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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDE AMONG RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENTS OF BISHNAH (J&K, INDIA)

Shahima Akhter and Piyush Malaviya*

Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Jammu, Jammu-180006 (J&K) India

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ABSTRACT

Environmental crisis has made everyone in the world to think of its gravity. In the beginning, man lived in harmony with nature, but as his number grew, his attitude towards nature has changed and consequently damaged the environment a lot. Hence, it is the need of the hour to develop favorable attitude towards environment. In this context, a comparative study has been conducted to evaluate the level of environmental attitude among rural and urban residents of Bishnah (J&K, India). Data was collected using a questionnaire and the key findings of the study revealed a significant difference in mean attitude scores of males (67.58) and female (67.30) respondents. The results also indicated a significant difference in environmental attitude scores among different educational and age groups. The study concluded that the urban respondents had high attitude towards environment than rural respondents.

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation and natural resources depletion are on the rise at an alarming rate (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2007). Environment has been threatened by problems like poverty, pollution and over population existing in both rural and urban settings. With the world population estimated to reach nearly nine billion by 2050, it is imperative that effective measures to shift towards a more sustainable way of life for all human beings is adopted (United Nations Environment Programme, 2007).

The issues and problems concerning environment will not be solved merely through technical progress and environmentally compatible products; changes at the individual level, in the attitudes and the behavior of people are also needed (Kumari *et al.*, 2012). Environmental attitude (EA) has been defined as a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating the natural environment with some degree of favor or disfavor (Milfont and Duckitt, 2010). Attitude is a complex mental construct which emerges out of an integration of an individual's belief and values system. It is clear that individuals with negative attitudes towards the environment will be inconsiderate towards environmental problems and will continue to pose problems to the environment (Ugulu *et al.*, 2013). Hence, it is the need of the hour to develop favorable attitude towards the

environment. Several studies concerning demographic variables such as gender, age, ethnic and educational groups in relation to environmental attitude have been carried out by many researchers (Tikka *et al.*, 2000; Eisler *et al.*, 2003; Larijani and Yeshodhara, 2008; Eilam and Trop, 2012; Kumar and Malaviya, 2015), but no such study was made to analyze the variation in environmental attitude of the people living in urban and rural areas. In this perspective, the objective of the present study was to analyze the level of attitude towards environment among people living in rural and urban areas of Bishnah (J&K, India).

STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The study area i.e., tehsil Bishnah of district Jammu, was located between 32°36' North latitude and 74°54' East longitude. The survey was conducted on hundred rural and same number of urban households of the study area. Each household was visited several times to establish rapport with them. One or two leaders were identified from the area. Through them the purpose of the study was explained to the people. The questionnaire included both social and environmental aspects. The duration of interaction varied between 30-45 minutes. Normally the non-working days were preferred like holidays because maximum members of the households were available on these days.

*Corresponding author: Shahima Akhter

Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Jammu, Jammu-180006 (J&K) India

A self made questionnaire having twenty multiple questions was used to measure environmental attitude which can be defined as acquisition of values, feelings, and motivation towards the environment (Aminrad *et al.*, 2010). For the purpose of counting, scores 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) were assigned to each positive statement (agreement with the statement was considered as favorable response), while for negative statements (agreement with the statement was considered as unfavorable response) the scoring was reversed i.e. 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree. Based on the composite score of responses out of twenty questions, level of satisfaction and environmental attitude was classified in three categories viz., low, moderate and high. Each statement was having score of 5 and there were five levels of agreements in each question, thus the total score was hundred. Respondents who scored between zero to 33.33 were considered as having low attitude, those who scored between 33.34 to 66.66 have moderate attitude and respondents with score between 66.67 to 100 were considered as having high attitude towards environment.

The collected data was entered into a research database utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 17.0). Each case was entered into database assigning a code to identify each participant. The significance level was 0.05. Independent samples t-test was used as a test of statistical significance. The procedure was applied to compare the means of the two independent groups of variables (rural and urban). If the observed t-test value exceeded the critical value of the results of the table, the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected, which inferred that there was a significant difference between the two variables. For more than two groups, One-way ANOVA was applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Environmental attitude among respondents of the study area was measured by analyzing the responses to questions on the environmental attitude. An analysis of composite scores showed that the majority of respondents had a score indicating a moderate level of environmental attitude. The statistical t-test in the survey between male and female groups showed the mean of 67.58±14.86 and 67.30±21.69, respectively, which indicated significant difference of mean between two groups in environmental attitude [t=0.107, p=0.00]. It was observed that male respondents showed more positive attitude towards the environment than female respondents (Table 1).

