

Greener Minds: Understanding Students' Perceptions of Environmental Sustainability in Higher Education, Sultan Qaboos University

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Abstract : Objective: With environmental sustainability (ES) emerging as a critical concern due to its global impact, higher education institutions play a vital role in promoting ES through curricula and campus operations. This study examines the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors related to ES among students at Sultan Qaboos University, aiming to identify areas for improved integration of sustainability practices in higher education. Design: A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted with 300 students from Sultan Qaboos University using an online questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The survey assessed six key areas: awareness, concern, attitude, willingness to participate, current behaviors, and recommendations for enhancing campus sustainability initiatives. Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 23, employing Pearson's correlation, chi-square, and Fisher's exact test to explore associations among key variables. Findings: Preliminary analysis reveals that 68% of participants are familiar with core ES concepts, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with high levels of concern expressed regarding environmental issues. However, only 47% reported active involvement in campus-led ES initiatives, highlighting an engagement gap. Over 70% of respondents indicated that sustainability should be a university policy priority, and 62% expressed willingness to participate in additional ES-related programs. Despite this interest, 58% advocated for more courses on sustainability within their curriculum, suggesting that current offerings are insufficient. Statistical analysis identified a significant positive correlation between ES awareness levels and willingness to engage in sustainable practices ($p < 0.05$). These findings emphasize the need for enhanced institutional efforts, including targeted programs and curriculum integration, to foster a more sustainability-focused culture among students. Conclusion: The results underscore that while there is a strong foundational awareness of ES among students, greater institutional support is essential to translate this awareness into actionable engagement. Integrating sustainability more fully into academic programs and campus life could substantially advance students' involvement and commitment to environmental stewardship.

Keywords : environmental sustainability, higher education, students, perceptions, Sultan Qaboos University.

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