

# Awareness on Sustainable Development among Secondary School students in Papumpare District, Arunachal Pradesh

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**Abstract:** The present study examines awareness among school students on Sustainable Development. A qualitative survey method was adopted wherein 4 schools from Papumpare district from the state of Arunachal Pradesh was selected as sample. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used to examine the level of awareness in different classes on sustainable Development. The mean age of the respondents was 15 years. Most of the respondents were aware of the SDGs but very few of them had knowledge about the SDGs. However, most of the respondents had positive attitude towards it. More respondents with knowledge of the SDGs were either those have been enlightened via personal study of the SDGs or as belonging to the middle age group.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Qualitative surgery, SDGs, Middle age group.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a globally accepted developmental agenda, and it is expected that everyone everywhere in the world would be aware, knowledgeable and be willing to contribute to its attainment. This study aims to assess the level of awareness, knowledge of, and attitudes towards the SDGs among secondary school students.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is widely known as Agenda 2030, with reference to the end year by which the SDGs should have been attained globally. The MDGs, while it lasted was a focal point of the world's developmental agenda and brought about novel and innovative partnerships and considerable development to both developing and developed countries. The SDGs represents a more comprehensive agenda than the MDGs with 17 goals, 169 targets and well over 200 indicators. The SDGs involves a five "Ps" agenda: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership and these five "Ps" are for all countries and peoples of the world (Nair P, 2007). Global consultations among various bodies/sectors including governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, scientists, academicians and individual citizens were made before the SDGs were put in place. Thus, the educational sector was not left out of its formulation.

The role of education (with SDGs enlightenment as its central focus) is central to achieving the SDGs. just as Health Education is central to Primary Health Care. The United Nations' Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognize that education is a major key to sustainable development with its statement "Sustainable development cannot be achieved by technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone. We need to change the way we think and act. This requires quality education and learning for sustainable development at all levels and in all social contexts" (Fransman, MacDonald and Mc Donnell, 2013). The school system is made up of teachers who teach, students who learn and administrative staff standing as an expedient support to both students and staff. Teaching and learning about the SDGs are thus important in the school setting, not only to academic staff and students but also the non-academic staff since no one is to be left behind when it comes to the SDGs. Thus, this study seeks to assess the

perspectives of all members of a school community on the SDGs with a view to appraising the implications not just for the academic community but for all individuals and groups in developing countries like; India, where the level of awareness and knowledge on global developmental agendas such as the MDGs or SDGs are usually low.

### Objectives:

- 1) To study the level of awareness and attitude among secondary school students.

### Statement of problem:

In the present study the investigator made an attempt to examine the issue of awareness about sustainable development among different grades of secondary school students and the problem has been stated as: “**Awareness on Sustainable Development among Secondary School students in Papumpare District, Arunachal Pradesh.**”

### Research questions:

- 1) What is the level of awareness about sustainable development among secondary school students?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was followed wherein descriptive survey method was adopted to explore the level of awareness among secondary school students in Papumpare district of Arunachal Pradesh. The population of the study was secondary school students. Multi-stage sampling strategy has been adopted for the present study. There are 15 blocks in Papumpare district, out of which 3 blocks (Itanagar, Banderdewa and Naharlagun) have been selected purposively. From each block respectively 2,1,1 secondary schools have been selected randomly. 240 students constituted the sample. The mean age for the respondents was 15 years. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used to examine about the level of awareness in different classes on sustainable Development. Data has been collected by the investigator after visiting the schools under investigation personally for taking prior permission from the Headmaster/Headmistress of the schools. Descriptive statistical tools were also applied in data analysis.

### Analysis of awareness on Sustainable Development:

**Data analysis** is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. Data analysis has multiple facets and approaches, encompassing diverse techniques under a variety of names, while being used in different business, science, and social demographic domains.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents (N=240)**

Variable	Age group	Frequency	Percentage	Gender	
				Boys	Girls
Age group [Mean age 15 years , minimum =11, maximum = 19	11-13	105	43.75	130	110
	14-16	90	37.44		
	17-19	45	18.72		
	Mean=15	N=240	100%	54.16%	45.84%

**Table 2: Respondents' awareness on SDGs related with selected socio-demographic characteristics (N=240).**

Variable	Sub-Variable	Awareness about SDG	
Gender	-	No/Not sure (%)	Yes (%)
	Boys =130	42	58
	Girls =110	46	54

When asked about the first time they heard of the SDGs, 55 (23%) of the 240 respondents said they heard of it in or before the year 2016. In the same vein, when asked about the year the SDGs were adopted by the United Nations (UN), 19 respondents (8.5%) stated that it was adopted in or before 2014, with only 26 (11%) stating 2015 as the adoption year.

In **Table 2**, more people in the boys group (58%) were aware of the SDGs compared to girls (54%). Similarly, more girls (46%) were unaware than boys (35.3%), and those who had below secondary education, not up to the level of a first degree.

**Table 3: Respondents' knowledge and attitude on SDGs related with selected socio-demographic (N=240).**

Variable	Sub-Variable			
	Knowledge		Attitude	
Total respondents	Poor (%)	Good (%)	Negative (%)	Positive (%)
	33	4.5	6	62.3

In **Table 3**, With regard to knowledge, only 4.5% of the respondents had good knowledge (Good knowledge refers to the information, descriptions, understanding and skills on SDGs, which is acquired through experience or education) while 33% had poor knowledge of SDGs. However, for attitude, 62.3% of the respondents showed positive attitude while 6% showed negative attitude on SDGs.

