

CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS AMONG BHOPAL YOUTH ON TEXTILE POLLUTION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Textile pollution is a growing environmental concern, yet consumer awareness and perception remain key factors in addressing its impact. This study examines the awareness and attitudes of young individuals in Bhopal (aged 15-35 years) toward textile pollution, using an online survey via Google Forms. Findings indicate that while 81% of respondents are familiar with the term "textile pollution," knowledge of its full environmental impact remains moderate. A significant 96.3% acknowledge the textile industry's environmental harm, with water pollution (82.7%) and landfill waste (71.6%) identified as major concerns. Social media (77.8%) is the primary information source, highlighting the role of digital platforms in spreading awareness. While nearly half (49.4%) sometimes consider environmental impact when purchasing clothing, only 18.5% consistently do so, indicating a gap between awareness and action. Sustainable fashion awareness is high (84%), yet ethical labour practices and slow fashion are less understood. Comfort (84%), price (71.6%), and durability (67.9%) are primary purchasing drivers, outweighing environmental concerns. Encouragingly, 72.8% express interest in learning more about sustainable fashion, presenting an opportunity for increased education and advocacy. The study underscores the need for targeted awareness campaigns to bridge knowledge gaps and promote sustainable consumer behaviour.

Keywords: consumer perception, consumer awareness, sustainability, textile waste, pollution, sustainable practices.

INTRODUCTION:

India's textile industry is a key pillar of the economy, contributing 7% to GDP and employing over 45 million people. As the world's second-largest manufacturer and exporter after China, it supplies diverse products to local and global markets, with major hubs in Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Punjab.

However, the industry is also a major pollutant, contributing to water contamination, air pollution, and soil degradation. India generates 7,800 kilotons of textile waste annually (8.5% of the global total), much of which ends up in landfills, harming ecosystems and exacerbating climate change. The sector also exposes workers to severe health risks, including respiratory diseases and cancer.

Fast fashion and poor waste management worsen the crisis, yet consumer awareness—especially among youth—remains limited. While sustainability movements are gaining traction, actionable knowledge is still lacking. Since young consumers shape market trends and influence societal norms, studying their awareness of textile pollution is crucial. Their demand for sustainable products can drive industry change, fostering long-term environmental responsibility.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research examines youth perception and awareness of textile pollution in Bhopal, focusing on their role in sustainability. It explores their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, particularly in the context of fast fashion. The study also assesses their willingness to adopt eco-friendly choices and the impact of awareness on purchasing decisions. Findings will offer recommendations for policy, marketing strategies, and consumer education to promote sustainable fashion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The effluents being discharged into the stream by the textile industry have considerable negative effects on the water quality of the sampled stream and as such, the stream is polluted and the water is not good for human consumption and domestic use. Based on this, it is therefore recommended that the effluents from the textile industry should be treated before being disposed into the water-bodies. (Awomeso, 2010) The aquatic toxicity of textile industry wastewater varies considerably among production facilities. The sources of aquatic toxicity can include salt, surfactants, ionic metals and their metal complexes, toxic organic chemicals, biocides and toxic anionic. (Imtiazuddin, 2012) The textile effluents contain toxic metals, high oxygen demanding wastes and appreciable amount of sulphide. This study also indicates the presence and the deleterious effects of industrial pollutants in general and sulphide in particular, as alarmingly high concentration of sulphide (608 times higher than the permissible limit) being discharged into Kabul River. This could logically be linked with the substantial decrease in fish crop specifically at and downstream of the discharging point, and overall reduction in fish population in the Kabul River (ABRAR, 2011). Water pollution is caused due to Mining, Agricultural Wastes and Industrial effluent such as paint, dyeing units etc. In textile production, opportunities exist for the release of potentially hazardous compounds into the ecosystem at various stages of the operation. These pollutants are produced in an effort to improve human standard of living and fashion but ironically, their unplanned intrusion into the environment can reverse the same standard of living by impacting negatively on the environment. (Mohan, 2017) Textile, the second biggest polluter, and the ecological harm is increasing as the business develops that has resulted in 5% of global landfill is taken up by dumped textile waste. (Aishwariya, 2020). It revealed that responsibility toward the environment is directly proportional to knowledge and concern. Findings also suggested that the university and the electronic media have a significant role to increase the environmental awareness among the students. (Zannat, 2021). From the initial purchase of a textile to its care and longevity, consumer behaviours are at the core of consumption associated with the textile industry. Making consumers aware of the environmental impacts of the clothing products they buy help them to choose the best alternative which has the lower footprints and also enable

