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DEVELOPING MINDFULNESS IN DEPRIVED ADOLESCENTS OF BALAGHAT

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ABSTRACT
Mindfulness is key in developing environmental awareness and sustainable living, especially among vulnerable populations. This research examined the degree of mindfulness for environmental conservation among deprived youths in Balaghat to determine their current awareness, influencing factors, and recommend developmental strategies. Utilizing a Quasi-Experimental design, this research study integrated observational studies and survey questionnaires. Surveys gauged the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of adolescents in relation to environmental conservation, whereas observations on how they engage with the environment and whether or not there was an environmental education program. From the results, although adolescents are found to have a moderate degree of awareness, major gaps and hindrances are evident. Of the main impediments, a lack of specifically tailored mindfulness programs and poor availability of learning material rank among them. This research highlights the need for specific interventions and community-led initiatives to promote environmental awareness among this population. These findings are highly applicable to policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders interested in furthering environmental knowledge and sustainable behaviors in disadvantaged populations.

KEY WORDS: *Mindfulness, Environmental Awareness, Deprived Adolescents, Sustainable Practices, Educational Interventions, Community Engagement*

INTRODUCTION
Encouraging awareness among deprived teenagers about conserving the environment is vital for their all-around development and the long-term well-being of our planet. In Balaghat, scarcity of resources and many everyday problems make it even more crucial to make adolescents environmentally aware. By encouraging awareness about preserving the environment, we can enhance the health and prospects of the youth.

Balaghat, one of the highly populated districts of Madhya Pradesh, is famous for its poor infrastructure, overpopulated living areas, and lack of educational and recreational facilities. The adverse circumstances usually prevent teenagers from accessing the knowledge and resources necessary to develop a sound grasp of environmental issues and take proactive environmental action.

Being environmentally conscious means knowing environmental issues, embracing green practices, and taking part in conservation efforts. It enhances the well-being of Earth and also enhances teenagers' mental processes, focus, and social skills. Making teenagers more environmentally conscious can enable them to gain essential skills such as responsibility, critical thinking, and persistence, which are essential for their development and future success.

Addressing the issue of environmental consciousness among poor adolescents in Balaghat requires an integrated approach involving various stakeholders. It is necessary to have a collaboration between local schools, community leaders, environmental experts, and NGOs to create long-term environmental education initiatives. Engaging parents, teachers, and the broader community in this process can help provide adolescents with the necessary resources and opportunities to adopt green lifestyles.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY
Disadvantaged adolescents in Balaghat are faced with socio-economic problems that limit their exposure to environmental education and mindfulness. Thus, the study aims to contribute towards raising awareness among them and implementing focused interventions for inculcating environmental responsibility. Through mindfulness-based environmental education, the study aims to equip adolescents with critical thinking, accountability, and sustainable behavior patterns. The study focuses on the need for community-level projects to address environmental awareness, which is ultimately beneficial to the individuals and society.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY
This study is based on the growing awareness of environmental education as an important instrument for promoting good psychological well-being and promoting sustainable lifestyle among young people. According to studies, involving youths in environmental conservation projects can boost their accountability, enhance cognitive abilities, and lessen the negative impacts of socio-economic challenges (Chawla &

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Cushing, 2007; Ernst & Theimer, 2011). Nevertheless, there is a lack of knowledge on how these advantages directly impact deprived adolescents living in NGOs, especially in Balaghat, where the economic and social conditions highlight the necessity for focused actions.

Teenagers raised in a non-governmental organization setting frequently absorb emotions of powerlessnessand detachment from their environment. Not being exposed to nature and environmental education worsens their disconnection and low self-esteem, hindering their ability to understand their influence on the environment and their community's health. Addressing such psychological and social barriers with ecopsychological awareness might present a beneficial avenue for adolescents to develop a deeper sense of self and a healthier outlook on the world.

