

# Environmental Awareness Vis-A-Vis Activities: Inconsistence in Daily Life (A Special Case Study at Khardah, North 24 PARGANAS, West Bengal)

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**Abstract:** *People though normally have some degree of environmental awareness irrespective of their education level, their attitudes and activities doesn't reflect the same. Here, it has been tried to explore the reasons of such contrasting behavioral pattern. So, 100 people had been chosen as sample and were being observed and interviewed with a questionnaire. In most cases their attitude towards environment doesn't match with their activities. There are so many causes and barriers behind it. So it is needed to spread environmental awareness through campaigning, use of CCTV camera, prize and punishment system etc. to resist environmental degradation.*

**Keywords:** Environment, Awareness, Attitudes, Activities, well-being

## 1. Introduction

Now-a-days it must be admitted that people have some degree of awareness of environmental wellbeing, i.e. they know what is harmful for the environment and what is not. Not only is that, with the advancement of education, the level of awareness also continuously increasing. For example, few years ago, most of the common people were unaware about CFC gas and its harmful effect but today we are almost familiar with this gas. It becomes possible due to wide-spreading of education of our society due to massive campaigning through different Medias.

But the problem is that our activities often don't match with our level of knowledge. It is found that man practicing a non-ecofriendly behavior though academically he/ she are sound. For instance we very often throw packet of food on the side of the road though we know that it may cause environmental pollution.

In primitive society it was observed that people then had their natural instinct to love and protect environment. They even strongly opposed to cut of trees. But in modern society this bonding with environment is gradually decreasing which causes gradual destruction of the environment. In this paper I have tried to find out the barriers which resist man to do pro-environmental activities though they have awareness regarding environment. In the earlier LINEAR MODEL by BURGESS et al. it was shown that environmental activities are directly related with environmental knowledge. But reality opposes to this model. Practical situation says that it is related with the surrounding physical, social, cultural and economic settings of a person. These settings directly build one's psychological characteristics. The aim of my paper is to find out the relationship between environmental awareness and environmental activities which in English is generally known as Environmental Psychology and in German word it is termed as "UMWELTPSYCHOLOGY".

## 2. Literature Review

**Schultz (2002)** gave emphasis on the sense of integration with the environment. According to him when people consider themselves as the part of environment they become more pro-environmental in their attitude.

**Stewart (2007)** focused on the wastages reduction, reuse and recycling. He studied on 673 residents of Exeter, UK and found that environmental values, situational characteristics, and psychological factors all play a significant role in the prediction of waste management behavior.

**Yeşilyurt, Özdemir, Erol (2020)** emphasised on the environmental awareness from their very childhood level. So that they have surveyed the perception of primary school student towards environment. As a result they have noticed that the children who are getting environmental education are performing more pro-environmental activity.

**Heyl, Diaz, Cifuentes (2013)** surveyed 383 college students out of which some have their diploma in environmental science. From the result of that survey, they have showed that the number of students having or pursuing diploma on environmental science are more pro-environmental in their attitude.

**Damianus, Racoma (2017)** surveyed the employees of Catholic Colleges in Ilocos Sur Province to analyse their sense and behavior towards environment. Unfortunately, they couldn't find any relationship between their understanding of the environmental phenomena as well as their activities regarding environment.

### Objective:

The main aim of my study is:

- 1) To find the answer to the question that "Why don't people act pro-environmentally though they have a level of awareness about eco-friendliness?"

- 2) To search the relationship of pro-environmental activities with education, socio-economic condition, and psychological condition.
- 3) To find out the way to establish an eco-friendly society.

### 3. Methodology

The literate society of Khardah has been considered as a population. Out of which 50 people have been considered, the sample was chosen by stratified random sampling. The study was performed based on observation and interview methods. A questionnaire with 30 Likert-type questions was asked to the sample respondent. After collecting data, analysis has been done with cartographic technique, hypothesis testing, satellite image analysis using Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and SPSS.