them to help the entire textile sector to become sustainable. (Muthu, 2023). Every year, in Pakistan about 270,125.34 metric tons of textile waste is generated including about 19,304.58 tons from Karachi. Among the Pakistan's economic classes, the highest amount textiles are discarded by the lower income class (class C), class A+ tends to trash about 195 Kg of clothing annually, whereas classes A and B demonstrate an annual discards of 150 and 105 Kg of textile waste respectively. (Shehzad M. B., 2024). The findings show that approximately >40% of people do not even understand the idea of textile waste management and about >70% are unaware about the concept of textile waste recycling. Survey results indicate that currently the majority of the textile industries are lacking adequate arrangements and research and development in textile waste management. (Shehzad M. B., 2024)

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS:

A Google Forms questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp and Instagram to gather responses from 100 participants aged 15-35 in Bhopal. The survey measured awareness, perceptions, and behaviors related to textile pollution. Responses were analyzed using Google Sheets and Excel to identify trends in consumer awareness and purchasing behavior regarding sustainable fashion.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY:

The relevance of this project lies in its focus on understanding and promoting sustainability in textile consumption among Bhopal's youth, a demographic known to shape consumer trends. As textile pollution is prevalent in India as one of the environmental concerns, the result of this study will help in creating focused awareness and educational campaigns. With limited research available on this topic in Bhopal, the project offers localized insights that can inform stakeholders about the specific attitudes, challenges, and motivations of young consumers, thus contributing to efforts in fostering responsible consumption behaviours within this demographic. This project's structured, clear, and achievable goals ensure impactful results that will enhance understanding of youth awareness and foster environmentally responsible consumption patterns within India's textile sector.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the level of awareness among Bhopal youth on textile pollution in India.
- To find the consumer perception of young people in Bhopal city on textile waste and sustainable fashion.
- To determine the willingness among the youth of Bhopal city to engage with eco-friendly alternatives.

METHODOLOGY

1. **Research Design:** This study employed a quantitative approach using an online questionnaire to assess youth awareness and perception of textile pollution in Bhopal. The method ensured efficient data collection and participant anonymity.
2. **Target Population:** Young adults (18-35 years) in Bhopal were chosen due to their active role in consumer culture and sustainability movements.

3. **Sampling Technique:** A purposive sampling method was used, distributing the survey via social media and Bhopal School of Social Sciences (BSSS) networks, yielding 100 responses.
4. **Data Collection Tool:** A Google Forms questionnaire covered:
 - **Demographics:** Age, gender, education.
 - **Awareness:** Knowledge of textile pollution and its impact.
 - **Consumer Behaviour:** Shopping habits, sustainability preferences.
 - **Information Sources:** How respondents learned about textile pollution.
5. **Questionnaire Design:** Included closed-ended and Likert scale questions to quantify awareness, perceptions, and behaviours.
6. **Data Collection Process:** The survey remained open for two weeks, ensuring voluntary participation with anonymity.
7. **Data Analysis:** Data was cleaned in Excel and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores) to identify awareness trends and consumer behaviour correlations.

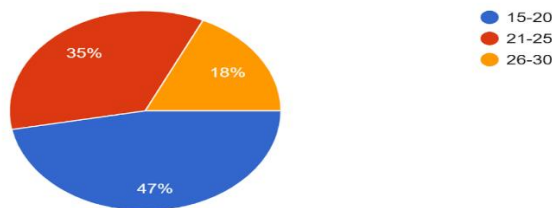
ANALYSIS:

1. Age

Age of the respondents	No. of respondents	Percentages
15-20	47	47%
21-25	35	35%
26-30	18	18%

Figure1:

