
ANALYTICAL STUDY ON AWARENESS, PERCEPTION, AND ATTITUDE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) IN DEHRADUN.

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Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations were formed to highlight global Issues that the world can come together to discuss common problems on social, economic, and environmental issues, to find solutions that benefit humanity as a whole. College students, particularly, are important in advancing these goals, as they are the key drivers of change and future leaders. The objective of this study is to analyze the attitude and perception of college students in Dehradun toward Sustainable Development Goals, It also assesses their level of engagement, willingness to contribute to sustainability efforts, and level of awareness. In this study, a mixed-method approach, including qualitative interviews and Quantitative surveys, was included. The study identifies and analyzes their commitment towards sustainability practices and the difficulties faced in their active participation. Key findings of the study indicate that few do not even know what the Sustainable Development Goals are, while many students are aware of them, their practical involvement is limited due to inadequate institutional initiatives, insufficient curriculum integration, and their real-world exposure to sustainability is low. The research highlights the need for Institutions, universities, and policymakers to improve sustainability education through improved curriculum, experiential learning, and community-based projects. By addressing these gaps, institutions and universities can cultivate a properly informed, proactive student community actively participating in sustainable development. This study provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and organizations seeking to integrate Sustainable Development Goals awareness and action into higher education, ultimately empowering students to participate actively in global sustainability efforts.

Keywords—Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), college students, awareness, attitude, sustainability education.

I. INTRODUCTION**United Nations and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The United Nations is the platform where the nations of the world gather together to discuss common problems and find shared solutions. In the year 1945, the United Nations was formed as an international organization. Currently, it comprises 193 Member States. 51 countries dedicated to maintaining international peace and security, developing cordial relations among nations, creating better living standards and human rights, and promoting social progress after the Second World War, [1]. The UN has progressed and developed over the years to keep pace with a fast-changing world. But one thing remains similar: to discuss mutual problems and find answers that benefit humanity as a whole, the United Nations remains a platform for this, wherein all the nations of the world can come together [2].

1. Background of Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aim to address global challenges as defined by the United Nations in their 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Are: - No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Economic Growth and Work, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Production and Consumption, Climate Action, Life Below Water, Life on Land, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, Partnerships for the Goals** [3]

Comprising 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDGs provide a comprehensive roadmap for achieving sustainable economic, social, and environmental development worldwide [4]. Their successful implementation requires a collective effort from governments, organizations, communities, and individuals, particularly young people who will shape the future. As key stakeholders in the sustainability agenda, college students play a crucial role in advancing the SDGs through awareness, education, and proactive engagement [5].

Importance of Youth Engagement in SDGs To achieve the SDGs, youth engagement is essential, as youth represent the largest group in the global demographic and will inherit the consequences of current development choices [6]. Specifically, college students have the potential to determine sustainable change through innovation, research, and activism [7]. Higher education Institutions serve as a source for knowledge and

critical thinking, providing scholars with the necessary tools to address sustainability challenges. Yet, the extent to which higher education students are engaged, understand, and are aware of and with the SDGs differs across various institutions and regions. This study explores Dehradun college students' awareness, perception, and attitude toward the SDGs. It evaluates their awareness levels, willingness to contribute, and the challenges they face in integrating sustainability practices into their academic and personal lives.

Awareness and Perception of SDGs Among Students Perception and awareness are important factors in knowing how students are involved with the SDGs. Studies proposed that although many students acknowledge the importance of sustainability, their knowledge of the SDGs often remains limited [8]. A survey conducted by UNESCO (**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**) expressed that 80% of students worldwide know the term "Sustainable Development Goals," while less than 40% could properly define individual goals or their implications [9]. This knowledge gap highlighted the need for improved sustainability education within higher education curricula[10].

