



## Society and Environmental Conservation: A Psychological View

Sandeep<sup>1\*</sup> • Nisha Panchal<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Psychology, Rajiv Gandhi University (A Central University), Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Institute of Environmental Studies, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, India

\*Corresponding Author Email id: [sandeepkuk88@gmail.com](mailto:sandeepkuk88@gmail.com)

**Received: 15.12.2023; Revised: 20.05.2024; Accepted: 20.05.2024**

©Society for Himalayan Action Research and Development

**Abstract:** Growth in population is very common but energy resources are not sufficient. The rate of formation of these resources is very slow as compared to its rate of consumption, causing their exploitation. The aim of the article was to find out the link between society and environmental conservation and how society plays a great role to conserving the environment. The article is based on the review and it is theoretical in nature. The methodology of the article was based on search by using Google Scholar, Research Gate and articles downloaded from various web sources. Existing results of review suggested that there is a need to conserve all these non-renewable natural resources like water, oil and coal in order to ensure a fair and equitable share of these among the current and forthcoming future generations, a phenomenon called sustainability. This paper highlights the role of society, including teachers, women, students and their cultural aspects, which is very important factor so that knowledge and awareness related to environmental conservation can be spread more fruitfully. It is also concluded that each individual has its own importance in society, there is a strict need that each human, owing his/her responsibility towards environmental conservation, should avoid over exploitation of natural resources and realize his/her duty towards future generations.

**Keywords:** environmental conservation • society • psychological view point

### Introduction

The current article is based on the existing knowledge and literature on the environmental conservation and societal norms and how psychological views link between these two concepts. Human is God's supreme creation and collectively, all humans create a society. As a human is a social animal, so he requires a community to connect with and exchange his/her ideas. Psychology is a branch of science that deals with the mental processes of humankind, including feelings, behaviour and thought processes. After the Second World War, Psychology contributed to healing the deep wounds and pulling out people from the sufferings (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004). So

this article deals with the psycho-societal role of humans in dealing with the environmental conservation strategies. Conservation of environment means to save it from its exploitation. As human population is increasing, the competition for the available resources (water, oil, coal, land etc.) is also increasing; in fact these are exhausting day by day. So this review article is an attempt to highlight the collaborative duties and roles of all the people of a community towards environmental conservation along with suggestions for their future contributions. Another important concept is sustainability, which means using the available resources in a way that it does not affect the resource availability of the upcoming



future generations, thereby ensuring a fair and equitable sharing among various generations. But the problem is that people are not following the sustainability rule strictly. Although the environment activists are deliberately focusing upon the term sustainability, but it can be achieved if exact knowledge about human behaviour regarding resource usage is forecasted (Heinen & Low, 1992). Hence there is a deliberate requirement for each human to understand and realize the importance of environment and step ahead towards its protection and conservation following the path of sustainability.

### **Objectives of the article**

The objective of the article is to explore and understand the link between society and environmental conservation. The major objectives of this article are to identify the various societal components and how they can be the contributing factors for environmental conservation.

### **Methodology**

The current article is based on the following methodology: with regard to the objective of the article it was decided to review the literature which was relevant to the search criteria of the key words such as environmental conservation and the role of society by using the Google search engine and Google scholar, as well as research gate. The search was done between August 2023 to Sept. 2023. More specifically, those articles were included which were focused primarily on the linkage between society and environmental conservation.

**Society and linking factors with environmental conservation:** The below mentioned factors focus on how society plays a great role in environmental conservation. Further, these factors also emphasis on the different components of the society which can

be helpful to preserving the environment and sustaining the natural resources.