Which among the following age group do you belong to?
100 responses

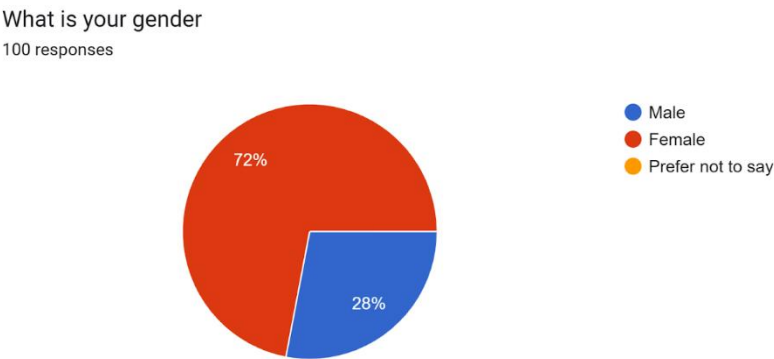


2. Gender

Table2: Gender of the respondents.

Gender	No. of respondents	Percentages
Male	28	28%
Female	72	72%
Other	0	0

Figure2:

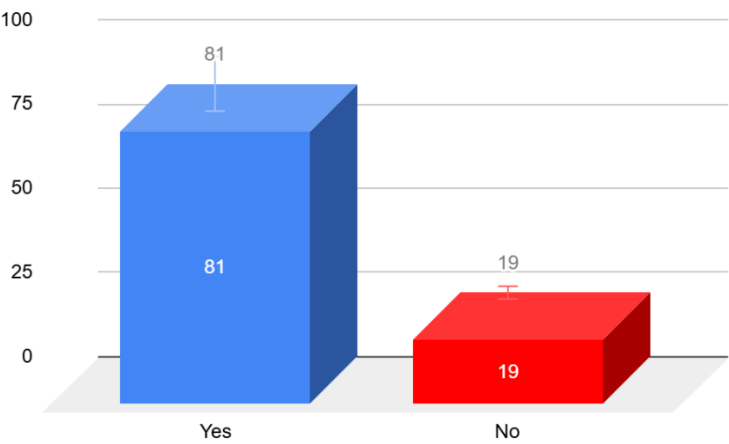


3. Awareness of the term “textile pollution”.

Table3:

Aware or Not	No. of respondents	Percentages
Yes	81	81%
No	19	19%

Figure 3:



4. Familiarity with the impact of textile waste in India.

Table 4:

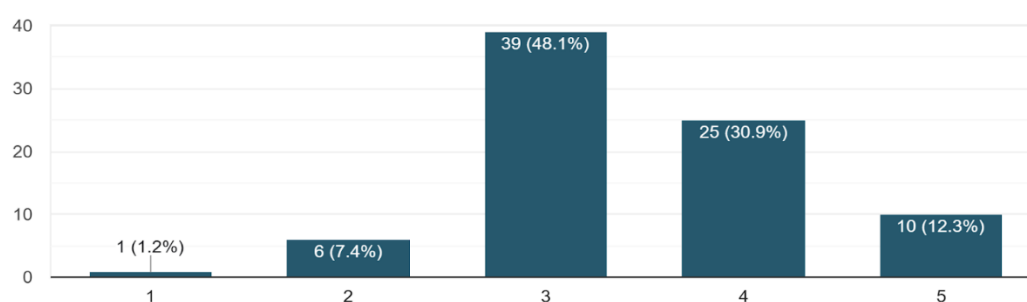
Scale from 1-5	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	1	1.2%

2	6	7.4%
3	39	48.1%
4	25	30.9%
5	10	12.3%

Figure 4:

If yes, on a scale of 1 to 5, how familiar are you with the environmental impact of textile waste?

81 responses



5. Awareness about the environmental harm caused by the textile industry.

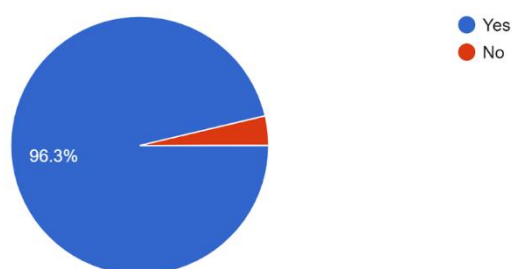
Table 5:

Attributes	No. of respondents	percentage
Yes	78	96.3%
No	3	3.7%

Figure 5:

Have you heard about the environmental pollution caused by the textile industry?