Table 1 Independent sample t-test for comparing environmental attitude between gender groups.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Total Attitude score	Male	129	67.58	14.86	0.107	198	0.00
	Female	71	67.30	21.69			

Level of significance ($p < 0.05$)

One-way ANOVA was applied to compare difference in environmental attitude between different educational groups. Respondents were divided into three groups according to their level of education viz., illiterate, educated upto middle class

and above middle class with mean of 59.08±17.22; 66.78±17.68 and 71.23±16.50, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2 One-way ANOVA for comparing environmental attitude among educational groups.

Educational level	N	Mean	SD	df	f	Sig.
Illiterate	36	59.08	17.22	2	6.697	0.002
Upto middle	70	66.78	17.68	197		
Above middle	94	71.23	16.50			

Level of significance ($p < 0.05$)

Table 3 One-way ANOVA for comparing environmental attitude among age groups.

	Age	N	Mean	SD	df	f	Sig.
Total Environmental Attitude	1-20	12	76.75	17.34	2	4.695	0.011
	21-40	116	69.24	18.25	197		
	>40	72	63.12	15.39			

Level of significance ($p < 0.05$)

There was significant difference in attitude scores for the three educational groups [$f = 6.697, p = 0.002$], which indicates that the respondents with education level above middle class have high attitude towards environment than the other two groups. Also, there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in environmental attitude scores for the three age levels [$f = 4.695, p = 0.011$]. One-way ANOVA indicated that the mean of total environmental attitude score for age group below 20 years (76.75±17.34) was significantly different from age group 21-40 years (69.24±18.25) and age group above 40 years (63.12±15.39), which signifies that younger age group respondents were more positive in their attitude towards the environment than the other two age groups (Table 3). The statistical t-test between the urban and rural respondents showed that the mean for urban respondents (74.71±16.86) was more than rural respondents (60.21±15.06), pointing that respondents of urban households had high attitude towards the environment than rural households (Table 4).

Table 4 Independent sample t-test for comparing environmental attitude between areas.

	Area	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Total awareness score	Urban	100	74.71	16.86	6.440	198	0.00
	Rural	100	60.21	15.06			

Level of significance ($p < 0.05$)

On the whole, results demonstrated that the respondents living in urban households had more positive attitude towards environment than those living in rural area which may be influenced by their lifestyle, family and education. In a similar study, Jaime *et al.* (2005) while comparing rural-urban differences in environmental concerns, attitudes and actions found that those living in cities assume a larger number of environmental responsibility but show less pro-environmental orientation when the attitude and behavioral intention scales were used.

In our study, it was also observed that the level of environmental attitude enhanced with education. It has been asserted that education is the variable, most consistently associated with environmental attitude (VanLiere and Dunlap, 1980). The reason for higher positive attitude may be due to enhanced exposure to print and electronic media reporting

various environmental issues (Aminrad *et al.*, 2010). The trend among educational groups showed the significant difference between the groups i.e., the respondents having higher educational qualification showed a high attitude towards environmental issues. In the present study, it has also been found that males possessed higher environmental attitude than female respondents. In contrast, several studies have shown that women are more likely to hold environmental beliefs than men (Milbrath, 1984; Arcury *et al.*, 1986; Mohai, 1992). Also, the three age groups showed significant differences in environmental attitude score and found that the younger age group respondents (below 20 years) had a higher environmental attitude than the other two age groups. However, in contrast to our study, Strong (1998) and Aminrad *et al.* (2010) reported high environmental attitude among older age group (above 40 years) and attributed this to increased chances for learning due to their long life span. Manzanal *et al.* (2007) in their study found significant differences between respondent's environmental attitude scores. Concluding their research, they stated that these differences are possibly due to different societies, age and educational levels.

CONCLUSION

Environmental attitude in the study area was assessed and the statistical t-test between the urban and rural respondents showed that the mean for urban households was more than rural area, indicating that respondents of urban households had high attitude towards the environment than rural households. However, significant difference in environmental attitude of males (mean=67.58±14.86) and females (mean=67.30±21.69) (t=0.107, p=0.00) was observed which indicated that male respondents showed more positive attitude towards the environment than female respondents. When the environmental attitude of different age groups was compared, the younger age group respondents showed high environmental attitude than respondents of other two age groups.

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