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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sustainable education awareness and practice are of growing concern, both in Nepal and globally. Practicing sustainability requires every citizen to shoulder social responsibilities for the present and the future. This study aims to investigate sustainable education awareness and practices among students.

Methods: The study employs a descriptive cross-sectional design to assess sustainable education practices (SEP) and sustainable educational awareness (SEA) among students. It takes place in government schools in Jhapa District, Province Number One, Nepal, with two specific schools chosen for the study. The study population includes secondary-level students from grades 8, 9, and 10, totaling 175 students, and selected using a stratified sampling technique. Data collection involves self-administered questionnaires with an emphasis on reliability and validity. Ethical approval and permissions ensure confidentiality and informed consent.

Results: The study employed descriptive, regression, and chi-square tests. The findings reveal average SEA levels with limited SEP representation. The analysis underscores a weak link between awareness and practice. The sample, with an average age of 15.35, features balanced gender representation and primarily nuclear families involved in agriculture. Key information sources include social media and the school curriculum, while socio-demographic factors show no significant associations with SEP.

Conclusion: The study underscores the significance of SEP and SEA for addressing global challenges. While students exhibit an average SEA level, SEP remains deficient, with a weak link between awareness and practice. Tailored interventions, diversified stakeholder involvement, and interdisciplinary approaches are needed to prepare the next generation to address sustainability on a global scale and foster a more resilient future.

Key Words: School; SEA; Sustainable Educational Awareness; Sustainable Education Practice; SEP

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the examination of SEA, and a SEP (Toriola-Coker et al., 2021), determined by the values (Al-Kuwari et al., 2021) of all-inclusive learning, environmental responsibility, and long-term societal well-being, which is increasingly significant in addressing current global challenges (Al-Kuwari et al., 2021; Gani et al., 2023; Thapa, M., et al., 2023; UNESCO., 2018). It allows individuals to become up-to-date citizens and enthusiastically participate in the construction of a sustainable future (Gunansyah et al., 2021; Hernandez, 2019; Toriola-Coker et al., 2021; UNESCO., 2018). The main objectives of this study are to deliver an evidence-based assessment of the current state of practical education and mindfulness among students in government schools in the Jhapa District. By recognizing strengths and weaknesses, this research seeks to pave the way for more active SEP and a more knowledgeable and proactive cohort ready to report the challenges of sustainability.



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The rationale of this research stems from a pressing requirement to measure the efficacy of SEP and the scope of students' awareness in a situation where nearly 140 developing countries deal with development needs among the approaching threat of climate change (Johnston, 2016; UNESCO., 2018). The study proposes to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the alignment of educational practices with SEP and their impact on students' understanding and engagement in sustainable actions (Gani et al., 2023; Gunansyah et al., 2021; Thapa et al., 2022; Zwickle et al., 2014). The main objectives of this study are to deliver an evidence-based assessment of the current state of practical education and mindfulness among students in government schools in the Jhapa District. By recognizing strengths and weaknesses, this research seeks to pave the way for more active SEP and a more knowledgeable and proactive cohort ready to report the challenges of sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

The research employs a descriptive cross-sectional research design to assess SEPSEA among students. Descriptive research aims to provide an accurate description of individual characteristics without imposing control or manipulation. The study is conducted in government schools in Jhapa District, located in Province Number one, Nepal. The selected schools are Shree Shahid Dharma Bhakta Secondary School, established in 2024 Bikram Sambat (BS), in Kherkha, Jhapa, and Shree Kamala Madan Ashrit Smriti Secondary School, established in 2019 BS, in Topgachhi, Jhapa. The study population comprises secondary-level students from grades 8, 9, and 10 in the selected government schools in Jhapa. This totals 170 students from Shree Shahid Dharma Bhakta Secondary School and 100 students from Shree Kamala Madan Ashrit Smriti Secondary School, resulting in a total study population of $N = 175$. A sampling frame is developed by listing the number of students in grades 8, 9, and 10 using school registers. Stratified random sampling was employed to select a total sample size of 175 students from two schools: (1) Shree Shahid Dharma Bhakta Secondary School $170/270 \times 175 = 110$ and (2) Shree Kamala Madan Ashrit Smriti Secondary School $100/270 \times 175 = 65$; Total = 175; with the sample size determined using the Cochran formula. Data collection is performed through self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire is designed based on research objectives, an extensive literature review, consultations with research experts, and reliability and validity testing.

The questionnaire consists of three parts:

Part I: Socio-demographic information

In this section, socio-demographic variables such as age group, gender, family types, occupation of the father, occupation of the mother, and sources of information are included.