81 responses



6. Information sources about textile pollution.

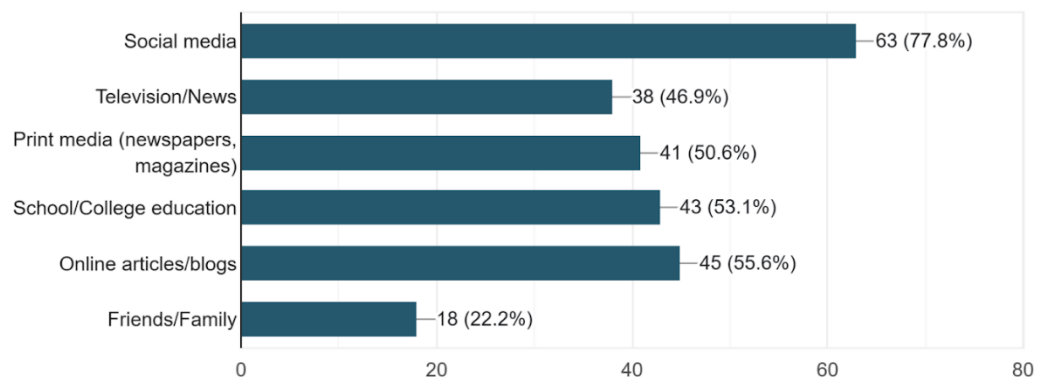
Table 6:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentage
Social media	63	77.8%
T.V. or News	38	46.9%
Print media	41	50.6%
Educational institutes	43	53.1%
Online article or blogs	45	55.6%
Family/Friends	18	22.2%

Figure 6:

If yes, what sources have informed you about textile pollution? (Select all that apply)

81 responses

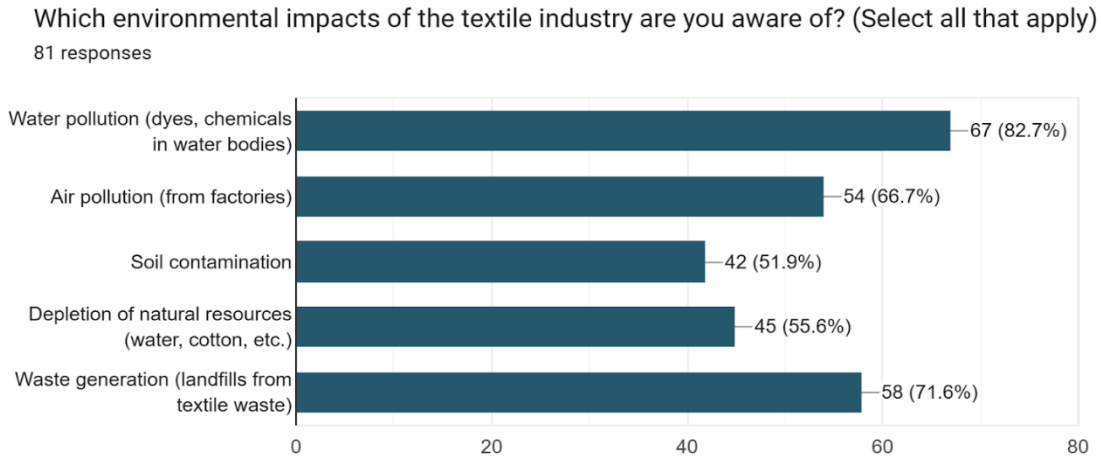


a. Awareness on environmental impacts of textile industry.