In the Indian context, awareness of the SDGs among higher education students is still evolving. Research shows that while environmental concerns are widespread amongst Indian youth, comprehensive knowledge of the SDGs and their incorporation in their daily life is often limited [11]. Dehradun dominates as an educational center, providing an exclusive setting to study how college students perceive and engage with sustainability initiatives. The region's diverse higher education institutions, ranging from public universities to private universities and colleges, offer diverse perspectives on sustainability education and engagement.

Behavioral and Attitude Intentions Toward Sustainability

Attitudes towards sustainability affect students' inclination to act on environmental and social issues. The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that an individual's perceived behavioral control, attitude, and subjective norms determine their likelihood of engaging in a specific behavior [12]. By applying this framework to SDG engagement, positive attitudes toward sustainability, institutional encouragement, and supportive social environments can enhance students' participation in SDG-related initiatives [13]. Recent studies revealed that students with higher exposure to sustainability education exhibit stronger pro-environmental attitudes and are more likely to adopt sustainable practices [14]. However, barriers, such as lack of support by institutions, the perceived complex nature of sustainability issues, and limited real-world application, often hamper active participation [15]. Understanding these attitudes and their influencing factors is essential for designing effective interventions that promote student engagement with the SDGs.

Role of Higher Education Institutions in Promoting SDGs

colleges and Universities play a vital role in fostering SDG awareness and action among students. Institutions that include sustainability into their curricula, campus operations, and extracurricular activities generate an environment conducive to meaningful student engagement [16]. The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) idea, encouraged by UNESCO, highlights the significance of incorporating principles of sustainability within educational curricula [17]. Research shows that universities with well-organized sustainability programs experience higher student engagement in SDG- related work, such as community outreach, research projects, and advocacy campaigns [18]. In the developing countries, the extent of such integration varies significantly across institutions, specifically where sustainability education is still emerging as a priority [19]. Assessing how universities and colleges integrate sustainability principles into their academic structures in Dehradun will provide insights into potential areas for improvement.

Challenges faced by students in engaging with the SDGs

Despite the rising importance of sustainability education, some challenges hinder students' engagement with the SDGs. These include:

- **Insufficient Curriculum Integration:** Sustainability topics are confined to a few disciplines only, which leaves students from non-environmental fields with little exposure to SDG-related Content. [21].
- **Lack of Knowledge and Awareness:** Many college students are unacquainted with the SDGs or perceive SDGs as global goals with limited or no significance to their daily lives [20].
- **Insufficient Support by Institutions:** Universities and colleges may have limited funding, faculty expertise, and structured programs to effectively encourage sustainability initiatives [22].
- **Perceived Inadequacy:** Some students believe that the actions of individuals have a negligible or no impact on global sustainability issues, which contributes to disengagement [23].

- Socioeconomic Barriers: constraints related to Financial and academic pressures may limit students' ability to participate in voluntary sustainability efforts [24]. Identifying and addressing these barriers is crucial in promoting a culture of sustainability within higher education institutions.

For shaping future sustainability, it is vital to understand college students' perceptions and attitudes toward SDGs to plan and make efforts. As young people transition into leadership roles, their ability to integrate sustainability principles into professional and personal decision-making will significantly impact global progress toward achieving the SDGs. This study will provide insights into the current state of SDG awareness and engagement among students in Dehradun, contributing to broader discussions on sustainability education and youth empowerment. By recognizing challenges and opportunities, this research aims to advise educational institutions, policymakers, and organizations on how best to foster a more proactive and well-informed student community committed to sustainable development.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the level of awareness and understanding of SDGs among college students in Dehradun.
- To analyze students' attitudes and perceptions toward sustainability and the SDGs.
- To examine the role of higher education institutions in promoting SDG engagement among students.
- To identify barriers that hinder student participation in sustainability initiatives.
- To propose recommendations for improving sustainability education and engagement in higher education.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study is analytical and descriptive to assess students' awareness, attitudes, and perceptions toward SDGs, with institutional roles and barriers to engagement in SDGs. A mixed-method approach (both qualitative and quantitative methods) is adopted.

