ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AS A COGNITIVE CORRELATE OF PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

The question of what shapes pro-environmental behaviour is such a complex one that it cannot be visualized through one single framework. Pro-environmental behaviour simply means behaviour that consciously seeks to minimize the negative aspect of one's actions on the natural and bui There are several other studies which point out that there exists a positive relationship between Environmental Knowledge and Pro-environmental behaviour, but the influence of Environmental Knowledge on Pro-environmental behaviour has been systematically under estimated because the underlying structure of Environmental Knowledge has not been addressed adequately. The study is an attempt to establish that Environmental Knowledge influences Pro-environmental behaviour in a significant manner.

Introduction

Creating environmentally responsible citizens is no easy task for the educators. It requires a strong educational system together with an efficient group of 'ecolate educators' who can transform our children into environmentally responsible citizens of the future. The educators, especially teachers should serve as the connecting link between the environment and students. Thus there is an urgency to meet the ecological challenges of 21st century by promoting 'Pro-environmental behaviour' or 'Responsible environmental behaviour' in children. Pro-environmental behaviour is defined as behaviour that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world. (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). It can be any action, conscious or unconscious directed towards the protection, promotion and preservation of

the environment and remediation of environmental problems. Pro-environmental behaviour is influenced by a plethora of factors which includes cognitive, affective and sociological ones. Knowledge about factors influencing Pro-environmental behaviour is a pre-requisite for inculcating Pro-environmental behaviour in individuals. Thus, an in-depth knowledge and understanding about Pro-environmental behaviour will surely pave way for educators to create an environmentally literate citizenry capable of initiating environmental action to solve environmental issues.

Need and Significance of the Study

It was not very long ago that the human race seemed to realize, with some panic that the impact of the environment on human life and endeavors cannot be ignored any more, particularly after the way in which human beings had begun to use and misuse the environment. Awareness and knowledge concerning the environmental problems, favorable attitude, emotional and behavioral inclination would contribute greatly towards enhancing and promoting ecological consciousness, a feeling characterized by a sense of self as part of a large holistic system and awareness of the sociological processes within these systems. The review of literature reveals a dearth of Indian research done in the field of environmental psychology especially in the area of responsible environmental behaviour among the teachers. It is in this context that the present study ventures to explore the relationship between the select cognitive correlate Environmental behaviour and Pro-environmental behaviour.

Hypothesis of the Study

➢ There exists a significant correlation between Pro-environmental behaviour and the select Cognitive Correlate, Environmental Knowledge

Objectives of the Study

➢ To find out the relationship between Pro-environmental behaviour and the select Cognitive Correlate 'Environmental Knowledge'

Sample selected for the study

450 secondary school teachers from Thiruvananthapuram district constitute the sample for the study. The sample has been selected by the 'Simple Random Sampling Method'.

Tools used

- Pro-environmental Behaviour Scale (PEBS) prepared by the investigator
- Environmental Literacy Test (ELT) prepared by the investigator

Procedure

The Pro-environmental Behavioural Scale and the Environmental Literacy Test was administered to the sample under standardized conditions. The data was further subjected to statistical treatment. The data was coded, tabulated and correlation coefficient was calculated.

Statistical Techniques

- Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

Results and Discussion

The data were analysed so as to find valid answers to the objectives specified in the study. The details of the analysis are presented under appropriate subheads

Results of Correlation Between Pro-Environmental Behaviour (and Its Components) and Environmental Knowledge (And Its Components) of Secondary School Teachers (N=450)

Correlation Between Pro-Environmental Behaviour (and its Components) and Environmental Knowledge (And Its Components) of Secondary School Teachers (N=450)

Variables	Environmental Knowledge (Total)		System knowledge		Action knowledge	
	Pearson Coefficient of correlation (r)	Significance (2-tailed)	Pearson Coefficient of correlation (r)	Significance (2-tailed)	Pearson Coefficient of correlation(r)	Significance(2-tailed)
Pro-environmental	0.428**	0.000	0.456**	0.000	0.397**	0.000

Behaviour (Total)						
Travel behaviour	0.289**	0.000	0.358**	0.000	0.285**	0.000
Consumer behaviour	0.294**	0.000	0.285**	0.000	0.270**	0.000
Conservation behaviour	0.374**	0.000	0.399**	0.000	0.341**	0.000
Activist behaviour	0.285**	0.000	0.337**	0.000	0.251**	0.000
Vicarious behaviour	0.281**	0.000	0.265**	0.000	0.270**	0.000

** Significant at 0.01 level

The results from **Table** reveals that the coefficient of correlation between Pro-environmental behaviour (and its components) with Environmental Knowledge (and its components) for the total sample are positive and significant at 0.01 level. Thus it can be concluded from the analysis that 'Pro-environmental behaviour' and its components viz. Travel behaviour, Consumer behaviour, Conservation behaviour, Activist behaviour and Vicarious behaviour are dependent on the Cognitive correlate 'Environmental Knowledge' and its components, viz. System Knowledge and Action Knowledge.

A positive and significant correlation ($r = 0.428$) exists between Pro-environmental behaviour and Environmental Knowledge. A good measure of Environmental knowledge in an individual will definitely lead to Pro-environmental behaviour.

A positive and significant correlation ($r = 0.456$) exists between Pro-environmental behaviour and System knowledge. Thus it can be interpreted that if an individual has sufficient knowledge about how ecosystems function and knowledge of environmental problems caused by humans, then it is likely that the individual will act pro-environmentally.

A positive and significant correlation (r =0.397) exists between Pro-environmental behaviour and Action Knowledge which proves that knowledge about measures and possible courses of action to reduce environmental problems will surely result in Pro-environmental behaviour.

Discussion

➤ A positive and significant correlation (r=0.428) exists between Pro-environmental behaviour and Environmental Knowledge. A good measure of Environmental knowledge in an individual will definitely lead to Pro-environmental behaviour.

➤ A positive and significant correlation (r=0.456) exists between Pro-environmental behaviour and System knowledge. Thus, it can be interpreted that if an individual has sufficient knowledge about how ecosystems function and knowledge of environmental problems caused by humans, then it is likely that the individual will act pro-environmentally.

➤ A positive and significant correlation (r=0.397) exists between Pro-environmental behaviour and Action Knowledge which proves that knowledge about measures and possible courses of action to reduce environmental problems will surely result in Pro-environmental behaviour.

Conclusion

The development of environmentally responsible and active citizens has become the ultimate goal of Environmental Education. However, curricular and instructional strategies that effectively lead to the development of Pro-environmental behaviour has not been implemented so far in our educational scenario. A tremendous variety of variables has been investigated in relation to behaviour in the environmental context. However, there is at present no agreement among researchers as to which of these variables appear to be most strongly associated with Pro-environmental behaviour. Such information is vital to environmental educators for its potential in terms of providing a sound empirical base on which to construct appropriate curricula for the development of environmentally responsible and active citizens.

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