To address the multifaceted issue of disadvantaged youth in Balaghat requires concerted and ongoing efforts from all sections of society. With environmental awareness programs, society can assist teenagers in becoming their best and contributing positively to the community and environment by investing in their future.

i. Demographics and Living Conditions

Balaghat, which is in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, is known for its rich diversity of wildlife as well as historic significance. Despite its breathtaking scenery, many of its youth have socio-economic struggles. These young people residing within a non-profit organization are some of the most vulnerable segments of the population despite having a slightly better access to resources than their counterparts in other similar circumstances.

The young people in this NGO typically attend government schools so that they can obtain a proper education. However, they still face challenges associated with their socio-economic background. Though the NGO provides shelter, food, and necessary amenities, life is still challenging. Their development and health are affected by limited access to healthcare, recreational activities, and possibilities for personal development.

ii. Education and Schooling

Education is a crucial aspect for adolescents in this non-governmental organization. In spite of attending government schools regularly, there are several factors that still affect their educational life. Government schools often suffer from a lack of facilities, teachers, and resources. These issues may hinder the quality of education, even with regular attendance. The adolescents are assisted by the NGO, topping up their studies with additional classes and tutoring after school. However, there is still a significant shortage of integrating environmental studies and raising the awareness of environmental conservation into their curriculum and daily routines.

iii. Psychological and Social Challenges

Teenagers experience unique psychological and social challenges when brought up in an NGO environment. Although they enjoy a stable life compared to their counterparts in slums, they still experience the emotional and psychological effects of their deprived childhoods. Being perpetually aware of their socio-economic status and absence of conventional family support systems can lead to perpetual stress and psychological harm.

Teenagers are likely to develop low self-esteem and motivation from the lack of good role models and useful activity. Often, they feel isolated and discriminated against by society, and consequently, they accept their destiny with despair. Shattering this chain of disadvantage proves difficult without intervention.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main goal of this research is to assess how well environmental mindfulness activities work in instilling a sense of responsibility and promoting positive environmental actions in underprivileged adolescents living in an NGO in Balaghat. The research seeks to offer a thorough insight into how focused actions can help tackle the psychological and educational difficulties experienced by these teens. The objectives are as follows:

- To study the level of awareness on environmental issues among deprived adolescents of Balaghat.
- To instill a sense of environmental responsibility among deprived adolescents of Balaghat through interventions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

By emphasizing the healing potential of nature awareness activities, this study has great relevance in addressing the urgent needs and future development of underprivileged youths in Balaghat. It emphasizes how involvement in these initiatives can empower underprivileged teenagers by increasing their knowledge, fostering a feeling of accountability, and equipping them to handle obstacles in their daily lives. The study emphasizes the comprehensive benefits of eco-awareness practices, which not only improve academic performance but also social, emotional, and cognitive development, enabling individuals to break free from cycles of poverty and marginalization. Enhancing learning experiences, increasing school attendance, decreasing dropout rates, and cultivating lifelong learning abilities are all possible outcomes of integrating environmental education into the curriculum.

In addition, environmental activities possess therapeutic implications, which assist adolescents in coping with anxiety, depression, and trauma while improving their well-being and mental health.

The influence is not limited to the individual but also reaches the community, where empowered adolescents motivate others, promote cohesion, and contribute to sustainable development. Through developing young champions of environmental protection, this research highlights the potential to build a more sustainable, resilient, and environmentally aware society.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The discussion of literature related to environmental protection in India identifies the history and law advancements, such as Sony N. (2018) referring to the history of environmental rights development over five decades and their establishment in the constitution, resulting in tighter legislation and greater public