Targeted Population and Sampling

The research population for the study is College students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs across different disciplines (science, commerce, humanities, and professional courses) in Dehradun. The sample size taken for the study is approximately 300 students to ensure statistical significance.

The stratified random sampling technique is used based on college type (government/private), discipline, and level of study (UG/PG).

Primary Data is collected through a structured questionnaire developed with closed-ended questions to assess:

- Awareness and knowledge of SDGs.
- Attitudes and perceptions regarding sustainability.
- Institutional role in SDG promotion.
- Interest in sustainability education.
- Barriers to engagement in SDGs

The survey is distributed through Google Forms and offline surveys at selected colleges.

Focus Group Discussions were also performed. A Small group of students (6–10 per group) discussed their views on sustainability, SDGs, and barriers to participation in sustainable initiatives. Interviews with faculty or administrators are conducted to gain insights into how colleges integrate SDGs into curricula and student activities.

Table 1. Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Age	18–21 yrs	175	58.2	58.1
	22–25 yrs	101	33.6	91.7
	Above 25	25	8.3	100
Gender	Male	167	55.5	55.5
	Female	134	44.5	100
Level of Study	Undergraduate	208	69.1	69.1
	Postgraduate	90	29.9	99

	Doctorate	3	1	100
Field of Study	Science and Technology	56	18.6	18.6
	Social Science	42	13.9	32.5
	Management	130	43.2	75.7
	Humanit ies	73	24.3	100
College or University	Private	197	65.4	65.4
	Govern ment	104	34.6	100

III. ANALYSIS

1. Age Distribution

The majority (58.1%) of the respondents belong to the 18- 21 years age group, followed by 33.6% in the 22-25 years category, while only 8.3% are above 25 years. This indicates that most of the participants are young undergraduate students who are likely in the early stages of their academic and professional journey. The limited representation of students above 25 suggests that mature students or working professionals pursuing higher education may not have been a major part of the sample.

2. Gender Distribution

The gender composition is fairly balanced, with 55.5% male and 44.5% female respondents. This near-equal representation allows for a gender-inclusive analysis of awareness, perception, and attitude towards SDGs.

3. Level of Study

A significant proportion of the respondents (69.1%) are undergraduate students, followed by 29.9% postgraduate students. A small percentage comprises doctoral candidates (1%). This distribution highlights that most participants are in the early stages of their higher education, which could influence their level of awareness and engagement with the SDGs.

4. Field of Study

Among 301 respondents Management field of study dominated with 43.2% of respondents, followed by Humanities having 24.3%, Science and Technology with

18.6%, and Social Sciences with 13.9%. The overwhelming number of business management students may show a strong inclination toward industry-oriented courses, potentially shaping their understanding and engagement with sustainability concepts. whereas the lower representation of science, social science, and technology might limit perspectives directly tied to environmental and social sustainability issues, which are central to the SDGs.

5. College/University Type

Most respondent students (65.4%) are enrolled in private institutions, whereas only 34.6% belong to government colleges or universities. This finding suggests the dominance of private institutions and universities in higher education in Dehradun and may have a different approach to integrating SDG-related topics in their curricula compared to government institutions.

IV. DISCUSSION

The demographic data provides critical insights into the awareness, perception, and attitude of college students toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since a large proportion of respondents are young undergraduate management students from private institutions, their exposure to SDG-related themes is likely influenced by their curriculum, industry trends, and institutional policies.

- The age factor suggests that most students are at an impressionable stage, where sustainability education and awareness initiatives can have a long-term impact. The correlation between students' age and their attitude and perception was found to be very weak and statistically insignificant ($r = -0.028$, $p = 0.634$). This indicates that age does not play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes or perceptions in the context of this study. Therefore, age may not be a relevant factor when considering variations in students' perspectives related to their academic or professional experience
- The balanced gender representation ensures that perspectives from both male and female students are captured, making the study more inclusive. The correlation analysis between gender and awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) revealed a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.093$, $p = 0.107$), which was not statistically significant. This suggests that gender does not have a significant impact on whether students have heard about the SDGs. Thus, awareness appears to be generally uniform across

genders in the sample studied.