Table 7:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentage
Water pollution	67	82.7%
Air pollution	54	66.7%
Soil contamination	42	51.9%
Depletion of resources	45	55.6%
Landfills	58	71.6%

Figure 7:



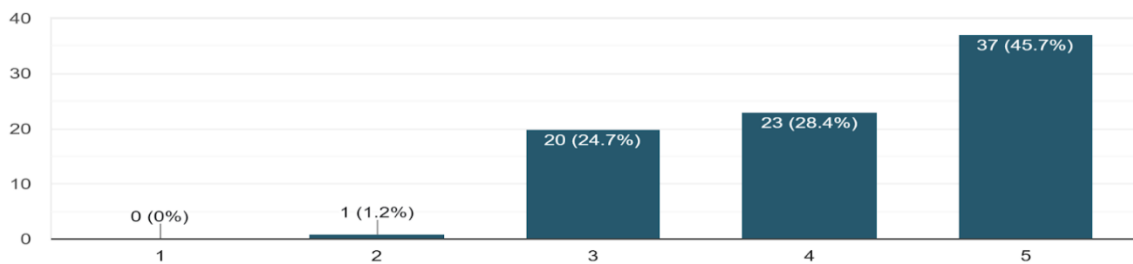
b. Perception on the seriousness of textile pollution as an environmental issue.

Table 8:

Attributes(scale from 1-5)	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	0	0
2	1	1.2%
3	20	24.7%
4	23	28.4%
5	37	45.7%

Figure 8:

On a scale of 1 to 5, how serious do you think textile pollution is as an environmental issue?
81 responses



c. Perception on possible contributors of textile pollution.

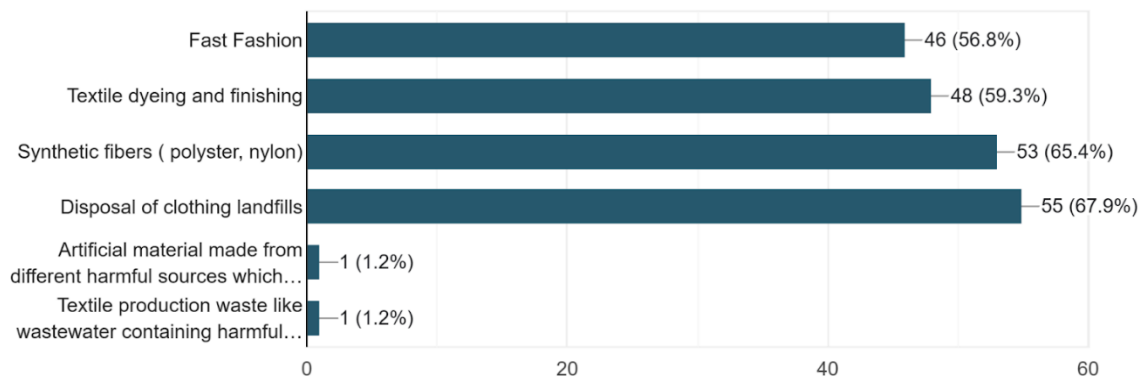
Table 9:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Fast fashion	46	46%
Dye	48	59.3%
Synthetic fibres	53	65.4%
Landfills	55	67.9%
Other	2	2.4%

Figure 9:

What do u think are the main contributors to textile pollution? (select all that apply)

81 responses



d. Awareness on the environmental harm caused by synthetic fibres, like micro plastic pollution.

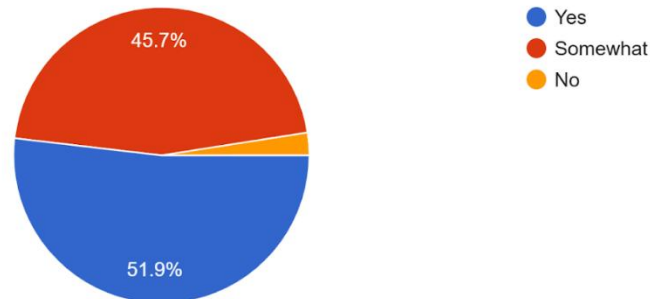
Table 10:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Yes	42	51.9%
No	2	2.5%
somewhat	37	45.7%

Figure 10:

Are you aware of the enviornmental harm caused by synthetic fibers, like microplastic pollution?

81 responses



e. Awareness during purchase decision.

