

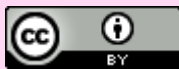
Research Article

An Empirical Study on Environmental Laws Awareness Among College Students of Kashmir Valley

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Abstract. India, with its wealthy biodiversity and numerous ecosystems, has lengthily diagnosed the significance of environmental conservation for sustainable development. Environmental regulation in

India encompasses a vast variety of criminal principles, regulations, and insurance policies that goal to defend and retain the environment, stop pollution, and promote sustainable use of herbal resources. In this study, we use a well-designed validated questionnaire to collect the information from 400 College students (200 male and 200 female) via online/offline mode using simple random sampling. The data collected was analysed statistically using statistical software SPSS (Version 20). The results of our study revealed that majority of respondents were not aware of legal laws, an important part of healthy society. It is important for every individual to study and know about environmental laws as it helps in understanding the environmental principles and regulations that govern the protection of environment. Statistically, non-significant difference was observed between Arts and Science Stream students in practice towards environment ($P > 0.05$). Finally, it was suggested that legal literacy about environmental laws may be promoted as it will make society more fair and useful to protect the environment and address global issues related environment.

Keywords: Environment, Kashmir, Legal awareness, Students, Society, Statistics

INTRODUCTION

The Environmental laws are those laws meant to safeguard the environment, for sustainable use of natural resources as well as humans' health and wellbeing. Their coverage includes air and water quality, pollution control, managing hazardous waste, resource conservation and others. The Environmental laws are necessary as they make sure we have a fresh and healthy environment, available for everyone. In India the roots of environmental regulation can be traced long back to historical times, place texts like the Vedas, Arthashastra, and Manusmriti accented the importance of environmental safety and conservation. We found that the Vedas highlighted the want for preserving a harmonious relationship between human beings and nature, and the Manusmriti forbid the destruction of forests, wildlife and natural resources. However, we observe that with modernization and industrialization, environmental degradation grew to become an pressing issue. There was a need to frame environmental laws for protection of natural resources. India's Constitution, adopted in 1950, enshrines the proper to wholesome surroundings as an essential proper below Article 21, which ensures the proper to existence and non-public liberty. This has formed the basis for environmental jurisprudence with the judiciary taking part in a quintessential position in deciphering and increasing the range of environmental rights in India. In Indian Article 48, is a provision that emphasizes the responsibility of the state to safeguard and enhance the environment. The Article 51A(g) outlines a duty for all citizens of India to protect and enhance the environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to show compassion towards living creatures.

Legal awareness literally means the information regarding the rights, acts, laws and legal provisions which are offered to a citizen of a specific country for their security, certainty, equal access to opportunities and helping them to face all the challenges in daily life. Environmental laws are very crucial part of any governance body which comprises a set of laws and regulations concerning air quality, water quality, and other aspects of the environment. The environmental laws in India are guided by environmental legal principles and focus on the management of specific

natural resources, such as forests, minerals, or fisheries. In the present scientific technological environment media plays a crucial role as a source of legal information among youth. The exposure to legal issues via printed or electronic media like T.V. can increase the legal understanding among students'. Further, newspapers and social media give students access to a large number of legal information, including breaking news about momentous legal cases, updates on legislative changes, and legal commentary and criticism. It is necessary that every student must have knowledge about environment laws given below:

The Environmental laws of India are:

1. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
2. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Rules, 1975
3. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
4. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Rules, 1978
5. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
6. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Rules, 1982
7. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) (Union Territories) Rules, 1983
8. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
9. The Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986
10. Hazardous Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 1989
11. Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemical Rules, 1989
12. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
13. The Forest (Conservation) Rules, 1981
14. The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
15. The Wildlife (Transactions and Taxidermy) Rules, 1973
16. The Wildlife (Stock Declaration) Central Rules, 1973
17. The Wildlife (Protection) Licensing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 1983
18. The Wildlife (Protection) Rules, 1995
19. The Wildlife (Specified Plants - Conditions for Possession by Licensee) Rules, 1995
20. The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
21. The Public Liability Insurance Rules, 1991
22. The National Environment Tribunal Act, 1995
23. The National Environment Appellate Authority Act, 1997
24. The Biological Diversity Act, 2002
25. The Energy Conservation Act, 2001
26. Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA)
27. The National Green Tribunal Act, 2010
28. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016
29. **Environment (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022**