### 4. Result and Discussion

To determine the actual status of such inconsistency, a study area at Khardah in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India, has been selected (latitude is 22°43'6"N and 88° 22'41"E, elevation is 15 meter). As a part of the Gangetic plain in West Bengal, this region comprises different types of population, among which middle-class literate folks are dominant. In this region, people are being found to have more or less education, and they are also concerned about the terms pollution and global warming.

#### Respondents' Identity:

The residents of the Khardah Municipal area have been selected as the surveyed population. Out of all respondents, the majority belongs under the 35 to 60 age group, and except 2% of the respondent, all have at least a minimum level of formal education.

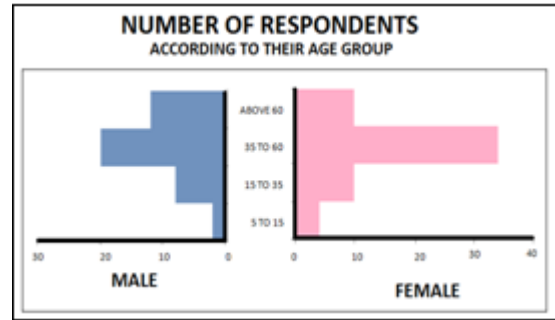


Figure 1

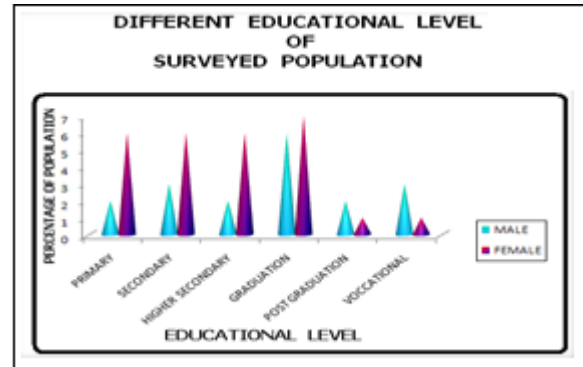


Figure 2

### 5. Major Findings

Based on the response getting from the questionnaire schedule and daily observation, it is noted that in many cases, the activities performed by the persons do not match with the knowledge and awareness they have regarding the environment. It is found that people are aware enough about some environmental issues like solid waste disposal, excessive exploitation of energy resources, contamination of freshwater, global warming. However, they do not even bother to through their domestic garbage on the side of the road or to use plastic carry bags to satisfy their own needs. It was generally found that though people are aware of the environmental issue, their activities often do not support their awareness. There are many more issues like this.

In the following table, the level of awareness regarding different environmental issues and the activities related to ecological wellbeing are summarised as follows:

Issue No.	Type of Issue	Awareness (%)	Unawareness (%)	Ecofriendly Activities (%)	Indifferent Activities (%)
1.	Solid Waste Disposal	78	22	52	48
2.	Exploitation of Energy Resource	46	54	34	66
3.	Contamination of Fresh Water	52	48	46	54
4.	Global Warming	96	04	40	60
5.	Water Logging	78	22	48	52
6.	Extinction of Flora and Fauna	52	48	38	62
7.	Environmental Pollution	82	18	40	60
8.	Exploitation of Forest Resource	76	24	48	52

The chart shows that though people are aware of the socio-environmental problems, they often do not act pro-environmentally. For instance, people usually dispose of their domestic garbage though they know that this is harmful to their surrounding environment. Moreover, almost all people have admitted that environmental temperature increases gradually, alarming. However, they often burn dry

leaves to clean their garden, and they use plastic bags, private cars, etc. The people who are aware of the harmful effect of CFC gas also use the refrigerator air-conditioner more than their needs to satisfy their comfort.

