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A STUDY OF PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR OF TEACHERS AND ITS ROLE IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract:

Growing environmental challenges and the fast depletion of natural resources have made sustainable practices a pressing global concern. Education plays an important role in raising environmental awareness and encouraging responsible behaviour among students. Teachers are key players in this effort. Besides teaching through the formal curriculum, teachers influence students through their everyday actions and behaviour, which are part of the hidden curriculum. Therefore, developing environmentally responsible students is closely tied to teachers' pro-environmental behaviour. This study looks at the pro-environmental behaviour of teachers and its role in teaching for sustainability. A descriptive research design was used, along with surveys to gather data from 64 teachers at the primary, secondary, higher secondary, and undergraduate levels. A structured questionnaire was used to assess teachers' awareness and practices related to environmental sustainability. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean score analysis. The findings show that teachers generally have a positive attitude towards pro-environmental behaviour, indicating a high level of environmental awareness and a willingness to adopt sustainable practices. Teachers from various educational levels and with different years of experience displayed similar pro-environmental values, suggesting that this behaviour is not limited to a specific career stage. The positive pro-environmental behaviour of teachers underscores their ability to influence students' attitudes and practices regarding environmental responsibility. The study concludes that improving teachers' pro-environmental behaviour is crucial for effective education for sustainability. By modelling sustainable practices, teachers can significantly contribute to developing environmentally responsible students and fostering a culture of sustainability in schools.

Keywords: *Pro-Environmental Behaviour, Sustainability, Hidden curriculum*

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Introduction:

Human beings are the vital component of the environment, and their existence and well-being are closely linked to both natural and human-made surroundings. The environment comprises living (biotic) and non-living (abiotic) components such as air, water, soil, plants, animals, and the physical and social settings created by human activities. Any damage caused to these components directly affects the quality of life of present and future generations. In recent decades, increased industrialisation, urbanisation, and population growth have led to the enormous exploitation of natural resources. While trying to progress and improved quality of living, humans have overused natural resources beyond safe limits. Unsustainable consumption patterns, pollution, deforestation, and Climate change have become major global concerns. If such exploitation continues, future generations may face serious environmental implications, making the adoption of sustainable practices an urgent necessity. Sustainability means meeting present needs without harming future generations' ability to do the same, so it should be seen not only as an environmental issue but also as a social and educational duty.

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Education plays a very important role in addressing environmental challenges by developing awareness, values, attitudes, and behaviours that support sustainability. Education for Sustainability helps learners gain the knowledge and skills needed to make wise decisions and behave responsibly towards the environment. However, environmental education can be genuinely effective only when it goes beyond theoretical knowledge and is demonstrated in daily actions and real-life experiences.

Teachers hold a central role in education and act as key agents in promoting sustainable values. They influence students not only through the formal curriculum but also through their personal conduct, classroom practices, and daily interactions. This informal influence, often called the hidden curriculum, significantly shapes students' attitudes and behaviours. When teachers themselves demonstrate environmentally responsible actions—such as conserving resources, avoiding waste, and respecting nature—they provide meaningful and authentic learning experiences that motivate students to adopt similar practices.

Pro-environmental behaviour means doing small daily actions that help protect nature and use resources wisely. Students learn these habits best when they see their teachers practising them regularly, both in school and in daily life. Therefore, to develop environmentally responsible students, teachers themselves must follow and show such eco-friendly behaviour.

In this context, the present study tries to understand the eco-friendly behaviour of teachers from the primary to the undergraduate level and how it supports education for sustainability. By looking at the everyday environmental practices of teachers, the study highlights the important role teachers play as role models in developing sustainable attitudes and behaviours among students.

Need for the Study:

Environmental problems such as pollution, loss of natural resources, and damage to nature are increasing day by day. While sustainability is discussed in policies and textbooks, real change depends on how people behave in their daily lives. To develop environmentally responsible citizens, it is not enough to give only information; people must also practise eco-friendly habits regularly. Education plays an important role in developing such habits, and teachers are at the centre of this process. Students learn not only from lessons but also by observing the daily actions of their teachers. When teachers practise simple habits like saving resources, following eco-friendly traditions, and living responsibly, they influence students in a positive way. Therefore, this study focuses on understanding teachers' pro-environmental behaviour and its importance in supporting education for sustainability and developing environmentally responsible future citizens.

Aim of the Study

To study the pro-environmental behaviour of teachers and its role in education for sustainability.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the level of pro-environmental behaviour among teachers.
2. To examine teachers' pro-environmental practices in their daily lives.
3. To study teachers' pro-environmental behaviour in cultural and social practices.
4. To examine teachers' perception of their role in promoting sustainable practices among students.
5. To analyse the contribution of teachers' pro-environmental behaviour to education for sustainability.

Operational Definitions:

Pro-Environmental Behaviour: In the present study, *pro-environmental behaviour* refers to the actions, habits, and practices adopted by teachers in their daily

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life, cultural activities, and professional roles that aim to protect the environment, conserve natural resources, and promote sustainable living. It is operationally measured through teachers' responses to a structured questionnaire consisting of statements related to environmentally responsible practices, scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Teachers: In the present study, *teachers* refer to individuals engaged in teaching at the primary, secondary, junior college, and undergraduate levels who participated in the survey and provided responses to the questionnaire.

Education for Sustainability: In the present study, *education for sustainability* refers to the process of developing environmental awareness, values, and responsible behaviour among learners through teachers' practices, role modelling, and encouragement of eco-friendly habits. It is operationally understood through teachers' self-reported beliefs and practices related to promoting sustainable behaviour among students.

Methodology of the study

The present study adopted a descriptive research methodology, and the survey method was used to collect data from teachers.

