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ISSN : 2277-6419

An Interdisciplinary Refereed Research Journal

# शोध वैचारिकी

(मानविकी एवं समाज-विज्ञान की शोध त्रैमासिकी)

वर्ष-4, अंक-2  
अप्रैल-जून, 2015

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## A Study of Human Behaviour and Environmental Sustainability in District Muzaffarnagar

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### Abstract :

*Environmental sustainability is a necessity for all countries worldwide, and it is strongly related to human quality of life. Given that sustainability problems largely result from human-environment interaction, social and behavioral research is developing as a necessary complement to natural-science and technological studies of environmental problems.*

Climate change and environmental decline are largely the result of human behavior. These problems have accelerated in recent decades as we've consumed ever more scarce resources, including oil, coal, metals, and water, to create ever more products to live in our homes, work in our business, and accumulate things. This behavior is often called 'unsustainable' because we are depleting some of those resources ever faster, we are needing to provide for ever more people as worldwide population growth continues unabated, and we are degrading many parts of our environment- land, seas, and air- as we try to 'sustain' our current way of life. We review existing knowledge across these areas and conclude that the global sustainable deficit is not primarily the result of a lack of academic knowledge. Rather, unsustainable behaviors result from a vicious cycle, where traditional market and state institutions reinforce disincentives for more sustainable behaviors while, at the same time, the institutions of civil society lack momentum to effectively promote fundamental reforms of those institutions. Achieving more sustainable behaviors requires this cycle to be broken.

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We call on readers to contribute to social change through involvement in initiatives. Sustainability demands changes in human behavior. To this end,

priority areas include reforming formal institutions, strengthening the institutions of civil society, improving citizen engagement, curbing consumption and population growth, addressing social justice issues, and reflecting on value and belief systems.

#### **Introduction :**

Climate change has been described as a diabolical issue because much of what we would like to know in order to manage the risks it presents is uncertain, the issues are complex and, without action, there is a potential for dangerous consequences. Policy development considers what the impact of greenhouse gas emissions might be, what response options are acceptable and what options are equitable. Together, these questions pose substantial challenges to individuals, companies and governments.

It has always been important to look after our local environment if only so that we can pass to on our children and grandchildren an environment at least as good as we have enjoyed. Today, however, it is not just the local environment that is at risk but the global environment. Small amounts of pollutions for which each of us is responsible are affecting everyone in the world. For instance, very small quantities of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) emitted to the atmosphere from leaking refrigerators or some industrial processes have resulted in degradation of the ozone layer. Of greater importance is carbon dioxide that enters the atmosphere from the burning of fossils fuels, coals, oils and gas, which is leading to damaging climate change. Pressure from rapidly increasing world population and form over-use of the Earth's resources are making such problems much more acute exacerbating the damage both to the natural world and to human communities. The perils of human induced climate change are now recognized much more widely. It is frequently described by responsible scientist's and politicians as probably 'the greatest problem the world faces' and as a 'weapon of mass destruction'. Global pollution demands global solution. To arrive at global solutions it is necessary to address human attitudes very broadly, for instance those concerned with resource use, lifestyle, wealth and poverty. They must also involve human society at all levels of aggregation- international organisations, nations with their national and local governments, large and small industry and business, non-governmental organisation (e.g. churches) and individuals. To take into account the breadth of concern, a modern term that is employed to describe such environmental care is 'sustainability'.

#### **Objectives :**

The aim of our study are :-



1. To review and build on existing evidence to produce a practical overview of links between environmental issues and human behavior.
2. To identify lessons about how environmental behavior could be supported, and suggest promising areas for further work.
3. The relationship between the local neighbourhood environment and wider environmental problems and goals.
4. Peoples opinion, experiences and actions in relation both to their own immediate environment and the wider environment.
5. How behavior change could be supported.