### **Role of students**

Students are regarded as the foundation of a country's growth and development as they form the basis of the overall population age structure. They are at a stage of learning and understanding well about anything. If awareness about environmental preservation and global climate change is inculcated among them, it would be a game changer approach for the entire world to deal with the various environmental issues. Hence quality educative approaches are a must today for a sustainable tomorrow. In a study conducted by Filho et al. (2018), it was mentioned that academics play a very vital role in building sustainability among the students. Along with knowledge and skills, moral values and attitude about environmental education must be aroused in the minds of students i.e. in a psychological manner so that they connect themselves with the nature emotionally and regard it for fulfilling our requirements, through which sustainability can be achievable. These must be trained in a way to deal with the changing world through enhancing their critical thought process and making them compatible with effective decision making. In a study of Islamic studies students that were enrolled in the course regarding sustainability and ecology, it was found that religious people effectively taught students about eight main environmental roles like campaigning, implementing sustainability in routine life, joining with NGOs, becoming environmental volunteers etc. that can be performed in the direction of environmental conservation (Rahman & Jalil, 2021). The students must be appreciated for environmental projects and exhibitions; encouraged to debate on various issues related to nature and must be given exposure about practical solutions. In a study conducted by Panth et al. (2015) it was



concluded that in earlier stage of education, if students are taught about the nature and its value, they would actively involve in its preservation for future purpose. In a recent Chinese study (Tagulao et al., 2022) aimed at mangrove protection, it was observed that the students involved in environmental education as subject along with their visits to mangrove sites, were found to be more focused towards mangrove conservation and were aligned better in terms of morality and values for environment.

**Role of Teachers:** Teachers are regarded as a highly social and knowledgeable part of any community. It is the teacher, who can educate and make the people aware about the right path regarding any problem. They not only teach the book matter but also provide with the practical exposure. Sustainable environment education is a must today and it can't be imposed deliberately on others. So here comes the main role of teacher who can create a suitable learning environment about sustainability. The primary role of a teacher is to build the nation, so they can inculcate sustainable environment education among the learners in a psychological manner so that the learners upgrade their education from books towards a developmental path of a nation. According to Karataş (2013) a teacher from any field can pass his/her environmental education to their students in an appropriate manner. Teachers can play a variety of roles like as an active leader who can enlighten the correct path to the students in an eco-friendly manner; like an environmentalist who can encourage them towards afforestation and treat the nature as our mother with true love and affection; or like an authority who can upgrade the students about the current pollution status and various means to deal with it. A teacher should clarify the status of various non-renewable resources with their exhausting rate and encourage students use the various renewable resources available like solar

energy, wind energy etc. They can also arrange some institutional seminars and workshops to train students in favour of the nature (Bhat, 2020). Hence a teacher itself can play as a role model for a thousand of students and the chain goes so and forth.

**Role of Women:** Women have a unique relation with the natural environment. In ancient period, when there was less advancement, they were completely interdependent upon the natural resources like water, fodder, fuel, land etc. In fact their whole family income and health were dependent upon the nature and its resources (Mago & Gunwal, 2019). Somewhere women are treated insignificant in two manners. First being a female she is introduced as a home care taker and on the other hand she is lacking resources (Wickramasinghe, 1998). Women play an essential role in the management of natural resources, including soil, water, forests and energy and often has a profound traditional and contemporary knowledge of the natural world around them”(World bank, 1991). In a study by Yerian et al. (2014), women were appreciated for their informal role regarding proper management and use of water. In a questionnaire based study on the rural women in Iran, it was found that women are more collaborative with the environment due to their innate psychological factors like independent behaviour, self- efficacy and pride (Ghasemi et al., 2023). Women are of great importance for the nature because of their number of qualities like: natural resource management, emotional relation with the environment, conscious behaviour towards ecological resources, knowledge about medicinal plants and many more. Unless and until we'll keep ignoring the women contributions towards sustainable use of natural resources, the target to achieve Sustainable Development Goals will not be realized, hence women need to provide with



autonomy (Raimi et al., 2019). Women are also credited for their various movements against the damagers of the environment. Some of them are: 1. Chipko movement in 1973 (under the leadership of Sunderlal Bahuguna) 2. Appiko movement in 1983 (hugging trees by women of Karnataka), 3. Silent Valley movement in 1976 (under the leadership of Sugatha Kumari), 4. Narmada Bachao Aandolan in 1985 (led by Medha Patkar with Arundhati Roy). Other names associated with the environmental conservation are Amrita Devi, Gaura Devi, Maneka Gandhi, Radha Bhatt and many more. Women around the world also have their significant contributions like Wangari Maathai for Green Belt Movement, Rachel Carson for the book “The Silent Spring” emphasizing on the detrimental impacts of chemicals on the environment and many more. So history proves that women are emotionally attached with the Mother Nature and can't accept any kind of misbehave with it.