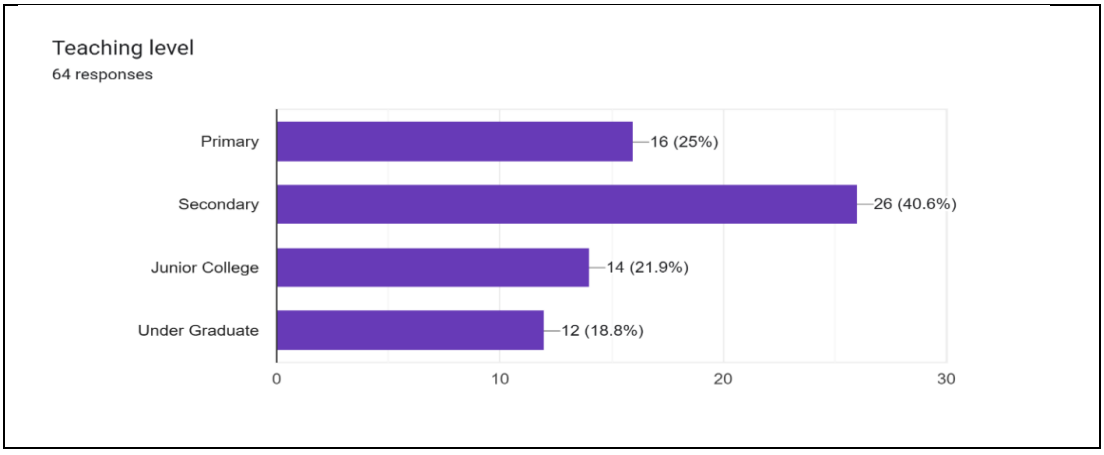
Population and sample of the study:

The population of the present study consisted of teachers working at different levels of education, including primary, secondary, junior college, and undergraduate institutions. A sample of teachers was selected from this population using the convenience sampling technique. Teachers who were accessible and willing to participate in the study were included in the sample. The survey was administered online, and responses were collected from teachers belonging to various educational institutions.

Tool of the study:

The tool used for data collection for the present study was a self-constructed questionnaire designed to assess the pro-environmental behaviour of teachers. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements covering various aspects of pro-environmental behaviour, including daily life practices, cultural and social practices, and teachers' role in promoting sustainability. The responses were obtained using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. The questionnaire was administered through an online platform to facilitate easy access and encourage honest responses.

Data Analysis:



The chart indicates that teachers from primary to undergraduate levels took part in the survey. This shows that views from different stages of the education system were included, giving a wider picture of teachers' pro-environmental behaviour.

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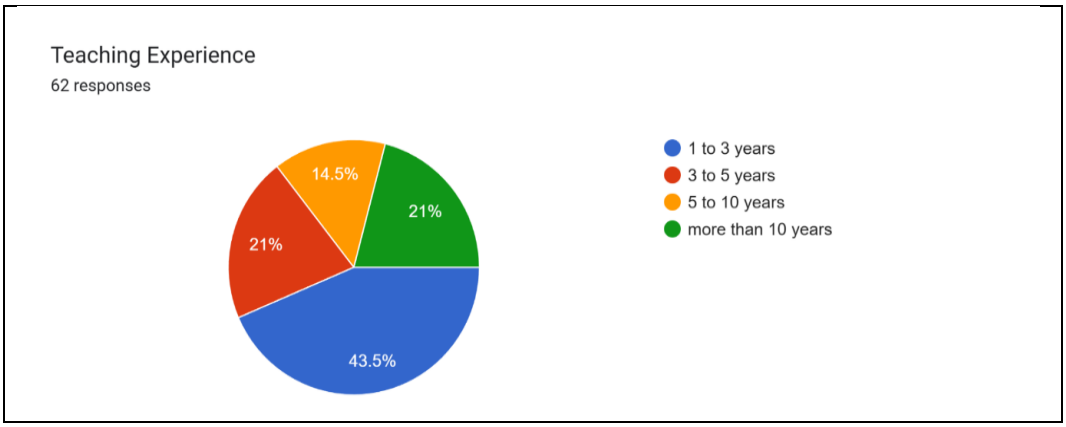
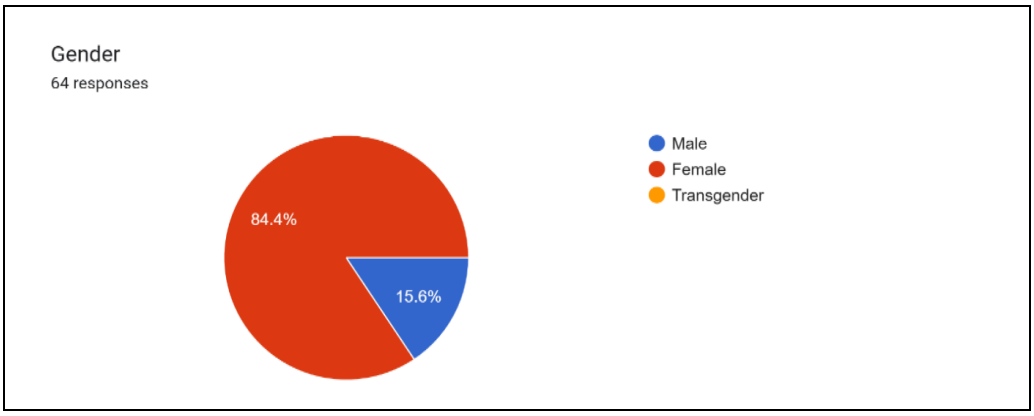
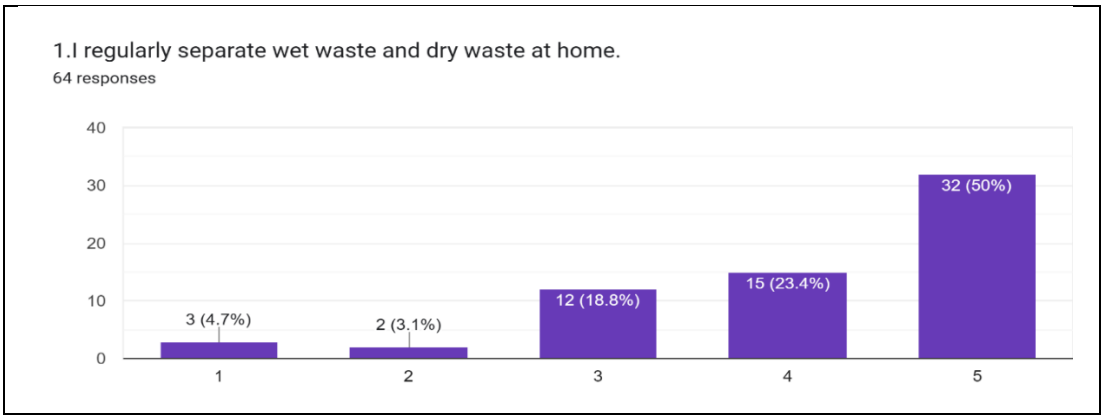


The sample included teachers with different levels of teaching experience, ranging from early-career to highly experienced teachers. This mix helps provide a broader understanding of pro-environmental practices across different stages of the teaching profession.



