

The Role of College Students in Shaping Environmentally Conscious Character

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Abstract: *Students play a crucial role in the social system as Agents of Change who contribute to SDGs point 13 Climate Change and are in line with the philosophical values of Pancasila, the 2nd Principle of Humanity. Fair and Civilized. Behind this crucial role lies the reality of the Knowing-Doing Gap, where students are able to provide an interpretation of 'environmentally aware', but do not really implement the knowledge into real action. This study aims to explore students' understanding, awareness, and real actions on environmental issues. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and interviews to collect information from two student sources from the same university without participatory experience and one source from a different university with participatory experience, conflict was found. The results show a clear difference in emphasis, some sources without experience tend to interpret awareness gradually, starting from theory moreover formerly, Then going to awareness action And Other sources focused solely on theory. Meanwhile, sources with direct experience focused their interpretation on concrete actions as the primary manifestation of awareness. This show that although student in a way theoretical capable referring to to Action-based, participatory experiences orient them toward concrete action. Therefore, this study recommends that universities adapt character- or environmental-based learning methods that address action-based learning and deepen awareness, which are expected to bridge this gap.*

keywords: *Student, Awareness Environment, SDGs, Pancasila, Agent of Change*

Abstrak: Mahasiswa memegang peran krusial dalam sistem sosial sebagai Agent of Change yang berkontribusi pada SDGs poin ke-13 Climate Change dan selaras dengan nilai filosofis Pancasila Sila ke-2 Kemanusiaan yang Adil dan Beradab. Di balik peran krusial ini, terdapat realita Knowing-Doing Gap, di mana mahasiswa mampu memberikan penafsiran 'sadar lingkungan', tetapi tidak begitu mengimplementasikan pengetahuan ke aksi nyata. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pemahaman, kesadaran, serta aksi nyata mahasiswa terhadap isu lingkungan. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif serta wawancara untuk mengumpulkan informasi dari 2 narasumber mahasiswa dengan universitas sama tanpa pengalaman partisipatif serta 1 narasumber universitas berbeda dengan pengalaman partisipatif, ditemukan adanya pertentangan. Hasil menunjukkan perbedaan penekanan yang jelas, terdapat narasumber tanpa pengalaman yang cenderung memaknai kesadaran secara bertahap, dimulai dari teori terlebih dahulu, kemudian menuju kesadaran aksi dan narasumber lainnya hanya berfokus pada teori. Sedangkan, narasumber

dengan pengalaman secara langsung memfokuskan penafsirannya pada aksi nyata sebagai wujud utama dari kesadaran. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa secara teoritis mampu merujuk ke aksi, pengalaman partisipatif mengorientasikannya pada aksi nyata. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menemukan rekomendasi untuk perguruan tinggi dapat menyesuaikan metode pembelajaran terkait karakter atau lingkungan yang merujuk pada pembelajaran berbasis aksi dan pendalaman kesadaran yang diharapkan dapat menjembatani ketimpangan ini.

Kata kunci: Mahasiswa, Kesadaran Lingkungan, SDGs, Pancasila, Agent of Change

Introduction

Students are a group of individuals who act as academic agents. in college tall at a time teenager Which currently in process going to a broader social field than before, specifically society. Students are individuals who aim to continue their education or strive to improve their academic competence at higher education institutions, both universities and non-universities. private sector (Pujiana, Lestari, Study, Nursing, & Palembang, 2017).

In the process of moving towards a broader social field, of course the level of exposure of students to social problems, both in the realm of environmental cleanliness to the economy, can be seen through visuals on social media or felt. direct by they with jump direct to realm problem or exposed to problem the. From many realm problem the, what we can be certain of is Students themselves are involved in environmental issues. According to Law No. 32 of 2009, Article 1 Article 1 states that “The environment is a unity of space with all objects, power, conditions, and living creatures, including humans and their behavior, which affect nature itself, the continuity of life, and the welfare of humans and other living creatures.” This definition emphasizes that human behavior from all levels without exception, including students, has an impact on the sustainability of nature it self.

