

AWARENESS OF MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION

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Abstract

Microplastics are defined as plastic particles ranging in size from 100 nanometers to 5 millimeters. Their appearance is highly diverse in terms of color, size, and shape. These particles can originate during the manufacturing process or from the fragmentation of larger plastic objects. In most cases, they end up in the environment after use, where they threaten entire ecosystems along with the organisms living within them. In recent years, this type of pollution has reached such proportions that the European Union, in 2019, initiated the ban of single-use plastics (such as straws). In 2023, this regulation was further expanded to include measures addressing packaging waste and microplastic pollution. Given the anthropogenic origin of the problem, informing students currently in education about the severity of the issue is of key importance. Taking this into account, the aim of this study was to conduct a survey to assess how well high school and university students in Vojvodina region, the north part of Serbia, are informed about microplastic pollution and to explore potential differences between the two groups. The research was conducted using a questionnaire completed by 50 respondents (25 high school students and 25 university students). The survey consisted of 19 questions designed to evaluate the respondents' demographic data, knowledge, and attitudes towards the topic. The results revealed some surprising findings, as the correlation between awareness and educational level proved to be less significant than initially expected. It was also confirmed that the majority of respondents had already heard of microplastics, although they did not necessarily possess more detailed knowledge. The importance of this research lies in the fact that, despite the popularity of the topic, the number of similar surveys remains limited. This represents a major issue, as human attitudes are a factor that exerts a substantial influence on today's global plastic pollution problems. Looking ahead, it will be essential to complement scientific investigations with social perspectives, as the combination of these two approaches can become truly effective in combating microplastic pollution.

Keywords: microplastics, pollution, consequences, students, environment

References

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