**Role of Education:** Education is not limited up to a teacher and a student or to an institution. In fact it is free from any boundary which means that any person can gain education not only from an institution but also from the environment or any other source, no matter whether the learner is an educated person or an illiterate one. Education is that powerful weapon, using which, any problem can be resolved, and so can be the problem of environmental conservation. Using education, every age group can be trained and informed about the importance and values related to the natural resources. Awareness regarding environment protection and conservation can be provided with the help of education (Alam, 2018). Not only the environmental issues but other social problems can also be solved using education. For the successful implementation of environmental sustainability among the community, education

is practically very relevant and helpful in encouraging the values and attitudes related to the nature in the mind of individuals (Martínez-Borreguero et al., 2020). The present time is not for wasting in faulting others for the environmental degradation, but this is the time for the whole society to be sensible and responsible for all the happenings. Each one of us should treat the nature as our mother and serve for it by taking care and avoiding any kind of damage so that environmental sustainability can be achieved maintaining a balance on the earth. According to Alam (2018) the decade 2005 to 2014 was announced as the decade of education by United Nation Organization, which aimed on sustainable development. Hence education is a means through which every individual can be exposed to the nature's capacities, sustainable resource management, the detrimental effects of human activities on the environment and the practical ways through which a healthy environment can be created.

**Role of Tribal Community:** Tribal community is known to exist in the lap of nature from the time of human evolution. They are directly involved with the natural biodiversity. In a study, Kuttancherry & Arunachalam (2020) stated that these communities not only protect the trees but also promote the concept of ecotourism. They are rich in indigenous knowledge, with the help of which they can forecast various weather related phenomena like lightening in the sky, direction of wind, upcoming disasters like drought, flood and ways to mitigate, formation of clouds, rain pattern, crop harvests etc. Accounting for 80% of total biodiversity on a global scale, tribal people share 22% area of total land mass (Nayak, 2016). They are the best example for sustainable use of natural resource because they worship their living environment and



utilize the resources in a well regulatory manner following the restrictions, term called taboos. If they want to cultivate in any area in the forest, they cut the plants in a way leaving behind its part for regeneration and avoid destroying flowering and edible plants. They worship various trees and plants which is also advantageous to animals and birds in the form of home and food, promoting an overall biodiversity conservation. The indigenous knowledge of tribal community is of greater importance which can be helpful in the field of medicinal research, natural resource management, and agroforestry, conservation of biodiversity, environment impact assessment and in deciding migratory plans to deal with disasters. Various tribal community practices mixed farming i.e. different types of crops are grown on the same piece of land at a time. Due to this practice, the soil quality get enhanced in terms of fertility, control over pest and organic food products containing no chemical fertilizers. As the tribal groups reside and sustain in remote areas like dense forests and hilly terrains, the younger generation is backward in sense of education (Dash, 2018). At last the government should utilize this treasure of knowledge which will be a great step ahead for environmental conservation and sustainability.

**Role of NGOs:** NGOs (non-government organizations) are those organizations that work for the society in a volunteer manner for a non-profit cause to uplift the society from all perspective. So they are an important part of the society. In India out of 1.5 million NGOs, there are a number of organizations that serve for the environmental conservation like Bombay Natural History Society, Kerala Sastra