- The dominance of business management students highlights the need to explore how sustainability principles are embedded in business education and whether students perceive SDGs as relevant to their careers. The correlation between field of study and awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was negligible and statistically insignificant ($r = 0.016$, $p = 0.778$). This suggests that students' academic discipline does not influence whether they are aware of the SDGs. Therefore, SDG awareness appears to be uniformly distributed across different fields of study, indicating a lack of targeted emphasis or exposure within specific academic domains.
- The overrepresentation of private college students may indicate differences in access to resources, faculty exposure, and institutional emphasis on sustainability education compared to government institutions. The Pearson correlation between students' college/university and their awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was found to be extremely weak and statistically insignificant ($r = 0.042$, $p = 0.471$). This indicates that institutional affiliation does not have a notable effect on SDG awareness. Awareness levels appear to be similar across different colleges and universities in the sample, suggesting that SDG-related exposure or emphasis may be limited across institutions.

The demographic profile of respondents reveals that a majority are young undergraduate business management students from private institutions, which could shape their perception of SDGs in a career-oriented manner rather than a purely social or environmental one.

The study highlights the need for higher education institutions to incorporate SDG-focused curriculum elements across diverse disciplines, ensuring that all students, irrespective of their field of study, develop a holistic understanding of sustainability. Future studies must also include government institutions to assess potential differences in sustainability education and engagement levels compared to private colleges.

This demographic analysis sets the stage for further investigation into how students' backgrounds influence their awareness, perception, and attitude toward SDGs, ultimately shaping their role in achieving sustainability goals in their future careers and personal lives.

Table 2: SDGs. Awareness, Perception and Attitude Data, Dehradun. (301 Respondent)

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
heard of SDG	No	65	21.6	21.6
	Yes	236	78.4	100
knowledge level of SDG	Very low	20	6.6	6.6
	Low	28	9.3	15.9
	Moderate	152	50.5	66.4
	High	83	27.6	94
	Very high	18	6	100
Knowing names of three SDGs	No	111	36.9	36.9
	Yes	190	63.1	100
Belief that the SDGs are important for global development	Strongly Not Imp.	10	3.3	3.3
	Not Imp.	1	0.3	3.7
	Neutral	54	17.9	21.6
	Imp.	83	27.6	49.2
	Very Imp.	153	50.8	100
Belief that individuals have a role in achieving the SDGs	Strongly Disagree	35	11.6	11.6
	Disagree	6	2	13.6
	Neutral	11	3.7	17.3
	Agree	9	3	20.3
	Strongly Agree	240	79.7	100
	Strongly Not Committed	66	21.9	21.9

Commitment towards SDGs	Not Committed	55	18.3	40.2
	Neutral	89	29.6	69.8
	Committed	61	20.3	90
	Highly Committed	30	10	100
participate in the SDGs- related programme	Yes	157	52.2	52.2
	No	144	47.8	100
Institutional Promotion to SDG	Yes	221	73.1	73.1
	No	81	26.9	100

1. Awareness and Knowledge of SDGs

- Among 301 respondents, 236 (78.4%) have heard about the SDGs, whereas 61 respondents (21.6%) have not. This shows a relatively high level of general awareness of the SDG among college students in Dehradun; still, a small chunk of students do not even know the name SDG.
- Only 6% claim to have "Very High" knowledge of SDGs. A total of 50.5% of students (the highest proportion) rated their understanding as "Moderate." Meanwhile, a smaller percentage (27.6%) reported having "High" knowledge. 9.3% and 6.6% reported "Low" and "Very Low" knowledge, respectively. Shows a significantly high degree of variation in Knowledge levels.
- Although a significant number (78.4%) of students have heard about SDGs; still, in-depth knowledge is lacking since only 6% rate their knowledge as "Very High."
- It suggests that awareness campaigns through students may be an effective way to foster a comprehensive understanding of SDGs. Students, being an element of higher education, comprise approximately only 3.1% of the total population of India and are considered to be the most informed society in India; even then, they know very little about SDGs.