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engagement. Ambhore et. al. (2013) follow the development of environmental legislation from pre-independence to contemporary times, pointing out major milestones such as the formation of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the 42nd Amendment. In his analysis of the role played by legal and judicial measures, Kadri (2004) highlights significant laws like the Water Act, Air Act, and Environment Protection Act and recommends improvements in public education and enforcement. The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change plays a crucial role in environmental conservation, and Chavan (2021) considers how urbanization and industrialization contribute to environmental degradation and emphasizes the importance of regulating natural resources through legislation. A comprehensive picture of India's approach to environmental governance, legal frameworks, and policy initiatives for ecological harmony and sustainable development is provided by all of these studies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We put in place a range of programs and activities designed to cater to the specific needs and interests of the impoverished youths in Balaghat in order to raise their understanding of environmental conservation. These programs were focused on encouraging sustainable practices and fostering a profound appreciation for the environment. Through these initiatives, we hope to foster an awareness of environmental issues among Balaghat's impoverished youngsters. We want to provide these young people the tools they need to take control of their own lives, improve their general wellbeing, and have a good environmental impact through education, community involvement, and practical experience.

RESEARCH DESIGN

i. Quasi-Experimental Design

The effectiveness of the intervention in fostering environmental conservation awareness in disadvantaged teenagers was assessed using a quasi-experimental methodology. This approach made it possible to track changes in the participants' attitudes and behavior toward environmental preservation.

ii. Survey Method

The primary means of data collection was a survey. Surveys are useful tools for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data from respondents, providing a comprehensive understanding of their opinions, convictions, and behavior about environmental preservation. To get more detailed quantitative data, a survey questionnaire with a predetermined framework will be developed. To assess the teens' mindfulness and opinions on environmental issues, this survey will include simple, age-appropriate questions. The survey will be conducted either through one-on-one interviews or group discussions led by trained researchers, depending on what is possible logistically.

iii. For quantitative data analysis pre test and post test was conducted

Pre-Test and Post-Test questionnaires were used to assess participants' awareness and mindfulness of environmental conservation, allowing for a determination of their prior knowledge and beliefs prior to the intervention and measuring any changes as a result of the educational programs. The pre-test survey was used to measure the baseline knowledge of the adolescents regarding environmental conservation, determining areas of knowledge deficit to adapt teaching strategies accordingly. It had 15 questions dealing with basic environmental principles, personal behaviors concerning conservation, and environmental protection attitudes. After the training phase, the post-test questionnaire, having the same 15 questions, was administered in order to make direct comparisons and determine improvements in the participants' comprehension and awareness of environmental conservation.

iv. To validate and triangulate the data observation was done

- **Observation Checklist**

A checklist for observation will assess the existence and use of environmental education resources at the NGO. The checklist will cover aspects like having educational materials on environmental subjects, engaging in eco-friendly activities, and the state of facilities used for environmental education. Observations will offer understanding of the factors that impact teenagers' involvement in environmental protection efforts.

- **Field Notes**

During data collection, researchers will write field notes to document insights, observations, and contextual information important to the study. Adding these notes to the collected data will help provide context and enhance the analysis and interpretation of the results.

SAMPLE AND PARTICIPANTS

i. Description of the Participants

Nine participants were studied, all of whom were inhabitants of the NGO in Balaghat, a Madhya Pradesh district in India. The participants ranged from 10 to 18 years of age. This is a crucial age group for imparting values of environmental conservation, as they are at an age when attitudes and behaviors are developed. These boys are a vulnerable group with many socio-economic problems. The characteristics of these participants are :

ii. Demographic Details

The participants are boys, ranging in age from 10 to 18 years. They live in an NGO in Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh, India. The participants come from various socio-economic backgrounds and get their basic needs, such as shelter, food, and education, from the NGO.

iii. Living Conditions

The participants stay in basic shared dormitories with cramped space for private and joint commons. Overcrowding prevails, and substantial recreational or leisure activities are largely diminished because of the lack of infrastructure. These conditions often discourage or limit opportunities for relaxation and leisure.

