

STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Darin Jan Tindowen
University Research and Innovation Office
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Philippines

Marica-Malou Valencia
School of Education, Arts, Criminology and Psychology
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Philippines

Abstract— This study explores the awareness and attitudes of students at the University of Saint Louis towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to inform and enhance the university's sustainability initiatives. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study surveyed 948 respondents from both undergraduate and Basic Education programs, employing a stratified random sampling technique for representation across various departments and age groups. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which assessed students' awareness and attitudes using a Likert scale. Findings reveal a strong understanding of the SDGs, particularly emphasizing Quality Education and Clean Water and Sanitation as significant in students' lives. However, the study identifies areas for improvement in personal involvement in SDG-related activities, indicating that while awareness is high, active participation is lacking. These insights underscore the need for ongoing efforts to enhance student engagement with the SDGs at the university.

Keywords— *Sustainable Development Goals, Awareness, Attitude, University, Sustainability*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have emerged as a vital global framework designed to tackle a wide array of pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges faced by humanity today. Adopted by United Nations member states in 2015, the 17 SDGs encapsulate a holistic approach to sustainable development, addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, health, education, and climate change. Each goal is interconnected, recognizing that progress in one area can significantly impact others. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of 17 interconnected goals that address various global challenges (United Nations, 2015).

1. **No Poverty:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere. This goal aims to eradicate extreme poverty and ensure that all people have access to basic resources and services.
2. **Zero Hunger:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. This goal focuses on ensuring that everyone has sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.
3. **Good Health and Well-Being:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. This includes

reducing maternal and child mortality, combating diseases, and ensuring access to quality healthcare.

4. **Quality Education:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This goal emphasizes the importance of accessible education for everyone.
5. **Gender Equality:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This goal seeks to eliminate discrimination and violence against women and ensure equal opportunities in all areas of life.
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. This goal focuses on ensuring access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate sanitation.
7. **Affordable and Clean Energy:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. This goal promotes the use of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. This goal aims to foster economic development and job creation.
9. **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. This goal focuses on enhancing technological capabilities and sustainable industry.
10. **Reduced Inequalities:** Reduce inequality within and among countries. This goal aims to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities and that wealth is shared more equitably.
11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. This goal addresses urbanization challenges and promotes sustainable urban development.
12. **Responsible Consumption and Production:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. This goal promotes resource efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable practices in production and consumption.

13. **Climate Action:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. This goal emphasizes the need for global cooperation to address climate change and its effects.
14. **Life Below Water:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. This goal focuses on protecting marine ecosystems and addressing issues like overfishing and pollution.
15. **Life on Land:** Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss. This goal aims to protect ecosystems and promote sustainable land use.
16. **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable institutions. This goal focuses on fostering peace, justice, and strong governance.
17. **Partnerships for the Goals:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. This goal emphasizes the importance of collaboration among governments, civil society, and the private sector to achieve the SDGs.



Figure 1. List of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Source: 2030 Agenda, UN (2015).

This comprehensive agenda emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts among governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals. The SDGs call for a collective commitment to ensure that no one is left behind, especially the most vulnerable populations (Samman et al., 2018). As future leaders and change-makers, students play a crucial role in this global effort. Their awareness and attitudes toward the SDGs can significantly influence their engagement in sustainable practices and advocacy (Chokrani & Ghneim-Herrera, 2024; Dhaka, 2024). When students are informed about these goals and understand their relevance, they are more likely to become active participants in initiatives that promote sustainability, whether through community service, advocacy, or pursuing careers that align with these values (Kumar, 2023).

Understanding students' awareness and attitudes toward the SDGs is crucial for developing effective educational strategies that empower them to contribute to a sustainable future (Oltra-Badenes et al., 2023; Smaniotto et al., 2020). Educational institutions have the opportunity to cultivate an environment where sustainability is integrated into the curriculum and campus life. By fostering a culture of awareness and engagement, schools can help students recognize their potential to make a positive impact on their communities and the world. This not only enhances students' educational experiences but also prepares them to address the complex challenges of our time, ensuring that they are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and motivation necessary to advance the SDGs and contribute to a more sustainable world.

