



Perception of Environmental Education and Awareness Among Mass People: A Case Study of Tangail District

S. A. Mamun¹, A. Nessa¹, M. Aktar², M. R. Hossain¹ and A. S. M. Saifullah¹

¹Department of Environmental Science and Resource Management,

Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, Santosh, Tangail, 1902, Bangladesh

²Department of Soil, Water and Environment, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Abstract

At present environmental education is emerging across the globe although this is a quite new phenomenon in Bangladesh. The present study was attempted to know about the environmental education and awareness among the mass people of Tangail town. In order to conduct this research, a questionnaire survey was carried out and interview was undertaken among 100 respondents in Tangail District. This paper describes some findings to understand the status of environmental awareness among people of different age groups of Tangail district. Moreover, this paper enables to provide some suggestions to extend environmental education and awareness to make a decent and ethical life as well as to keep the environment sustainable.

Key words: Environmental education, People, Sustainability, Tangail municipal area

Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries with limited land area (about 0.06 ha/person) (Ali, 1995 and UNDP, 1995). Because of increased population pressure, huge amount of natural resources are being used every day and the quality of the environment is deteriorating directly and indirectly through various anthropogenic as well as natural activities. Nevertheless, this environment deterioration has ultimately posed a threat to human civilization on global arena (Kabir and Mahmud, 2009). For instance, in recent years fresh water scarcity on a global scale, deforestation, degradation of coastal and marine areas, soil depletion and loss of biodiversity have become a major concern. Air and water pollution have reached such levels that have already resulted serious health hazards and negative impact on the environment as well as inevitably influence the prospects of long-term economic growth (Krishnamacharyulu and Reddy, 2005).

According to UN Climate Panel (2007), the melting of Himalayan glaciers could have serious consequences since over 800 million residents; almost half of the Indian and Bangladeshi population relies on the Ganges and the Brahmaputra river basins for water supply. With Himalayan glaciers melting, its eastern islands sinking and freak rain flooding deserts, environmentalists opine global warming is already taking its toll on one of most populous Asian nation, Bangladesh.

Currently, the steady global environment deterioration is a matter of great concern and gives emphasis on environmental education and awareness based courses and trainings. Environmental education certainly, a powerful vehicle bringing about change, a Panacea of all evils and a potent weapon for

prevention plays a central role in the society. The need of the hour is to make people sensitive towards nature through a strong programme of environmental education (Nachimuthu and Vijayakumari, 1993). Environmental education is not only some literatures and textbook full of hypothesis but also the remedy of the upcoming disaster. In order to protect and conserve the environment, enabling people to lead quality life, emphasis has been given to environmental education in both formal and non-formal system of education.

In 1970, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) called an international working meeting of its "Commission on Education" to discuss and work out Environmental Education curriculum for school. UNESCO (1974) reported environmental education as a tool of environment protection rather recognizes this as a subdivision of science based study. Another research coincided by (Sytnick 1985) demonstrated environmental education as a lifelong educational process. Although the global environment is at risk and environmental education is one of the prerequisite of its remedy, this is just three decades that environmental issues might be a concern for the global sustainable development. Thus, open discussion on environment education at national and international level such as conferences and workshops could make it possible to understand common people about the necessity of environmental education and awareness and its significance in practical life (Rao, 2010).

Recently, almost all developed world are concern about their environment and give priority on environmental education. Meanwhile Bangladesh lag far away from environmental studies in her formal education system and this is a quite new concept in Bangladesh (Kabir and Mahmud, 2009). The

principal aim of this research was to know about the environmental education and awareness among the mass people of Tangail municipal area according to their age levels.

Materials and methods

This study was conducted in Tangail District to collect the required information on various aspects of the study following a questionnaire survey. An interview schedule was undertaken among 100 participants to satisfy the objective of this research. The information recorded from the interviewee added valuable information about environmental education and awareness and follow similarities with literature review. After obtaining required information, the data were analyzed by using Microsoft office package.

Results and Discussion

Drinking water source greatly influence water borne disease

The Table 1 describes that most of the respondents mentioned that they are affected less by water borne diseases when drink water from tubewell. On the contrary, the data showed that supply water causes disease mostly. Thus the level of disease affected people is notably low on Tubewell water user than other two water source users.

Table 1: Relation between drinking water and water borne disease

Drinking water source	Affected water borne disease		Total respondents
	No	Yes	
Tubewell	42	20	62
River\Pond water	0	1	1
Supply water	13	24	37
Total	45	55	100

Age and water borne disease affected rate

The Table 2 showed a relationship how local people of Tangail municipal area are affected by waterborne diseases according to age group. The table represent that people who are in the age between 31-55 years old are vulnerable mostly to waterborne diseases. This may be due to the use of water for drinking purposes from unsafe sources and probably the water was not pure drinking water.