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iv. Educational Background

Participants receive their education through public schools in which facilities and classrooms are largely inadequate. But to such challenges, there is a deep eagerness by the participants. The NGO, therefore, bridges this gap as it offers added tutoring. To them, there is still restricted access to the quality educational resources and materials available.

v. Psychological and Social Context

Many of the participants are chronically stressed, anxious, and have low self-esteem. They have had histories of poverty, instability, and neglect. The participants face further exacerbation through social stigma, exclusion, and prejudice. However, the participants do show resilience and determination. They play casually and creatively as ways of coping with stress and developing emotional resilience.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Participants for the study were selected based on specific criteria to ensure a focused investigation. These criteria include:

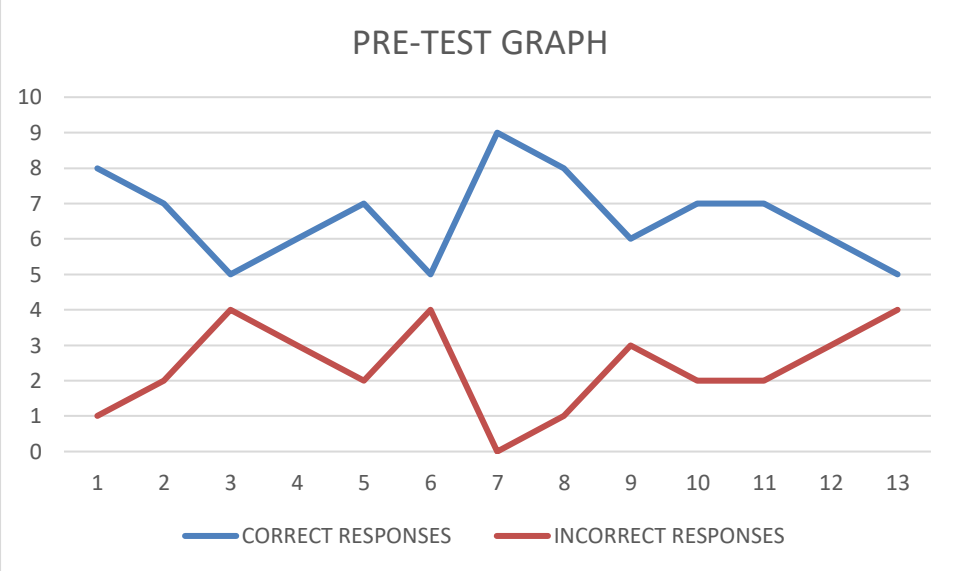
i. **Sample Size**: Limited to nine participants, restricting generalizability.
ii. **Gender Restriction**: Only boys participated, excluding girls' perspectives.
iii. **Assessment Duration**: Focused on short-term behavioural changes without long-term evaluation.
iv. **Resources**: Constrained by the NGO's limited resources and infrastructure.
v. **Geographical Scope**: Confined to Balaghat, limiting applicability to other regions.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Data was gathered using a self-designed questionnaire, expert-validated. Pre-test and post-test were conducted on nine students in the NGO Balaghat to measure their awareness of environmental conservation. The questionnaire, which consisted of 15 questions divided into four sections, was constructed so that it was easily to moderately comprehendible. The pre-test was used to measure initial knowledge, whereas the post-test was used to measure changes following intervention sessions. Responses were captured to monitor progress.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

i. **Pre-Test Responses:** The pre-test was administered to nine students to assess their initial understanding and attitudes towards environmental protection. The following graph represents the number of responses on Environmental Protection for each question.