From a basic perspective, students are not directly involved in large-scale environmental issues. large as industries, but they hold a contribution to environmental issues on a small scale as consumers of products such as *fast fashion*. or no utilise use *reusable product* like box supplies and drinking bottles, and not using personal *tote bags* or *shopping bags* to minimize the use of single-use plastic. This activity is relatively small, but it plays a role in students' efforts to protect the climate and environment. is One attention from many points SDGs (*Sustainable Development Goals*), namely point 13 – *Climate Change*.

SDGs or *Sustainable Development Goals* themselves are 17 global goals that are interrelated with each other, these goals were adopted by all members of the United Nations in 2015 as an act of awareness that in frame stop various lack from various aspect required which is called hand-to-hand assistance to improve health and education, reduce gender inequality, spur economic growth, balanced with handling climate change and contributing to marine and forest conservation

(United Nations, 2024).

In the context of the social system, students are trusted to carry out the role of *Agent of Change*. *Agent of Change* as one of *the roles* or roles of students has definition from gathering individual Which own action become point beginning the trigger for change, whether positive or negative change, has a courageous character And supportive to fellow, especially in frame strive change, the orientation of *Agent of Change* also focuses on the future, they have a vision or visual of a better life for individuals and society (Istichomaharani & Habibah, 2016).

Implementation role social as *an agent of Change* yourself close relation with Pancasila in the second principle, namely Just and Civilized Humanity. In this study, *Agent of Change* focuses on a more specific aspect, namely students. Which civilized. Student as *Agent of Change* is role which is crucial in the social system in the process of implementing Pancasila values in society. Reinforced by their other role as successors to the nation, students have a responsibility to exemplify attitudes based on Pancasila values in every aspect life socializing, nation, And state (Abdul, 2021; Ariatama, et al., 2022, in Prambudi & Najicha, 2023).

The character of *Agent of Change* is in line with the second principle of Pancasila, which is emphasized through the statement that character care environment is character Which must have students, this character reflects human concern and sensitivity to the environment (Mariska I, 2023).

Students' awareness of being *agents of change*, or having environmental awareness, can have a significant impact on the future and social development of society. It has been stated that environmental education aims not only to broaden knowledge but also to shape real awareness and behavior. Which support sustainability environment (Borchers et al., 2014, in Edwin et al., 2025).

However, the ideal of students' role as environmentally conscious *agents of change often clashes with the realities on the ground. Several studies (Hidayah N et al., 2021; Edwin et al., 2025; and Sugiarto A and Gabriella D, 2020) provide conclusions or visualizations of research results that describe 3 layers of student character towards environmental issues, starting from only superficial understanding, knowing what actions should be taken, but needing guidance to do it correctly or called *conscious incompetence*, and finally is own knowledge Which Enough Good, However attitude And practice which is not optimal.*

Through several research results, *a research gap* or discrepancy was found. study between knowledge and action, in where student indeed knowing about environmental issues or other things related to the environment even if it is only superficial, but from the knowledge that students have, knowledge the No Enough For move or bring up flavor urgency for contribute in minimize change climate or at least carrying out small-scale actions such as throwing rubbish in its place and caring about the environment.

This gap between knowledge and action, often called *the knowing-doing gap*, is a phenomenon described by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton (1999). They highlighted that when invited to discuss a problem such as economic issues, environmental issues, psychological issues, and others, basically individual Actually know solution Which required. Will but, they also feel confused about the gap between the knowledge they possess and the actions they ultimately take. In short, actions that don't align with their knowledge or knowledge that hasn't been successfully translated into action.

The gap between knowledge and action cannot be ignored, as knowledge without action is like a dusty book in a library. This gap is also crucial because it indicates the role of students in the social system as *agents of change* based on Pancasila please 2nd not optimal implemented. Moreover, awareness regarding environment is Wrong One points from *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) in which Indonesia also places its position in the SDGs program. If the root causes of low this consciousness is not mapped, then the identity of *Agent of Change* carried by students will only be a label without a strong and real character foundation.