The pie chart shows the gender-wise distribution of the respondents. Out of the total 64 responses, 54 respondents (84.4%) were female, while 10 respondents (15.6%) were male. This indicates a higher participation of female teachers in the study, which reflects the gender composition commonly observed in the teaching profession.



A large majority of teachers (73.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that they regularly separate wet and dry waste at home. This indicates good awareness and practice of basic waste management among teachers. However, a small proportion of teachers showed neutral or negative responses, suggesting scope for further sensitisation regarding household waste segregation.

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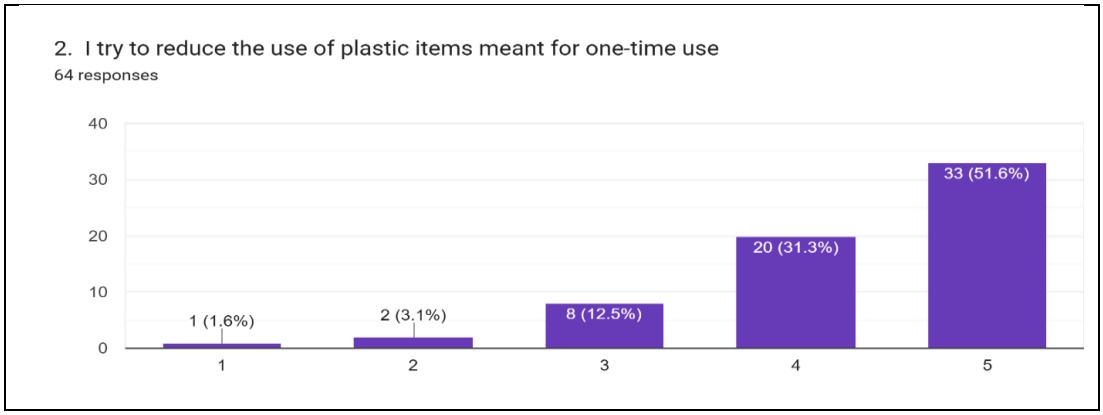
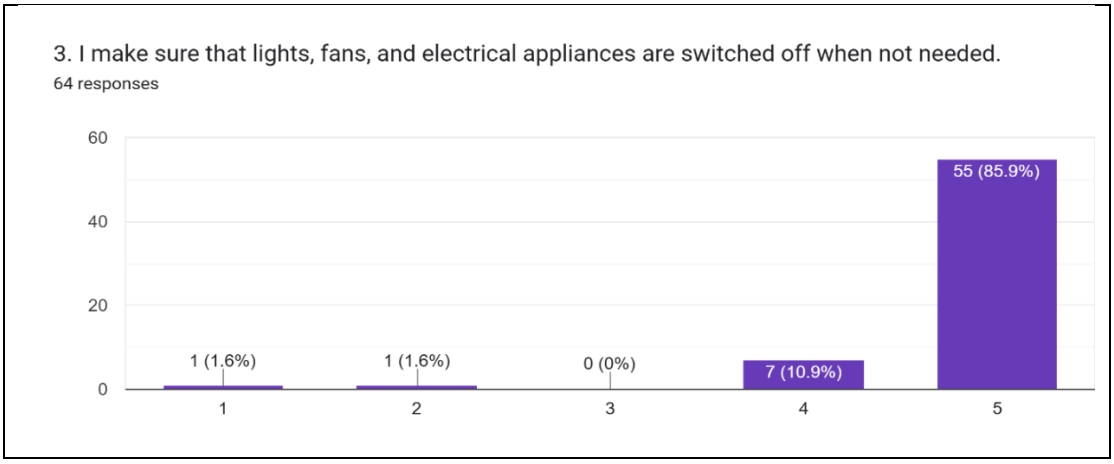
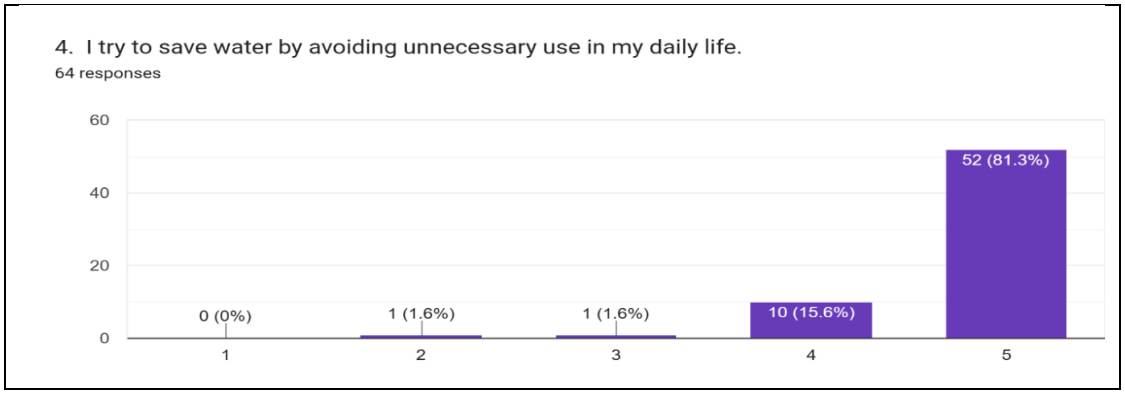


An overwhelming majority of teachers (82.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that they try to reduce the use of single-use plastic items. This reflects strong pro-environmental behaviour related to responsible consumption. Very few teachers disagreed, indicating wide acceptance of plastic reduction practices.



The bar graph shows that most teachers regularly switch off lights, fans, and electrical appliances when they are not in use. A very high number of teachers strongly agreed with this statement, indicating good awareness about saving electricity. Only a very small number of teachers showed disagreement. This suggests that energy conservation is a common and well-practised habit among teachers.



The graph indicates that a large majority of teachers try to save water in their daily lives. Most respondents strongly agreed that they avoid unnecessary use of water, showing responsible behaviour towards water conservation. Very few teachers gave neutral or disagreeing responses. This reflects a strong sense of responsibility among teachers regarding the careful use of water.