Graph 1: Pre-Test Graph

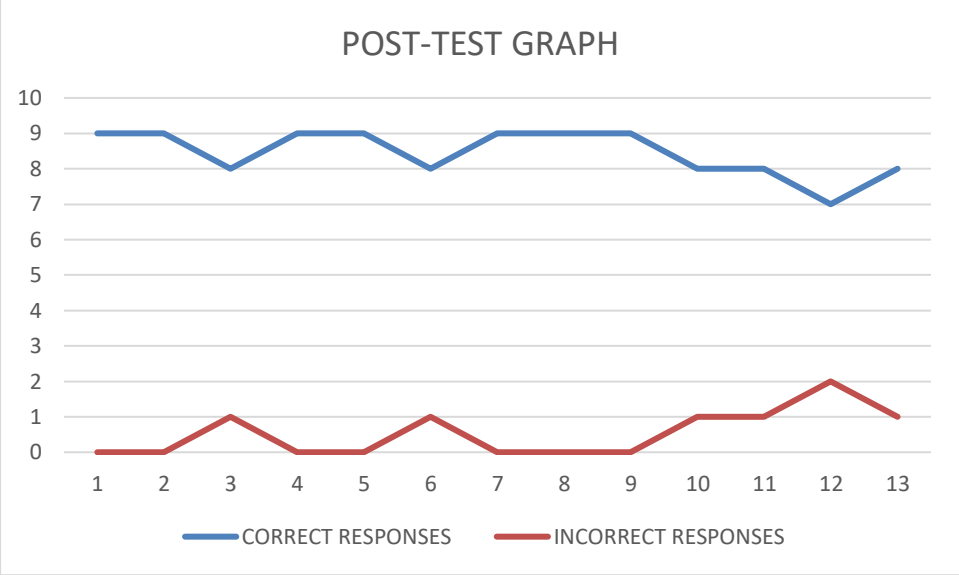
Pre-test results show that a large proportion of students knew the subject very superficially. Most of the students were at the lower level, reflecting that there was a need for specially designed instructional intervention.

Intervention Process

After the pre-test, the intervention was conducted to improve the knowledge and behavior of students in environment protection. It included learning sessions about the environment with a special focus on waste management, energy conservation, and sustainable-related practices. Students also engaged in practical activities such as tree planting, waste segregation, and energy-saving challenges according to what they have learned. Organizing awareness campaigns with group works and discussions with appropriate visual aids would encourage environmental responsibility and proactivity in sustainable efforts.

Post-Test Responses: Post-test was given after the intervention to assess the changes in knowledge and attitudes toward environmental protection. The graph below shows the number of responses per question.

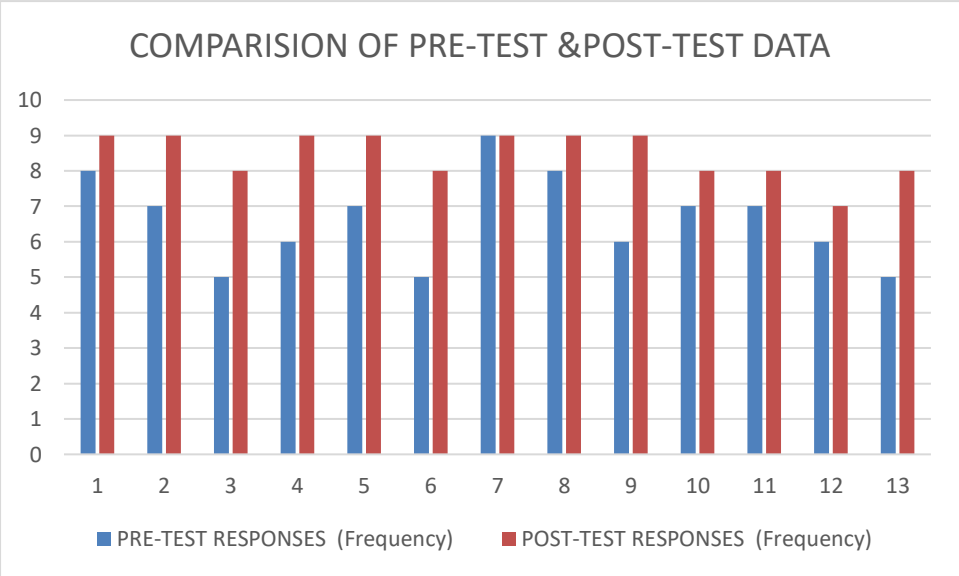
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Graph 2: Post-Test Graph

