

Importance of Environmental Education & Communication Among Youth in Dehradun

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ABSTRACT

Environmental communication is a process where media acts as a bridge in transmitting an information related to climate awareness. Environmental communication serves to raise awareness, change behavior, influence public opinion, advocate for policies, address conflicts and pass legislation. The citizens' involvement in environmental management and protection depend, largely, on their level of awareness about environmental issues. The media can play a vital role of a facilitator to create an environmental awareness among the propels and make people more responsive to the efforts being made by government and NGO's for environmental awareness. One of the biggest challenges is to educate the masses about the environmental issues. Role of media for environmental awareness includes geographical knowledge – Newspapers, radio, television, and even the internet are providing a comprehensive understanding of geographical knowledge to people. What is happening in the world today, which place has been ignored and the relevant representations made through different forms of media produces deep effects on the people; Identification of forces affecting nature – Currently, human beings are building an artificial man made environment by over utilizing the natural resources in the name of economic and social development. Media can report and educate people about certain forces and activities that adversely affect our environment; Conservation of natural resources -Our primary target is not only controlling the wastage of various sources of energy like oil, gas, coal, etc. the main focus should be on certain relative aspects which serve as a means of environmental protection; Dissemination of environmental information – Electronic media and print media are a major medium of spreading information about environment among the population. Media educate people about various environmental concerns and ways to address them. Among other media, social media plays a significant role in making people aware every minute but it is important to know that if they are using authentic websites to gather information regarding environment or not. This study investigates on importance of environmental education & communication among youth in Dehradun. The major issue of our surrounding is environment degradation which results in polluting environment.

The purpose of this study is to increase your insight into how communication shapes our perceptions of environmental issues and to acquaint you with some of the media and public forums that are used for environmental communication. Environmental issues have always been the center of news for media coverage in Uttarakhand.

KEYWORDS

Environment, Education, Communication, Awareness, Dehradun

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the current level of environmental knowledge among youth in Dehradun.
2. To examine the role of communication strategies, including media and community outreach, in shaping environmental awareness among youth.
3. To analyse the importance of environmental education with special reference to their region.

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of environmental education and communication plays a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of youth, particularly in regions with rich ecological diversity such as Dehradun. This literature review synthesizes existing research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the importance of environmental education and communication initiatives targeted at youth in Dehradun.

Dehradun, with its rich biodiversity and ecological heritage, faces both opportunities and challenges in maintaining a balance between urban development and environmental conservation. This paper aims to shed light on the importance of environmental education and communication in nurturing a sense of environmental responsibility among the youth population in Dehradun. The research focuses on understanding the current state of environmental education programs and communication initiatives and their impact on the attitudes and behaviors of youth toward the environment.

This research paper delves into the critical role of environmental education and communication in shaping the environmental consciousness of youth in Dehradun. As a city nestled in the lap of nature, Dehradun provides a unique context to explore the impact and importance of initiatives aimed at fostering environmental awareness and sustainable practices among the younger generation. The study investigates various aspects, including the current level of environmental knowledge among youth, the effectiveness of existing

educational programs, and the role of communication strategies in influencing attitudes and behaviors toward the environment.

The following research questions are formed-

1. To what extent do current environmental education programs in Dehradun contribute to enhancing the environmental awareness and knowledge among youth?
2. What are the attitudes and behaviors of youth in Dehradun towards environmental conservation, and how are these influenced by their exposure to environmental education and communication efforts?
3. In what ways can environmental education empower youth in Dehradun to actively participate in civic engagement and contribute to local environmental conservation efforts?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review seeks to illuminate the pivotal role played by environmental education and communication in shaping the awareness, attitudes, and behaviours of youth in Dehradun. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the significance of initiatives that strive to create environmentally conscious citizens in this ecologically sensitive region. As Dehradun navigates the delicate balance between development and conservation, informed and empowered youth can serve as catalysts for sustainable practices and environmental stewardship, ensuring a harmonious coexistence with the region's natural heritage.

As per Schoenfeld, 1983, p. 471, the impact of environmental issues and the need to inform and discuss these issues have initiated an environmental communication (EC) which became a dedicated discipline over the years. The term environment has evolved as 'a recognition of pervasive interdependencies, in which everything is connected to everything else.