2. Attitude, Commitment, and Perception towards Sustainability

- An average of 2.9 on a scale of 1 to 5 suggested a moderate level of engagement when students rated their commitment to sustainable practices. This reflects that although students know the importance of sustainability, their level of Attitude, perception, and active commitment is relatively weak.

3. Institutional Role in Promoting SDGs

- 221 students (73.1%) believe that their institutions actively promote SDG awareness, while 81 respondents (26.9%) do not recognize institutional efforts. This indicates that although universities and colleges are striving to raise awareness, these initiatives may not be reaching or engaging all students effectively. It is also observed that Veer Madho Singh Bhandari Uttarakhand Technical University runs a program through its affiliated colleges and institutions, requiring them to adopt two SDGs and implement them in their day-to-day activities.

4. Barriers to SDG Engagement

- The most common barrier reported is a lack of awareness, cited by 178 (59.1%) students.
- Lack of institutional support and resources, lack of interest among students, time constraints due to academic workload, and limited access to funding were some other challenges faced by the students of Dehradun, which restrict them from actively participating in the SDGs.

5. Encouragement Factors

- The top motivator, 35.2 %, as per the survey done, that can engage students in SDG-related activities is incentives such as certificates or academic credits from universities. (106 responses).
- Other important factors include more awareness and education (92 responses, 30.6%), institutional support, projects, hands-on activities, and collaborations with NGOs and local communities.

V. OTHER OBSERVATIONS DURING INTERVIEWS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. Institutional Efforts Are Recognized, But Gaps Exist

- A majority of students believe that institutions and universities promote SDGs. However, "lack of awareness" is still the leading barrier, which supports the fact that these efforts are not sufficiently deep or engaging. This suggests that institutions should go beyond awareness and focus on effectively incorporating SDGs into students' activities and academic curricula.

2. Low or No Engagement due to Personal and Structural Barriers

- Key barriers to SDGs impact —Academic workload, Lack of awareness, and lack of institutional support— indicate that students either do not prioritize sustainability or are unable to have sufficient exposure to it, due to competitive academic pressures. This reveals the need for time- efficient, structured, and institutionally supported initiatives to drive engagement.

3. Incentives and Practical Initiatives Can Improve Participation

- Interest in practical learning experiences, collaborations with external organizations, and academic incentives (certificates/credits) are the activities expressed by the students to improve their participation. these outcomes suggest prioritizing experiential learning SDGs coursework, creating and providing tangible benefits for participation in sustainability programs.

VI. CONCLUSION

- Awareness of the SDGs is relatively good, but deep knowledge is lacking. Universities should integrate SDG education into syllabi and academic programs to enhance students' understanding beyond basic- level awareness. Practical courses on SDG should be included in the curriculum with course credit, thereby learning by doing.
- Time constraints and institutional support are major limiting factors. Heavy academic workloads or less academic capabilities to cope with the prescribed workload by the universities prevent students from actively engaging in sustainability initiatives, and some do not perceive adequate institutional support for such activities.
- Some students exhibit heightened concern regarding the uncertainty of their career trajectories; their strong commitment to achieving professional success often precludes engagement in other activities."

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Universities, Institutes, and colleges should incorporate SDGs in their curricula in a way so that Students perceive SDGs as a basic necessity in their career progression.
- Universities can provide Incentives such as certificates or academic credits to promote SDGs.
- SDG-focused workshops and courses can be developed to enhance in-depth knowledge.
- Strengthening partnerships with NGOs and local organizations by educational institutions to create hands-on learning experiences is required.
- Institutes, colleges, and universities should increase funding and support initiatives led by students for sustainability.

Colleges and universities in Dehradun can engage students with SDGs to enhance the implementation of these steps, thereby developing a more sustainable and socially responsible student community.

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