Interpretation of the Post-Test Graph

In the very simple contrast of pre-test and post-test scores, a considerable effect of the intervention on the performance of most of the students is noted whilst learning took place. Improvement in average scores implies better understanding of the concepts by students during the teaching. From the performance distribution, increase in students scoring in the higher range (70-90% and beyond) versus a decrease in those scoring below 40% indicates learning gains accrued. Rising scores reflect the application of effective teaching strategies, TLMs, and interactive methodologies. Also, students weak in this subject matter have shown a remarkable gain of understanding, substantiating the trust of well-formed ideas. This intervention, overall, has implanted a better student understanding, which facilitates constructing subsequent lessons on this knowledge while providing support where necessary for some students.



Graph 3: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test

The research indicated a remarkable increase in awareness, participation, and responsibility towards the environment among poor teenagers in Balaghat. Prior to the intervention, the students possessed elementary knowledge about the environment, whereas their participation in ecological practices was mediocre. Post-intervention, awareness of major subjects such as pollution, recycling, and protection of the environment increased to 100%, and participation in green activities also increased remarkably. The application of teaching-learning materials was effective in promoting active engagement, resulting in improved waste management, energy savings, and ethical environmental practices. Although the intervention was very effective, sustained follow-up is essential to ensure all students embrace sustainable practices consistently.

CONCLUSION

The research, "Developing Mindfulness in Deprived Adolescents of Balaghat on Environmental Protections" effectively proves the efficacy of focused interventions in raising environmental awareness and developing sustainable

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habits among disadvantaged adolescents. Through the integration of educational workshops, experiential environmental activities, and creative exercises, the intervention filled gaps in knowledge and promoted a sense of responsibility towards environmental protection. Participants exhibited considerable improvement in grasping fundamental environmental concepts, implementing improved waste management and energy conservation practices, and participating in environmentally friendly activities.

The intervention also fostered a proactive mindset towards sustainability, with teenagers showing greater awareness of undesirable environmental habits and the value of living in a clean and green community. Their dedication to green habits, including recycling and ongoing use of environmentally friendly modes of transportation like walking, likewise testifies to the program's effectiveness in instilling sustainable living habits.

In summary, the research was successful in its objectives of enhancing environmental awareness, eco-friendly habits, and a feeling of responsibility among disadvantaged adolescents. Through empowering these teens through learning and practical experiences, the intervention not only solved short-term environmental issues but also helped shape a greener and more responsible generation in Balaghat.

KEY FINDINGS

Comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test responses brings forth a number of findings:

i. Students exhibited a consistent perception of the environment as the natural world and enhanced understanding of the "reduce, reuse, recycle" principle.
ii. Enhanced waste management practices and energy saving were seen, and increased participation in green activities.
iii. Post-test responses reflected higher awareness of detrimental environmental habits and advantages of a clean, green environment.
iv. The students embraced green habits like recycling and recycling resources, proving the effectiveness of the program.
v. There was regular utilization of green means of transportation, e.g., walking to school, before and after intervention.
vi. The intervention strongly increased awareness, attitudes, and behaviors towards environmental protection among the students.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Based on the outcomes of this research, several issues can be explored to enhance environmental consciousness among adolescents in underprivileged groups:

i. Enroll more NGOs and schools in Balaghat and the surrounding regions to reach more adolescents and expand the program.
ii. Collaborate with educational authorities to include environmental studies in the school curriculum for enhanced long-term knowledge.
iii. Develop programs integrating parents and the community to assist adolescents in maintaining the environment.
iv. Bring in more complex subjects such as biodiversity, green energy, and global warming to stimulate interest.
v. Employ technology and online platforms for presenting interesting environmental education content.

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