Part II: Sustainable Education Practice with 25 items

This section contains 25 items or statements used to assess sustainable education practices. The practice levels, categorized as low and good practice are defined by Thapa et al. (2022) as follows:

Low sustainable education practice (below 45%)

High sustainable education practices (above 45%)



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Part III: Sustainable Education Awareness responses are as follows:

Strongly Disagree: 1; Disagree: 2; Neutral: 3; Agree: 4 and Strongly Agree: 5.

This section contains 17 items or statements used to assess sustainable education awareness. The awareness levels, as defined by (Muhammad Ridwan et al., 2021), are categorized into three levels: High (70-100%), Average (40-69%) and Low (0-39%).

Reliability and Validity: To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, it underwent pilot testing and feedback from research experts.

Part II: Sustainable Education Practices

In the pre-testing stage, 10% of the sample size was used, which equated to 10% of 175, approximately 17.5, or rounded up to 18 participants. Green team (2 items), Energy management (5 items), Waste management (6 items), water management (5 items), school ground management (3 items), and transportation management (4 items), totaling 25 items, with "yes" or "no" options, were used to assess SEP.

The factor Load analysis: The reliability analysis for the 25 items assessing SEP revealed mixed results. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.669, indicating moderate sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that the items shared some common variance. The communalities ranged from 0.460 to 0.827, indicating that most items had acceptable communalities. The principal component analysis with variable rotation yielded eight components. While reliability is acceptable for all items.

Part III: Sustainable Education Awareness

The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.895 for SEA suggests high reliability since it exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.7. Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) value of 0.817 and the significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$) indicate that the data is suitable for factor analysis, further confirming the reliability of the study.

Content Validity: Instructions were provided to respondents to mark (√) the relevance of statements about SEA and answer yes or no questions about SEP. The options included "not relevant" (score 1), "somewhat relevant" (score 2), "relevant" (score 3), and "very relevant" (score 4). The experts' scores were averaged, and the content validity index (CVI) was calculated for each question. Questions with a CVI of 70% or higher were considered acceptable, while those below 70% were revised or removed. The final CVI for both tools was 80%, indicating suitability for the study.



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Data Analysis: The data analysis involved using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine the frequency, percentage, and levels of SEP and SEA. Chi-square tests were conducted to explore the associations between selected demographic variables and SEP. Additionally, regression analysis was used to investigate the relationship between SEA and SEP in this study. Data collection was carried out after obtaining ethical approval from the Institutional Review Committee (IRC) of the Yeti Health Sciences Academy (YHSA), recognized by the Nepal Health Research Council. Permission letters are also obtained from the school principal for data collection. The research ensures individual confidentiality and informed consent.

RESULTS

Table 1. Illustrate the socio-demographic characteristics of participants

| Variables (n=175) | Frequency (N=175) | Percentage |
|--|-------------------|------------|
| Age | | |
| ≤15 years | 98 | 56.0 |
| ≥16years | 77 | 44.0 |
| Mean Age: 15.35; Standard Deviation: 1.318; Minimum Age: 13; Maximum age: 22 | | |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 92 | 52.6 |
| Female | 83 | 47.4 |
| Family types | | |
| Nuclear | 96 | 54.8 |
| Joint | 79 | 45.1 |
| Father Occupation | | |
| Agriculture | 90 | 51.4 |
| Service | 51 | 30.9 |
| Business | 12 | 6.9 |
| Foreign employment | 22 | 12.6 |
| Mother Occupation | | |
| Agriculture | 67 | 38.3 |
| Service & Business | 3 | 1.7 |
| Foreign employment | 6 | 3.4 |
| Home maker | 99 | 56.6 |
| Source of Information | | |
| Social media | 71 | 40.6 |
| Parent's/ Relatives/ Friends | 20 | 11.4 |
| School curriculum | 84 | 48 |

The study involved 175 students in Jhapa District, Nepal. In the Table 1. Majority were aged below 15, with a mean age of 15.35. Nearly equal gender representation was observed. A significant share of families was nuclear, with parents predominantly engaged in agriculture. Social media and the school curriculum were key sources of information.



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Table 2. Illustrate the level of Sustainable education Awareness among participants

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Low | 4 | 2.3 |
| Average | 131 | 74.9 |
| High | 40 | 22.9 |

In the results, table 2. The distribution of Sustainable Educational Awareness (SEA) levels was as follows: 2.3% of respondents had a low SEA, 74.9% exhibited an average SEA, and 22.9% demonstrated a high SEA.