The University of Saint Louis (USL) has taken significant strides in promoting the SDGs within its academic and community frameworks. As a higher education institution committed to holistic education and social responsibility, USL integrates sustainability into its curriculum, encouraging students to engage with global issues actively. The university's initiatives, such as sustainability-focused programs, community outreach projects, and partnerships with local organizations, underscore its dedication to fostering a culture of sustainability among its students. By creating an environment that prioritizes the SDGs, USL aims to cultivate informed and responsible citizens who are equipped to tackle the challenges of the 21st century. This study seeks to explore the awareness and attitudes of students at the University of Saint Louis toward the SDGs, examining how these perceptions can inform and enhance the university's ongoing sustainability initiatives.

II. METHODS

The study employed a descriptive research design to explore the awareness and attitudes of both undergraduate students and students in the Basic Education School at the University of Saint Louis regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The target population included all undergraduate students and Basic Education students enrolled at the university. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure representation across various strata, including department and age. A total of 948 respondents were selected, with equal representation from each stratum to enhance the reliability of the findings.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Respondents of the Study

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Department		
Basic Education School	328	34.60
School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality	149	15.72
School of Architecture, Computing and Engineering	226	23.80
School of Education, Criminology, Arts and Psychology	85	8.10

School of Health and Allied Sciences	160	16.88
Age		
17 years old and below	320	33.76
18 – 21 years old	588	62.03
22 years old and above	40	4.21
TOTAL	948	100.00

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' awareness and attitudes toward the SDGs. This questionnaire included demographic information, awareness questions, and attitude questions measured on a Likert scale. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of students to ensure clarity and reliability. The final version was distributed both online and in paper format to maximize participation, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The data collection period lasted two weeks to allow sufficient time for responses.

Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics, with mean scores calculated to summarize students' awareness levels and attitudes toward the SDGs. Frequencies and percentages were also calculated for demographic variables and specific responses to the awareness and attitude questions. Results were presented in tables to illustrate trends and patterns. Ethical considerations were prioritized, ensuring that participation was voluntary and that participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. Limitations included the reliance on self-reported data, which could introduce bias, as well as the lack of generalizability beyond the University of Saint Louis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Awareness of Students towards SDGs

Sustainable Development Goal	Mean	Qualitative Description	Rank
SDG 1. No Poverty	4.20	Understand	8
SDG 2. Zero Hunger	4.19	Understand	9
SDG 3. Good Health and Well-Being	4.29	Understand	3
SDG 4. Quality Education	4.36	Understand	1
SDG 5. Gender Equality	4.30	Understand	2
SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation	4.28	Understand	4
SDG 7. Affordable and Clean Energy	4.22	Understand	6
SDG 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	4.08	Understand	13
SDG 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	4.05	Understand	16
SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities	4.08	Understand	15

SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	4.17	Understand	10
SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production	4.14	Understand	11
SDG 13. Climate Action	4.24	Understand	5
SDG 14. Life Below Water	4.00	Understand	17
SDG 15. Life on Land	4.14	Understand	12
SDG 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	4.21	Understand	7
SDG 17. Partnerships for the Goals	4.09	Understand	14
OVERALL AWARENESS	4.18	Understand	

