

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors Driving Sustainability Practices among Undergraduates: Evidence from Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Integrating sustainability into higher education is critical for preparing future leaders to address environmental and social challenges. However, evidence on undergraduates' engagement in sustainability practices remains limited in developing countries, particularly Sri Lanka. This study investigates how undergraduates' knowledge, attitude, and behaviour influence sustainability practices at a state university in Sri Lanka, applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Learning Theory. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 373 undergraduates through a structured questionnaire using stratified random sampling. Responses on a five-point Likert scale were analyzed using SPSS. Findings reveal a significant influence of individual-level determinants on sustainability engagement, with behaviour emerging as the strongest predictor. This study provides new empirical evidence from a developing country context, addressing a critical gap in the literature on sustainability in higher education. It underscores the importance of enhancing students' knowledge, fostering positive attitudes, and encouraging pro-environmental behaviours to establish a sustainable culture in universities. Practically, the findings inform policymakers, academics, and university administrators in developing policies that enhance knowledge, cultivate positive attitudes, and promote pro-environmental behaviour among students. These findings align with Sri Lanka's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promote the establishment of a culture of sustainability in universities.

Keywords: higher education, state universities, sustainability practices, Sri Lanka, undergraduates