

CREATING CONSUMER AWARENESS AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to find out the level of consumer awareness in higher secondary students. The investigator adopted experimental study. The sample consisted of 200 higher secondary students from four schools, 50 students from each school. The investigator taught consumer awareness through lecture, demonstration, exhibition and computer assisted instruction. The result revealed that there was significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of higher secondary students in all the four methods. The demonstration method had higher mean difference for boys and the lecture method had higher mean difference for girls.

INTRODUCTION

The field of education is very vast. It includes all those activities and experiences, which prepare the individual to engage them in activities for their own good, and the good of the society of which they are an integral part.

Every citizen of India whether young or old, rich or poor, male or female is a consumer of goods and services from the time of their birth. A consumer is a person who buys goods or services to be used or consumed by himself/herself or by someone else on behalf of the buyer. Goods may include both consumable items and durable consumer goods, while services paid for may be transport, electricity, film-shows and the like. Consumers are the largest economic group in any country. They are the central point of all economic activities.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, "A consumer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in work. He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider of our business. He is a part of it. We are not doing a favour by serving him. He is doing us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so."

Swami Vivekananda also believed that "the consumer is the king". Being economically independent, the developed countries have succeeded in creating institutions and political systems that make their consumer a king. However, the developing countries have a long way to reach this goal, because of various factors, the important of which is the unhealthy competition among producers (Chattergie, 2004).

Consumers in India are very heterogeneous in composition, following different religions, speaking different languages, using very different products and services and adhering closely to their varied traditions. They are also largely poor, illiterate and ignorant and therefore willing to take very little risk with their spending. (Gupta 1997).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the consumer behavior among the selected groups.
2. To create consumer awareness among selected school children by giving packages through imparting knowledge on consumerism.
3. To identify the extent of awareness of the students about the rights of the consumer.
4. To suggest certain measures for improving the awareness among the consumer about their rights and remedies available for better consumer protection.

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NEED FOR THE STUDY

In a competitive economy like India, it is the consumer who decides the success or failure of business, either by buying or not buying the product. The consumers in their daily life are confronted with problems like escalating prices, misleading advertisement, adulteration, substandard products, artificial scarcities, black marketing, underweighting and measurement.

Illiteracy, lack of consumer education, ignorance of consumer rights, laziness in exercising vigilance against exploitation, poverty and difficulty in the implementation of available consumer laws are some of the reasons why the consumers are being exploited.

The purpose of consumer education is to influence consumer behavior. The investigator felt the imperative need to create consumer awareness at the higher secondary level and help the students understand the rights and responsibilities of every consumer.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1. This study would help focus on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption-related items.
2. This study would help the individuals to identify the day-to-day problems in consumerism.
3. This study may help the individuals in becoming aware about consumerism and to make correct decisions after weighing alternatives.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference between the pre and post-test scores with regard to various aspects of the package.
2. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

METHODOLOGY

Quasi experimental pre-test test design was followed. A pre-test was given to the sample selected to find out their level of knowledge. Based on the results, a package was prepared and its efficacy was tested through a post test.

TOOL CONSTRUCTION

As there was no standardized tool available relevant to the present study, a checklist consisting of 40 questions with yes or no response was prepared by the investigator to evaluate the knowledge and attitude of higher secondary school students on consumerism. The constructed tool was refined through jury opinion and pilot study. The same checklist was used for pre and post tests.

SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The area selected for the study was Coimbatore city. Four schools were selected for the study i.e one government school, one government aided school, one corporation school and one private school. The sample of the present study consisting of 200 higher secondary students of 11th standard were selected using the simple random sampling technique. 25 boys and 25 girls formed the sample from each school.

S.No.	School	Sample	
		Boys	Girls
1	Pannimadai Government Higher Secondary School	25	25
2	Avinashilingam Girls Higher Secondary School	25	25
3	Corporation Higher Secondary School	25	25
4	Jaycee Matriculation School	25	25

CONSTRUCTION OF THE PACKAGE

The investigator prepared a consumer awareness package in order to teach aspects of consumer awareness to the adolescents. The package included the following aspects.

- Introduction about consumer awareness.
- Rights of consumer awareness.
- Adulterated foods and adulterants and relevant pictures.

METHODS OF TEACHING

For using the package the investigator selected different methods of teaching.

- Education through lecture method.
- Education through demonstration method.
- Education through exhibition method.
- Education through computer assisted instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively to find out the importance of consumer awareness. The quantitative analysis included differential and co relational studies. The collected data were consolidated, tabulated and analyzed statistically by using the following tests.

- Test of significance (t-test and ANOVA)
- Mean, standard deviation and percentage.

Table 1

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTS

S.No	Category	Levels	Numbers (200)	Percentage
I	Family income	Low income	78	39.00
		Middle income	95	47.50
		High income	27	13.50

The family income is divided into three levels. The low income group ranged from a monthly income of Rs.100 to 2500/-. The middle income group ranged from Rs.2501-5000/- and the people getting more than Rs.5000 per month were classified as the high income group. Thirty nine percent of the students belonged to low income families, 47.5 percent belonged to middle income families and only 13.5 percent belonged to high income families.