The results presented in Table 1 indicate a generally high level of awareness among students regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with an overall mean score of 4.18, categorized as "Understand." This suggests that students are not only familiar with the SDGs but also comprehend their significance and implications for societal development. Among the specific goals, SDG 4 (Quality Education) received the highest mean score of 4.36, reflecting a strong recognition of the importance of education in achieving sustainable development. This finding highlights that students understand education's critical role not only in individual empowerment but also in fostering societal progress. Research has consistently shown that quality education is fundamental for equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to address global challenges (Reimers, 2020). Moreover, education is a catalyst for promoting awareness about sustainability, encouraging active participation in community and global initiatives. The emphasis on SDG 4 aligns with the notion that education can drive transformative change. A study by Anlimachie and Avoada (2020) indicated that investments in quality education lead to improved outcomes in health, economic growth, and social equity. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of prioritizing education in sustainable development efforts. Furthermore, the high awareness of SDG 4 could reflect the university's commitment to integrating sustainability into its curriculum and programs. Institutions that prioritize quality education often see enhanced student engagement with sustainability topics, as highlighted in the work of Berchin et al. (2021), which found that educational institutions play an important role in fostering sustainability literacy among students. This finding also aligns with previous studies that emphasize education as a foundational element for fostering awareness of global issues and facilitating informed participation in sustainability efforts (Wamsler, 2020).

Following closely, SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) also received notable mean scores of 4.30 and 4.29, respectively, indicating that students are acutely

aware of these pressing social issues. This awareness reflects a growing recognition among students of the critical role that gender equality plays in sustainable development. Research shows that achieving gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a prerequisite for creating a sustainable and equitable society (Leal Filho et al., 2023). The high score for SDG 5 suggests that students understand the importance of empowering all individuals, regardless of gender, to participate fully in social, economic, and political life. Similarly, the strong awareness of SDG 3 highlights students' recognition of health as a cornerstone of sustainable development. Monaco (2024) emphasizes that health is interconnected with economic and social stability, and improving health outcomes is essential for achieving other SDGs. The close scores of these two goals suggest that students are aware of the interconnectedness of social issues, recognizing that progress in gender equality can lead to better health outcomes and vice versa. Furthermore, the emphasis on these SDGs could be influenced by contemporary social movements advocating for gender equality and public health awareness. Students today are often exposed to discussions around these issues through social media, community engagement, and educational programs, which may enhance their understanding and commitment to these goals (Menon & Suresh, 2020).

In contrast, SDG 14 (Life Below Water) received the lowest mean score of 4.00, suggesting relatively lower awareness among students regarding marine conservation issues. This finding is concerning, as studies indicate that awareness of environmental sustainability is critical for fostering responsible behaviors toward natural resources (Ahmad et al., 2021; Farrukh et al., 2022). The rankings of the other goals reflect varied levels of understanding, with goals related to economic growth (SDG 8) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) scoring lower compared to more universally relatable goals like quality education and gender equality.

Table 2. Importance of the SDGs in the daily Life

Sustainable Development Goal	Mean	Qualitative Description	Rank
SDG 1. No Poverty	4.60	Very Important	11.5
SDG 2. Zero Hunger	4.65	Very Important	8
SDG 3. Good Health and Well-Being	4.74	Very Important	3
SDG 4. Quality Education	4.75	Very Important	1.5
SDG 5. Gender Equality	4.54	Very Important	15
SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation	4.75	Very Important	1.5
SDG 7. Affordable and Clean Energy	4.67	Very Important	5.5
SDG 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	4.66	Very Important	7

SDG 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	4.55	Very Important	14
SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities	4.57	Very Important	13
SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	4.60	Very Important	11.5
SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production	4.62	Very Important	9
SDG 13. Climate Action	4.71	Very Important	4
SDG 14. Life Below Water	4.50	Very Important	17
SDG 15. Life on Land	4.61	Very Important	10
SDG 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	4.67	Very Important	5.5
SDG 17. Partnerships for the Goals	4.53	Very Important	16
OVERALL AWARENESS	4.63	Very Important	

The results in Table 2 indicate that students perceive the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as highly important in their daily lives, with an overall mean score of 4.63 categorized as "Very Important." This strong perception underscores the relevance of the SDGs to students' personal and societal contexts, suggesting that they recognize the impact of these goals on their communities and future.