In the literature (e.g., Oragwam 2004; Chinedu 2008 etc.), we found various definitions of awareness and attitude. Awareness is defined as a state of consciousness and purpose (Oragwam, 2004). Chinedu (2008), defined awareness as the condition of being aware and able to understand what is around one. Further, as per Bellotti

(2002) awareness involves knowing who is talking with whom; it provides a view of one another in the every day working environment.

Environment preservation and safeguarding is very important for the continuation of life on Earth as we know humans depend on different resources like food, air, water, and oxygen. It becomes urgent for individuals to recognise their role in protecting the environment (Fallah Shayan, 2022). It is observed that the condition of our environment over the past few decades has been deteriorating as per Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in 2021 that the Earth's temperature within the next 20 years is projected to rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius, mainly due to human activities, significantly affecting future environmental conditions (Buis, 2019). To prevent environmental degradation, the implementation of effective environmental laws becomes essential. Environmental laws serve as a means to prevent and penalize actions that may destroy the environment. The international environmental law, globally tackle the critical environmental issues, like climate change, mass animal extinction and ozone depletion. To manage environmental issues and ensure long-term environmental protection is the primary purpose of environmental laws (Chu & Karr, 2017). Erhabor and Don (2016) discussed impact of environmental education on the knowledge and attitude of students towards the environment. In a study (Kousar et al., 2022), it was reported that individuals bear the responsibility of establishing limitations and taking proactive measures to protect the environment. And among the possible ways to addressing existing environmental issues is enhancing environmental awareness as well as understanding among individuals. It was found that worldwide climate crisis has led to increasingly severe tropical storms, hurricanes, heat waves, and flooding (Clarke et al., 2022). It was found that poor governance is a contributing factor to environmental deterioration (Stern & Stiglitz, 2016). Nash et al., 2019, reported that environmental concerns include food waste, biodiversity loss, plastic pollution, deforestation, air pollution, melting ice caps, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, agriculture, food and water insecurity, fast fashion, and textile waste, overfishing, and cobalt mining. Rahmani (2021) in a study discussed in detail importance of public awareness in environment protection.

In today's society, it is expected that students, should possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to care for the environment (Renandang & Dalonos, 2019). However, the reality often falls short of this expectation. It was found that climate change poses a significant threat to the environment, whereas plastic pollution worldwide continues to contribute to habitat loss (Lincoln et al., 2022). In another study, it was reported that environment plays an important role in supporting human life on earth, though there are many environmental issues. The responsibility for the environmental issues lies mainly with human actions, including those of students who are expected to be stewards of the Earth (Yue et al., 2020). However, it was found that students may not always be mindful of the consequences of their actions (Sorqvist & Langeborg, 2019). In the literature (e.g., Abdo, 2010; Siwamoorthy, 2013; Joseph, 2014; Sarsour, 2015, Bhat et al., 2016; Ashtankar, 2016) in view of the environmental awareness among students, various authors worldwide have discussed the environmental awareness and practice among students. The

environmental issues will continue to worsen, if such situation persists. In view of such circumstances, present study was conducted in Kashmir valley, popularly known as paradise on earth because of its natural beauty and peace loving people with the objectives to assess the students awareness and understanding of environmental laws, attitudes towards environmental laws, perception of environmental laws and their enforcement, evaluation knowledge and attitude about environmental laws, and assessment of pro-environmental behavior of College students in Kashmir.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the current study 400 College going students were selected at random via online/offline mode from different education institutions of Kashmir valley using stratified random sampling procedure. The respondents under study were explained, the main purpose of this study to get their consent. A well-developed validated Questionnaire was utilized to assess the Legal awareness among college students of Kashmir towards environmental laws. We use likert scale in our study as we know likert scales are a reliable way of measuring the behaviour, perception as well as opinions. The 5-point likert scale, was used to assess the awareness and Pro-environmental Behavior, 4-point likert scale was used to assess the attitude and 3-point likert scale was used to assess the perception of students towards environmental laws. Further, mean value less than 3 was considered poor legal awareness and mean value >3 was considered as satisfactory legal awareness. To compare the difference in practice towards environment between male and female students subjectwise, Mann-Whitney U test was used. The sample size was computed using (Cochran, 1977)