Table 3: Illustrate the level of Sustainable Education Practice (SEP) among participant's

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Low practice | 107 | 61.1 |
| Good practice | 68 | 38.9 |

The results in Table 3 describe the level of Sustainable Education Practice (SEP) among participants. A substantial 61.1% indicated low practice, while 38.9% reported good practice in the dominion of sustainable education practices.

Table 4 One-Sample Statistics: Sustainable Education Awareness (SEA) and Sustainable Education Practice (SEP)

| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | MD | 95% CI | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|---------|--------|--------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Sustainable Education Awareness(SEA) | 63.626 | 174 | .000 | 2.206 | 2.14 | 2.27 |
| Sustainable Education Practice(SEP) | 37.578 | 174 | .000 | 1.38857 | 1.3156 | 1.4615 |

Based on the results from Table 4, participants demonstrated a significantly higher mean Sustainable Education Awareness (SEA) score of 2.206 ($p < 0.001$) compared to a mean Sustainable Education Practice (SEP) score of 1.38857 ($p < 0.001$).



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Table 5 Coefficients between Sustainable Education Awareness and Sustainable Education Practice among Participants

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 13.470 | 1.618 | | 8.323 | .000 |
| Awareness | .031 | .025 | .093 | 1.229 | .221 |

a. Dependent Variable: Practice

In this study, examining the impact of sustainable education awareness on students' sustainable education practices, the regression model showed that awareness had a minimal influence on practice. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for awareness was 0.031, with a non-significant p-value ($p = 0.221$), suggesting a weak relationship between awareness and practice. The constant coefficient was 13.470. The results indicate that other factors may play a more significant role in influencing students' sustainable education practices.

Table 6 Socio- Demographic variables Practice Cross tabulation

| | | Sustainable Education Practice (SEP) | | Pearson X^2 |
|--------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | Low practice | Good practice | |
| Age | <15 Years | Count | 61 | .736 |
| | | Expected Count | 59.9 | |
| | >16 Years | Count | 46 | |
| | | Expected Count | 47.1 | |
| Gender | Male | Count | 57 | .816 |
| | | Expected Count | 56.3 | |
| | Female | Count | 50 | |
| | | Expected Count | 50.7 | |
| Family Types | Nuclear | Count | 57 | .368 |
| | | Expected Count | 56.9 | |
| | Joint | Count | 47 | |
| | | Expected Count | 48.3 | |

The cross-tabulation in Table 6 shows socio-demographic variables and their relationship with Sustainable Education Practice (SEP). There was no significant association between age ($p = 0.736$), gender ($p = 0.816$), or family types ($p = 0.368$) and SEP.



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DISCUSSION

This study, involving 175 students in Jhapa District, Nepal, provides crucial insights into sustainable education practices (SEP) and sustainable educational awareness (SEA) among students in the region. The participants' socio-demographic characteristics reveal valuable context.

The majority of students were under 15 years of age, emphasizing the importance of introducing sustainability concepts early. Near gender parity in participation suggests that both male and female students are equally engaged in the study's subject matter. The prevalence of nuclear families and parents primarily engaged in agriculture underscores the potential role of family upbringing and agricultural backgrounds in shaping sustainability perspectives. Furthermore, the significance of social media and the school curriculum as information sources highlights the need for effective educational strategies through these channels to promote sustainability awareness and action.

In investigative table 3; sustainable education awareness (SEA) among students, the current study revealed a varied landscape. A substantial 74.9% of students exhibited an average SPA level. These findings resonate with previous research. A study by (Peedikayil et al., 2023) revealed that in the education system, teachers have a favorable attitude towards educating sustainable development. Similarly, a study by (Muhammad Ridwan et al., 2021) demonstrated that students have average levels of sustainability awareness. Additionally, according to (Hassan et al., 2010), secondary school students had a high level of environmental awareness of the concept of sustainable development, but there is a weak relationship between awareness and practice. When awareness is high, it is not always accompanied by high levels of practice. This evidence underscores the need for designer sustainability education and outreach.

The discussion about the findings in Table 3 highlights the varying degrees of Sustainable Education Practice (SEP) among participants, with a majority (61.1%) reflecting low practice levels. These results align with previous research. Similarly, in a study by (Muhammad Ridwan et al., 2021), students were found to rarely engage in sustainability practices such as discussing environmental issues with friends, making compost from food waste, reducing plastic bag use, discussing environmental problems with their families, and taking actions to address these issues, categorizing them as moderate.