Therefore, this research is important to explore the related aspects of this research and identify the importance of the role of students in developing themselves as environmentally conscious individuals because it is closely related to the role of students in the social system as *Agents of Change* who should have a civilized character as instilled in the 2nd principle of Pancasila, namely Humanity. Fair and Civilized, this etiquette cannot be separated from ethics towards the environment, as well as student participation in realizing *the Sustainable Development Goals* point thirteen, Climate Change. Which can followed up by student, can started with action small.

This research also contributes to the academic literature, specifically in the areas of character and environment, with a foundation for future-oriented students. It can also serve as a foundation or reference for future research on similar topics. The findings and explanations in this study, which emphasize the importance of action to increase environmental awareness for the future, also contribute to a broader understanding of the importance of this approach.

Method Study

Researchers use method study qualitative descriptive to conduct this research with interviews to be used as a data source. Qualitative (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N., 2018, in Hanif Hasan et al., 2025) is research approach methods that function to understand phenomena in the socio-humanities realm, including character, personality, or perception something group in society regarding certain matters. The qualitative approach adheres to the researcher's in-depth interpretation of the data collected through interviews, observation, And analysis document. Use method This require Researchers carry out interpretation and

understanding in depth and critically to provide data Which has written or implied to in text. Descriptive (Sujana and Ibrahim, 1989:65 in Rahima, (2016) Alone is business Describes an event that is currently occurring. The aim is to systematically explain and depict the event. The choice of a descriptive qualitative method is considered the most appropriate for answering the research problem formulation regarding a deeper understanding of the importance of environmentally conscious character for students. as agent of change Which No can measured with number Because Each individual holds different perceptions and backgrounds.

Results and Discussion

Based on Which We know in a way general about perception or view, This is of course based on an individual's thoughts, perspectives, and background, all of which are interconnected. Perception itself is defined as the process by which an individual assigns meaning to each phenomenon, triggering a response based on their collective experiences (Asrori, 2009:214, in Dzul Fahmi's book, 2021).

The interview results confirmed that each individual from the 3 sources we interviewed held their own views regarding meaning from aware environment with similarities that student the conscious environment is they Which own understanding about environment in terms of knowledge and action, namely what can influence the environment itself Good impact positive or negative. From understanding the, separated again into several layers from the stage of understanding to realizing it into real action. From the results of the interviews, the researcher drew an outline regarding the hierarchy of understanding in context aware environment with layer First that is understanding with a knowledge base that focuses on theory only, followed by a second layer that focuses on students' awareness of the environment, but experiencing confusion will implementation action Which appropriate For issue environment Which feels heavy For scale a student, Then there is layer third Which where focuses on theory with a stream of consciousness in real-world actions, for example, being aware that the actions a student takes today will trigger natural reactions in the future, and the last is a layer of consciousness that focuses on implementation or direct, real action in the academic realm, stated as such because the resource person feels that the meaning of 'environmentally aware' for a student is action representation Which done by students For reflect character guard environment to realm public or to other students, especially because students also play a role as *Agents of Change*.

The informants also consistently linked awareness with understanding impact and action. Therefore, it is interpreted as an action that can also refer to concrete action. It is formulated as a cycle of "Awareness, Understanding, Action," based on the awareness that today's actions trigger future natural reactions, similar to the definitions of "Understanding the surrounding conditions

and impacts" by other informants and "Knowing the actual conditions."

The social role in this awareness was also raised by the resource person, who saw that students play a role as *Agents of Change* who act as pioneers of the future and representatives for the wider community. Definition Which presented by source person withdrawn as view It doesn't stop at the cognitive or understanding stage. Instead, it continues and links awareness with an understanding of future consequences and the actions that embody that understanding. This view aligns with the theory of sustainability awareness, which is also related to the environment. According to Gerickle et al. (2019, in Ovais, 2023), sustainability awareness is a term used to describe an individual's awareness of the environment, which encompasses both experience and knowledge of the facts and conditions that occur within the environment, including the individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward the environment.