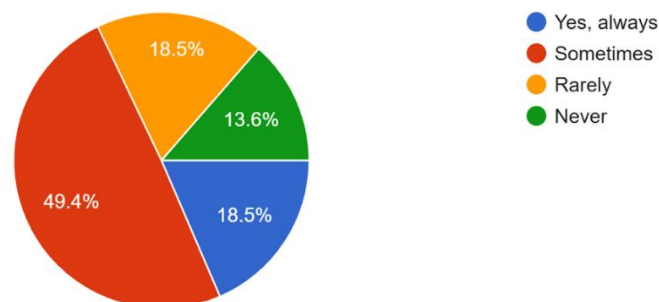
Table 11:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	15	18.5%
Sometimes	40	49.4%
Rarely	15	18.5%
Never	11	13.6%

Figure 11:

Do you consider the enviornmental impact when purchasing clothing?

81 responses



f. Awareness on sustainable fashion.

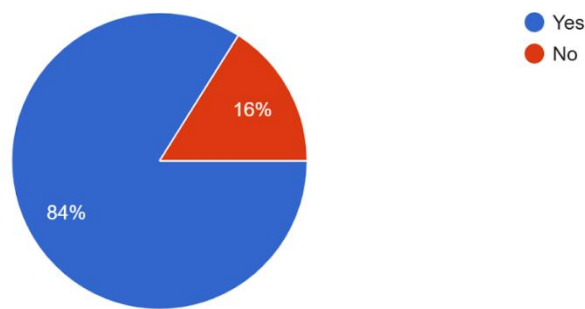
Table12:

Attribute	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	68	84%
No	13	16%

Figure 12:

Are you aware of the term "sustainable fashion"?

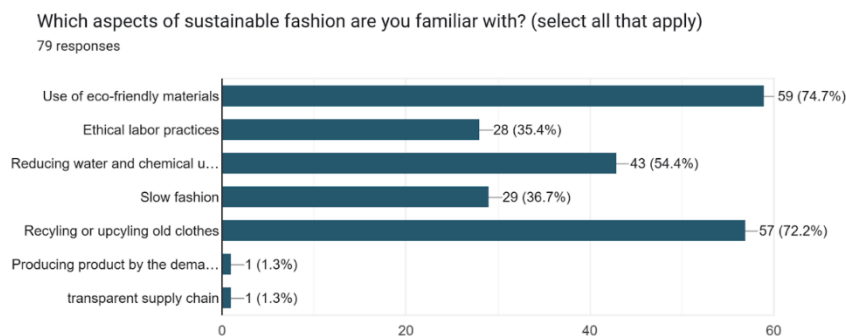
81 responses



g. Awareness on sustainable aspect of fashion.

Table 13:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Eco-friendly materials	59	74.7%
Ethical labour practices	28	35.4%
Reducing use of water and chemicals	43	59.4%
Slow fashion	29	36.7%
Recycling and up cycling	57	72.2%
Other	2	2.6%

Figure 13:

h. Awareness on factors influencing purchase decision.

Table 14:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Price	58	71.6%
Brand	40	49.4%
Comfort	68	84%
Durability	55	67.9%
Fashion trends	40	49.4%
Eco-friendly	39	48.1%
Availability	25	30.9%

Figure 14:



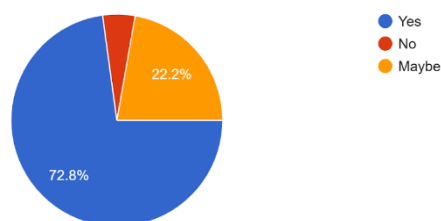
i. Perception in learning more about eco-friendly options.

Table 15:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Yes	59	72.8%
No	4	4.9%
Maybe	18	22.2%

Figure 15:

Would you be interested in learning more about sustainable fashion practices?
81 responses



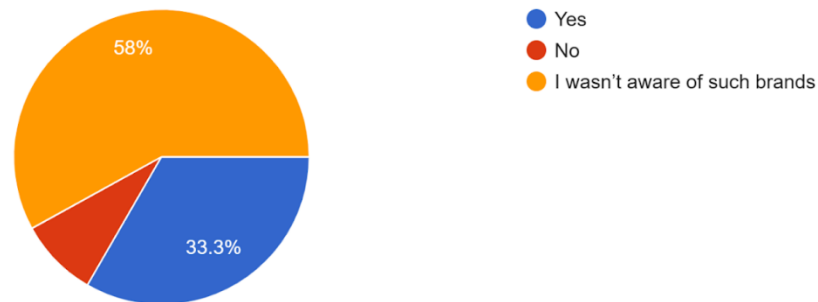
j. Awareness about textile pollution and brands contributing to it.**Table 16:**

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Yes	27	33.3%
No	7	8.6%
Wasn't aware	47	58%

Figure 16:

Have you ever actively avoided buying clothing from brands that you know contribute to textile pollution?

