



# TEACHER'S AWARENESS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SRI LANKA

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## ABSTRACT

*Teachers' awareness on SDGs has been considered through considerable amount of research works since SDGs were introduced. Current study is mainly to find out the level of awareness on SDGs among the teachers in rural schools in Sri Lanka. General awareness on SDGs and awareness on SDG 4 especially focused through the study. The current study is an empirical study in which 120 of randomly selected rural secondary school teachers were involved. A self-prepared questionnaire with open-ended questions was used as the research instrument for this quantitative survey. The sample includes rural secondary school teachers in Anuradhapura district, Sri Lanka and stratified sampling method under the probability sampling was used as the sampling method. Considerably less in awareness was shown on SDGs among teachers while male teachers showed significance less awareness on SDGs.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Sustainable development goals, awareness on SDGs, Rural school teachers.*

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is a vital concept in the present context. In 2015, united nation introduced the agenda 2030 for sustainable development which is adopted by all United Nations Member States. The agenda 2030 introduced 17 sustainable development goals with 169 targets that collectively provide peace and prosperity for people and the planet.

The issue of sustainable development has occupied the minds of scholars, political activists, local and international civil organizations for many years, with increased emphasis in 2015 when the Millennium Development Goals came to an end (Dr. Kanelechi C.K. Nwangwa, Igbogi, Inatimi,2019). Eight goals were introduced in Millennium Development Goals which were a global attempt at ensuring equitable distribution of resources and development. The declaration for the Millennium Development Goals was signed in 2000 and the year 2015 was expected as the deadline for achieving most MDGs. The 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly outlined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a guiding framework for further global development from 2015 to 2030 after the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (Xinqun Yuan, Le Yu and Hao Wu,2021).

The United Nations' Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes 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.(Akinlolu G Omisore, Grace M Babarinde, Damilola P Bakare, and Esther O Asekun-Olarinmoye,2017).Education can be considered as the most important tool to achieve SDGs. Many countries are trying to integrate the SDGs into their school curriculum to achieve the SDGs (Kazuaki OkuboJeongsoo YuShiori OsanaiKevin Roy B. Serrona,2021). Therefore, teacher education (TE), and initial teacher education (ITE) must include in their formative paths the preparation of (future) teachers to deal with such challenges (António Valter Chisingui and Nilza Costa,2020). Teachers by reason of their profession are rightly positioned to share information and knowledge on Sustainable Developmental Goals (Dr. Kanelechi C.K. Nwangwa, Igbogi, Inatimi,2019). Teachers need to understand the concept of ESD and be aware of



the perspectives of ESD (S Aye, Y M Win and S S Maw,2018). Teacher-education programs have a potentially significant role to play in promoting sustainability, especially given SDG 4. (Wisuit Sunthonkanokpong and Elizabeth Murphy,2019). Preparing future teachers and providing enrichment for in-service teachers to be competent in teaching children about issues on sustainability has often been undervalued (Chee Keong Chin, Hairiah Munip, Ryohei Miyadera, Ng Khar Thoe, Yeang Soon Ch'ng, Natthasurachet Promsing,2019).

Numerous research works could be observed on the teacher's awareness and effect of education on the SDGs at global level. As well as it is observable that research works focused on teachers' awareness on SDGs in rural schools in Sri Lanka are rare and not considered. By taking this knowledge gap into consideration, present study is focused on the Teacher's Awareness on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) In Rural Secondary Schools in Sri Lanka.

Also, current study sheds light on finding the fundamental causes for insufficient knowledge on SDGs in teacher and students in rural secondary schools in Sri Lanka.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Below objectives were considered through the current study.

1. Primary and main objective was to identify level of teacher's awareness on SDGs in rural secondary schools in Sri Lanka.
2. Identification of root causes for unawareness on SDGs among the teachers in rural schools in Sri Lanka
3. Identification of school-based measures to achieve SDGs through education.
4. Recognition of level of interest among teachers on SDGs in rural schools in Sri Lanka.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The current study was an empirical study which was based on the survey design. The population, sampling, research instrument, data collection and analysis are described below.