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 P(1 - P)}{d^2}$$

We chose $p=0.5$, $Z_{\alpha} = 1.96$ and $d=0.05$ in our study. That gives the sample size $n \sim 384$ and we decided to choose $n = 400$. The data collected from 400 respondents (200 male and 200 female) was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted statistically. The statistical software SPSS (version 20) was used for analysis purpose.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis : There will be no significant difference in practice towards environment awareness between male and female College students under study. In order to test the hypothesis, we apply Mann-Whitney U test (with usual notations) given by the formula

$$W = N_1 N_2 + \frac{N_x(N_x + 1)}{2} - T_x$$

where N_1 is the number of subjects in group 1; N_2 is the number of subjects in group 2. T_x is the larger of the two rank totals and N_x is the number of subjects in this group.

Data Interpretation:

The results obtained were interpreted in the context of the research objective, and conclusions were drawn regarding the level of legal awareness among college students of Kashmir valley.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presented in Table 1, revealed that among 400 respondents (50% male and 50% female), majority of the respondents (89.50%) were from nuclear families, 68.0% respondents were pursuing graduation, 86.75% respondents were from medium families, 59.75% respondents were from science stream, 67.25% respondents were from rural areas..

Table 1: General information of the respondents under study

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Educational Status	Pursuing graduation	272	68.00
	Pursuing post graduation	128	32.00
Family Type	Joint	82	20.50
	Nuclear	318	89.50
Family Income Status	High	07	1.75
	Medium	347	86.75
	Low	46	11.50
Subject	Science Stream	239	59.75
	Arts Stream	161	40.25
Residence	Urban	269	67.25
	Rural	131	32.75

The data presented in Table 1, revealed that in response to statement 1, i.e., How familiar are you with environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of respondents were not familiar with environmental laws. In response to statement 2, i.e., How would you rate your understanding of environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of respondents rated poor understanding. In response to statement 3, i.e., How would you rate your knowledge of the penalties for violating environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of respondents rated not fair. In response to statement 4, i.e., How would you rate your knowledge of the procedure for reporting environmental violations in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of respondents rated their knowledge poor. In response to statement 5, i.e., How much do you know about the J&K's Clean Air Act, majority of respondents reported they possess a little knowledge. In response to statement 6, i.e., How much do you know about the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, majority of respondents reported that they possess a little knowledge.

Table 2. Level of awareness, understanding, and knowledge of College students towards Environmental laws in Kashmir

S.No.	Statement	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
1	How familiar are you with environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K?	2.24	Not very familiar
2	How would you rate your understanding of environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K?	1.58	Poor
3.	How would you rate your knowledge of the penalties for violating environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K?	1.92	Not fair
4.	How would you rate your knowledge of the procedure for reporting environmental violations in the Kashmir valley of J&K?	1.46	Poor
5.	How much do you know about the J&K's Clean Air Act?	2.18	A little
6.	How much do you know about the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act?	2.12	A little

Very poor=1, Poor=2, Acceptable=3, Good=4, Very good=5

The data presented in Table 3, revealed that in response to statement 1., How do you think it is to follow environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of the respondents were of the opinion that it is very important. In a study, it was found that the environmental law that address environmental issues and promote environmental protection, were enforced through fines, punishments etc (Zhu et al., 2022). Further, in response to statement 2, i.e., To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement Enforcing Environmental Laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K is essential for the preservation of natural resources, majority of respondents agree. Table 2, shows that although respondents possesses limited knowledge about environmental laws but they still perceived following them as highly important and potentially effective(e.g., Ahmad et al., 2015).

