerce and science students with regard to environmental awareness ability. But there is no significant difference between the arts and commerce students with regard to environmental awareness ability.

**Rajvir Singh (2016)** studied on Environmental Awareness among Undergraduate Students in relation to their Stream of Study and area of residence. The findings of the study revealed that there exists significant difference in the level of environment awareness among undergraduate students in relation to their stream of study. And also the findings revealed that there exists significant difference in the level of environment awareness among undergraduate students in relation to their area of residence.

**Sahidullah (2022)** Studied on "Environmental awareness among High School Students: A study in Majuli District of Assam, India". It was revealed that there exist significant differences in environmental awareness among male and female high school students. Female high school students showed low environmental awareness among them in comparison to their male counterparts.

**Satyanarayana (2021)** conducted a study on "A Study on Environmental Awareness and Attitude of College Students". The study revealed that there is no difference in the environmental awareness between male and female college students. Both male and female have equal awareness towards environment.

**2.1 Significance of the Study:** Environmental degradation is the biggest problem in the 21st century. It leads to threatening the existence of people. As such environmental awareness is utmost essential for environment protection and its conservation for better future and makes this earth healthy and clean for a long period of time

(Bala, 2016). Environmental education is important for looking into environmental issues, problem-solving, and taking action to protect the environment. Educationists play an important role in increasing environmental awareness. In the present era, environmental awareness should be developed among the general public, particularly among youths. To develop environmental awareness, everyone in society must work together at the grassroots level to protect the environment. To promote environmental values in youths, it is important that they understand their responsibilities to the environment and behave in an eco-friendly manner. People today are unaware of their role in the emergence of environmental problems and its negative impact on our environment. It is the function of environmental education to raise public awareness about the environmental issues we face today.

## 2.2 Statement of the Problem

The present study entitled as “Environmental Awareness among Undergraduate Students: A Study in Selected Districts of Upper Assam”.

## 2.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows-

- I.To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to their gender (male and female).
- II.To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to the locality of the college (rural and urban).
- III.To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to Golaghat and Jorhat districts.
- IV.To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to Jorhat and Sivasagar districts.

## 2.4 Hypotheses of the study

The hypotheses of the present study are-

- I.There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to their gender (male and female).
- II.There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to the locality of the college (rural and urban).
- V.There is no significant difference in the level of environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to Golaghat and Jorhat districts.
- VI.There is no significant difference in the level of environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to Jorhat and Sivasagar districts.

## 2.5 Delimitations

The delimitations of the study were-

- The study was delimited to undergraduate students of three districts affiliated to Dibrugarh University of upper Assam.
- The result will be applicable for the study area only.



### 3.0 Methodology and procedure

As per nature of the present study the researcher employed descriptive survey method.

### 3.1 Population

The population of the present study comprises the undergraduate students of Golaghat, Jorhat, and Sivasagar district of Upper Assam.

### 3.2 Sample

The investigator used random sampling technique for selecting 72 samples (male 32 and female 40) of undergraduate students from Golaghat, Jorhat, and Sivasagar districts of upper Assam.

### 3.3 Tools used

In the present study researcher used “Environment Awareness Ability Measure (EAAM)” as the research tool. It was constructed and standardized by Dr. Praveen Kumar Jha in 1998. The scale was adapted to measure undergraduate students' understanding of the importance of the environment in which they live, their knowledge of environmental pollution and its prevention, and their awareness of the efforts made by the government and other non-governmental organizations through various means, such as legislation, mass-awareness campaigns, or programs, among others.

### 3.4 Procedure of data collection

For the present study data were collected by using Google Forms which was disseminated through online platform. The investigator provided a comprehensive explanation regarding the study's objectives and the preferred method of response. Furthermore, participants were guaranteed that all data collected would be treated with utmost confidentiality and solely utilized for research purposes.

**3.5 Statistical techniques:** As per the objectives of the study, researcher employed descriptive statistics like mean and S.D. for description of the level of Environmental Awareness Ability of the sample. And for comparing this level of Environmental Awareness Ability of the sample the researcher used t-test.