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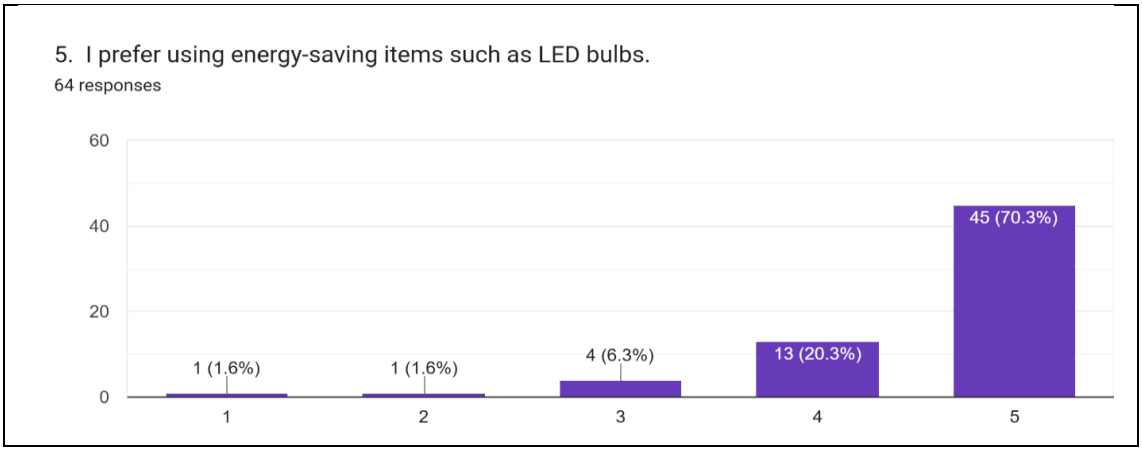
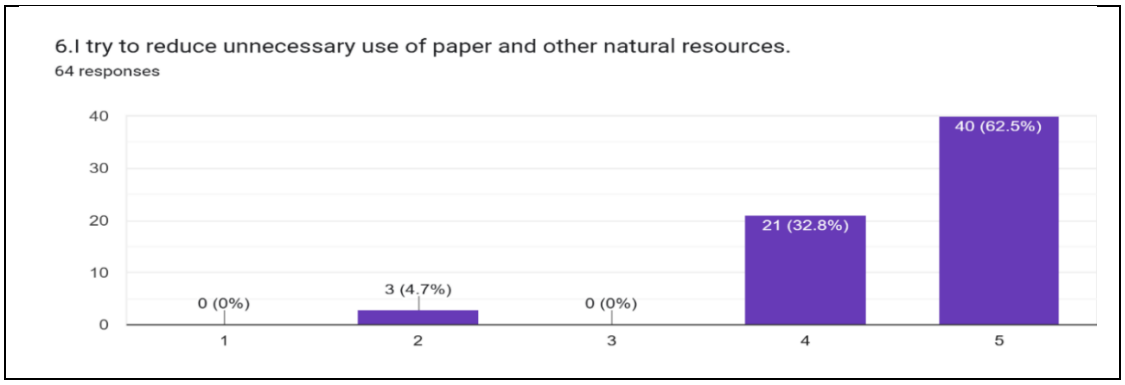
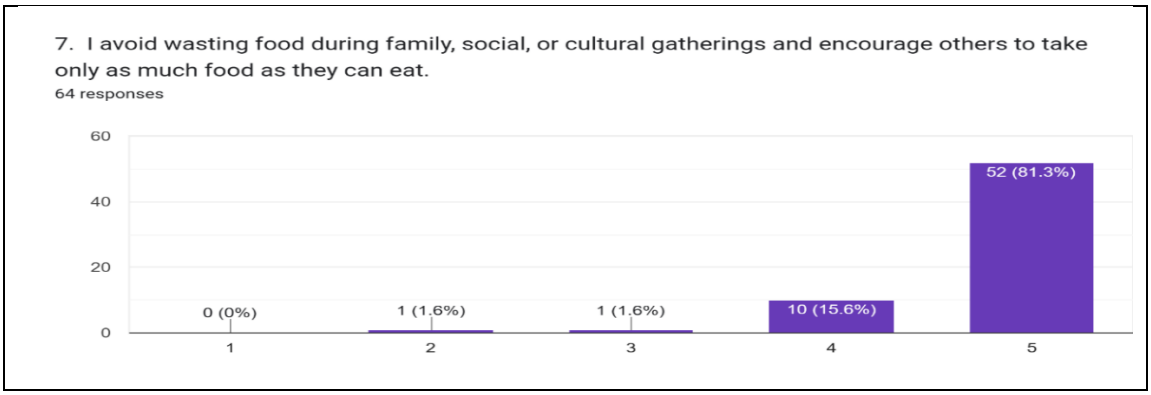


The bar graph shows that most teachers prefer using energy-saving items like LED bulbs. A large number of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, indicating awareness about saving electricity and reducing energy consumption. Only a very small number of teachers disagreed or were unsure. This shows that teachers are willing to adopt simple energy-saving practices in their daily lives.



The graph indicates that a majority of teachers try to reduce the unnecessary use of paper and other natural resources. Most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, reflecting responsible use of resources. Very few teachers showed disagreement. This suggests that teachers are conscious about avoiding wastage and support resource conservation.



The bar graph shows that a large majority of teachers avoid wasting food during family, social, or cultural gatherings. Most teachers strongly agreed that they encourage others to take only as much food as they can eat. Very few teachers showed neutral or negative responses. This indicates that teachers are conscious about food wastage and practise responsible behaviour during social occasions.