Comparison between Respondent’s Environment Related Awareness and Attitude

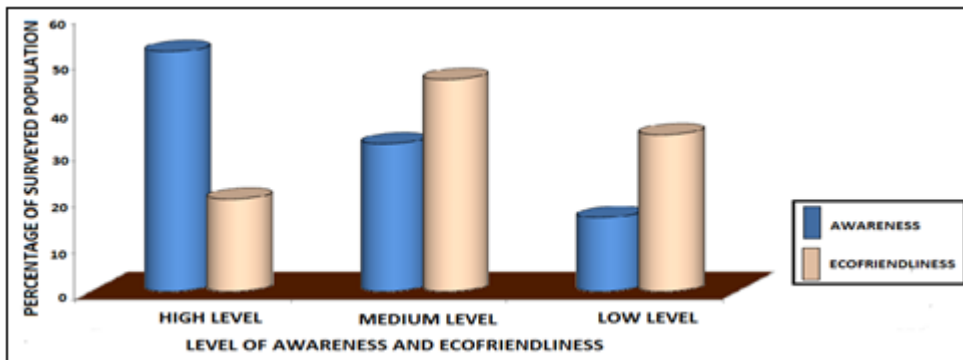


Figure 3

In figure no. 4, it has been shown that though most people have a high level of environmental awareness, their activities mainly belong to the medium class. It is thus significant to

say that a high level of understanding does not mean a high level of eco-friendly activities. So naturally, any relationship between environmental awareness and activities arises.

Comparison between Level of Environmental Awareness and Eco-Friendliness

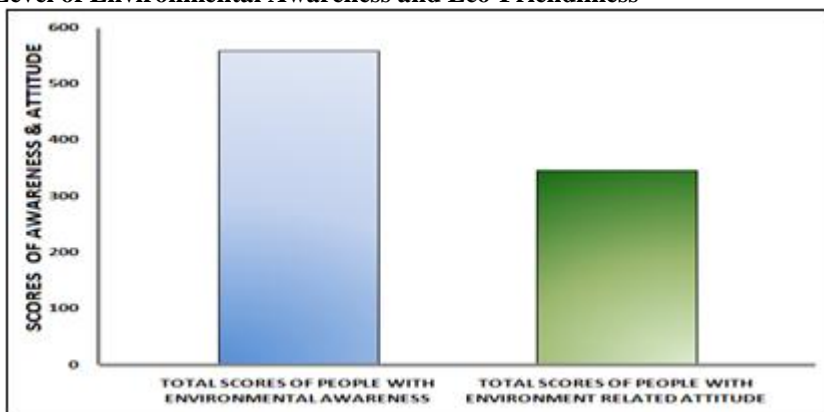


Figure 4

In figure no. 5, a comparative study has been done from the obtained score from the questionnaire response for environmental awareness and environment-related activities. Each pro-environmental awareness and training is awarded by score 1 for each person. Thus from the above diagram, it can be seen that the total score getting from the responses of all surveyed people regarding awareness is higher than the

score regarding attitude. It proves that more environmentally aware people do not mean more pro-environmental people.

Figure no. 6 shows the correlation between two variables, i.e., environmental awareness and environment-related activities.