81 responses

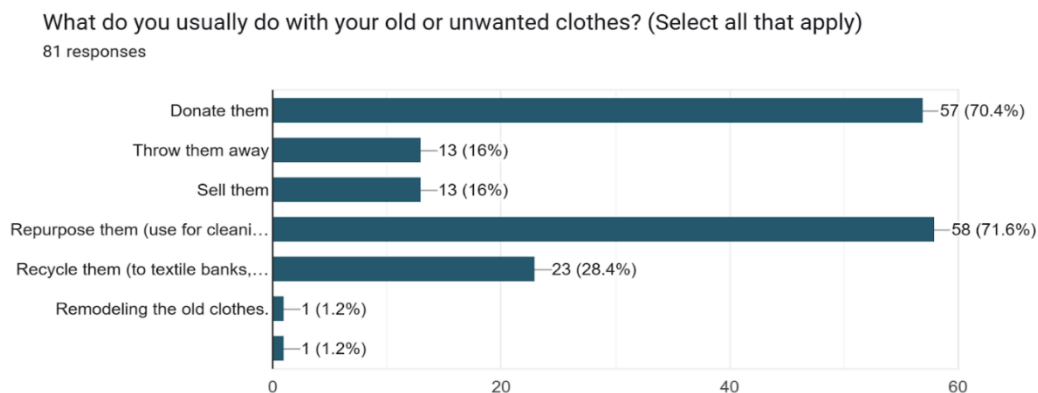


Interpretation: 33.3% of respondents actively avoid buying from brands that contribute to textile pollution, while 58% weren't aware of these brands' impact, and 8.6% do not avoid them. This shows a lack of awareness among most respondents.

k. How individual deal with unwanted clothes.**Table 17:**

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Donation	57	70.4%
Throw in as trash	13	16%
Selling	13	16%
Repurposing	58	71.6%
Recycling	23	28.4%
Others	2	2.4%

Figure 17:



l. Willingness to engage with sustainable options.

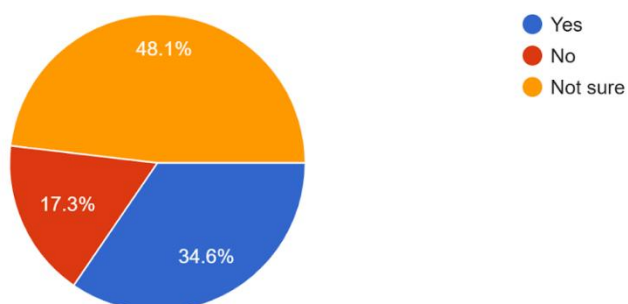
Table 18:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Yes	28	34.6%
No	14	17.3%
Not sure	39	48.1%

Figure 18:

Have you ever purchased clothing from sustainable or eco-friendly brands?

81 responses



m. Perception on current level of awareness on textile pollution.

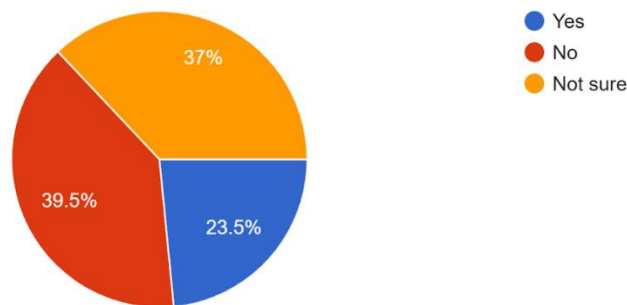
Table 19:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Yes	19	23.5%
No	32	39.5%
Not sure	30	37%

Figure 19:

Do you think enough is being done to address textile pollution?