Sahitya Parishad, Assam Science Society etc. (Pant et al., 2021). The role of NGOs is not limited to a single group but a chain of organizations are associated and working in coordination for the overall well-being of the country. According to Jasanoff (1997), after the Earth Summit that held in 1992 at Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, the environmental NGOs have upgraded themselves scientifically and technically and have shown a skilful development in terms of policy formation and its implementation. These groups work for mankind, help the needy to keep his point of view in front of the government and encourage various government policies among the people so that they can utilize the maximum profits. In a study of role of ENGOs (Environmental Non-Government Organizations) in South Eastern Europe, Turnock (2004) mentioned their efforts towards environmental education and also applauded them for their management against financial problem. As an artist, they perform acts to aware the society about the current social and environmental issues like pollution, scarcity of fuel resources like oil, coal etc. and also gives practical solutions to them. People affectively get connected to such acts and become sensible about their duty towards the nature. Highlighting the role of NGOs towards environmental sustainability, Nikkhah & Redzuan (2010) stated that they encouraged the concept of microfinance among the community so that job opportunities and income source can be welcomed and step ahead to become self-reliance. Hence NGOs must be appreciated for their dedication and the government can



collaborate with them to promote sustainability among the society.

**Role of Psychologists:** Although psychologists have been contributing their knowledge towards environment protection, but their work have neither been recognized nor has been used on a wide scale for environment protection (Clayton et al., 2013). Winter & Koger (2004) recommended that it's not solely the duty of scientists to search remedies for today's environmental issues; in fact it is believed that each individual is responsible for this deterioration of environment, proving that these issues are psychologically derived. Oskamp (1983) highlighted the contributions of psychologists in the environmental areas like management of solid wastes, conservation of energy, pollution abatement etc. through their intense studies regarding conservation of communities, consumer behaviour, societal connections etc. Psychology is highly correlated with the environment as Barragan-Jason et al. (2023) mentioned that cognitive and physical health is highly affected by the natural environment. They also found that psycho-connection with the nature impacts human values and their behaviours in a positive manner. Psychology has two attributes i.e. values and science, according to which this discipline works that means psychology's vision is to learn about the individual behaviour and also to uplift humankind (Doherty & Clayton, 2011; Geller, 2013). In an article, Saunders (2003) proposed conservation psychology as a connecting network between psychologists and the natural environment so that the goal of environmental sustainability can be accomplished. Psychologists are cheered up for their involvement to solve concerns related to the environment through numerous researches so that human behaviour can be best understood (Clayton et al., 2016). Psychologists, along with

providing the various methods to alter human behaviour, keep an eye on the track of the scientists who are working upon human nature and the accuracy of their assumptions in order to avoid any kind of misleading (Cialdini, 2003). Enlightening the relevant connection between the environment and psychology, Koger & Scott (2007) stated that the various scientists, environmental policy makers and as environmentalists can be mentally trained and educated in an effective way towards achieving sustainability.

**Role of Government:** The government, as the political authority of a country, is responsible for creating and implementing policies to improve citizens' lives. Effective governance is crucial for the nation's development, involving the proper formulation, execution, and enforcement of strategies. Understanding current environmental issues is vital for scientists and conservation managers to collaborate effectively with the government (Armitage et al., 2012). In India, the efficiency of wind turbines can be significantly enhanced through proper design and manufacturing (Satpute & Kumar, 2020). E-Government improves transparency and fosters a strong relationship between the government and citizens, streamlining public activities (Ndou, 2004). Artificial Intelligence can aid in environmental conservation and management, addressing societal, environmental, and ethical implications (Rayhan, 2023). In Bangladesh, effective government policies and conservation techniques are essential for wildlife protection and biodiversity conservation, with potential collaboration with neighboring countries to combat wildlife crimes (Ziaul Islam, 2023). Sustainable development requires rigorous discussions between the government and stakeholders to formulate strict environmental management laws (Al-Masri et al., 2023). In China, there is a need for innovative



amendments to the fiscal system, focusing on sustainability and energy efficiency. The Chinese government is encouraged to invest more in Science and Technology to achieve these goals (Feng et al., 2023). Overall, the interdependence between the government and citizens is critical for achieving sustainable development and environmental management

