International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development
Online ISSN: 2349-4182, Print ISSN: 2349-5979; Impact Factor: RJIF 5.72
Received: 14-06-2019; Accepted: 17-07-2019
www.allsubjectjournal.com
Volume 6; Issue 9; September 2019; Page No. 112-114

A study of environmental perception among rural and urban females

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Abstract
In a study 150 rural and 150 urban females were administered an environmental perception scale with a view to measure the environmental knowledge ability regarding 5 important aspects of environment i.e. knowledge of environment, impact of industry and technology responsibility for pollution, participation in environmental activities and impact of environment. Data were collected with the help of a 20 item self constructed questionnaire it was found that urban females showed more environmental concern than the rural female. Both the group of rural and urban females differed significantly with regard to their environmental concern in a form of environmental perception ability. Results are discussed in terms of existing environmental theories.

Keywords: urban, females, concern, environmental, activities

1. Introduction

The research work on environmental perception started from the work of Ittelson, 1970, 1973, 1976, 1978. He advocated that there are four important components (i.e. cognitive, Affective, Interpretive and evaluative) of environmental perception. Cognitive component emphasize on thinking that what can be done by an individual in his environment. Visual, auditory and image related brain processes are of greater importance in this regard. Our feeling about environment also play an important role. Environmental quality also influence our mood and temperament that is positively correlated with our perception toward environment. Environmental perception also includes evaluation as good or bad. Environmental perception also depends or the perceived quality of the environment. Our attitude toward environment depends or affective and evaluative components. Therefore it seems clear that all the components operate simultaneously and enforce an individual to perceive the environment as unit, Person – environment interaction was studied as the unit of environmental perception. Socio-cultural influence also affect our reaction to the environment. Individual goals and values play an important role in the processes of perceptual experience. Environmental perception was also viewed in terms of information received by an individual about environmental setting. Individual tries to processes the information selectively among various information derived from a particular environmental setting. Thus meaning which we derive from the environment shapes interpretive component, which is influenced by the personality, goals and individual values. Some time we are in a state of stimulation over load that influences our perception negatively. Environmental perception is also linked with our activity or strategy we apply to deal with environmental issues with a view to fulfill our needs and goals. Environmental activity depends or our evaluation pattern. Therefore, it can be argued that environmental perception is a complex process. Considering time as variable psychologists have focused on perception of movement, adaptation and change related activities.

Environmental perception was studied also with the help of broader conceptualization of the term perception in a from of perceiving the natural hazards. Researches conducted by Burtorekates, 1964; Burtorn, Kales & Whit, 1964, Kates 1976 are important in this correction. The level effect indicated about protective mechanism adopted by individuals during disaster. Adaptation was also emphasized in disaster studies that indicated about various coping strategies adopted by people about troublesome process of environment.

Environmental perception also depends upon social and cultural influence, Allport, (1955) [3], Campbell & Herkovitz, (1966) [6]. Environmental cognition was also studied in terms of thinking, recognizing and organizing the layout of environment. Cognitive mapping studies are important in this connection. Assessment of scenic quality of on environment was also emphasized in descriptive, physical, perceptual and psychosocial terms. In his research Yurtta and Sulun, (2010) [15] emphasized upon growth of informational settlements and discussed that completion in economic growth and environmental perception is appearing as a serious challenge before humanity. Gouldson and Sullivan, (2012) [7] indicated about a type of environmental movement based on the motion of preservation of nature specially in rural areas. It was argued that modern civilization is responsible for environmental problems.

Sarkar (2011) [12] reviewed the psychological research in the area of environmental perception and advocated that quality of human system influence the experience received from environmental change. In a study Jackson (2005) [9] also argued that environment can be preserved by creating environmental awareness among society. In a study, Kulasekera (2012) focused on attitude toward environment and ecological behavior. In some studies attitude toward on environment was stressed as important for related behavioural changes. In a study it was noted that

environmental concern in urban areas were noted as higher than in rural areas, (Vanliere & Dunlap, 1981) [14]. It was argued that people how living urban area become more aware about the exploitation of natural environments (Arcury & Ohristianson, 1990) [1]. In some studies it was noted that environment perception depends upon size of place of residence (Samdahl & Robertson, 1989) [13]. How ever negative correlation between attitude and action was noted in case of urban environment (Corral-verdugo, 2001) [5]. Against the above bock drop, the present study has tried to see the pattern of environmental perception among rural and urban females. The main objective of the study was to see the effect of background on environmental perception among females. It was hypothesized that both the group of rural and urban females would show significant difference with regard to their environmental perception ability because of effect of socio-demographic influences.