According to the Author of book namely 'Environment, Media and Communication' Anders Hansen, "The way in which we make sense of the environment threats which face human-kind is greatly conditioned by a powerful and omnipresent set of electronic and printed messages- the mass media. For many people, the knowledge of environmental issues is based upon what they have learned through print and electronic media, which help construct conceptions of political, social and ecological reality about an environmental issue." The communication process in regard to environment and environmental issues comes under the discipline of environmental communication.

Since the 1990s, environmental education has been internationally recognized as a key tool to creating a sustainable society and has been implemented into formal school systems including higher education (Teksoz, Sahin, and Tekkaya-Oztekin 2012). This year (2014) marks the final year of the U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2005). In spite of the increasing international recognition, environmental education has not been a priority for many schools and educators at regional levels. For example, only 12% of universities and colleges require environment related coursework in the United States (Hammond and Herron 2012).

A study was carried out to assess the pattern of tabloidization of the content of the daily newspapers and how the market definitions of newspaper intersect with their journalism practices (Kapoor 2008). The focus of the study was to analyse the quality and quantity of the type of stories in the Indian mainstream newspapers (The Indian Express and The Times of India) as the Lead and Page-Anchor story. (sampling from 1 January to 31 January 2008).

According to the author, when The Times of India lead stories were compared to The Indian Express it was observed that both the newspapers were primarily concentrating more on the Crime/ Accident related stories. The next category of news followed the lead was of Sports news coverage with four stories out of seventeen in Times of India but in Indian Express, second preference of news coverage was paid to Political News with four out of eighteen stories. It also determined that the space for serious stories is shrinking on the front page of the newspaper from the point of view of the readers. ("Pragyaan : Mass Communication" Volume 7 : Issue 1, June 2009). However, despite the limited access and urban bias, mass media and especially print media have been effective in communicating hard news, significant political issues and many social issues like environmental issues.

Swapnil Rai (2019), Environmental Awareness and the Role of Social Media. "Role of Social Media in Environment Awareness: Social Media and Environment", the author delves into the role of social media in raising environmental awareness. He explores that due to ever increasing needs and greed of man, our environmental quality is deteriorating day by day. Global warming, climate change, hurricanes, melting of icebergs, floods, acid rain, and extinction of flora and fauna is all due to environmental disturbance. Environmental issues have become serious health threats to humans. Pollution is the main reason behind many types of cancer, respiratory, and cardiovascular diseases, which sometimes lead to death. Environment conservation has become the priority of every country worldwide. This problem, which we are facing today, is due to lack of environmental awareness among the individuals and lack of knowledge. This problem can be solved if environmental awareness amongst the people could be raised. The advantage of environment awareness is its

contribution to public support for government action in environment policy and management. Environmental awareness can be raised with the educational and informative programs.

Numerous studies highlight the positive correlation between environmental education and increased knowledge levels among youth. According to Schneiderhan J. , BognerX. F, (2020) Environmental knowledge plays an important role regarding active participation because knowledge and competences determine the development of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour. As the general public still tends to show a rather low awareness for biodiversity, educational efforts to foster responsible citizenship and to engage more people in biodiversity conservation are needed. With our innovative short-term intervention, including a citizen science approach in an educational module, we could successfully achieve long-term knowledge gain on the topic of biodiversity conservation. Our study once again highlights the importance of considering the impact of environmental values on students'. According to the Annual Report 2020-21 of National Disaster Management Authority of India, with the purpose of awareness, a digital monthly e-magazine and an official blog, both named "Aapda Samvaad", were published for informing the stakeholders about major activities of NDMA, SDMA's, success stories on DRR, expert interviews, etc. Awareness campaigns were launched on social media to spread the messages related to prevention, mitigation and preparedness of disasters, before and during disasters. These social media campaigns comprised Do's and Don'ts and FAQs pertaining to heat wave, flood, cold wave, urban flood, earthquake, CBRN emergencies, first aid, lightning, fire safety and cyclone and videos and social media cards related to these disasters. Hash tags such as #Covid-19, #heatwave, #earthquake, #floods, #urbanflood, #lightning, #coldwave, #avalanche, #cyclone (in particular #CycloneNivar, #CycloneAlert, #CycloneBurevi, #CycloneNisarga, #CycloneAmphan, #CyclonicStorm) and #firesafety, #ForestFire, #FirstAid, #PreventMonsoonIllness, #Landslide etc. were used. These hash tags helped NDMA's social media channels gain greater online audience engagement.