Table 3. Attitudes of the College students toward environmental laws Environmental laws in Kashmir valley

S.No.	Statement	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
1	How do you think it is to follow environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K?	3.74	very important
2	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement Enforcing Environmental Laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K is essential for the preservation of natural resources?	3.82	Agree

Poor=1, Fair=2, Good=3, Excellent= 4

The data shown in Table 4, revealed that in response to statement 1, i.e., How effectively do you think the enforcement of environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of respondents were of the opinion that enforcement of environmental laws are somewhat effective. In response to statement 2, i.e., How confident do you feel in the government’s ability to enforce environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of respondents were somewhat confident. In response to statement 3, i.e., How do you think the general public is aware of environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K, majority of respondents reported poor awareness. It was found that Environmental law aims to protect the land, water, and air, with its different facets planned to ensure the protection of the environment (El-Mallah, 2019). It is important for every educated youth to know about Environmental laws.

Table 4. Perception of the College students toward environmental laws and their Enforcement in Kashmir valley

S.No.	Statement	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
1	How effectively do you think the enforcement of environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K?	2.86	Somewhat effective
2	How confident do you feel in the government’s ability to enforce environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K ?	2.76	Somewhat confident
3.	How do you think the general public is aware of environmental laws in the Kashmir valley of J&K ?	1.64	Poor awareness

Not effective=1, Effective=2, Very effective=3

The data presented in Table 5, revealed that in response to statement 1, i.e., How often do you recycle, majority of respondents reported very rare. In response to statement 2, i.e., How do you usually dispose of your waste, majority of respondents reported that they throw it in the trash. In response to statement 3, i.e., Do you conserve energy at home, majority of respondents told they don’t conserve very often. In response to statement 4, i.e., Have you ever participated in a community clean-up or tree-planting activity, majority of respondents reported rarely. In response to statement 5, i.e., Do you actively try to reduce your carbon footprint, majority of respondents told not often. In response to statement 6, i.e., How often do you use public transportation, majority of respondents told often. In response to statement 7, i.e., How often do you purchase environmentally friendly products, majority of respondents reported not often. In response to statement 8, i.e., Do you think that individuals have a responsibility to protect our environment, majority of respondents strongly agree to this statement.



The pictures shown above, reveals that students as well as general people take interest in environment awareness programs. It is encouraging people listen experts govt as well as non-govt /NGOs about environment and about environmental laws. They are taking part in plantation drives as well cleanness drives to protect environment. People used to complain govt via social media if there is there is any illegal activity in any area that hurts environment.

Public participation is critical for fine environmental governance. However, in general, public is not adequately involved in decision-making processes related to environmental issues, which can result in weak implementation of environmental laws. It was observed during field studies that limited awareness and participation of local communities, especially those living in rural and marginalized areas, can hinder the effective implementation of environmental laws. The discussion with participants and elders revealed that corruption and illegal practices, such as illegal mining, logging, and pollution, pose significant challenges to the implementation of environmental laws. These illegal activities often go unchecked due to corrupt practices, lack of accountability, and weak enforcement mechanisms, leading to environmental degradation. It was observed that balancing economic development with environmental protection can be challenging, as there are often conflicting interests between different stakeholders. Infrastructure projects, Industries and other developmental activities may prioritize economic gains over environmental concerns, leading to non-compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

Table 5. Pro-environmental Behavior of the College students in Kashmir valley

S.No.	Statement	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
1	How often do you recycle?	2.08	Very rare
2	How do you usually dispose of your waste?	1.68	Throw it in the trash
3.	Do you conserve energy at home?	1.58	Not often
4.	Have you ever participated in a community	1.88	Rarely

	clean-up or tree-planting activity		
5.	Do you actively try to reduce your carbon footprint?	2.42	Not often
6.	How often do you use public transportation?	3.76	Often
7.	How often do you purchase environmentally friendly products?	2.56	Not often
8.	Do you think that individuals have a responsibility to protect our environment?	4.62	Strongly Agree