Relationship between Environment Related Awareness and Attitude

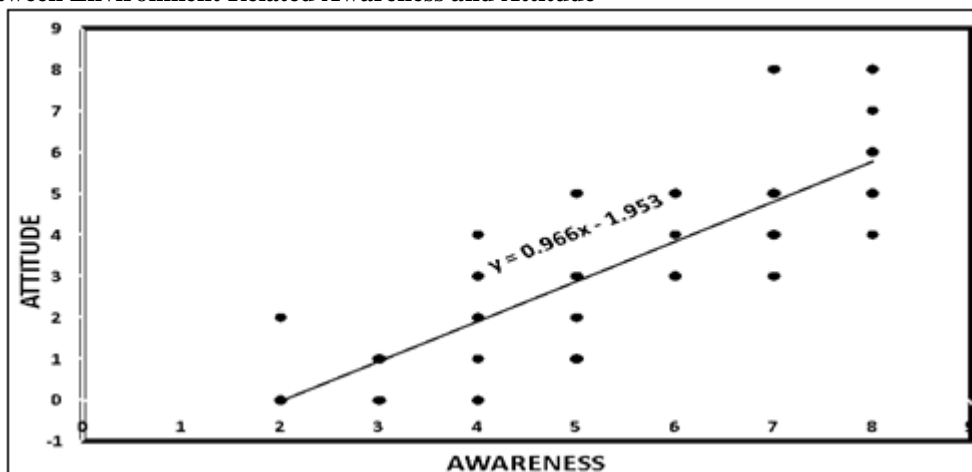


Figure 5

Hopefully, the correlation between the two factors like environmental awareness and pro-environmental activities is shown to be positive.

We, therefore, can say that awareness is the most influencing factor to decide the level of eco-friendliness. However, environmental awareness has also been influenced by many factors.

**Hypothesis Testing:**

Two hypotheses are taken to analyze the relationship between environmental awareness and environmental activities.

**Hypothesis 1:**

H<sub>0</sub>= There is no difference between environmental awareness and unawareness among the population.

H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant difference between environmental awareness and unawareness among the population.

**Hypothesis Testing:**

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Awareness (%)	Unawareness (%)
Mean	70	30
Variance	315.4285714	315.4285714
Observations	8	8
Pearson Correlation	-1	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	7	
t Stat	3.185110286	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.007690446	
t Critical one-tail	1.894578605	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.015380892	
t Critical two-tail	2.364624252	

Here, it has been shown that t Critical one-tail and t Critical two-tail values are greater than Pone tail and P two-tail value, respectively. But Pone tail value is 0.007690446, i.e., 0.76% and P two-tail value is 0.015380892, i.e., 1.54%. Both are less than 5% which means that the null hypothesis is significant.

**Hypothesis 2:**

H<sub>0</sub>= Environmental awareness is correlated with pro-environmental activities.

H<sub>1</sub>= Environmental awareness is not correlated with pro-environmental activities.

**Hypothesis testing:**

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances		
	Awareness (%)	Ecofriendly Activities (%)
Mean	70	43.25
Variance	315.4285714	37.64285714
Observations	8	8
df	7	7
F	8.379506641	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0.005940778	
F Critical one-tail	3.78704354	

Here, F is higher than F Critical one- tail, which means that the null hypothesis is significant.

**Factors influencing environmental awareness:**

There are so many factors that directly or indirectly influence awareness about the environment. These are as follows:

1) **Demographic Factors:**

- **Age and Gender:** Normally, it is found that people belonging to the age group of 15 to 60 are more aware of environmental issues. From my primary survey, it can also be stated that the male population is more aware of environmental issues.
- **Educational Level:** It has also been found that people with more literacy levels also have more awareness about the environment.

2) **Internal Factor:**

- **Motivation:** People must have the motivation to acquire environmental knowledge.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge has a direct positive relationship with awareness.
- **Moral Values:** People must have moral values to build awareness between them.

3) **External Factor:**

- **Infrastructure:** Only a suitable infrastructure can make people aware. For example, when walking on a road, we can dispose of our food packet properly if there is a dustbin.
- **Economy:** People may be aware of those issues belonging to their economic limit.
- **Socio-Cultural Situation:** Awareness builds based on the surrounding situation. For example, it can be said that a man who has been living in a much-polluted area from his childhood may have the chance to be indifferent about the cleanliness of surroundings.

**Barriers to environmental awareness:**

Some conditions prevent a person from becoming aware of society and the environment. These are:

- Most environmental degradation is not immediately perceivable.
- Environmental destruction takes place very gradually.
- Most of the environmental problems are complex to comprehend.

**Factors influencing environmental activities:**

1) **Individual Need:**

- **Direct/Indirect Experience:** Usually, people react directly if they experience an adverse situation.
- **Energy:** In some cases, lack of energy keeps us away from eco-friendly activities. For example, if people find a dustbin away from them, they often dispose of garbage besides their home.
- **Feeling Comfortable:** People perform eco-friendly behavior only if they feel comfortable doing this.
- **Field of Interest:** A person acts more pro-environmentally if interested in doing this.
- **Monetary Benefit:** People feel more interested in doing pro- environmentally if they have any monetary benefit.