As per the Uttarakhand Vision 2030 in reference to environment, the state is extremely vulnerable to climate-related hazards such as water shortage and also excess monsoonal precipitations leading to severe floods. There is also glacier melting and glacier burst, etc., along with water and air pollution in rural as well as urban areas. Although the state does have a State Action Plan for Climate Change, there is little integration of climate change measures into state policies as yet.

As per the Annual Reports, there are various initiatives taken by the National Disaster Management Authority of India to enhance the awareness among people through various social media platforms. Therefore it is important to assess its impact on people. New Media

has become a crucial part of everyone's life. This study is focused to find out the importance of environmental education & communication among youth in Dehradun.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employs a survey method approach for the collection of quantitative data that can be analysed using statistical methods. This survey will be distributed among youth in Dehradun to gauge their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to the environment. The survey method is an effective way to collect data from 100 participants and is useful in identifying the data from questionnaire as a tool for sampling. A sample of age 18 to 27 from Dehradun is being selected for the study. The sample could be selected using random sampling technique. This research study aims to examine the importance of environmental education & communication among youth in Dehradun.

Data for this study is also collected from the secondary sources. The secondary data includes books, magazines, journals and different websites.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this research paper, researcher aims to define the importance of environmental education & communication among youth in Dehradun. Questionnaire method is selected and used for the research.

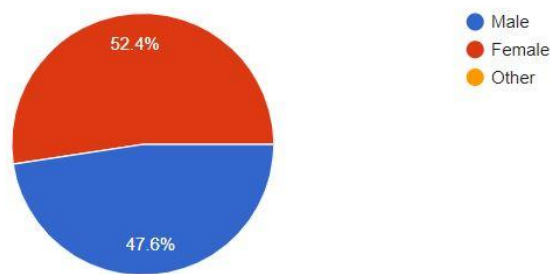
Graphs and Pie charts of Structured Questionnaire (103 responses)

In this data collection, a structured questionnaire is used as a tool by asking a set of 15 standardized questions with 14 close ended questions covering the objectives and research questions of this study and 1 open ended question which refer to the respondent to suggest their views about the importance of environmental education and communication.

Age Group:

Gender

103 responses



The target audiences for this research were youth. The target has been achieved with 100% responses filled by the people of age group between 18 to 27 years. The equality is maintained between males and females under this research. The number of Gender breakage covered here were:

Males = 49 (47.6%) Females = 54 (52.4%)

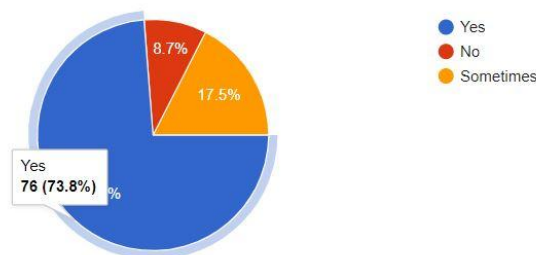
Occupation:



The respondents belonged to a diverse range of occupations which included students (school and college), Assistant Professor, Banker, Businessman, Digital Marketer, Marketing Manager, Pharmacist, IT Professional, Media Associate, Private Job, Salaried employees, Servicemen, Teachers and Engineers.

1. Do you access any mass medium of communication?

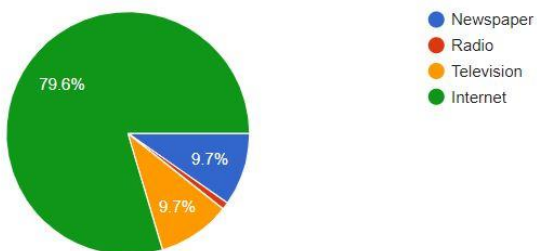
103 responses



Out of 103, 76 of the majority respondents with 73.8% mostly access mass medium of communication. 17.5% respondents sometimes access mass medium and remaining 8.7% respondents do not access mass medium for communication.