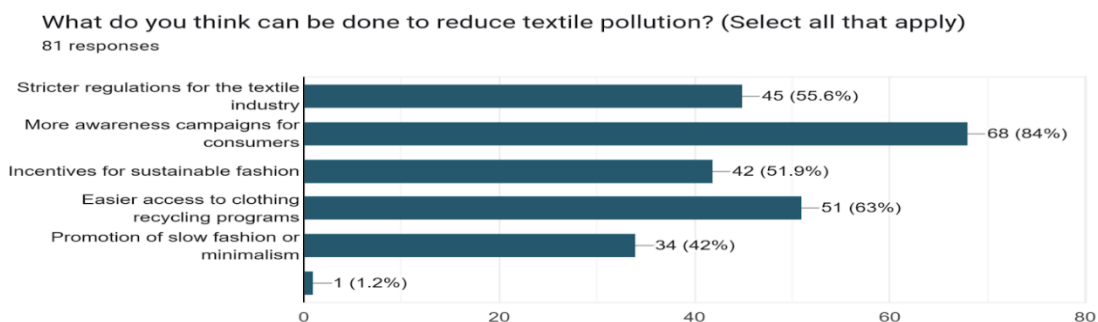
81 responses



n. Suggestions on what can be done to reduce textile pollution.

Table 20:

Attributes	No. of respondents	Percentages
Strict regulations	45	55.6%
Awareness campaigns	68	84%
Incentives	42	51.9%
Easy access to recycling programmes	51	63%
Promotion of slow fashion	34	42%
Other	1	1.2%

Figure 20:

FINDINGS:

The study, with a majority of respondents aged 15-20 (72% female), revealed high awareness of textile pollution (81%), yet moderate understanding of its full environmental impact. Nearly all participants (96.3%) recognized the industry's environmental harm, primarily learning about it through social media (77.8%). Water pollution (82.7%) and landfill waste (71.6%) were the most recognized impacts.

While 74.1% viewed textile pollution as a serious issue, only 18.5% consistently considered environmental factors when purchasing clothing. Comfort (84%), price (71.6%), and durability (67.9%) influenced buying decisions more than sustainability. Although 84% were familiar with sustainable fashion, fewer understood ethical labor practices and slow fashion.

Handling unwanted clothing was largely sustainable, with high donation (70.4%) and repurposing (71.6%) rates, but low engagement with recycling (28.4%) or sustainable brands (34.6%). Most respondents (39.5%) felt insufficient action was being taken, suggesting awareness campaigns (84%), better recycling access (63%), and stricter regulations (55.6%) as key solutions. The findings highlight the need for stronger educational outreach and industry accountability to promote sustainable consumer behavior.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. **Strengthen Awareness & Education:** Leverage social media, educational institutions, and digital platforms to enhance understanding of textile pollution and sustainable fashion. Integrate environmental education in schools and colleges to foster responsible consumption habits.
2. **Promote Sustainable Practices & Consumer Incentives:** Encourage eco-friendly materials, ethical fashion, and recycling/upcycling initiatives. Introduce incentives for sustainable purchases and improve accessibility to textile recycling programs.
3. **Enhance Industry Accountability & Policy Measures:** Support stricter regulations on textile production, increase transparency in brand practices, and promote eco-labeling to help consumers make informed, sustainable choices.

CONCLUSION:

The study highlights both awareness and challenges among Bhopal's youth regarding textile pollution. While many recognize general environmental issues, awareness of the textile industry's specific impact remains limited, influencing purchasing decisions driven by trends and affordability rather than sustainability. Despite this gap, there is strong potential for change, as many youths express interest in learning about sustainable fashion and are inclined toward eco-friendly brands. To bridge the gap between awareness and action, educational campaigns, industry transparency, and affordable sustainable options are essential. Achieving lasting impact requires collaboration between consumers, policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders. Integrating environmental education, promoting sustainable fashion, and implementing supportive policies can foster responsible consumption. By leveraging youth consciousness and fostering cross-sector partnerships, India can work toward a cleaner and more sustainable textile industry.

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