#### Major findings:

- 1) Only 55.84% of the respondents were aware of the SDGs and only 4.5% had good knowledge of the SDGs. (knowledge is set of experiences, skills, insights on sustainable development, while awareness is the perception of that knowledge and using of that knowledge).
- 2) However, 62.3% had positive attitude towards it. More respondents with good knowledge of the SDGs were either those have been enlightened via personal study of the SDGs or as belonging to the middle age group (15years).

### 3. DISCUSSION

Over a year into the implementation of the SDGs, a little over one-third of the study respondents were aware of the SDGs. This can be considered to be low as the SDGs has as its motto “no one must be left behind”. In a global survey of the SDGs done in 2016, involving 13 countries including the level of awareness ranged from 16% in Russia to 44% in India, with the African countries having 34% and 30% respectively (Global Action for People and the Planet. 2015). The level of awareness in this study is higher than that of the state survey for Arunachal Pradesh possibly because of the one-year gap in the conduct of both studies. It is expected that more people would become aware as time goes on. In another survey done across the state in 2015, among 27,672 respondents, the level of awareness on SDGs was 26%, (National Survey Report: 2016) which is lower than what was obtained in this study, although varied data collection times may account for the difference.

Further questions asked by the investigators in this study showed that those respondents claimed to be aware may not really be aware and many may be confusing the SDGs with the MDGs. For instance, a 34 of those who were aware said they heard of the SDGs in or before the year 2015. In reality, this is not likely to be true as the idea of SDGs as the new global developmental agenda to succeed the reigning MDGs was first mooted around 2012 at the Rio+20 conference, and did not really gain ground until the year 2015. One of the problems associated with the MDGs was the low level of awareness across the country. The level of awareness has been described as the backbone of achievement, and it is generally believed that without adequate awareness there can be no attainment as the public will not be able to hold pertinent stakeholders accountable.

Concerning sources of awareness on the SDGs, it is not entirely surprising that radio/ TV took the lead, traditionally, radio and TV remain the leading sources of awareness in this part of the world. It is, however, noteworthy that the use of the internet and attendance of conferences were quite close to the usage of radio/TV. This may not be unconnected with the setting in which the study was carried out, as many of the respondents are likely to be avid internet users and/or lecture/ conference attendees. Globally, the social media is becoming a veritable source of information about many issues. However, only a fifth of the respondents acknowledged the social media as one of the sources of their awareness. The need to increasingly use the social media as a source of awareness/enlightenment about the SDGs has been duly recognized in Arunachal Pradesh. Less than 5% of the respondents stated “on official duty” as one of the sources of awareness on SDGs, this is quite low and will not hasten the attainment of the SDGs. If truly no one is to be left behind in the attainment of the SDGs, then the earlier the SDGs are integrated into the learning and working culture or environment in any and every setting, the better it will be for SDGs implementation and ultimately its attainment. Although the level of

awareness of the SDGs could be said to be fair or just low, the level of knowledge was terribly low with less than 5% of the respondents who were aware having good knowledge of the SDGs. The low level of knowledge might not be unconnected with the fact that inter-sectoral collaboration which has already been recognized by the OSSAP-SDGs (Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs, Arunachal Pradesh) as a key principle for attaining the SDGs, is inadequate and thus needs to be strengthened. There is an urgent need for all sectors, inclusive of the educational sector, to have a real buy-in into the SDGs and make it the fulcrum of their developmental and/or strategic plans. If there will be any significant change in the understanding of the SDGs, positive attitudes will be required. Although over half of the respondents had positive attitude towards SDGs in this study. However, this is still grossly insufficient in the light of the SDGs' aim of leaving no one behind.

The implications of the findings of this study are grave and far-reaching. The schools system is the zenith of learning/education, and if the level of awareness and knowledge, as well as attitude towards the SDGs, is this low, then the societal level will be far lower and the SDGs paradigm that no one is left behind will remain a mirage (Nashash, 2013). The sheer number of educational institutions in Papumpare district with multitudes of students and staff should make the educational sector a priority setting for SDGs awareness and implementation. Strategies including policies and programs must be put in place to integrate the SDGs into the school system. Educational systems have a lot to offer and are expected to define learning objectives and contents compliant with the SDGs, introduce pedagogies and curricula that empower learners to know about and implement SDGs, and themselves embrace sustainability principles in their management structures. The 2030 Agenda in itself gave a premium place to education as education is a stand-alone goal (SDG 4) and many education related targets and indicators are present in the remaining 16 goals. Education is thus a means for attaining all the other SDGs as the SDGs are inter-linked and the fulfillment of one goal is likely to enhance the fulfillment of other goals. As the year 2030 looms on the horizon, it is imperative that curricula at the tertiary and other levels of education be spiced with the SDGs. It is vital that each educational institution integrates the principles of sustainable development into their mission statements, with emphasis on today's development not adversely affecting future development.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study is limited by lack of comparative hard data on the awareness of, knowledge about and attitude towards the SDGs in Schools, however the findings are revealing and will provide invaluable data on these and consequently stimulate efforts aimed at improving the level of awareness, knowledge and positive attitude towards the SDGs in educational settings. The SDGs are for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society, therefore pertinent individual and population-level methods of enlightening people about the SDGs becomes imperative and must be put in place in all settings, starting from the education sector.

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