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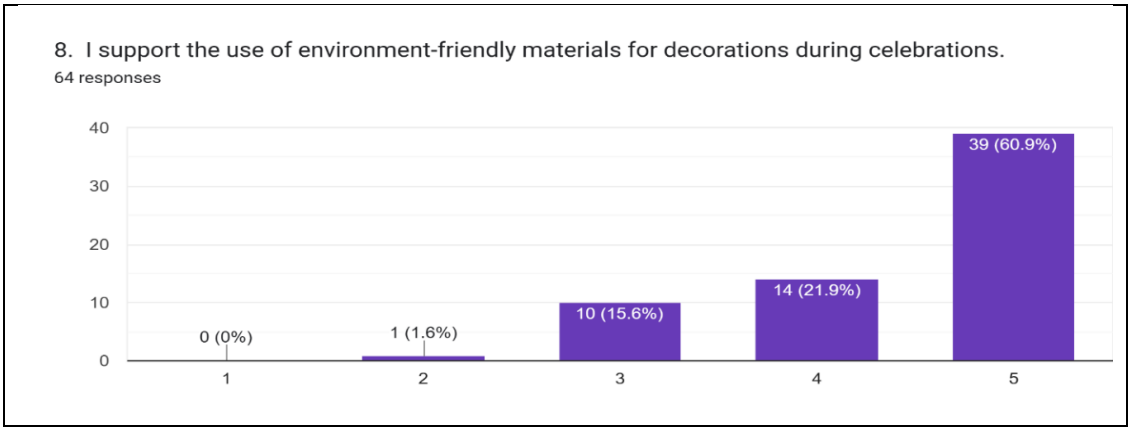
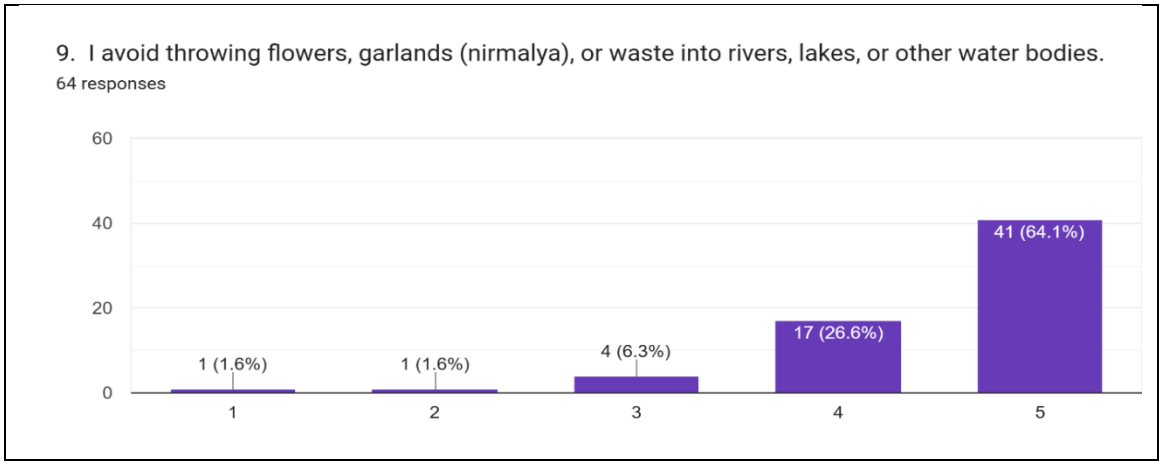
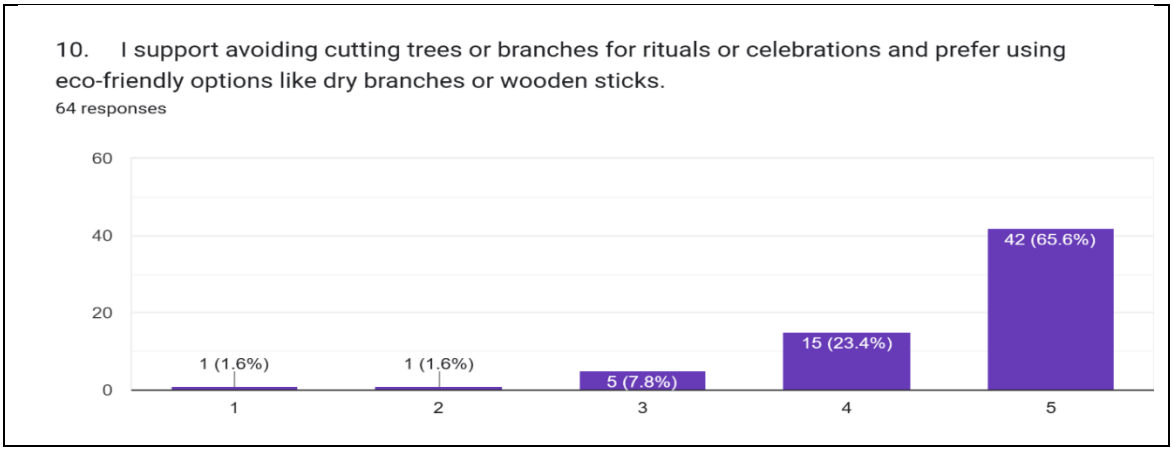


The graph indicates that most teachers support the use of eco-friendly materials for decorations during celebrations. A high number of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, showing awareness about reducing environmental harm during festivals and functions. Only a small number of teachers showed uncertainty or disagreement. This reflects a positive attitude towards environmentally responsible celebration practices.



The graph shows that most teachers avoid throwing flowers, garlands, or waste into rivers and lakes. A majority agreed or strongly agreed with this practice, indicating awareness about protecting water bodies from pollution.



The bar graph indicates that most teachers support avoiding the cutting of trees or branches for rituals and celebrations. Many teachers prefer eco-friendly alternatives, showing respect for nature and sustainable cultural practices.