Furthermore, the systematic review examined 50 out of 134 articles on sustainability education practice in schools (Dos Santos et al., 2022). The results encompassed school gardens, sustainability-focused education, menu planning, local and organic food sourcing, and food waste reduction. This review also emphasized the importance of integrating sustainability education into school curricula in line with sustainable development goals. Implementing assessment tools can aid in monitoring progress and addressing challenges in schools' sustainable strategies. However, a study by (Alsaati et al., 2020) focused on offering on-campus and off-campus programs to promote sustainable behaviors but found less recognition of recycling materials or renewable resources and energy conservation measures. Moreover, in a study involving 123 respondents through an online survey, the results revealed that the level of practice among students was low. These findings underscore the importance of addressing SEP deficiencies and promoting SEP to achieve broader sustainability goals (Jahan, 2021).

In Table 5, the coefficients between Sustainable Education Awareness (SEA) and Sustainable Education Practice (SEP) are presented. The analysis indicates a minimal influence of awareness on practice, with the unstandardized coefficient for awareness being 0.031 and a non-significant p-value of 0.221. This suggests a weak relationship between awareness and practice, reaffirming the complex nature of behavior changes. Similarly, according to (Hassan et al., 2010), Pearson correlation analysis among secondary school students showed a weak but positive correlation between practice and awareness ($r=0.31$; $p=0.000$). Likewise, (Afroz & Ilham, 2020) assessed University of Malaya students' awareness of SDGs, revealing a weak knowledge-practice correlation but a strong attitude-practice link (Afroz & Ilham, 2020; Thapa, Adhikari, et al., 2023; Thaphd et al., 2023).



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The findings from Table 6 suggest that socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, and family types do not significantly influence Sustainable Education Practice (SEP) among the students. These results align with previous research studies. For instance, (Peedikayil et al., 2023) demonstrated that gender and institutional management did not alter attitudes toward environmental sustainability.²¹ additionally, evidence suggests that digital guidance, social media, and parental, teacher, and authority supervision can enhance empathy and communication.²² Age is not related, but positive youth development in child and adolescent education can enable them to reach their full potential and flourish (Thapa B, Adhikari K, 2023). Family, mainly parental involvement, indirectly impacts children's learning behaviors. This study underscores its importance in fostering young children's development (Kern ML, 2021; Mao, 2022).

Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits our ability to establish causation or capture changes over time. Second, the sample size might not fully represent the diverse student population. Third, self-administrated questionnaires may introduce response bias. Further, socio-demographic variables showed no significant influences on sustainable education practice, suggesting the need for more comprehensive analyses. Finally, the study focuses solely on students without considering the perspective of teacher or parent, potentially missing valuable insight into the factors influencing sustainable education practices. Futures research could benefit from longitudinal design, larger and more diverse samples, mixed-methods approaches, and greater stakeholder involvement.

Suggestions

In this current study, a few recommendations have been made from research studies on this study:

Enhanced sustainability education: it is imperative to develop and implement an innovative, comprehensive, and engaging sustainability education program in Jhapa's government schools. These programs should focus on raising awareness and encouraging sustainable practices among students (Gani et al., 2023; Gunan-syah et al., 2021; Tilbury, 2011).

Longitudinal studies: Future research should consider conducting longitudinal studies to track change in sustainable education practice over time, providing a more accurate understanding of causality.

Diverse Stakeholder Involvement: Engaging teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in sustainability education initiatives can enhance their effectiveness and create a holistic approach to fostering sustainable practice (Muhammad Ridwan et al., 2021; Palladino & Thapa, 2023).

Customized Strategies: Tailored interventions are required to address the overall weakness in the awareness-practice relationship, considering cultural, regional, and demographic differences.

Interdisciplinary Approach: Collaboration with various disciplines, such as environmental sciences, psychology, and lifelong learning strategies, can lead to more effective sustainability education strategies in schools.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the increasing significance of Sustainable Education Practices (SEP) and Sustainable Educational Awareness (SEA) in preparing students to address environmental challenges. Encouraging all-encompassing learning, environmental responsibility, and long-term societal well-being is crucial for fostering a sustainable future. The study found that a significant proportion of students in Jhapa District, Nepal, had an average level of Sustainable Educational Awareness (SEA), with a notable percentage showing low Sustainable Education Practice (SEP). The analysis revealed a weak link between awareness and practice. The sample of 175 students had an average age of 15.35, with nearly equal gender representation and predominantly nuclear families engaged in agriculture.



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Social media and the school curriculum were primary sources of information. Socio-demographic variables showed no significant associations with SEP. Recommendations include conducting longitudinal studies, involving diverse stakeholders, implementing tailored strategies, and adopting interdisciplinary approaches to enhance sustainability education and encourage proactive student engagement. These efforts are vital for nurturing a generation prepared to address complex global sustainability issues.

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