#### **The Population and Sampling Procedure**

Teachers at public rural schools were considered as the population of interest. Five schools in Anuradhapura district were selected for the study and 120 teachers were in the sample. Table 1 shows the Demographic profile of the sample.

#### **Research Instrument**

A self-prepared questionnaire with open-ended questions was used as the survey instrument to collect the primary data. The questionnaire contained self-assessment items to be responded by teachers. The self-assessment items were constructed to receive responses that are indications of level of awareness on SDGs.

#### **Collection of Data and Analysis**

Selected schools were visited personally, and the questionnaire was administered to collect the data. The principals of respective schools were informed prior to the visit and questionnaire was administered during a convenient time allocated by the principal. Data were analyzed and both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were carried out. Findings of the current study was based on percentage analysis method.

### **SAMPLING DESIGN**

The primary data were collected through a self-designed questionnaire from 120 teachers in rural secondary schools. Stratified sampling method under the probability sampling were used as sampling method.

### **STATISTICAL DESIGN**

Collected data were coded and tabulated for analysis. Interpretation was done by using table, charts, and graphs. Both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were involved, and findings are mainly based on percentage analysis method.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

Teachers at rural secondary schools in Anuradhapura district, Sri Lanka were selected.

### **RESULTS**

The data collected from respondents through the questionnaire was analyzed and interpreted as below



- Table 01 shows a demographic profile of the sample of teachers in rural schools. There were 57(47.50%) male teachers and 63(52.50%) female teachers who teach Sinhala medium schools.
- Figure 01 shows the graphical representation of teacher's general awareness on SDGs. It shows that only 69(57.50%) teachers have heard on SDGs and there are 28 male teachers while 41 female teachers among them. It also indicates that only 45(37.50%) teachers know the total number of SDGs introduced by United nations and there are 19 male teachers while 41 female teachers among them.
- Figure 02 indicates the representation of hierarchical data on awareness on SDG 4 among the teachers. It suggests that only 12 teachers have the awareness on five pillars to which SDGs belong. It further indicates that only 3 teachers have the knowledge on the pillar to which SDG 4 belongs and among them, only one teacher knows the total number of targets under the SDG 4.
- Table 02 represents the Percentage analysis of data on awareness on SDGs among teachers. It indicates that only 17.50% of teacher(05.83% of male teachers and 11.66% of female teachers) have the awareness on SDG 4. It further shows that percentage of teachers who have done a project on SDGs in schools and have participated in an educational workshop related to the SDGs is 00.00%.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

- Adequate measures in the curriculum development should be taken to include knowledge and practices on SDGs in the school text books.
- Introduction and development of school wide policies to follow the project works related to the SDGs in school communities.
- Enhancing teachers' awareness on SDGs through adequate educational workshops.
- Establishing social media groups among the schoolteachers that are focused on SDGs.
- Promoting inter school projects on SDGs in global scale.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is well established fact that education has a significance impact towards the achieving SDGs. Hence educators play a vital role in achieving SDGs in national and international levels through providing the better knowledge for students. Observing level of awareness on SDGs among teachers in rural secondary schools in Sri Lanka is a requirement in the current context as adequate measurements could be taken to implement new strategies to provide knowledge on SDGs.

The current study and its findings provide an opportunity for policy makers and curriculum developers to implement new ways to give knowledge on SDGs for the educators. Also, it provides a chance to identify root causes for the unawareness on SDGs among rural secondary schools in Sri Lanka.

Overall, the current study shows that awareness on SDGs among teachers in rural schools in Sri Lanka is relatively very less. Also, study points out that projects based on SDGs in rural school communities are zero. Further it indicates that male teachers have less awareness on SDGs relative to the female teachers.

### **AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further study can be taken to find level of awareness on SDGs among teachers based on the ethnic group, school type and on the province. Impact of teacher's awareness on SDGs on the students' knowledge towards SDGs can be considered. Also, students' awareness on SDGs in rural schools in Sri Lanka can be taken into the further research works.



