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Sustainable Future: A Study on Students' Perceptions towards Sustainable Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Objective
The main objective of this paper is to determine and compare students' perception towards the level of sustainability in their Higher Education Institution.

Methodology
Data was collected from 64 students from Public Higher Education Institutions and 89 students from Private Higher Education Institutions, from the region Delhi NCR. In order to analyse the students' perception towards sustainability in the Higher Education Institution, three dimensions were analysed: perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, Institution's role in sustainability and Student's role in sustainability. Independent t-test was conducted to check on all these three dimensions. The reliability was measured using cronbach alpha, which was found out to be 0.79, indicating instrument was reliable to measure the constructs.

Results
There was no significant difference in scores of all two dimensions, namely perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, Institution's role in sustainability. Further analysis showed that there was significant difference in scores of student's role in sustainability in public and private higher education institution.

Research limitations/implications
The study was restricted to students from management colleges in Delhi NCR and should be extended to other regions for greater generalizability.
Practical implications and Future Research
Future research can conducted on students from various specific streams like vocational courses. Moreover, role of other variables like individual factors, Demographic factors (age, gender, qualification, caste) and situational factors (family background, failures faced in past) can me studied in future.

Conclusion
The study revealed that there is statistically significant difference between students' perception towards the level of sustainability in Public and Private Higher Education Institution.

1. Introduction

Higher Education Institutions have very crucial role in ascertaining sustainability in the country as these institutions can engage both internal and external stakeholders in formulating and implementing sundry sustainability cordial policies. Higher Inculcation Institutions are one such place where students authentically develop their orientation towards various aspects including sustainability. It would not be erroneous to understand that by formulating felicitous curricula and course plans, the institutions can shape student personality with certain provisions, in this case, sustainability, and be an example to other institutions Thus, the paramountcy of universities as such and their future transformations for the engenderment of sustainable society are acknowledged and envisioned (Beynaghi et al., 2016).

One of the most immensely colossal stakeholders of Higher Inculcation Institutions is its students. In fact these students additionally have the vigorous urge to contribute to the campus beyond their academics (Emanuel and Adams, 2011). On the contrary, very constrained research has analysed the role of student in ascertaining sustainability in the Higher Education Institutions.

Thus, this paper aims to understand students' perception towards sustainability in their Higher Education Institution; and to compare such perception of students from Public and Private Higher Education Institutions.

2. Role of Higher Education Institutions in Sustainable Development

Higher Education Institution's role towards sustainability is not only restricted to university's policies but it also includes its education, research and various other stakeholders (Koscielniak, 2014). The collaboration of higher education institutions for integration of sustainable development provisions is also a crucial factor in fostering sustainability (Anand et al., 2015). The role of networks could be of importance engaging universities in debates on topics relevant to society and obliging them to fulfil their commitments concerning sustainability (Dlouhá et al., 2017).

3. Students' Perceptions towards Sustainable Institutions

Studies on students' perceptions about sustainability conventionally fixate on their general perceptions regarding climate change and personal responsibility (Eagle et al., 2015). Though students could provide innovative conceptions or suggest and contribute to the ameliorations in terms of current performance of universities, studies on students' perception towards a university's contribution to sustainability are under-researched. Analysing students' priorities for sustainable development in higher edification, Yuan and Zuo (2013) highlighted that environmental aspects were ascendant. As their study showed, students' possibilities to act in sustainable ways and sustainability-cognate research were additionally perceived as principal factors while giving the least consequentiality to sustainable curricula. In turn, student participation in convivial transformation towards carbon neutrality was optically discerned as very salutary (Rosenberg Daneri et al., 2015; Trechner et al., 2015).

However, studies regarding students' perceptions of university sustainability and environmental information provision at the university are less addressed, as only scarce and fragmented data was available, especially regarding green (i.e., committed) and non-green (i.e., uncommitted) universities.

4. Review of Literature

Underneath table abridges a portion of the research related to evaluation of students' perception towards sustainability in Higher Education Institutions:

Year	Author	Findings
2014	Koscielniak	The inclination of university towards sustainability must be reflected in university's research, policy and administration.
2013	Yuan et al.	Sustainability must become integral part of an institution's teaching activities, infrastructure and operations
2018	Adams et al.	Culture of a Higher Education Institution must be in sync with sustainability
2015	Bajracharya	All the stakeholders of the higher education institution must have unrestrictedcommitmenttowards sustainability
2016	Turan et al	Stakeholders may have unpredictableviews regarding sustainable development in universities.
2013	Peer and Stoeglehner	highlighted universities as "change agents" for the joint society-university generation of knowledge, using universities as platforms for collaboration and networking
2015	Anand et al.	The collaboration of higher education institutions for integration of sustainable development provisions is also a crucial factor in fostering sustainability
2017	Dlouhá et al.	The role of networks could be of importance engaging universities in debates on topics relevant to society and obliging them to fulfil their commitments concerning sustainability
2013	Lee et al. Geng et al.	universities' commitment to sustainability overallcampus sustainability, and greening
2013	Lozano and Young	sustainability in curriculum
2012	Disterheft et al.	the role of participation in sustainability
2016	Pandey et al.	academic staff engagement in Education for Sustainable Development
2013	Posner and Stuart	universities should develop a systemic approach to sustainability
2014	Tan et al.	Universities that applysustainability principles not only in operational activities, but also cover research, education, andoutreach, are considered sustainable or greener
2013	Greener	declared commitments should be expressed in the curriculum content
2015	Li et al.	particular curricula contribute to the environmental knowledge and promotion of students' environmental awareness, which are the main drivers of environmentally friendly behaviour (e.g., it has been suggested that raising awareness could contribute to the reduction of students' carbon footprint
2017	Zhang et al.	following groups engage in waste sorting activities in Beijing universities more often: female students, those who are willing to act, those having friends who separate waste, and those having better perceptions of the university's waste management processes.
2015	Eagle et al.	Studies on students' perceptions about sustainability usually focus on their general perceptions regarding climate change and personal responsibility
2011	Abd-Razak et al.	campus development planning based on students' perceptions. They found that students indicated "weak" areas (e.g., accessibility, improper lighting, and safety) on university campuses; this could help to improve campus sustainability.
2013	Yuan and Zuo	students' possibilities to act in sustainable ways and sustainability-related research were also perceived as principal factors while giving the least significance to sustainable curricula.
2015	Trechner et al.	student participation in social transformation towards carbon neutrality was seen as very beneficial
2016	Disterheft et al	Exhibited the importance of participatory and collaborative approaches, facilitation, and communication. Thus, incorporation of the whole university community, students included, in the sustainability activities enables ownership, responsibility, and real impact.