Never=1, Rarely=2, Sometimes=3, Often=4, Always=5

The data shown in Table 6, indicated that in response to statement 1, i.e., ways of recycling, the respondents in majority showed poor awareness. In response to statement 2, i.e., what materials do you segregate, majority of respondents reported generally plastic bottles. In response to statement 3, i.e., How do you conserve energy at home, majority of respondents reported that they unplug the unused appliances often. In response to statement 4, i.e., How often do you participate in clean-up or tree-planting activities, majority of respondents reported rarely. In response to statement 5, i.e., Ways to reduce Carbon footprint, majority of respondents reported that we should avoid burning plastic. In response to statement 6, i.e., what factors influence your decision to use public transportation, majority of respondents reported time issues. In response to statement 7, i.e., what factors influence your decisions to purchase environmentally-friendly products, majority of respondents reported love for environment. In response to statement 8, i.e., why do you think that have or do not have a responsibility to protect the environment, majority of respondents reported Because we are the beneficiaries of the environment. It was found that on environmental practices conducted by the researchers, good environmental practices were actions that were intended to minimize environmental issues (Yue et al., 2020). The data reported in Table 6, indicated that the respondents understudy, specifically were engaged in various environmental practices. The respondents, specifically, stated that they had recycled by using plastic bottles as planting material, with plastic bottles being the most commonly segregated material. Further, respondents conserve energy by unplugging unused appliances in daily basis. The respondents also reported that they frequently participation in clean-up or tree-planting drives. They also adopted ways to reduce their carbon footprint, such as avoiding burning plastic and choosing to walk instead of using vehicles regularly. It was found that factor that influenced the respondents the most was laziness regarding using public transportation. Love for the environment was the main factor that influenced respondents to purchase environmentally friendly products. The respondents in general believed that every individual has a responsibility to protect the environment because they were the beneficiaries of it. Overall, analysis of data revealed that there was inconsistency between the awareness, behavior, and attitude of the students toward the environment. The awareness level of the students did not have a significant impact on their behavior and attitude. Interestingly, even though the majority students understudy were not aware of

environmental laws, but still they took action to protect and preserve the environment.

Table 6. Environmental practices of the College students in Kashmir valley

S.No.	Indicators	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
1	Ways of recycling?	1.76	Poor awareness
2	What materials do you segregate?	1.12	Generally plastic bottles
3.	How do you conserve energy at home?	1.16	Unplug the unused appliances
4.	How often do you participate in clean-up or tree-planting activities?	1.94	Rarely
5.	Ways to reduce Carbon footprint	1.38	Avoid burning plastic
6.	What factors influence your decision to use publictransportation?	2.36	Time issues
7.	What factors influence your decisions to purchase environmentally-friendly products?	1.18	Love for environment
8.	Why do you think that have or do not have a responsibility to protect the environment?	1.22	Because we are the beneficiaries of the environment

Sometime=1, Rarely=2, Always=3

The data presented in Table 7, shows the practice of students towards environment, keeping in view their responsibility as a responsible citizen of a country. The students were explained the fundamental duty imposed on every citizen of a country as it is not only to “protect” the environment from any kind of pollution but also to “improve” the environment quality if it has been polluted. It is duty of every individual to preserve the environment in the same way as nature has gifted it to all of us. Every educated person must have knowledge about environmental laws to protect it in case there is any violation.