2. Methods

2.1 Sample

The present study was conducted over 300 females (150 rural) and (150 urban). The sample was selected from Rewa M.P. India. Their ages ranged between 20 to 60 years, depending on availability. Purposive sampling technique was applied to sellect the samples.

2.2 Measure

Researcher herself constructed an environmental perception scale consisting 20 questions framed on the basis of five important components of environmental influence, i.e. knowledge of environment, impact of individual and technological development, responsibility for pollution, participation in environmental activity and overall impact of environment. All the 20 questions were attached with a five point likert type scale ranging between very high (5) to very low (1). The scale was anchored in a way that higher the score greater the knowledge about environmental problems and lesser the score greater was the ignorance about environmental problems. The scores could range between maximum (100) to the minimum (20).

2.3 Procedure

All the participants were individually contacted at their residences and were asked to fill the questionnaire. In this way the questionnaire was administered over 150 rural and 150 urban participants and their responses were collected accordingly one by one.

2.4 Analysis

Obtained results were subjected to the analysis of Mean S.D. and critical ratio (t-ratio) and graphical analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Obtained findings were analyzed and results are given in table no: 1

Table 1: Environmental perception among rural and urban females

S. No.	Participants	N	M.S.	S.D.	Level of Environmental perception
1.	Rural	150	31.62	8.14	Low concern for environment
2.	Urban	150	83.96	10.98	Very high concern for environment

It was clear with the table that rural females showed low level of environmental concern than the urban females who showed very high level of environmental concern. Urban females received higher mean ratings than the rural females on environmental perception scale. S.D. value was noted also higher in case of urban females than rural females.

These results indicated that urban females perceived environmental problems more sincerely than rural females because urban females live in cities and use to view T.V. news daily. They are also fond of reading news papers that might have resulted in a from of more knowledge about environment. This is the reason that urban females showed more awareness regarding environmental issues than the rural females.

Data were subjected to the analysis of t-ratio obtained results are given in table no 2

Table 2: t-ratio between the mean scores of rural and urban females on environmental perception scale

S. No.	Participants	N	M.S.	S.D.	t-ratio	Significant level
1.	Rural	150	31.62	8.14	47.15	<.01
2.	Urban	150	83.96	10.98		

It is clear with results that both the rural and urban females showed significant difference with regard to environmental concern. Obtained t-ratio was significant at.01 level of confidence. This means rural females showed lover level of environmental perception ability than the urban females.

Rural females reflected lower amount of knowledge regarding environmental issues because most of the time of their life spents in household affairs and they receive less opportunity of reading news papers and viewing T.V. that may have affected their responses on environmental perception scale. Data were also analyzed to find out the number of rural and urban participants who showed vivid responses on environmental perception scale. Results are given in table no. 3.

Table 3: Position of rural and urban females on environmental perception scale

S. No.	Participants	N	Status on environmental perception				
			Very high concern	High concern	Moderate concern	Low concern	Very low concern
1.	Rural females	150	0	8	7	118	17
2.	Urban females	150	120	30	0	0	0

Results of table 3 indicated that a majority of rural females showed low concern about environmental problems. Only 17 participants showed very low concern and 7 participants showed moderate level of knowledge while only 8 out of 150 participants showed high category of concern regarding environmental issues. In case of urban females about 120 participants showed very high concern and 30 participants showed high concern about environmental problems.

The results are also confirming the pattern as obtained in case of table 1and 2. Mean scores in case of rural and urban females were subjected to graphical analysis also (See figure.1).

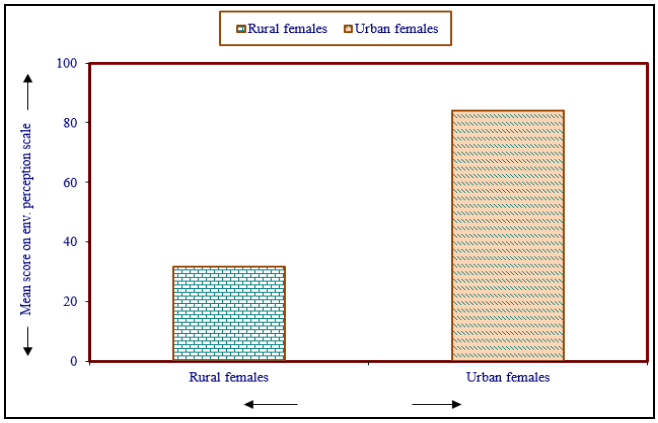

Fig 1

As evident from the figure that environmental perception as well as concern about environment was showed higher by urban females than rural females.

Results of the present study indicated that concern about environmental problems depends upon the situational properties in which females reside. These results are in line with the previous findings (i.e.Van Liere & Dunlap, 1981; Arcury & Christianson, 1990 and Corral-Verdugo, 2001).

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