Year	Author	Findings
2005	Velazquez et al.	indicated a lack of participation and involvement as a deterring factor for sustainability in higher education institutions
2017	Avila et al.	the inclusion of the whole community in sustainability-related decision-making or activities is limited because of a rather stagnant institutional structure and poor engagement for sustainability of administrative staff
2011	Brinkhurst et al	Strongmessage and valuation of sustainable initiatives could reinforce commitment to change.

However, studies regarding students' perception towards sustainability in Higher Education Institution are less addressed, as only scarce and fragmented data was available. Consequently, the existing gap might be filled by research reported in this paper.

5. Objective

The main objective of this paper is to determine and compare students' perception towards the level of sustainability in their Higher Education Institution.

6. Methodology

The current study is based on descriptive research design. Data was collected from 64 students from Public Higher Education Institutions and 89 students from Private Higher

Education Institutions, from the region Delhi NCR.In order to analyse the students' perception towards sustainability in the Higher Education Institution, three dimensions were analysed: perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, Institution's role in sustainability and Student's role in sustainability. Independent t-test was conducted to check on all these three dimensions. The reliability was measured using cronbach alpha, which was found out to be 0.79, indicating instrument was reliable to measure the constructs.

7. Results

The analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in scores of students' perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, Institution's role in sustainability. However, there was significant difference in scores of Student's role in sustainability in Private Higher Education Institutions (M=3.48, SD = 0.54) as compared to students' perception in Public Higher Education Institutions (M=4.88, SD = 0.59)

Table 2 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of all three dimensions of students' perception towards sustainability in the Higher Education Institution, namely perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, Institution's role in sustainability and Student's role in sustainability. Students from Private Higher Education Institution have low Perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, whereas Students from Public Higher Education Institution have high Perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution. Students from Public Higher Education Institution strongly perceive that Institution and Students have important role in sustainability of higher education institutions.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Dimensions	Students from Private Higher Education Institution			Students from Public Higher Education Institution		
	Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level
Perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution	1.74	.51	Low	3.81	.44	High
Institution's role in sustainability	3.54	.56	High	4.84	.57	Very High
Student's role in sustainability	3.48	.54	High	4.88	.59	Very High

Table 3 shows the overall mean scores of all three dimensions of students' perception towards sustainability in the Higher Education Institution, namely perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, Institution's role in sustainability and Student's role in sustainability. Independent t-test was conducted to check on various dimension of students' perception towards sustainability in the Higher

Education Institution. There was no significant difference in scores of all two dimensions, namely perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution, Institution's role in sustainability. Further analysis showed that there was significant difference in scores of student's role in sustainability in public and private higher education institution.

Table 3: Overall Mean Scores. Independent Sample t-test

Dimensions	Category	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Sig
Perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution Institution's role in sustainability	Students from Private Higher Education Institution	1.74	.51	2.07	0.31
	Students from Public Higher Education Institution	3.81	.44		
Student's role in sustainability Perception towards current sustainability level in the Institution	Students from Private Higher Education Institution	3.54	.56	1.30	0.24
	Students from Public Higher Education Institution	4.84	.57		
Institution's role in sustainability	Students from Private Higher Education	3.48	.54	1.40	0.0

Dimensions	Category	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Sig
	Institution				0*
	Students from Public Higher Education Institution	4.88	.59		

8. Research limitations/implications

The study was restricted to students from Public and Private Higher Education Institutions in Delhi NCR and should be extended to other regions for greater generalizability.

9. Practical implications and Future Research

The findings extended beyond the existing literature of Higher Education Institution' Sustainability and students' perception towards sustainability in Higher Education Institution.

The findings of this study would help the management of Higher Education Institution and policy makers to formulate specific policies to promote sustainability in the Institution. This study would also provide base to improve the students' perception and commitment towards sustainability in the Higher Education Institution. This research also outlines few areas for future research. Future research can conducted on students from various specific streams like vocational courses. Moreover, role of other variables like individual factors, Demographic factors (age, gender, qualification, caste) and situational factors (family background, failures faced in past) can me studied in future.

10. Conclusion

From the last decade, there has been tremendous growth of green institutions. Moreover, it is expected that the role of green universities in the sustainability should be higher than the non-green ones. To test this assumption, a study was conducted on students from Public and Private Higher Education Institution.The study revealed that there is statistically significant difference between students' perception towards the level of sustainability in Public and Private Higher Education Institution.

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