### 4.0 Result and Discussion

**Objective 1:** To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to their gender (male and female).

Table: I Mean, S.D and t- values of Environmental Awareness of gender (Male and Female)

District	N	Mean	SD	T value	Table value	Level of Significance (0.05 level)
Male	32	44.19	2.78	1.72	2.00	Not Significant
Female	40	43.15	2.66			

The table I shows that the mean for male and female undergraduate student's environmental awareness ability is concerned is 44.19 and 43.15 respectively. This indicates that there is no difference in the understanding of these two groups regarding the environmental issues. The SD is 2.78 and 3.49 for male and female undergraduate students respectively. The “t” value is 1.72, which indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on environmental awareness. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

**Objective 2:** To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to the locality of the college (rural and urban).

Table -II: Mean, S.D and t- values of Environmental Awareness of the locality of the college (rural and urban).

District	N	Mean	SD	T value	Table value	Level of Significance (0.05 level)
Rural	38	43.16	3.11	0.32	2.00	Not Significant
Urban	34	43.41	1.91			

The table II shows that the mean for rural and urban undergraduate student's environmental awareness ability is concerned is 43.16 and 43.41 respectively. This indicates that there is no difference in the understanding of these two groups regarding the environmental issues. The SD is 3.11 and 1.91 for male and female undergraduate students respectively. The "t" value is 0.32, which indicates that there is no significant difference between rural and urban undergraduate students on environmental awareness. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

**Objective 3:** To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to Golaghat and Jorhat districts.

Table-III: Mean, S.D and t- values of Environmental Awareness of undergraduate students with respect to Golaghat and Jorhat districts.

District	N	Mean	SD	T value	Table value	Level of Significance (0.05 level)
Golaghat	20	43.1	2.31	0.36	2.01	Not Significant
Jorhat	30	43.5	2.47			

The table III shows that the mean for Golaghat and Jorhat district undergraduate student's environmental awareness is concerned is 43.1 and 43.5 respectively. This indicates that there is no difference in the understanding of these two groups regarding the environmental issues. The SD is 2.31 and 2.47 for the Golaghat and Jorhat district undergraduate students respectively. The "t" value is 0.36, which indicates that there is no significant difference between Golaghat and Jorhat district undergraduate students on environmental awareness. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

**Objective 4:** To find out significant difference in environmental awareness among undergraduate students with respect to Jorhat and Sivasagar districts.

Table-IV: Mean, S.D and t- values of Environmental Awareness of undergraduate students with respect to Jorhat and Sivasagar districts.

District	N	Mean	SD	T value	Table Value	Level of Significance (0.05 level)
Jorhat	30	43.5	2.47	0.62	2.01	Not Significant
Sivasagar	22	44	3.49			

The table IV shows that the mean for Jorhat and Sivasagar district undergraduate student's environmental awareness is concerned is 43.5 and 44 respectively. This indicates that there is no difference in the understanding of these two groups regarding the environmental issues. The SD is 2.47 and 3.49 for the Jorhat and Sivasagar district undergraduate students respectively. The "t" value is 0.62, which indicates that there is no significant

difference between Golaghat and Jorhat district undergraduate students on environmental awareness. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

### Findings of the Study

The findings of the present study are as follows-

- I. The study revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on environmental awareness.
- II. There is no significant difference between rural and urban undergraduate students on environmental awareness.
- III. It is revealed that there is no significant difference between Jorhat and Sivasagar district undergraduate students on environmental awareness.
- IV. The study also revealed that there is no significant difference between Golaghat and Jorhat district undergraduate students on environmental awareness.

### Conclusion

The researcher concludes this paper by following recommendations. Measures should be taken to increase knowledge of environmental protection and concerns as soon as undergraduate classes begin. Communication, community action, and behavioral change initiatives can all help to raise awareness. Colleges must develop environmental initiatives, such as planting and caring for existing plants on campus and outside. An environmental society can be created at the college level and encouraged to organize environmental-related activities. Students should be encouraged to visit sites where environmental preservation and conservation programs are underway. At that period, the environment helped and encouraged human efforts to establish a luxurious and excellent existence. In turn, it is man's responsibility to make efforts to protect the environment around him.

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