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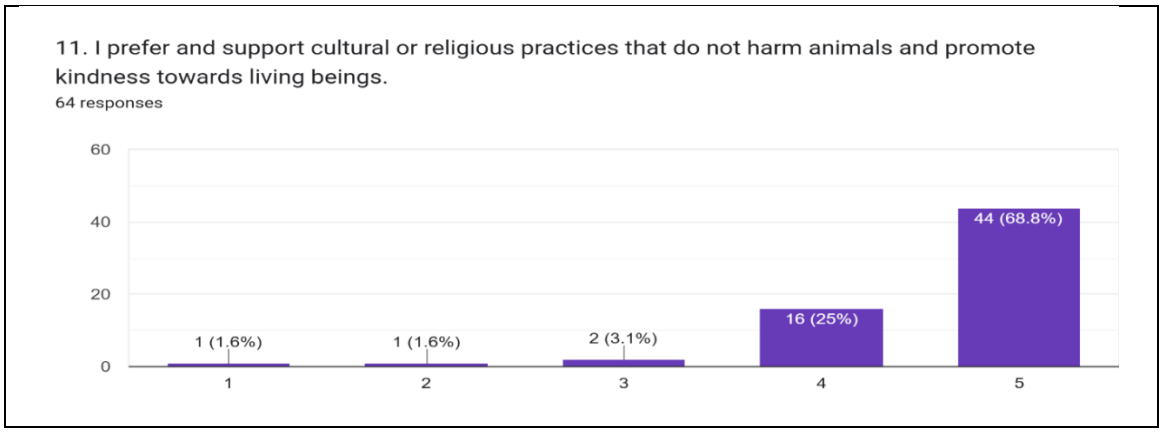
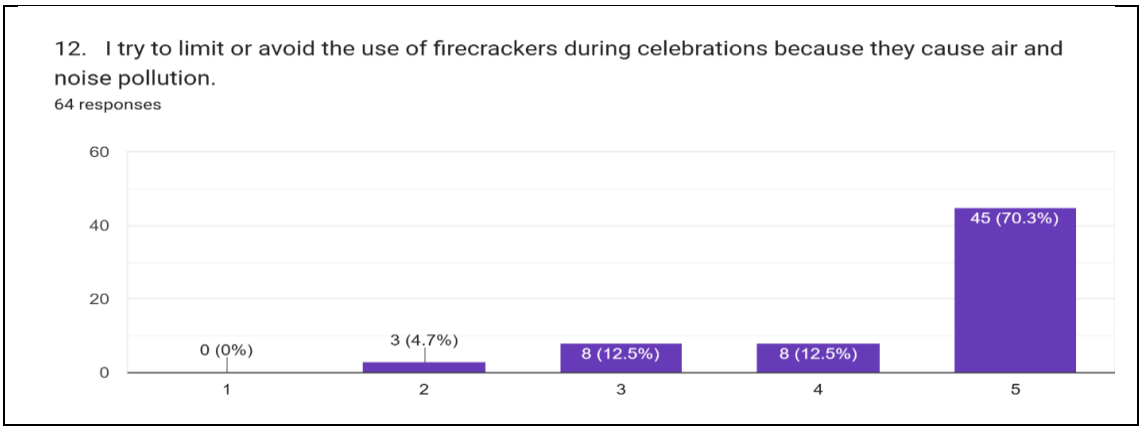
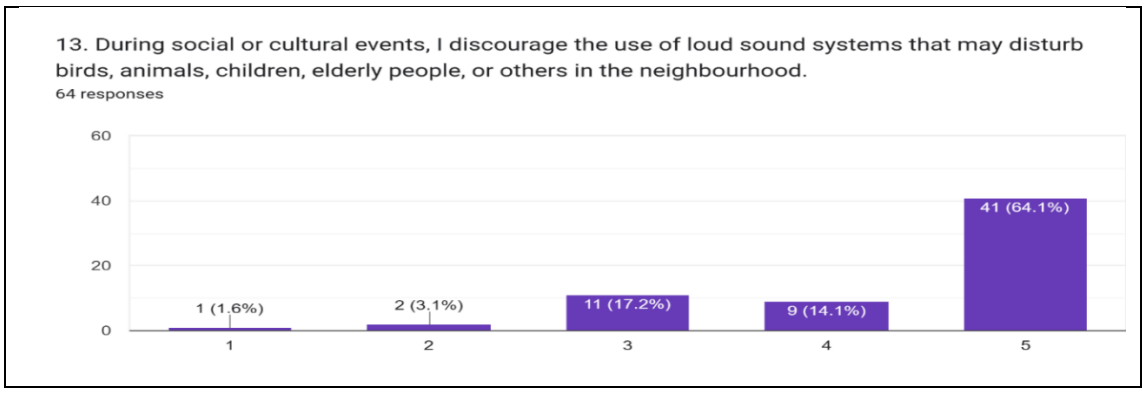


The graph shows that most teachers prefer cultural and religious practices that do not harm animals. A large number agreed or strongly agreed, indicating sensitivity towards living beings and ethical environmental values.



The graph shows a mixed response among teachers regarding the use of firecrackers. While a majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they try to limit or avoid firecrackers due to air and noise pollution, a noticeable number of teachers gave neutral or disagreeing responses. This suggests that although awareness is high, traditional practices still influence behaviour in some cases.



The graph shows that most teachers discourage the use of loud sound systems during events. However, some teachers gave neutral responses, indicating a mixed level of practice. Overall, awareness about noise disturbance to people and animals is evident among teachers.

