MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

Environmental Education: Sustainable Behavior and Psychological Wellbeing of Students

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Abstract: *There is a common understanding that EE can transform students' knowledge and attitudes towards sustainability. EE not only helps individuals be better able to make more environmentally conscious choices, but it also helps them to be more emotionally resilient, environmentally conscious, and healthy in general. The ways in which EE improves students' mental health and sustainable behavior are examined in this research. The study deals with the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of environmental learning, based on the concepts of education, psychology and environmental science. The relationship between people and nature (mentalistic correctness), self-efficacy and prosaic behavior improved when EE was communicated into curricula through participative and value based EE than when EE was communicated through eco-anxiety control, while there was an increase in environmental identification and self-wellbeing in EE communicated into curricula through participative and value based EE than in EE communicated through eco-anxiety control. We suggest a few ideas for schools and universities to incorporate a psychologically informed EE approach that considers the needs of the whole child. With growing evidence of eco-anxiety, this research and findings will help further the understanding of how EE can be a support to students' mental health.*

Keywords: *Environmental Education (EE), Sustainable Behavior, Psychological Wellbeing, Eco-Anxiety, Experiential Learning.*

1. Introduction:

Raising awareness of the environment is an imperative need if humankind is to overcome the ecological crises which are an unfolding reality this century, including the extinction crisis and climate change. The transfer of environmental awareness and resilience to future generations is an important job of education. Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence that time spent in nature can have a positive effect on mental and emotional well-being, stress and cognition.

Then EE is not only a means to raise awareness about the environment; it is also a road to peace and harmony. It includes all three aspects of cognition, emotion and behaviour. Ethically sound EE meets the psychological requirements of independence, mastery and connection, in addition to promoting the environmental ethic.

This article examines how EE can promote sustainable behaviours and mental health of students through education, environmental science and psychology.

2. Conceptual Framework:

2.1 Environmental Education

Teaching people about ecosystems, how they work, what they need to know to make a difference, and how to motivate themselves to do their part to solve environmental problems and live more sustainably is what environmental education is all about (UNESCO 1977). Students' involvement in decision-making and action, such as through service-learning, will help them to think critically about human-environment interactions, a natural component of

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SE (see sidebar).

2.2 Sustainable Behavior

Sustainable living involves meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations. Moderation with consumption, waste minimization, conservation and social responsibility are included. Because of the importance of emotional investment and perceived behavioral control in bringing about sustainable behavior change, environmental awareness is inadequately understood, as pointed out by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002).

2.3 Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological well-being includes acceptance of self, life direction, freedom from outside interference, competence in the immediate environment, supportive relationships and room for growth (Ryff, 1989). Opportunities for learning in the environment and active engagement in natural settings support mindfulness, empathy and sense of belonging.

2.4 Theoretical Linkages

There are three ideas which underpin EE, sustainability, wellbeing and enterprise effectiveness. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) suggests that EE fosters relatedness, competence and autonomy through active engagement with the surrounding environment. The Biophilia Hypothesis (Wilson, 1984) suggests that EE can be used to support the idea that humans have an innate attraction to nature.

The awareness of environmental disasters can lead to a major transformation in one's personality and behaviour, as described by Transformation Theory (Mezirow, 1991).

3. Methodology: This paper has been inspired by literature review, case studies and empirical data from India and around the world, to devise its methodology which is qualitative meta-review. The sources used include psychological research into the connection between environment and mental health and articles of research in peer reviewed articles and reports from the UNESCO. The emphasis continues to be on the school settings of secondary and tertiary students.

4. Environmental Education and Sustainable Behavior:

4.1 Knowledge to Action

Research indicates sustainability education activities (e.g., recycling, energy saving, and green consumption) are linked to environmental literacy. Conversely, knowing does not necessarily mean acting better. Consideration of ethical and psychological factors is of equal significance.

4.2 Learning by Doing

Field trips, wilderness trips and community service projects are about sustainable practices. A greater level of personal responsibility for the environment and more pro-environmental sentiments are associated with students who engage in outdoor environmental activity.