2. Which mass medium do you use for news updates?

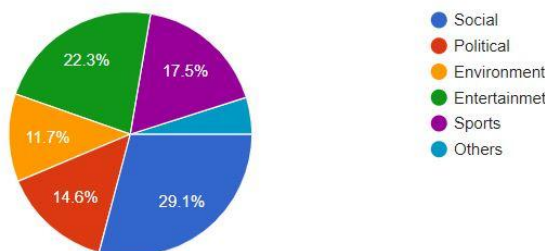
103 responses



Out of 103 respondents, 82 i.e. 79.6% people use internet as one of the popular mass mediums for news updates. It is believed that people find internet as a reliable source of environmental communication to gather information and news updates.

3. What type of news beat you are much interested in?

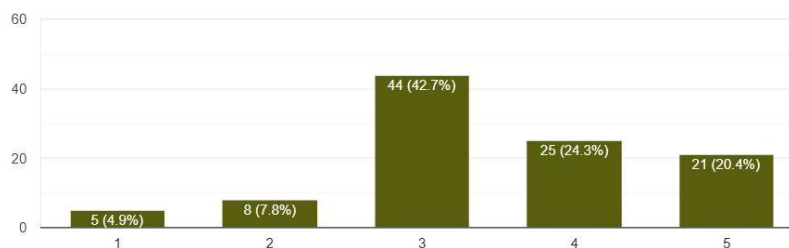
103 responses



Through the above mentioned pie chart it is observed that public interest is not much in the environmental news. Only 12 respondents are interest in environment awareness out of 103 i.e. 11.7%. Remaining respondents are interested to know about Social news 29.1%, Entertainment 22.3%, Sports 17.5%, and Political 14.6%.

4. How much you are attracted by environmental news and information?

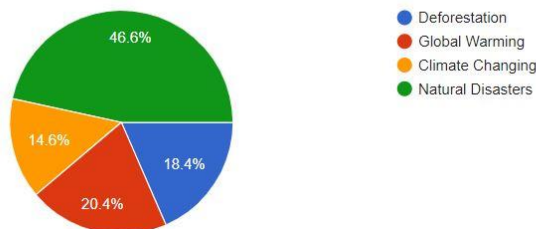
103 responses



There is an average response of 44 people found out of 103 i.e 42.7% which are attracted by the environmental news and information. It is observed that some people are concerned about the environment and their surroundings.

5. In environment news segment, which type of content affects you more?

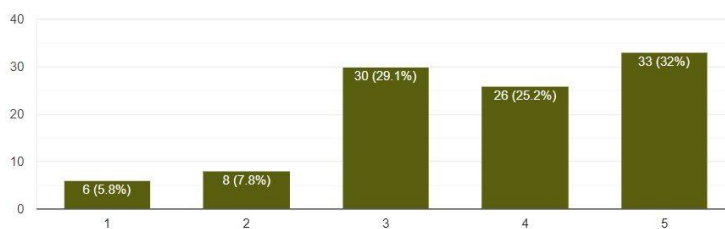
103 responses



As per 46.6% respondents, news and information related to natural disaster affects them more as compared to other segments of environmental education and communication.

6. How much you are affected by environmental issues?

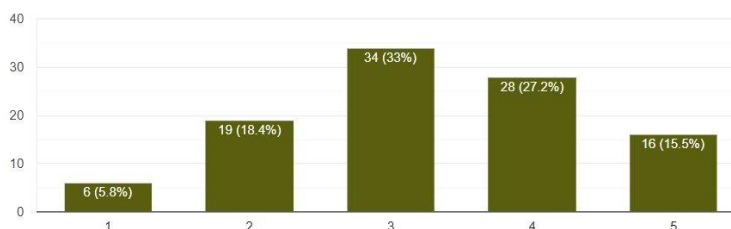
103 responses



32% of respondents are highly affected by the news related to environmental issues. It is observed that people are not much aware about the need for environment conservation and awareness.