Table 2: Relation between age and water borne disease

	No Affected by water borne disease		Total
	No	Yes	
Age 10-18	8	7	15
19-30	15	18	33
31-55	15	22	37
56-More	7	8	15
Total	45	55	100

Contribution to minimizing pollution according to Sex

The Table 3 demonstrates how different gender groups contribute to reduce environment pollution through their awareness. This table described that women’s contribution was more than male to keep the environment safe and clean. The possible explanation is that women usually look after house hold activity and try to keep their family healthy and happy. From this point of view, they try to produce less pollution. However, if they could able to receive any formal environmental education or training, it would make them more aware about quality of environment and its diverse benefits.

Table 3: Relation between sex and pollution control contribution

Gender	Contribution to minimize pollution	
	No	Yes
Male	49.2%	50.8%
Female	42%	58%

Concern about environmental pollution of different ages people

It has been noticed from Table 4 that among the participants 85% people who are concern about environment pollution are in the age group 19-30 years. They contributed maximum to keep environment pollution free while the age group of 56 or more were not concern even did not show their interest about environmental issues.

Table 4: Relation between age and concern of pollution at different ages

		Pollution Concern		Total
		No	Yes	
Age	10-18	5 (34%)	10 (67%)	15
	19-30	5 (15%)	28 (85%)	33
	31-55	12 (34%)	25 (67%)	37
	56-More	8 (53%)	7 (47%)	15
Total		30	70	100

Water borne disease activity on different sanitation system

According to Table 5 it has revealed clearly that maximum people of Tangail district are concern about their sanitation system. It has been observed from

following table that people who use open toilet are more in danger to water borne disease because they dump their waste into nearby place, which's washed away to the water body, later these water is used by the people.

Table 5: Relation between water borne disease and sanitation system

Sanitation system	Affected water borne disease		Total respondents
	No	Yes	
Open	0	4	4
Closed	45	51	96
Total	45	55	100

Table 6: Relation of Age and Sex with water source, water borne disease, arsenic pollution concern and global warming concern.

		Drinking water source			Affected water borne disease		Arsenic pollution concern		Global warming concern	
		Tubewell	River/Pond Water	Supply water	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Age	10-18	9		6	8	7	9	6	9	6
	19-30	22		10	15	18	6	27	12	21
	31-55	21		17	15	22	15	22	14	23
	56-more	10	1	4	7	8	8	7	11	4
Sex	Male	42	1	22	28	37	23	42	29	36
	Female	20	-	15	17	18	15	20	17	18

Present status of environmental awareness in Tangail town

The Table 6 shows the environmental concern noticed among different ages and sex groups of Tangail area and revealed that the maximum environment aware group is 31-55 years age group whether people who are over 56 respond very poor regarding environment. In addition, male participants showed more interest in all global environmental issues including water sources, pollution as well as global warming. In addition, this study stated that people of almost all age groups of Tangail town aware of environmental pollution although many of them do not have any idea about the term Global warming. The concern on Arsenic pollution is high in middle aged male

respondents (31-55 years people) because they have got more opportunity and keep in touch with news paper and outdoor communication rather than women. A major group of participants use Tubewell water for drinking water source that results low water borne disease and indicate their serious attitude toward environment.

It has been revealed from Table 7 that respondents in the age group of 19-30 years old respond positively to control global environmental pollution and improved waste management systems. In addition, male participants respond more than female respondents regarding pollution control and waste management systems.

Table 7: Relation of age and sex with pollution concern, contribution to pollution control, satisfaction with municipal waste management and sanitation system

		Pollution Concern		Contribution to pollution control		Satisfy with municipal waste management system		Sanitation system	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Open	Closed
Age	10-18	5	10	7	8	11	4	1	14
	19-30	5	28	18	15	26	7	1	32
	31-55	12	25	17	20	25	12		37
	56-more	8	7	5	10	6	9	2	13
Sex	Male	21	44	32	33	45	20	4	61
	Female	9	26	15	20	23	12		35

Furthermore, the present research has revealed those issues arise from the literature review as well as from the interview of the survey. Regarding environmental awareness present research discussed about some factual information about environmental education and awareness among various age groups. It has been noticed that young people 19-33 years old people are more concern about current environmental issues. During the survey period, almost all respondents mentioned to create an opportunity to learn environmental education in formal education system not only in Tangail district rather in entire Bangladesh. They added that although Tangail is a municipal area, most of the people here are interested about environment particularly male people. In these circumstances, mass media campaign and advertising might be useful to make people aware since this is quite difficult for old people to go to school and have lessons.

Conclusion

Until recent year, environmental education and awareness is in its initial stage in Bangladesh. However, the whole environment is at risk recently because of booming population. These mass people are exposed to different types of pollutions and arsenic contamination that may lead to a great threat to them. According to present research, most of the people of Tangail Municipal area have traditional knowledge about environmental issues although environmental education is important due to present global agenda of sustainable development. Deployment of environmental expertise in public and private environment management sectors to teach and train people about environment protection and conservation to pressing sustainable environment within limited opportunities and limitations will improve the present environmental condition of Bangladesh.

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