**Recent Governmental initiatives regarding Environment:** (Jagran Josh, 2021)

- Namami Gange Programme (2014): With a budget of 20,000 crores, this integrated conservation mission was launched by Prime Minister with the aim to conserve and rejuvenate our national river Ganga. This program is implemented by National Mission for Clean Ganga (at national level) and State Program Management Groups (at state level) and about 147 projects have been completed under this program.
- Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) (2017): This project was launched with an objective to preserve and restore the environment and achieve sustainable development by training over 5.5 lakh workers in the field of environment and forestry.
- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (2014): It was launched on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> October, to maintain hygiene and sanitation and improve solid management. This program was invigilated by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation along with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Nagar Van Scheme (2020): This scheme was launched on the occasion of World Environment Day with the aim to building 200 urban forests across India in the next five years, funded by CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority).

- Atal Bhujal Yojana (2019): This 6000 crore program was launched on the 95<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee with a 5 year objective towards ground water management over 7 states that are Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- National Clean Air Program (2019): This program was launched to decrease the concentration of fine and coarser dust particles leading in air pollution to about 20-30% in coming 5 years. It promotes the use of CNG vehicles and formation of ICCCs (Integrated Command and Control Centers) in smart cities.

Other programmes are National River Conservation Plan, Ecomark Scheme of India (ECOMARK), National Action Programme to Combat Desertification, National Afforestation Programme: A Participatory Approach to Sustainable Development of Forests (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC, 2022).

**Conclusion**

The paper concludes that the environment and human psychology are significantly interrelated, emphasizing the crucial role of societal factors including teachers, women, students, and cultural aspect in spreading environmental awareness and conservation knowledge. Every community member contributes uniquely to environmental stewardship, blending technological solutions with moral responsibilities. Both educated individuals and local, rural knowledge play vital roles in resource management. The paper calls for integrating diverse knowledge with emotional connections to ensure sustainable development and equitable resource sharing across generations. The review highlights the urgent



need to conserve non-renewable resources like water, oil, and coal to maintain this balance. It stresses that each person must acknowledge their responsibility to avoid over-exploitation of natural resources and protect the environment for future generations.

## References

- Abd Rahman N and Jalil M H (2021). Awareness of the Role of “Religious People” in Environmental Conservation from the Perspective of Islamic Studies Students. *Creative Education*, 12(8), 1755-1772.
- Ahmad Bhat S (2020). Role of Teachers in Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development. *Proceeding of International Online Conference (IOC-2020), Innovation and Sustainability through E-STEM*, 14-15 October, 2020, 129-134.
- Alam A (2018). Protection and conservation of environment: an important role of education. *i-manager's Journal of Educational Technology*, 15(3),1-6.
- Al-Masri A A Shafi K M Seyyed H and Meo S A (2023). Public perceptions: The role of Individuals, societies, and states in managing the environmental challenges—cross-sectional study. *Journal of King Saud University-Science*, 35(3), 102581.
- Armitage D Loë R D and Plummer R (2012). Environmental governance and its implications for conservation practice. *Conservation Letters*, 5(4), 245-255.
- Barragan-Jason G Loreau M de Mazancourt C Singer M C and Parmesan C (2023). Psychological and physical connections with nature improve both human well-being and nature conservation: A systematic review of meta-analyses. *Biological Conservation*, 277, 109842.
- Cialdini R B (2003). Crafting Normative Messages to Protect the Environment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(4), 105–109.
- Clayton S Devine-Wright P Swim J Bonnes M Steg L Whitmarsh L and Carrico A (2016). Expanding the role for psychology in addressing environmental challenges. *American Psychologist*, 71(3), 199-215.
- Clayton S Litchfield C and Geller E (2013). Psychological science, conservation, and environmental sustainability. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 11(7), 377-382.
- Dash D (2018). A Review on Organic Farming as a Potential Sector of Agripreneurship Development among the Tribal Youth of India. *International journal of Agriculture, Environment and Biotechnology*, 11(5), 761-767.
- Feng T Liu M and Li C (2023). How do vertical fiscal imbalances affect energy efficiency? The role of government spending on science and technology. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 30(14), 42327-42338.
- Ghasemi M Badsar M and Falahati L (2023). Investigating the Role of Psychological Variables on the Rural Women's Empowerment in Environmental Conservation. *Environmental Researches*, 13(26), 335-354.
- Heinen J and Low R (1992). Human Behavioural Ecology and Environmental Conservation. *Environmental Conservation*, 19(2), 105-116. doi: 10.1017/S0376892900030575
- Jagran Josh (2021). <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general->