7. How often do you discuss the environmental issues with others?

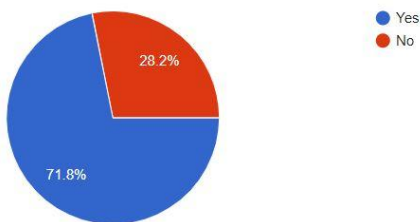
103 responses



Only 33% of respondents are concerned enough to discuss about environmental issues. This graph depicts the lack of environmental education and communication among people.

8. Are you aware about the government initiatives for environment conservation?

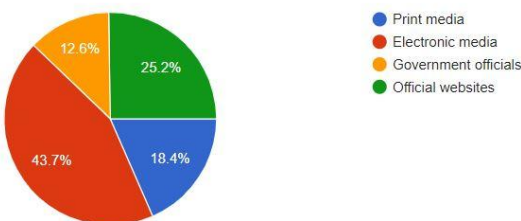
103 responses



It is observed that 74 (71.8%) respondents out of 103 are aware about the government initiatives for environmental conservation. It is good to find out that people are aware about that government is working for the environment conservation and education. It may also be observed that environmental communication is also followed completely as people are aware about environmental schemes and initiatives taken by the government.

9. On which medium do you rely more regarding government initiatives for environment conservation?

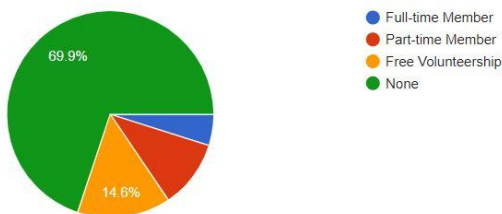
103 responses



Electronic media with 43.7% and official websites with 25.2% plays an important role in environmental education and communication as people rely more on these segments regarding government initiatives for environment conservation.

10. Are you attached with some organizations working for environmental conservation?

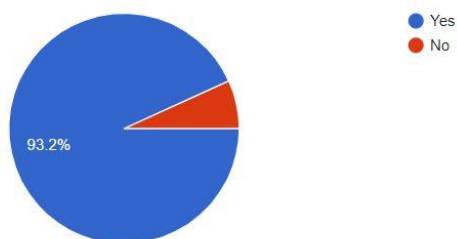
103 responses



Majority of 69.9% people are not attached with any organization working for environmental conservation. Only 14.6% people are involved for free volunteering in this sector.

11. Are you interested to work for environmental betterment?

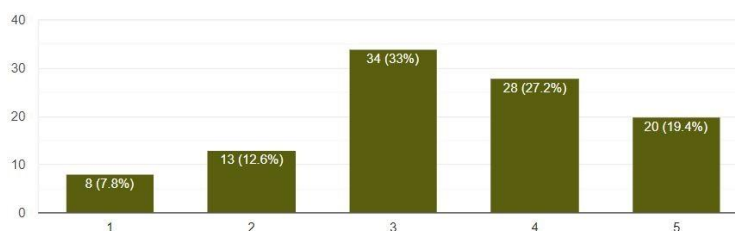
103 responses



93.2% people are interest to work for environmental betterment but as per the observation they are not aware about the correct path to follow and connect with the environmental organizations with financial benefits.

12. As per you, how much impact subjects like environmental studies may have over youth?

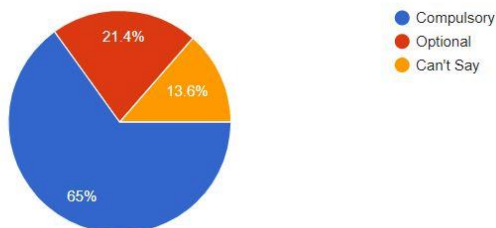
103 responses



Out of 103 respondents, 34 (33%) people believe that subjects like environmental studies have moderate impact on youth. Only 19.4% respondents believe that it has a high impact on youth.