The alignment of the informant's perspective with the theory also reinforces *the research gap* identified by the researcher. The fact that the informant was able to define awareness as both an understanding and an action clarifies the confusion that arises, assuming the students truly understand and understand this. Why gap between knowledge And action or Which Also what is known as *the knowing-doing gap* still occurs in everyday life. Although there is gap between knowledge with action real, The speakers agreed that the role of students in environmental issues is very important. This is certainly based on the status or role of students in the social system as *Agent of Change* And generation educated in time front. Diving role *Agent of Change* goes deeper, the sources mention different tasks or actions regarding what can be done, here the researcher draws 3 big points from the tasks the as representation or example with meaning that student regarded as representation academic.

Which Can exemplary by student other or the wider community, then there are educators who focus on the students' ability to re-teach the knowledge they have through their own teaching methods so that all members of society, including those who do not have the opportunity to pursue higher education, also receive education about environment, And Which final There is on field innovation, with facility and understanding Which considered more or adequate, student Also can play a role in energy technology innovation and research in other fields that can help in the field of education.

There are sources who agree with the above, adding their introspective views. Where they are aware of their position as students in realm social, However He confess that Still in stage knowledge just and his actions Which not enough, although has apply action small Which can help with issues environment like throw away rubbish on the place, save energy by turning off electricity when finished using it and minimizing the use of plastic bags. He also shared his view that some students are active or conscious thinkers but need guidance to take the

right and appropriate actions for the environment.

Based on the information obtained, this finding reveals that, in terms of perspective, students do indeed place a heavy emphasis on their social status as *Agents of Change*, which aligns with the researcher's speculation. On the other hand, the informants also expressed positional awareness, but lacked action, confirming or validating the *knowing-doing gap phenomenon* raised by Pfeffer & Sutton (2000). The knowledge possessed does indicate cognitive engagement among students, or can be interpreted as an involvement of students' mindsets in environmental issues, but it does not translate into concrete actions or behavior. This may indicate that they may not lack awareness of the environment or its problems, but rather an awareness of urgency or interest in come back problem environment That Alone in high scale that can move the heart, or there may be other inhibiting factors.

Awareness for source person about issue environment that happened in Campus, national, and global levels are also actions in line with *the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). The speakers noted the many environmental issues across various domains. The most dominant issue was in interview is change climate like effect House glass, warmup global or *global warming*, increase temperature drastic with proof from one of the sources who stated a story from his friend that in the UNNES or Semarang State University area the temperature had reached 40°C, and there was a water crisis clean in time Which will coming, around year 2040, stated by Wrong A source who obtained the information through social media.

Environmental issues related to or originating from industry, technology, and resource extraction were also highlighted, such as mining activities, waste, pollution, deforestation that has the potential to disrupt animal habitats, emissions from *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) server cooling and its water use, and poor palm oil control due to a *statement* from President Prabowo at the end of December 2024, in the context of international criticism regarding the deforestation issue. Which associated with industry coconut palm oil Indonesia, in a way line big It focuses on defending and promoting palm oil as a strategic state asset, while to prepare palm oil as a strategic state asset there will be several consequence which also need faced, no only focus on *output* in the field economy in end just. And Which final is awareness for student about the surrounding campus environment, which stated that the resource persons felt the campus environment was good and there were open green spaces.

Awareness for source person will issue environment in scale global emphasizes the action points of *the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) themselves in target 3, namely for increase education, awareness, capacity man, And institutions for mitigation, adaptation, subtraction impact and warning early to climate change (SDGs Center, Faculty of Medicine, Padjadjaran University, 2024). This is also in line with the statement from (Dekeyser et al., 2008;

Hafenbrack et al., 2020; Hölzel et al., 2011, in journal Lysova et al., 2023) states that awareness of something increases an individual's understanding of the background and how an event or action can influence or impact a situation, which is one source's interpretation of the definition of environmental awareness. The statement in the journal demonstrates the importance of awareness in the SDGs.