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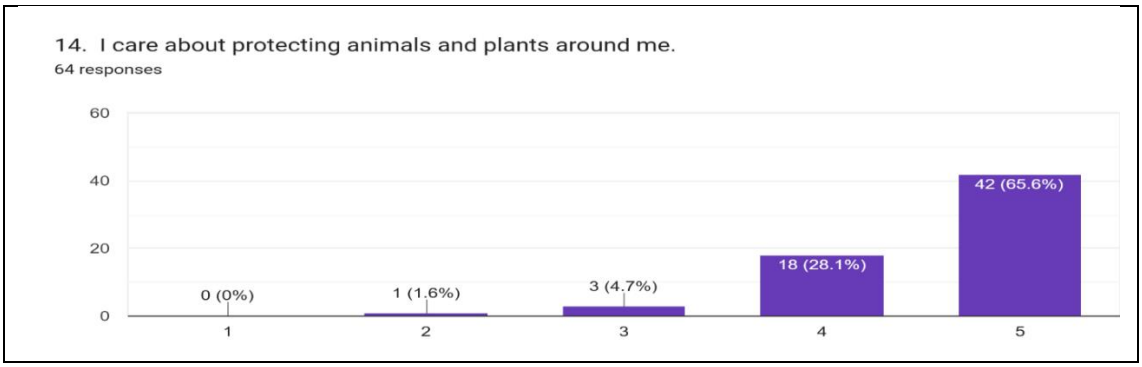
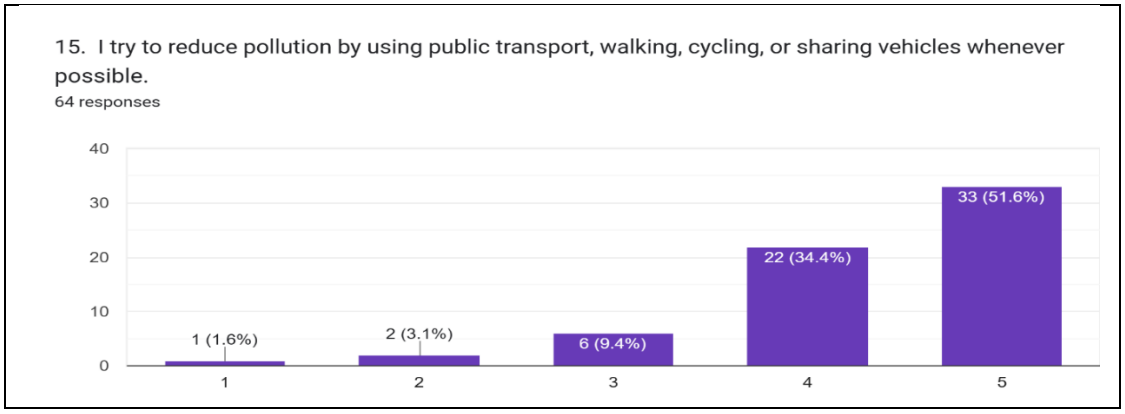
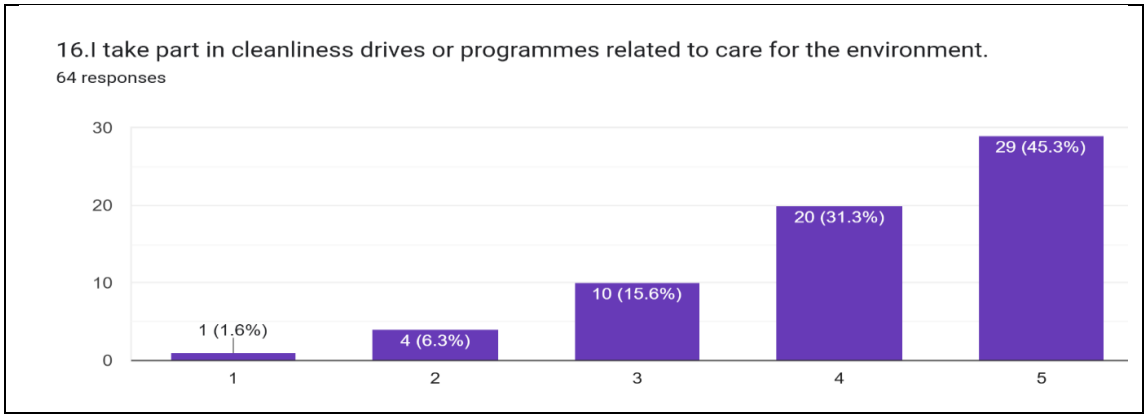


The bar graph indicates that a large majority of teachers care about protecting animals and plants around them. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed, reflecting strong concern for nature and living beings.



The graph shows that most teachers try to reduce pollution by using public transport, walking, cycling, or sharing vehicles whenever possible. However, some teachers gave neutral responses, suggesting that practical constraints may affect regular practice.



The bar graph indicates that many teachers take part in cleanliness drives or environment-related programmes. While a majority agreed or strongly agreed, a few teachers showed neutral responses, indicating varying levels of active participation.

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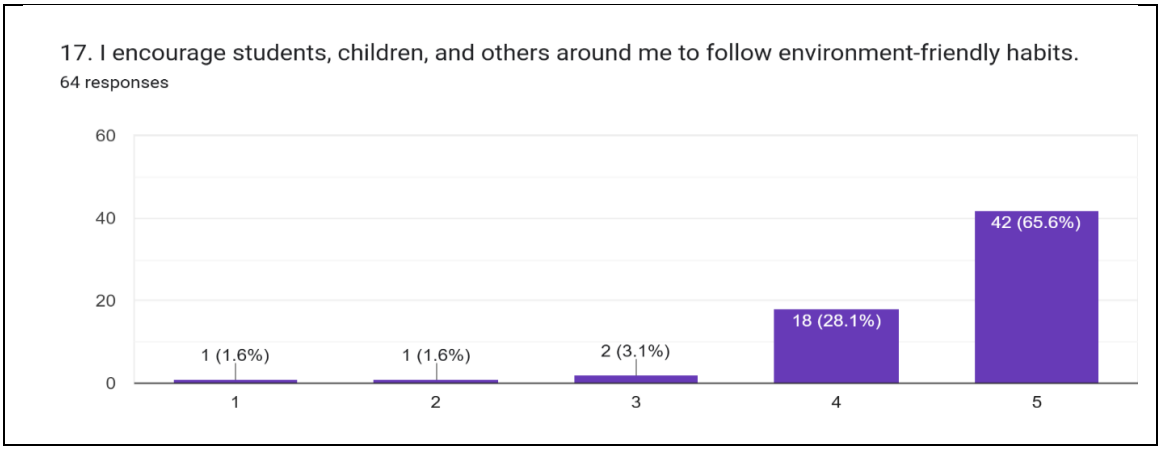
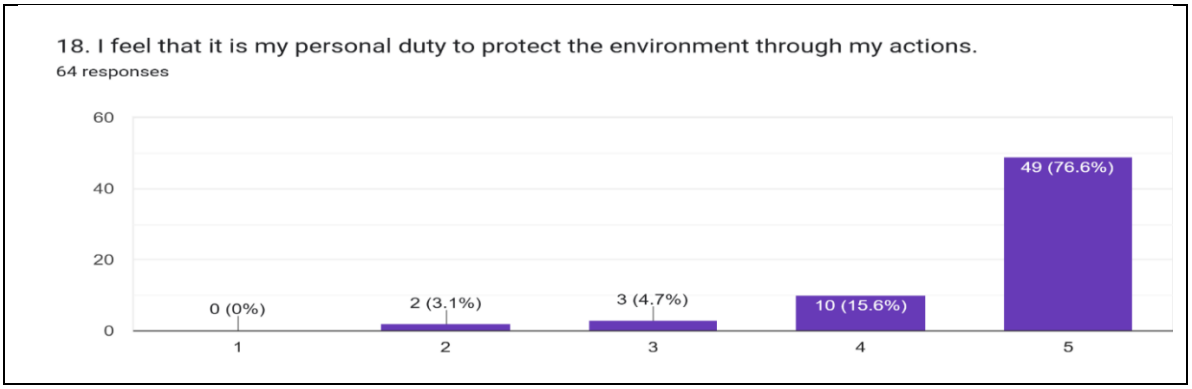
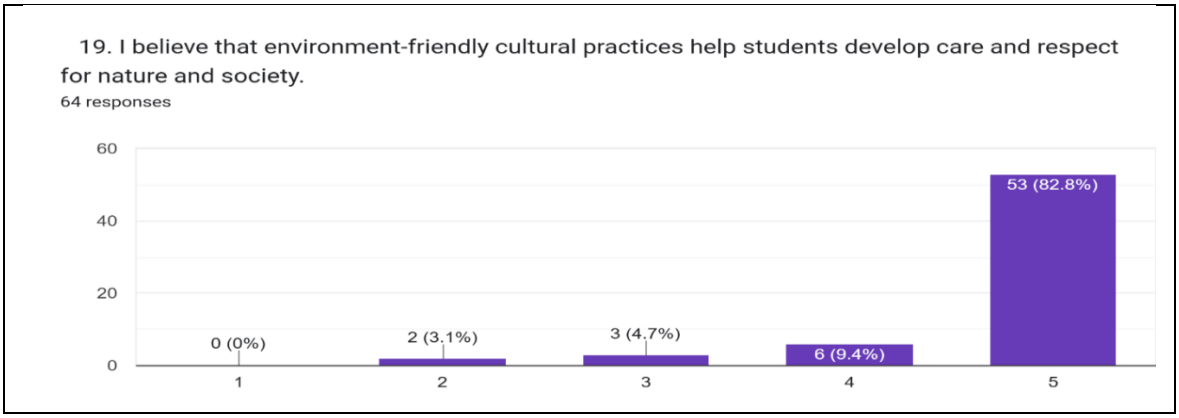