13. Environmental studies subject should be compulsory or optional within syllabus in higher studies curriculum?

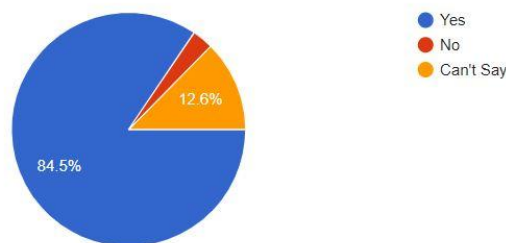
103 responses



Majority of 65% people agree to make environmental studies subject compulsory of students in higher education. It will provide them the knowledge for environmental enhancement and conservation in coming future.

14. Is environmental communication helpful to educate you regarding environment issues and awareness?

103 responses



As per 84.5% respondents environmental communication plays a vital role in educating people about environment and their surroundings. It also helps to focus on issue and awareness related to the environment.

15. What suggestions/ strategies do you like to share for the betterment of environmental education & communication among youth?

According to respondents

More than studying in a classroom one should conduct some practice as well like planting, energy conservation, garbage management, vehicle pollution, noise pollution, water pollution, advantage of using cycle for short distances or protect plants which is vulnerable and needs help till it's grown enough. Awareness creation, knowledge accumulation, attitude inculcation, citizen participation.

A compulsory credit course in colleges on environment where students have to be a part of an organization working for environment conservation. Tree plantation programmes should be initiated and the youth must be appreciated for their initiative. For the awareness and betterment, webinars and workshops should be organised for youth so that they can be a part of it. In some places strict actions are needed plus more awareness should be made not only youth but the elderly too as many youth learn from watching their elderly. There should be webinars and seminars provided for the students.

We should focus on environmental knowledge as well as their ethical and practical aspects. We can replace the normal projects to some steps towards planting trees and many

more. Preserve the environment by informing people as much as you can. Afforestation, which is termed as growing more trees and planting trees to balance out the destruction caused by deforestation can be done to improve environmental health. Wastewater released directly into the water bodies should be treated to remove any chemical pollutants. Environmental education must get compulsory to get new generation engaged in studies and in practical world to save the environment. Plant as much as you can, consider earth as your own home keep it clean and healthy. Use only recycled and recyclable things. Don't waste water, protect animals. Start with yourself, start today. Reuse and recycle. Volunteer and educate people about different natural elements present in surroundings by organising events or workshops.

Environmental question is not an isolated question. The question is directly linked with our well-being and the structure and political system we live in. The environmental consciousness without class consciousness is useless. We must realize that environmental degradation is not an automatic process there are group of people who knowingly perform that process every day. Education without pointing such class of people along with their vested interest and their act, merely studying the science behind it won't help.

Visit to local parks, conservation areas, or even sustainable farms to observe the environment first hand is the best option to make youth aware about environment around us. People should talk more about environmental issues and awareness than they usually do. Engaging youth in environmental education can involve interactive workshops, outdoor activities, and partnerships with schools. Communication should focus on real-world impact, inspiring them to take sustainable actions. Utilizing digital platforms and social media can amplify the message and create a sense of community around environmental awareness.

Educate them about different natural elements present in the surrounding: parents can teach their children about various plants in the neighbourhood and different animals and birds. Utilize digital platform and social media to reach and educate youth on environmental issues and solutions. Connect with Nature and encourage to use more sustainable transportation. Students should go for clean-up drive and also they must organize Nukkad Natak for the awareness regarding Environmental Issues like ban of single use plastic, plant more and more trees, do not use chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Make it more practical so that it creates a sense of responsibility and interest for our youth. Inculcate environment friendly practices like save water, electricity, trees etc.

Make environmental education interactive, technology-integrated, and hands-on, involving youth in real-world projects and decision-making, while highlighting role models

and connecting them with nature. Creating engaging and interactive programs, incorporating real-world examples, and fostering a sense of responsibility can make environmental education resonate more with the youth. Interactive Learning: Encourage hands-on experiences and field trips to nature reserves, fostering a direct connection with the environment.