**FIGURES AND TABLES**

**Table 01 – Demographic profile of sample**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	57	47.50%
Female	63	52.50%

**Figure 01-Representation of teacher’s awareness on general questions regarding SDGs**

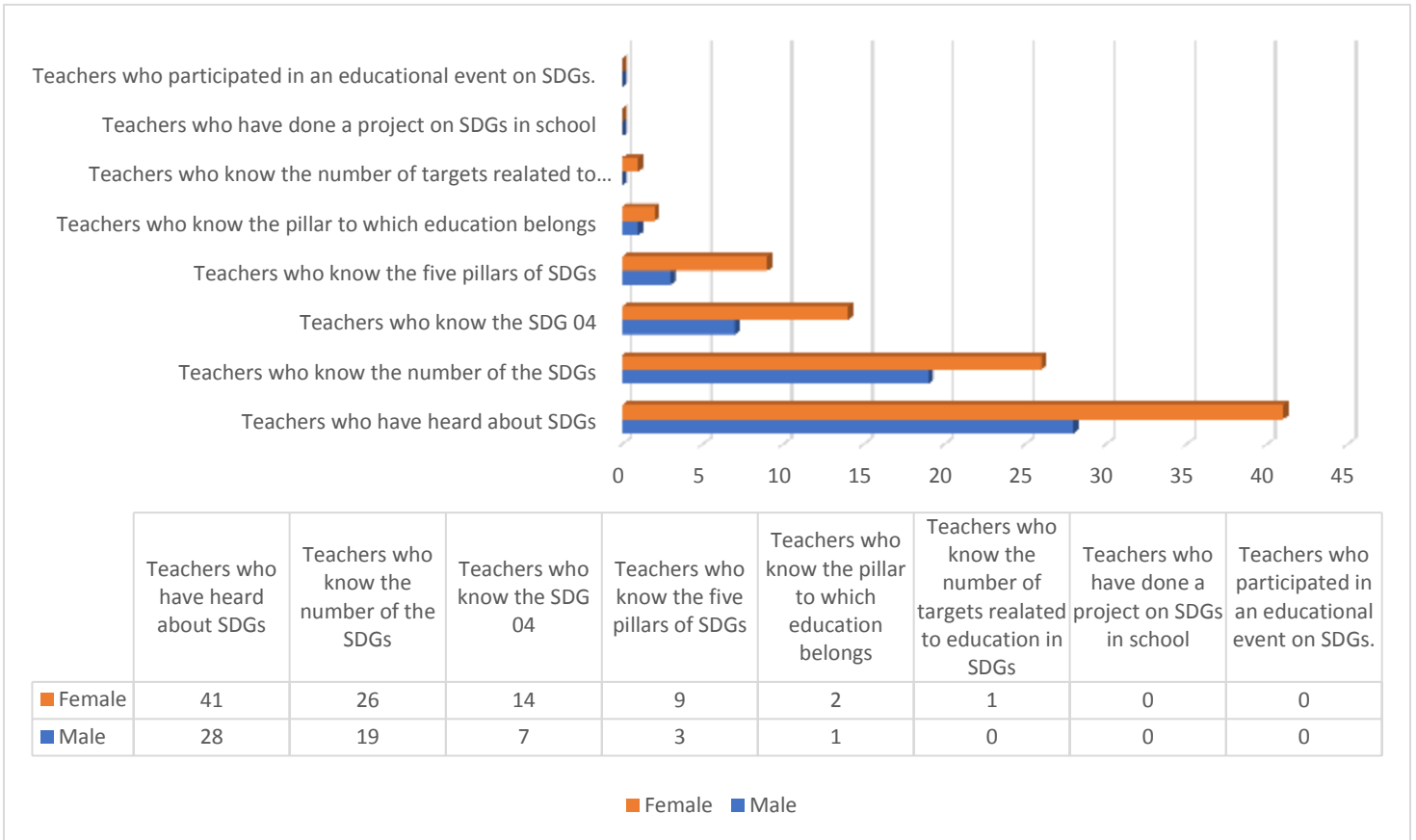


Figure 02-Hierarchical data on awareness on SDG 4

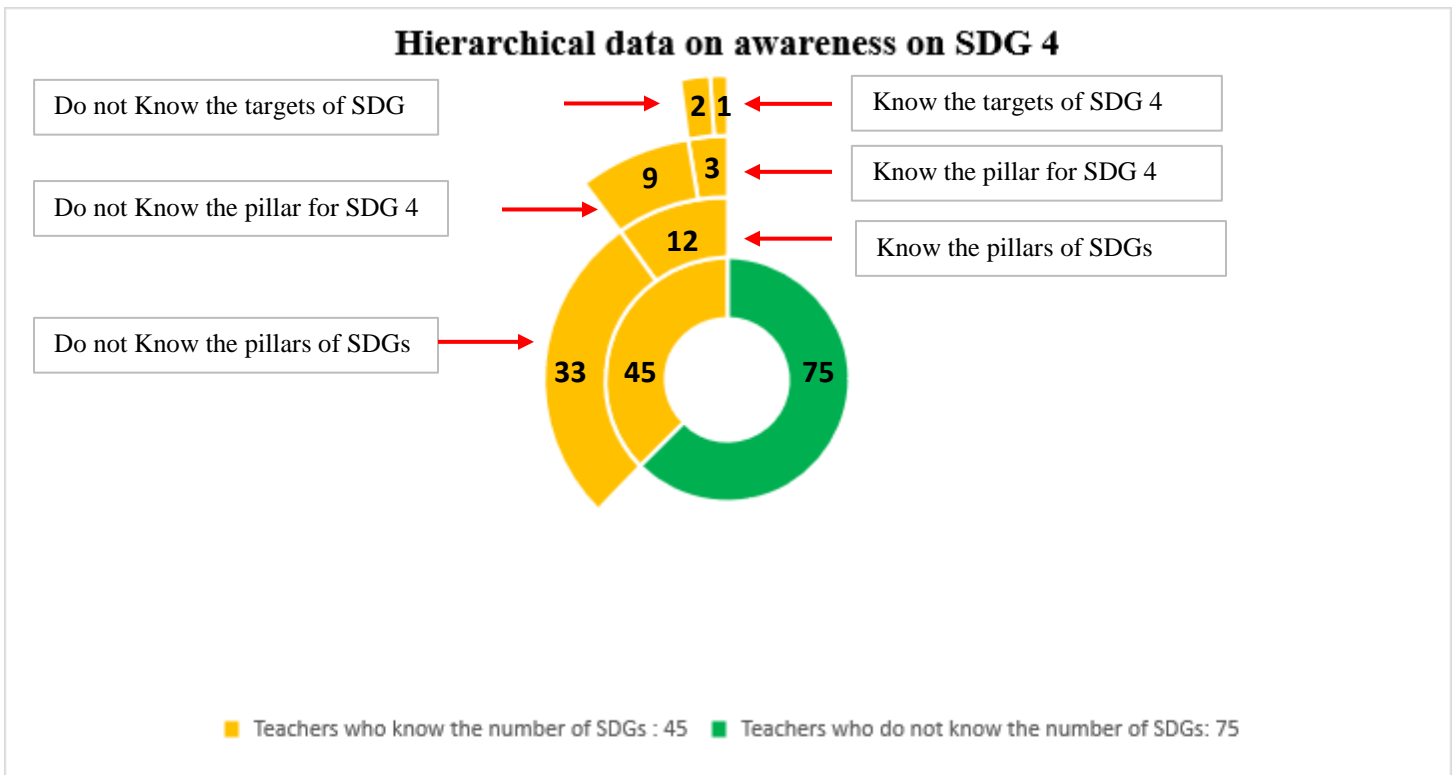


Table 02-Percentage Analysis of data on awareness on SDGs among teachers

No	Category	Percentage	Percentage based on the gender	
			Male	Female
01	Teachers who have heard on SDGs	57.50%	23.33%	34.16%
02	Teachers who know the number of the SDGs	37.50%	15.83%	21.66%
03	Teachers who know the SDG 04	17.50%	05.83%	11.66%
04	Teachers who know the five pillars of SDGs	10.00%	02.50%	07.50%
05	Teachers who know the pillar to which education belongs	02.50%	00.83%	01.66%
06	Teachers who know the number of targets related to education in SDGs	00.83%	00.00%	00.83%
07	Teachers who have done a project on SDGs in school	00.00%	00.00%	00.00%
08	Teachers who participated in an educational event on SDGs.	00.00%	00.00%	00.00%

Figure 03-Sustainable development goals



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