- knowledge/world-environment-day-important-government-schemes-for-a-greener-and-cleaner-india-1622825398-1
- Jasanoff S (1997). NGOs and the environment: From knowledge to action. *Third World Quarterly*, 18(3), 579-594
- Karatas A (2013). The Role of Faculties of Education in Increasing Sustainable Environmental Awareness of Society. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 2(4), 233.
- Koger S M and Scott B A (2007). Psychology and Environmental Sustainability: A Call for Integration. *Teaching of Psychology*, 34(1), 10–18.
- Kuttencherry A J and Arunachalam P (2020). Role of tribal vana samrakshana samithi (vss) members in building forest protection and eco-tourism at vazhachal eco-tourism area in thrissur district of kerala. *EPR International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)*, 6(10), 269-277
- Mago P and Gunwal I (2019). Role of women in environment conservation. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Available at SSRN:<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3368066>
- Martínez-Borreguero G et al., (2020). Analysis of Environmental Awareness, Emotions and Level of Self-Efficacy of Teachers in Training within the Framework of Waste for the Achievement of Sustainable Development. *Sustainability*, 12(6), 2563.
- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC, 2022). <http://moef.gov.in/>
- Nayak J K (2016). An anthropological observation on the role of tribal communities in the conservation of biodiversity. *European Journal of Environmental Ecology*, 3(1), 21-29. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309732041>
- Ndou V (2004). E-government for developing countries: Opportunities and challenges. *Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 18, 1-24.
- Nikkhah H A and Redzuan M B (2010). The Role of NGOs in Promoting Empowerment for Sustainable Community Development. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 30(2), 85-92
- Oskamp S (1983). Psychology's role in the conserving society. *Population and Environment*, 6, 255-293.
- Panth M K Verma P and Gupta M (2015). The role of attitude in environmental awareness of under graduate students. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 2 (7), 55-62.
- Raimi M O Suleiman R M Odipe O E Tolulope S J Modupe O Olalekan A S and Christianah M B (2019). Women role in environmental conservation and development in Nigeria. *Ecol Conserv Sci*, 1(2).
- Rayhan A (2023). Ai and the environment: toward sustainable development and conservation. 10.13140/RG.2.2.12024.42245
- Satpute A V and Kumar E V (2021). Current scenario of wind power in India, government policies, initiatives, status and challenges. *International Journal of Energy Sector Management*, 15(1), 209-226.
- Saunders C D (2003). The emerging field of conservation psychology. *Human*



- ecology review, 137-149.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24706965>
- Seligman M E Parks A C and Steen T (2004). A balanced psychology and a full life. *Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences*, 359(1449), 1379–1381.
- Tagulao K A Bernardo A B Kei L H and Calheiros C S C (2022). Mangrove conservation in Macao SAR, China: The role of environmental education among school students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(6), 3147.
- Turnock D (2004). The Role of NGOs in Environmental Education in South-eastern Europe. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 13(1), 103-109
- Vazquez C I and Liu M (2018). The role of psychology in the preservation of the planet. *Psychology International*, 29(5)
- Wickramasinghe A (1997). Women and minority groups in environmental management. *Sustainable Development* 5(1), 11-20.
- Winter D D N and Koger S M (2004). *The psychology of environmental problems*. Psychology Press.
- Yerian S Hennink M Greene L E et al (2014). The Role of Women in Water Management and Conflict Resolution in Marsabit, Kenya. *Environmental Management*, 54, 1320–1330.
- Ziaul Islam M (2023). Appraisal of domestic and international legal institutions for promoting wildlife conservation in Bangladesh. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 32(2), 469-487.