Table 2

ANALYSIS OF THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS ON CONSUMER EDUCATION

S.No	Overall performance	Mean	S.D	't' value
1	Pre-test score	19.23	5.83	28.917**
2	Post-test score	27.99	6.95	

**Significant at 0.01 level

The purpose of the package was to educate higher secondary students on consumer awareness. Statistical analysis showed a significant difference between the pre and post-test scores on consumer education. The mean value of the post-test scores 27.99 is higher than the pre-test score 19.23. Therefore, there exists a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores which showed that the students gained much knowledge on consumer awareness through the package.

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Table 3

STUDENTS PERFORMANCE BASED ON THEIR PARENTAL INCOME

S.No	Income Range	Scores	Mean	Mean difference	S.D	%
1	Low income (Rs. 1000-2500)	Pre-test	17.24	7.41	4.00	18.52
		Post-test	24.65		4.93	
2	Middle income (Rs. 2501-5000)	Pre-test	19.63	9.37	6.02	23.42
		Post-test	29.00		7.05	
3	High income (Above Rs.5000)	Pre-test	23.59	10.52	7.03	26.30
		Post-test	34.11		6.49	

The performance hike is at its maximum in the high income group with a mean difference of 10.52. The consumer education imparted had an impact on the middle income group with a mean difference of 9.37 and the third place in performance hike is secured by the low income group with the mean difference of 7.41. This shows that parental income has an influence in getting more awareness on consumerism.

Table 4

ANALYSIS OF BOYS' SCORES WHO UNDERWENT CONSUMER AWARENESS PROGRAMMES BY DIFFERENT METHODS

S.No	Methods	Scores	Mean	Mean difference	S.D	%
1	Exhibition	Pre-test	15.68	6.12	3.23	15.3
		Post-test	21.80		3.42	
2	Lecture	Pre-test	26.56	10.12	3.90	25.3
		Post-test	36.68		2.62	
3	Demonstration	Pre-test	16.76	11.28	2.97	28.2
		Post-test	28.04		2.87	
4	Computer assisted	Pre-test	15.25	7.52	4.09	18.8
		Post-test	22.76		5.56	

Table 4 shows the analysis of boys' scores from different schools. The pre-post test mean difference scores of all the boys show a significant difference. The significant differences between pre and post-test scores reveal the performance hike in the students which is the result of the package given.

From the statistics, it is concluded that the demonstration method (11.28) stands superior followed by the lecture method, computer assisted instruction and the exhibition method in educating boys on consumerism.

Table 5

ANALYSIS OF GIRLS' SCORES WHO UNDERWENT CONSUMER AWARENESS PROGRAMMES BY DIFFERENT METHODS

S.No	Methods	Scores	Mean	Mean difference	S.D	%
1	Exhibition	Pre-test	18.48	5.68	3.69	14.2
		Post-test	21.46		4.13	
2	Lecture	Pre-test	25.84	11.56	4.33	28.9
		Post-test	37.4		1.60	
3	Demonstration	Pre-test	16.56	7.12	3.06	17.8
		Post-test	23.68		3.68	
4	Computer assisted instruction	Pre-test	18.76	10.68	6.57	26.7
		Post-test	29.44		5.83	

The mean difference scores show that all the selected methods acted positively in bringing about consumer awareness. Moreover consumer awareness gained through the lecture method appeared to be definitely superior followed by computer assisted instruction, exhibition and demonstration methods in instructing girls on consumerism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The major recommendations of the study are :

1. In schools, teachers should motivate the students to be wiser consumers through drama, debates, symposium etc.
2. The children shall be encouraged to come forward to express consumer problems and issues. Exchange of experiences and ideas can thus be facilitated. Those children should then be rewarded with prizes and merit certificates.

3. Efforts shall be taken to promote the awareness of the perils of consumerism and the introduction of consumer education at the school level.

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CONCLUSION

Education plays a very important role in the evolution of the society into a dynamic and vibrant system that could respond to the challenges of the times. The quality of education then assumes the foremost significance especially for its role in the information of future generations.

The investigator hopes that the findings of this study will in course of time help the educational institutions to impart education in consumer's rights. Consumer education is a lifelong process of acquiring relevant information, knowledge and skills. It is an important aspect which needs to be given much importance which will enhance the standard of living of the people.

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GRATITUDE TO OLD TEACHERS

When we stride or stroll across the frozen lake,
 We place our feet where they have never been.
 We walk upon the unwalked. But we are uneasy.
 Who is down there but our old teachers?
 Water that once could take no human weight-
 We were students then- holds up our feet,
 And goes on ahead of us for a mile.
 Beneath us the teachers, and around us the stillness
By Robert Bly (from "Eating The Honey of Words")