Among the specific goals, SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) received the highest mean scores of 4.75, indicating their significance in students' daily experiences. This strong recognition of SDG 4 underscores the vital role that quality education plays in shaping students' lives and future opportunities. Education is not only a fundamental human right but also a critical enabler for achieving other SDGs, as it equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute effectively to society (Abera, 2023). The emphasis on quality education reflects students' understanding that education fosters critical thinking, innovation, and informed decision-making, which are essential for addressing global challenges. Similarly, the high score for SDG 6 highlights students' awareness of the importance of clean water and sanitation in their health and well-being. Access to clean water is foundational for public health, as it prevents waterborne diseases and supports overall quality of life (Chan et al., 2021). The recognition of this goal is particularly relevant in light of ongoing global challenges related to water scarcity and pollution, which disproportionately affect vulnerable communities. Research has shown that improvements in water quality can lead to significant reductions in health risks, thus enhancing community resilience (Saikia et al., 2022). The alignment of

these two goals in students' perceptions suggests a broader understanding of how quality education can lead to better health outcomes. In addition, education often drives awareness of hygiene practices and encourages responsible water use, contributing to improved sanitation in communities. This interconnectedness reflects the holistic approach needed for sustainable development, where advancements in one area can facilitate progress in others.

SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) also scored highly, with a mean of 4.74, reflecting students' awareness of health issues as integral to their overall well-being. This strong score indicates that students recognize the critical importance of maintaining physical and mental health, particularly in a world where health challenges are increasingly prevalent. The emphasis on good health aligns with findings from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), which highlights that health is foundational for achieving sustainable development across various sectors. Students' recognition of health issues may stem from increased exposure to discussions surrounding public health, especially in light of recent global events like the COVID-19 pandemic. This heightened awareness can lead to greater advocacy for health-related initiatives and policies, as well as a deeper understanding of how health disparities affect different populations (Wang & Huang, 2021). The connection between good health and other SDGs—such as quality education and gender equality—further underscores its relevance; for instance, healthier individuals are better able to engage in educational opportunities and contribute to their communities (Akinwale, 2023). Moreover, the high ranking of SDG 3 suggests that students are aware of the multifaceted nature of health, recognizing its interplay with various social determinants such as access to healthcare, nutrition, and environmental conditions. This finding aligns with studies indicating that young people today are increasingly conscious of health-related challenges and the importance of maintaining physical and mental health (Pulimeno et al., 2020).

The high ranking of SDG 13 (Climate Action) at 4.71 further emphasizes students' recognition of climate change as a pressing issue that directly influences their lives and future prospects. This significant score indicates that students are not only aware of climate change but also understand its profound implications for both local and global contexts. The increasing frequency of climate-related events—such as extreme weather, rising sea levels, and shifting ecosystems—has likely heightened this awareness among younger generations, who are poised to face the long-term consequences of environmental degradation (Chen et al., 2023). Students' recognition of climate action as essential reflects a growing commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. Research has shown that when individuals perceive climate change as a critical issue, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote sustainability, such as reducing waste, conserving energy, and advocating for policy changes (Grilli & Curtis, 2021). This alignment with SDG 13 underscores the importance of incorporating climate education into academic curricula,

empowering students with the knowledge and skills necessary to address this urgent challenge. Furthermore, the emphasis on climate action is particularly relevant in the context of recent global movements advocating for environmental justice and climate equity. The youth-led climate strikes and initiatives like Fridays for Future have galvanized young people around the world, highlighting the importance of their voices in the fight against climate change. This cultural shift may have contributed to students' heightened awareness and engagement with SDG 13, as they increasingly see themselves as active participants in the global response to climate change.

Moreover, the consistent scores for SDGs related to economic growth (SDG 8) and gender equality (SDG 5) highlight students' understanding of the interconnected nature of these goals. Research indicates that gender equality and economic development are mutually reinforcing; when women have equal opportunities, it positively affects economic growth and societal stability (Castro Nuñez et al., 2020).