2) **Responsibility:**

- **Efficacy:** Pro-environmental behavior depends on the efficiency of a person to do this.
- **Need:** A person performs pro-environmental behavior if they need to do this.



- **Feeling of Trust:** A person performs pro-environmental behavior if he trusts in the society that his excellent work may result.
- 3) **Normative Influence:**
- **Familial Tradition:** People often follow their family tradition, which goes against their concept of eco-friendliness. E.g., people usually dispose of garbage besides their home as they have seen this by their familial seniors.
  - **Cultural Norm:** People often follow their cultural norms, influencing their eco-friendliness. For example, people usually throw their religious items like clothes, flowers, and even dead bodies into water body though they know that this is harmful to the environment.
  - **Superstition:** In many cases, superstition drives away people from pro-environmental behavior, like people often make floating dead people due to snake-bite despite their awareness about environmental wellbeing.

**Barriers to Pro-Environmental Activities:**

Some barriers prevent people from doing pro-environmental behavior. These are as follows:

- Lack of knowledge and awareness.

- Problem to accept information that contradicts one’s belief.
- Refuse to get the actual situation or problem.
- Perfectly aware of the problem but has stopped feeling any emotion about it.
- Feeling helpless to change the situation and so create distance from the pain.
- Refuse to take any personal responsibility and blame others for degradation.
- Feeling of freedom by breaking the rules.

Here, the factors and barriers of environmental awareness and pro-environmental activities are represented in the following "ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING MODEL" in figure no- 7. There is a pro-environmental activity at the center encircled by two circles. The outer track shows the factors of pro-environmental activities obstructed by the barriers positioned in an inner way.

The area remains pro-environmentally active in a society where the outer track can break the inner one. The power of both the outer and inner way depends on the ability of the concerned activities. The factors of pro-environmental activities should break the obstruction to create a healthy society.



Figure 7: Environment Welbeing Model

**Some suggestions to remove this inconsistency:**

- Campaigning to do pro-environment behavior with all layers of people through seminars and conferences.
- Proper parenting from childhood.
- Create a curriculum with practical knowledge at the school level.
- Introduce a pay-per-bag system intensively to reduce the use of plastics.
- Use of hidden CCTV camera and legal backing. Against the indiscriminate abuse of the environment.
- Prize and punishment systems should be introduced everywhere for pro-environmental and anti-environmental behavior successively.
- Encourage people to use proper sanitation systems.
- Encourage people to reuse and recycle waste materials.
- Aware people about not to exploit natural resource
- Use greenhouse gas measurement meter and set its reading display board as possible, making conscious people from their heart.

## 6. Conclusion

When we face any problem, suddenly it hits on our mind. However, when we encounter it slowly but gradually, we do not even understand it. That is why, if we see a dirty pond beside our home and fishes die in this water, usually we react. However, though we know that the storage of petroleum in the world is gradually decreasing, we often use private cars randomly, never thinking about exploiting fuel. Lastly, the experience with frog can be remembered that when it was thrown into the boiling water, it suddenly jumped out while in case of throwing into the cold water it could not feel and got death.

## 7. Future Scope

The paper has been intended to observe the gap in between environmental awareness and activities. Here it is found that the people who are seems to be so called "literate" for the society are surely conscious about the environment literally yet their activities in daily life does not reflect their knowledge. In this paper a few factors which helps to achieve environmental awareness and insist people to perform pro- environmentally has been mentioned. Beside these, there are some barriers which hinder to achieve environmental knowledge and to perform pro- environmental behaviour has been mentioned.

However, there are some limitations, i.e., the research is based on the response of the people living at a particular region. Moreover, surveying for primary data collection has been done at a particular time. The study doesn't reveal the role of economic condition on environmental awareness and activities.

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## Author Profile



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