#### **Review of literature**

Garnaut (2008) describes climate change as a 'diabolical' issue because it is uncertain in its format and extent, insidious rather than (as yet) confrontational, long-term rather than immediate, international as well as national and, in the absence of effective mitigation, carries a risk of dangerous consequences. Other dimensions to the diabolical nature of the issue include its sheer complexity, the urgent need for action and the inequities of its causes and effects.

In addressing the issue, governments and corporations respond by considering three questions: what is possible what is acceptable, and what is equitable? (Pearman 2008; Hartel and Pearman 2009). With regards to what is possible, what are the geophysical realities of the cycling of greenhouse gases, the response of the climate system to these gases and the human inputs to emissions, and the direct impact of climate changes on natural and human systems? Second, in terms of what is socially acceptable, how might the risks be managed, and what are the opportunities and potential for adaptive responses? Finally, in terms of what is equitable, how do we share the responsibility for action, establish agreements and legislation to share costs and manage inequities nationally and internationally.

This delineation of the major questions provides a convenient way of describing what is otherwise a complex of interactions without discernable structure. What is striking is the degree to which human behavior and human governance systems form an integral part of how we contribute to, perceive and respond to the climate change issue. As observed by Shove (2006) in relation to the issue of energy consumption and climate change, response necessitates that we go beyond physical science and consider the values, norms and institutions that drive behavior.

Vlek and Steg (2007) recently argued that environmental problems are basically social and behavioral problems. In response to the question, 'Are there social limits to adaptation to climate change?' Adger et al. (2009) suggested that the limits to adaptation are endogenous to society and contingent to ethics, knowledge, attitude to risk and culture. Similarly, Hulme (2009), in addressing the question, 'why do we disagree about climate

change?' , identified a range of behavioral and societal factors ,such as perhaps science is not doing the job we expect of it ; that we each have different values and views concerning our duty to others , to nature and to our deities ; that we understand development differently , and we seek to govern in different ways .

**Hartel and Pearman (2009)** recently examined the role of behavior science in the climate change issue in terms of what is possible, acceptable and equitable. They first identified a wide range of physical science issue that relates to climate change, and then mapped on to this the relevant fields of behavior and social science. This chapter draws heavily on the work reported in **Hartel and Pearman (2009)** to explore who we are, how we behave and our societal constructs interface with the issue.

#### **HYPOTHESES -**

This led us to develop 5 hypotheses:-

1. Local environmental neglect has a significant negative impact on people's quality of life, which has wider implication for the environment.
2. Environmental; behavior are more influenced by local area conditions than by wider problems.
3. Environmental behavior changes will happen most easily if it builds on the starting point of everyday lives in the context of local area.
4. Low -income residents care about wider environmental issues.
5. Behavior change depends on the wider context, the removal of barriers to action, and the knowledge and constraints of individuals , as they experience them on a day-to-day basis.

#### **METHODOLOGY -**

We reviewed existing quantitative and qualitative evidence to build a detailed picture of environmental problems, attitudes and behavior in District Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh), including specific evidence about low-income areas, different social classes and income groups. We identified existing evidence through our knowledge of, and involvement with, Work in this field, together with internet and journal searches and a search of the Indian data archive .

We chose 6 areas that have been carefully selected to reflect the characteristics distribution of the most disadvantaged areas in Muzaffarnagar. The participants were recruited through local organizations, local worker and posters. Each focus group was facilitated by the project researcher, using a standard set of questions to guide discussions on environmental issues, concerns and action. We recorded the focus group discussions and produced transcribed records of discussion. We also asked the participants to complete a questionnaire covering questions about environmental concern and action. We asked about environmental issues, action and concern during interviews conducted as part of the CASE Areas study. Comments and discussion on



these issues, with a total of 18 housing, regeneration, community and neighborhood workers in our 6 areas, were made available as part of our study.