Table 3. Engagement and Involvement in SDGs

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
The Philippines gets actively involved in SDG	3.88	Agree
The municipality/city I am currently living in gets actively involved in SDG	3.84	Agree
The University gets actively involved in SDG	4.14	Agree
If I were to get a job, I wish to work for a company that is actively involved in SDG.	4.34	Agree
I am actively involved in SDG.	3.77	Agree

The results presented in Table 3 reflect students' perceptions of engagement and involvement in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), indicating a generally positive attitude toward both local and institutional efforts. The overall mean scores suggest that while students recognize various levels of engagement, there are opportunities for increased participation and commitment.

The highest mean score of 4.14 is attributed to the statement regarding the university's active involvement in the SDGs, indicating that students feel positively about their institution's efforts in promoting sustainability. This aligns with research suggesting that universities play a crucial role in driving awareness and action related to the SDGs, serving as hubs for sustainability education and initiatives (Abo-Khalil, 2024). Students' recognition of their university's involvement may enhance their sense of belonging and motivation to engage in related activities, reinforcing the idea that educational institutions can significantly influence student engagement with sustainability issues.

In contrast, the statement regarding the Philippines' active involvement in the SDGs received a mean score of 3.88, while the involvement of local municipalities or cities scored slightly lower at 3.84. These scores reflect a moderate agreement, suggesting that students acknowledge some level of governmental commitment to the SDGs but may feel that more can be done at both the national and local levels. This sentiment resonates with findings that highlight the need for stronger collaboration between governments and communities to effectively implement sustainable development initiatives (Graci, 2020).

Meanwhile, students expressed a strong desire to work for companies that are actively involved in the SDGs, with a mean score of 4.34. This finding highlights a growing trend among young people who prioritize sustainability in their career choices, indicating a shift toward more socially responsible business practices. Research has shown that millennials and Gen Z are increasingly inclined to seek employment with organizations that demonstrate a commitment to corporate social responsibility and sustainability (Fisehaye & Teclehaymanot, 2023).

Lastly, the lowest mean score was for the item indicating students' own active involvement in the SDGs, which scored 3.77. While students generally agreed with this statement, the score suggests that there may be barriers preventing them from fully engaging in SDG-related activities. Educational institutions can address this gap by creating more opportunities for student involvement, such as workshops, community service projects, and partnerships with local organizations focused on sustainability.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that students at the University of Saint Louis possess a strong understanding and appreciation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They demonstrate significant awareness of the importance of these goals, particularly emphasizing Quality Education and Clean Water and Sanitation as vital to their daily lives. Furthermore, students express a clear recognition of the relevance of various SDGs, especially regarding their future career aspirations, as evidenced by their desire to work for organizations actively engaged in these initiatives. Despite this commendable awareness, there are areas for improvement, particularly in terms of personal involvement in SDG-related activities. This suggests that while students understand the goals, they may feel limited in their active participation. Overall, the findings highlight the necessity for continued efforts to not only raise awareness but also to foster deeper engagement with the SDGs among students.

The university should incorporate more comprehensive sustainability education into the curriculum such as workshops, seminars, and courses focused on specific SDGs, allowing students to engage more deeply with the content and its applications.

USL may establish programs that encourage student participation in sustainability initiatives, such as community service projects, internships with organizations focused on the SDGs, and partnerships with local governments and NGOs.

The university may implement awareness campaigns that highlight the relevance of the SDGs in students' daily lives and future careers. Utilizing social media, campus events, and informational resources can effectively raise awareness and inspire action.

The Community Engagement and CICM Advocacies Office can serve as a bridge between the university and local communities, facilitating projects that address specific SDGs. By actively involving students in these initiatives, the university can enhance practical learning experiences while making a meaningful impact.

The Research office should promote studies focused on sustainability and the SDGs, encouraging faculty and students to explore innovative solutions to local and global challenges.

Student organizations play a vital role in promoting awareness and involvement in the SDGs. The university should support these groups by providing resources, training, and funding for initiatives that align with the SDGs. Encouraging collaboration among different organizations can amplify their impact and foster a sense of community.

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