Technology Integration: Utilize digital platforms and apps to make environmental education engaging, incorporating virtual tours, games, and interactive content. Students must be aware about seriousness towards changing climactic and environmental conditions. Environmental studies should not be an optional subject and most importantly it's for the betterment of youth only so one should study it. Colleges, schools, societies should do an Environmental drive at least once or twice a month and not only on the "environment day" this can make children aware of their environmental norms, the do's and don'ts. If today we'll save environment tomorrow the next generation will have a better future. It's important for youngsters to understand the value of Mother Nature. Youngsters should be made aware about the value of fresh air, clean water, big forests and balanced ecosystem. Government should work to disseminate information with more involvement of youth via various awareness programmes.

Encourage hands-on experiences like nature excursions and eco-friendly projects to make environmental learning engaging for youth. Foster open discussions, emphasizing the real-world impact of their actions on the environment. Utilize multimedia platforms to convey information creatively and raise awareness about pressing environmental issues. Collaborate with schools, NGOs, and local communities to create a network for sharing resources and ideas. Empower youth to take leadership roles in eco-friendly initiatives, promoting a sense of responsibility for the environment. Environmental awareness campaign along with reward so that people may be more attracted towards this act.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research findings highlight significant patterns in the media consumption and interests of the surveyed population regarding environmental communication. A substantial 73.8% of respondents predominantly rely on mass media for their information needs, with 79.6% acknowledging the internet as a primary source for news updates. This underscores the growing importance of online platforms in disseminating environmental information, suggesting that the internet is perceived as a reliable and accessible medium for staying informed about environmental issues.

Despite the prevalence of online access, the study reveals a notable lack of widespread interest in environmental news. Only 11.7% of respondents express a specific

interest in environmental awareness, indicating that the majority are more inclined towards social, entertainment, sports, or political news. This suggests a potential gap in public engagement and interest when it comes to environmental issues.

The findings prompt further exploration into the reasons behind the limited interest in environmental news and underscore the importance of tailoring communication strategies to capture and maintain public attention. Understanding the factors influencing these preferences is crucial for environmental communicators and educators to develop more effective outreach programs that resonate with the interests and values of the target audience. As environmental concerns continue to grow globally, bridging this gap in interest becomes essential for fostering greater awareness and encouraging sustainable behaviors among the broader population.

The research findings emphasize the pivotal role that environmental communication plays in the minds of the respondents, with a significant 84.5% acknowledging its importance. This overwhelming majority underscores the consensus that effective environmental communication serves as a powerful tool for educating individuals about their environment and surroundings.

The recognition of environmental communication as a catalyst for focusing on environmental issues and fostering awareness is noteworthy. It reflects a collective understanding among the respondents that communication strategies are instrumental in directing attention toward critical environmental concerns. This acknowledgement suggests a widespread belief in the potential of communication initiatives to raise awareness, instigate positive behavioral changes, and ultimately contribute to the overall well-being of the environment.

As the majority of respondents endorse the significance of environmental communication, it underscores the need for continued investment and innovation in communication approaches. This may include leveraging various channels, adapting to evolving technologies, and tailoring messages to diverse audiences. The findings suggest that a well-crafted and targeted communication strategy can serve as a driving force in cultivating a society that is not only informed but also actively engaged in environmental issues, fostering a collective commitment to sustainable practices and stewardship of the environment.

With a significant majority of 65% expressing agreement on the necessity of making environmental studies a compulsory subject for students in higher education. This collective

viewpoint signals a widespread recognition of the potential benefits that such educational initiatives can bring to individuals and society as a whole.

The endorsement of mandatory environmental studies suggests a shared belief that incorporating this subject into higher education curricula can equip students with essential knowledge and skills for actively contributing to environmental enhancement and conservation. The acknowledgment of the role education plays in shaping future perspectives and actions, particularly in the context of environmental stewardship, reflects a forward-thinking approach among the surveyed population.

The research outcomes emphasize the importance of integrating environmental studies into higher education as a means to empower the upcoming generation with the tools necessary for addressing environmental challenges. The support for compulsory environmental education aligns with the broader goal of fostering a more environmentally conscious and responsible citizenry, paving the way for a sustainable future where individuals are not only informed but also actively engaged in the preservation and enhancement of the environment.

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