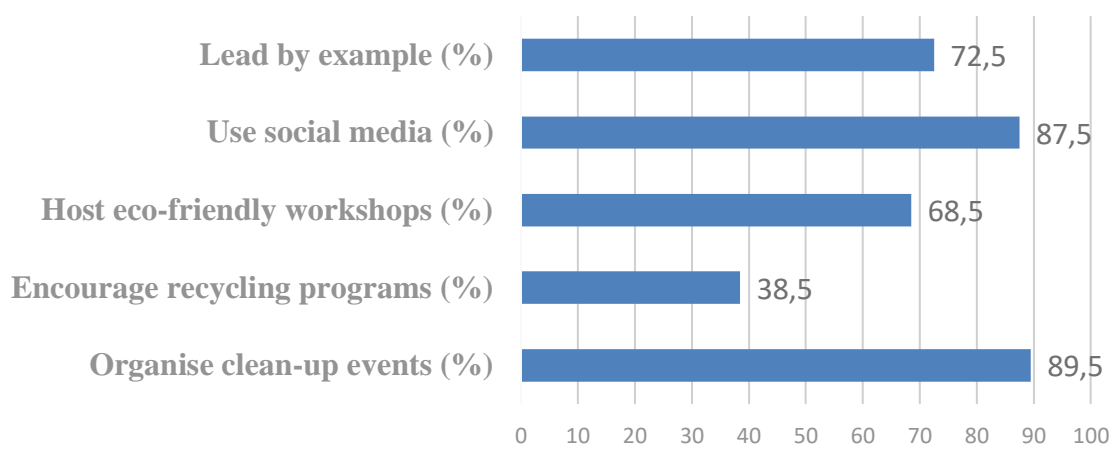
On the basis of rating of 5, we observed that Mean±S.E. for Arts Stream students was 2.5079±0.0682 whereas Mean±S.E. for Science stream students was 2.5616±0.08472. Statistically, non-significant difference was observed between Arts Stream and Science Stream students in practice towards environment ($P>0.05$). The students understudy showed good attitude towards environment but lack in practice. It was encouraging that few students reported that because of lack of environment laws they don't report concerned authorities if any violation related to environment was noticed. A small percentage of students reported that they highlight the environmental issue via social media.

Table 7: Comparison subject wise in practice of students towards environment

Subject	Mean±S.E.	Mann-Whitney U	P-value
Arts Stream	2.5079±0.0682	17985	>0.05
Science Stream	2.5616±0.08472		

The data shown in Figure 1, revealed that in response to question posed to students related effective measures to promote environmental awareness, 89.5% students were of the opinion that we should organise clean-up drives frequently as environment protection is responsibility of every individual, 87.5% respondents were of the opinion that we can highlight environmental issues using social media as it is not easy to approach any govt official, 72.5% respondents were of the opinion that we should lead by example, 68.5% of respondents were of the opinion we should host frequently eco-friendly workshops and 38.5% respondents encourage recycling programs. Team work is essential for fostering long-term environmental awareness.

Figure 1: Effective measures to promote environmental awareness among people



CONCLUSION

The current study revealed that College students of Kashmir valley have a low level of awareness and knowledge regarding environmental laws. The researchers rated familiarity of students with environmental laws as "Not very familiar," and understanding and knowledge of penalties for violating these laws were categorized as "Fair." Further, knowledge of the procedure for reporting environmental violations of respondents was rated as "Poor." Despite limited awareness and knowledge of environmental laws, the students understudy demonstrated positive attitudes toward environmental laws. The respondents in majority agreed that enforcing environmental laws is necessary for the preservation of natural resources. However, respondents understudy in majority believed that the general public has a low level of awareness regarding environmental laws as is noticed in field. This perception highlights the requirement for targeted awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to bridge the gap in public knowledge and enhance the effectiveness of environmental law enforcement. Further, study revealed that respondents exhibited a range of pro-environmental behaviors, such as energy conservation, recycling, participation in community activities, use of public transportation, efforts to reduce carbon footprint, and preference for environmentally friendly products. This indicate a genuine concern of students for the environment and consciousness of responsibility, despite limited awareness of environmental laws. The students were seen taking part in cleanness drives, awareness programs showed their love for the environment and their belief that individuals have a responsibility to protect it. The students have limited familiarity with environmental laws and specific legislation so there is a significant gap. Statistically, non-significant difference was observed between Arts and Science Stream students in practice towards environment ($P > 0.05$). Students are the future of any country and play a crucial role in environment protection. Therefore, it is recommended to incorporate environmental law education into the curriculum for all college students. Similarly, field visits, workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns should be organized frequently by Govt/NGOS to raise awareness among the students and improve their understanding of environmental legislation. Further, it is suggested that targeted awareness campaigns should be designed to raise public awareness of environmental laws, their significance, and reporting process. It is urgent that all stakeholders, including the government, industries, civil society, and local communities, work together to ensure the effective implementation of environmental laws for the betterment of present and future generations. Finally, it is expected that Analyzing the environmental awareness level among youth will help policy-makers to help society and improve their awareness.

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