4.3 Pedagogy based on values and participatory

Value-based education is part of EE through which sustainable behaviours are developed among the learners. Empathy, working as a team and respect for all living things are values that are included. Learning about sustainability: putting ideas into practice Sustainability is not just an idea, it is a way of life when we learn through experience, adopt green practices at the University and join environmental groups.

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4.4 The Duty of the University to Promote the Culture of Peace in the World

Schools can help lead the way on sustainability initiatives through various methods, such as recycling, solar energy, and water conservation. The institutional routines reinforce behaviour learning and hence make it more likely that students will repeat the sustainable actions they learn in school when they are outside of school.

5. Environmental Education and Psychological Wellbeing:

5.1 Nature and Mental Health

Numerous studies have found that plants can lower anxiety, despair, and stress in individuals, clear their mind, and make them feel better. So why do children who spend their days in schools that integrate outdoor learning into their school day appear to be more emotionally balanced and engaged with the natural world?

5.2 Stress Management, and managing Environmental Anxieties

The concern about environmental catastrophes has been documented as a phenomenon affecting young people, namely, their "eco-anxiety," which is described as feelings of powerlessness or terror in the face of environmental disaster. It can help reduce youth's eco-anxiety and inspire them to take their own action by giving them knowledge, resources, and agency. When a person learns to tackle the environmental issues sequentially, fear can be converted into creative inspiration.

5.3 SEL's Roles in EE

There are many opportunities for leadership, empathy and social-emotional development throughout community gardens, environmental projects, and group work. These routines boost social relationships, which has a positive impact on one's psychological health.

5.4 Cognitive and Academic Benefits

Children studying out of the classroom are thought to demonstrate greater levels of interest, creativity and attentiveness. Curiosity is one of the most crucial psychological factors of successful learning, and EE's multi-sensory, problem-based approach can help to develop both.

6. Case Studies:

6.1 India: Green Schools Programme

Such initiatives as the Centre for Science and the Environment (CSE) Green Schools Programme boost the school spirit and the sustainability of the school by involving students in school-wide energy and waste audits. When considering experiential learning, participants expressed a greater interest in and personal investment in the hands-on effort because of their environmental concerns.

6.2 Japan: Satoyama Education Model

Satoyama forest management is incorporated in Japanese schools. Students learn about the importance of ecological balance, they learn to think healthy thoughts by taking stock of themselves, expressing gratitude and realizing their connection to all living beings.

6.3 Finland: A Curriculum Rooted in Nature

Finland's low stress levels and high level of happiness among students are backed by the benefits of introducing an EE component to mental health, alongside schools placing emphasis on outdoor learning and environmental stewardship.

7. Challenges in Implementation:

Curriculum Overload: EE is not a theme which helps integrate all subjects but is a sub-

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ject that is added on.

Due to a lack of professional development opportunities, very few educators have the background in ecology and psychology that would allow them to instruct their students in EE.

In cities open spaces are so scarce that it is difficult for students to study out of the doors.

Difficulties in Assessing Affective and behavioral learning are downplayed in the conventional testing paradigm.

There is a need for a systemic change to effectively embed EE in goals for social and mental health development to address these issues.

8. Recommendations:

Make the concepts of environmental and psychological wellness a part of all courses; link scientific concepts with ethics (how we should live) and emotion (how it feels).

Increase the competence of educators: Deliver training on coping with eco-anxiety, experiential learning and environmental psychology.

Promote campus participation in community-based environmental projects; involve in civic responsibilities; encourage school/community relationships.

Infrastructure Development: Develop a green school environment and school grounds to make students feel connected with nature.

New Approach to Testing: Measure pupils' development of empathy and engagement rather than their ability to recall facts.

Policy: Incorporate efforts for environmental wellness into mental health and national health programs.

9. Conclusion:

The role of ecological human environmental education in the continuity and well-being is discussed in the ninth and final conclusion. Students are not only prepared to be good stewards of the earth, but also to live healthy, satisfying lives, because to EE's emphasis on environmental awareness, emotional intelligence, and psychological resilience. Environmental education and mental health should go hand in hand, so that a new generation can be mentally and emotionally well equipped to face the global challenges with imagination, compassion and hope.

It is not technological optimization or a single solution that will be the basis for a successful future, it's a cultural-emotional-educational civilization.

“To put it simply, listening to the wisdom of nature.”

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