Pancasila also plays a crucial role as the theoretical foundation for students' roles in the social system. One interviewee linked students' role as *agents of change* in the social system to Pancasila's second and fifth principles. The source's view regarding civilized humans in the 2nd Precept confirms that *Agent of Change* is representation from Please 2nd Which which would be very contradictory if *the Agent of Change* damaged the environment due to his actions. the No human And No civilized. Please 2nd put position environmental awareness as a fundamental part of human character. Resource person the Also explain that in guard natural required ethics within it. According to him, daily actions must be based on ethics. Ethics in responding to the environment or ethics in the role of students as *Agents of Change* is important, as is in line with the theory (Paramita & Yasa, 2015, in the journal Sugiarto & Gabriella, 2020) which states the importance of environmental awareness in humans in forming a positive attitude towards the environment. This means that someone who has environmental awareness will act well and positively towards the environment itself.

Relatedness with Please 5th Also add knowledge new for students and reaffirms the role of students as *Agents of Change* in the social system. Environmental justice that should be felt by all levels of society is part of social justice, because the environment itself is place for all over man, including creature life other Which living in the environment. The issue of social justice in the environmental sphere is in line with Article 28H of the Constitution Article 1 states that "Everyone has the right to live in physical and spiritual prosperity, to have a place to live, and to have a good and healthy living environment and has the right to receive health services.

Thus, environmental awareness is a real manifestation of students as *Agents of Change* with a future orientation that is based on or in line with *the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) and Pancasila, specifically the 2nd Principle. Because referring to on character as *Agent of Change* . Awareness environment this too need held action advanced Which is action real from knowledge or understanding of the environment, this is also based on the 5th principle of Pancasila which emphasizes *the output* or results of pouring out knowledge into real actions that can realize the dreams in Pancasila.

Conclusion

Student Which is source person in study This show findings study that they capable in expressing meaning 'environmentally conscious' and the role of 'Agent of Change' who are oriented towards the future or representation in the social environment with knowledge or reason. They display a strong tendency in the field of knowledge, namely interpretation, understanding, And criticism will connection 'aware environment' with 'Agent of Change'. They even capable linking role student in system social This is based on the philosophical basis of Pancasila, the 2nd principle.

In side other, depart behind with awareness in a way knowledge, The understanding of environmental awareness that the informants successfully linked to their social role as *Agents of Change* and the philosophical foundation of Pancasila's second principle was not fully integrated or translated into concrete actions. The results of this study also confirm the *knowing-doing gap theory* (Pfeffer & Sutton), which also recognized in a way direct by Wrong One from source person with state that he is aware of the role of students in the social sphere, but there is still a lack of personal action, this is also due to the fact that he is still a semester student beginning Which Not yet fully exposed with environment open society.

This study also found that the interviewees' direct experience can influence their answers to interview questions. One interviewee who had directly participated in the SDGs program in Singapore reflected that being 'environmentally conscious' is an 'activity' or 'actions' that are directly deployed to the community. This indicates that there is a possibility that the *Knowing-Doing Gap theory* we used as a link to this research occurs not only because students *are stuck* in theory, but also because of a lack of exposure and participatory experience.

If awareness of the SDGs points and the lack of real action are related to participatory experiences, then the character education provided by universities tall moment This need evaluated. Matter the due to study revolves around Students – College – Social where the student environment, especially first semester students, is at or closer to college than directly socially. *The Knowing-Doing Gap* can be addressed not only by providing basic theory, but also by focusing on building students' awareness that the climate crisis, as outlined in SDG 13, is crucial. Therefore, a shift is needed. from just 'theory' to 'aware' or 'participatory' in where student can dive right in and experience the reality of the climate crisis in the world.

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