#### **ANALYSIS -**

We used Anne Power's well-established method of analysing both qualitative and quantitative finding from area based research to analyse our findings (Power, 1997). We used a grounded theory approach, starting with hypotheses from our existing work and knowledge in the field. We tested these and based our conclusion on the results. We carried out a thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts, local manager interviews and think-tank findings. This involved grouping comments relating to the three main research issues. Findings were then categorized to identify themes illustrated by specific examples and quotes. We counted the number of times each theme was raised as significant, gave a clear weighting to specific issues. In addition, we put the questionnaire finding into SPSS to provide a quantitative analysis of responses from focus group participants.

#### **Crisis of Sustainability**

The human activities of an increasing world population together with the accompanying rapid industrial development, are leading to degradation is happening; others that degradation matters. Scientists have an important role in ensuring the availability of accurate information about degradation and also in pointing to how human can begin to solve the problem. Many things are happening in our modern world that are just not sustainable. In fact, we are all guilty of cheating in the three respects I have mentioned. Five of the most important cause of unsustainability are : Human induced climate change, deforestation and land usage change, over consumption of resources, over generation of waste and over Fishing. All these increasingly impact human communities and ecosystem, in particular, they threaten food and water supplies and lead to large scale loss of Biodiversity and loss of soil.

#### **Results from our society**

Participants discussed a wide range of problems in their local areas, illustrating the significant difficulties faced by resident. As reported in previous studies, participants' responses gave a wide definition of local 'environmental' problems, which fell under three broad categories:-

1. Physical problems such as lack of green space, dirty streets and poor quality housing.
2. Social problems such as crime, unemployment, antisocial behavior, and tension between established and new communities in area.
3. Problems specifically relating to services or facilities, such as poor transport, too few police, lack of recycling facilities, and service providers

not involving the community. Some participants talked about wanting to leave the areas because of poor local environmental conditions.

Focus group participants identified many wider environmental problems that they were aware of and concerned about, including, for example, biodiversity loss, global warming, and concern about overuse of world's resources. The discussion also showed that many participants understood these issues, as opposed to having just heard of them. Participants discussed the mechanisms and complexities underlying many of these global problems, including the role of the consumerist system and population growth putting pressure on resources.

Participants put this emphasis on individuals into a wider context. They acknowledged that business and government, as well as individuals, were to blame and discussed how people's individual behavior is constrained and manipulated, how social changes and norms have an influence, and role of these factors beyond individual control which shape what happens :

*'It's a bit of both. Industry are actually pressurizing us to buy these things, telling us 'you can have this, you can't live without a DVD player.....'. So it's a bit of both, it's society changing but I think it's the global, the large corporations are at a lot to blame..... It's very difficult to break the cycle because a lot of these multinational are bigger than countries, they have more sway over the world than even individual countries do.....so we as small community we can do our bit to recycle but we're not going to get past a certain [level of impact].....'* Redcar, Female

Many local environmental issues, but rarely linked these to global environmental concerns. The main issues raised were:

1. Decay, vandalism, lack of maintenance, housing abandonment.
2. Litter, rubbish, dumping, abandoned cars.
3. Ugly, poorly used spaces, unwanted bare sites.
4. Fear of crime and disorder keeping people away from green spaces bad behavior, poverty and ignorance (leading to neglect, dumping etc.)
5. Lack of maintenance and repair.
6. Poorly maintained gardens, paved over front gardens

#### **Conclusion-**

Overall our findings show that our five hypotheses were supported by the evidence we uncovered. The study shows an awareness of environmental problems and action among residents in areas that belies many firmly held assumptions. People in areas are aware of wider as well as local environmental problems and possible solutions. People can also relate global problems to their lives. Individual environmental actions can often be dependent on a supportive context and ease of execution. This requires a



framework that makes action relatively easy, that involves many people, and that has obvious benefits, both locally and more widely to do so. But barriers to action are often serious, for example, lack of options or facilities for recycling. Local managers highlighted the potential for stronger environmental response in poor areas but showed weak motivation and generally unimaginative of what could be done. Many residents in poor areas share a similar view of sustainable development with the rest of the country. There is no big gap in understanding. Many people already agree that action on environmental problems is necessary, and are willing to act. They need more support, incentives and a clear sense of direction.

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