The graph shows that most teachers encourage students and others around them to follow environmentally friendly habits. A large majority agreed or strongly agreed, highlighting teachers' active role in spreading positive environmental behaviour.



The bar graph indicates that most teachers feel it is their personal duty to protect the environment through their actions. Strong agreement reflects a deep sense of responsibility and commitment towards environmental protection.



The graph shows that although very few teachers disagree or remain neutral, the majority of teachers believe that environmentally friendly cultural practices help students develop respect and care for nature and society.

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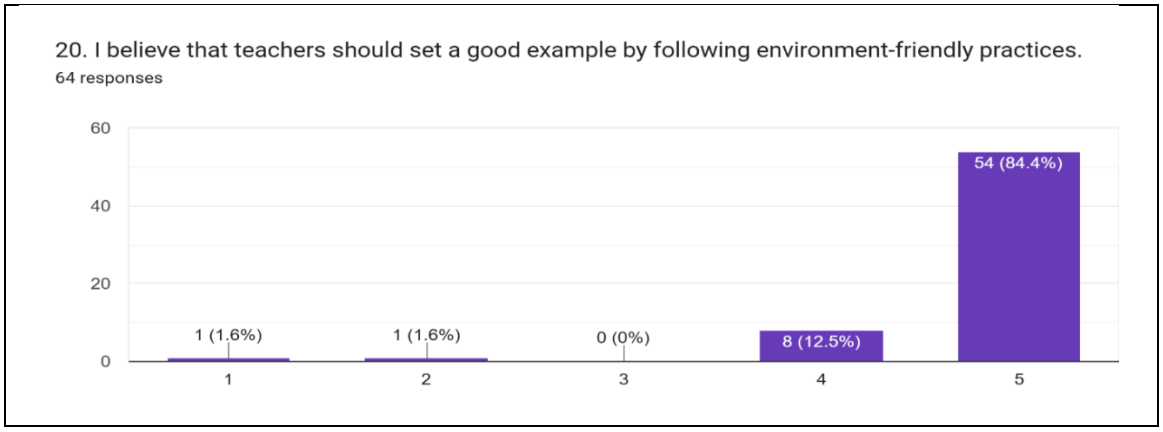

The graph shows that almost all teachers believe they should set a good example by following environmentally friendly practices themselves.

Findings:

The demographic profile shows that the study mainly represents secondary school teachers, with a female-dominated sample of 54 females and 10 male respondents, reflecting the typical gender composition of the teaching profession. Teachers with varied levels of experience, from early-career to more than ten years, were included, providing a broad perspective. The findings reveal a high level of pro-environmental behaviour among teachers, reflected in consistently high mean scores across survey items. Teachers actively practise daily environment-friendly behaviours such as conserving electricity and water, reducing food and paper waste, and using energy-efficient appliances. They also demonstrate responsible cultural and social practices, including the use of eco-friendly decorations, avoidance of harmful rituals, reduced use of firecrackers, and discouragement of loud sound systems. Teachers showed strong concern for environmental protection, actively participated in cleanliness and awareness activities, and strongly perceived themselves as role models who encourage eco-friendly habits among students. They also believed that such practices help develop environmental values in learners, highlighting the role of both formal and hidden curriculum in education for sustainability. Overall, the consistently positive responses indicate that teachers' pro-environmental behaviour plays a supportive role in promoting education for sustainability.

Suggestion :

The study suggests that teacher training programmes should give greater importance to sustainability and pro-environmental behaviour through practical and activity-based learning. Teachers should be encouraged to act as role models by practising eco-friendly habits, as students often learn by observing their behaviour. Schools and colleges can further support this by creating a culture of sustainability through activities such as eco-clubs, tree plantation drives, and awareness programmes. Regular workshops and professional development programmes can help teachers stay updated on environmental issues and sustainable practices. Teachers should also be encouraged to reflect on their own environmental behaviour to improve their practices. In addition, support from educational authorities in the form of clear guidelines and encouragement can help institutions effectively promote sustainable practices.

Conclusion:

The present study highlights the importance of teachers' pro-environmental behaviour in supporting education for sustainability. Teachers play a key role in shaping students' attitudes and habits, not only through

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classroom teaching but also through their everyday actions and behaviour. When teachers practise environmentally responsible habits in their personal and professional lives, they naturally encourage students to develop respect and care for the environment. The study emphasises that education for sustainability becomes meaningful when sustainable practices are consistently followed by teachers, as students learn by observing and imitating them. Teachers therefore act as important role models in promoting environmentally responsible behaviour among learners. Overall, the study underlines the need to strengthen teachers' awareness and practice of sustainable behaviour to create a culture of sustainability within educational institutions and contribute to a more responsible and sustainable future.

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