ijamrsd.com
ISSN: 2583-6404
Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research Studies and Development
Peer Reviewed Referred Journal | Bi-monthly | Open Access

IMPACT OF PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF STUDENTS ON THEIR ECO-CENTRIC BEHAVIOUR

Swapnesh Rangnekar
Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Studies, S.I.W.S. N.R. Swamy College of Commerce & Economics and Smt. Thirumalai College of Science, Wadala, Mumbai – 400031.
Email: swapneshrangnekar@siwscollege.edu.in

Abstract
Global educational agendas have made environmental sustainability a top priority, but students' conversion of environmental awareness into eco-centric behavior is still uneven. By examining how awareness, attitudes, and social norms influence environmentally conscious behavior, this study examines the connection between students' perceived environmental consciousness and their eco-centric behavior. Higher perceived environmental consciousness significantly predicts eco-centric behaviors like reuse and recycling, resource conservation and sustainable consumption, according to the results of this mixed-methods study that included a survey of undergraduate students and in-depth interviews with them. Peer influence and environmental self-efficacy also showed up as important mediators. Discussion of the implications for policy interventions and environmental education will surely help to reduce the ill effects of environmental issues.
Keywords: Behaviour, Eco-centric, Environmental Consciousness, Student.

► *Corresponding Author: Swapnesh Rangnekar*

1. Introduction

Among the most pressing global issues of the twenty-first century are climate change, environmental pollution, drinking water unavailability, deforestation, habitat destruction and the loss of biodiversity. As both current consumers of resources and potential future leaders, students are an essential component in the development of sustainable practices. The educational institutions have incorporated environmental education in their curriculum by which these a strong correlation can be established between the students' perceived environmental consciousness and the actual eco-centric behaviour which they exhibit.

Eco-centric behaviour refers to human actions driven by a nature-cantered worldview that prioritizes the intrinsic value of the entire ecological system over purely human interests. (Bron Taylor, 2020) It states that the humans are not superior to nature, bur are part of an independent, interconnected web of life. Nature has its own importance, its value beyond its use or economic utility to humanity. It believes that all the all the living organisms and systems have the right to exist and flourish. Humans with the extent of intelligence should act as stewards of nature, and not the exploiters.

This study investigates whether students who study subjects on ‘environment’ actually behave in an eco-centric manner on a regular basis and what are the factors that affect this relationship. Perceived environmental consciousness means the degree to which people think they understand and care about the environmental issues. It refers to the actions such as biodiversity conservation, empathy towards living organisms, reuse and recycling of materials, water conservation, optimum

use of energy resources and practicing sustainable development are all referred as eco-centric behaviour.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Environmental Consciousness and Behavioural Alterations

Earlier studies have put forth environmental consciousness as a multi-faceted concept that includes elements of cognitive (knowledge), affective (concern), and behavioral intention. (Schultz, 2004) Individual actions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, according to the Theory of Planned Behavior. (Ajzen, 1991)

2.2 Perception versus Behaviour

It refers to a value-action gap. Although students show a strong concern for the environment, they do not consistently behave in an eco-centric manner. (Agyeman, 2002). This disparity is moderated by elements like perceived self-efficacy, peer influence, media impact and convenience. (Bissing-Olson, 2013)

2.3 Educational and Social Influences

According to Pooley and O'Connor (2000), environmental education has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on knowledge and attitudes, but it is less successful at enforcing behavioral change in the absence of social and institutional support. (O'Connor, 2000) Behavior is significantly shaped by peer norms and campus sustainability initiatives (Catell, 2021)

3. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives:

1. To assess the level of perceived environmental consciousness among under-graduate students
2. To examine the extent of their eco-centric behaviours
3. To analyze the relationship between perceived environmental consciousness and eco-centric behaviour
4. To identify mediating factors influencing this relationship

Hypotheses:

H1: Higher perceived environmental consciousness is positively associated with stronger eco-centric behaviours.

H2: Environmental self-efficacy mediates the relationship between perceived consciousness and behaviour.

H3: Peer influence moderates the impact of perceived consciousness on eco-centric actions.

4. Methods

4.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected via a structured online questionnaire. Personal interviews were collected as a part of qualitative data collection. This provided a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of complex issue.

4.2 Sample Description

Undergraduate students from diverse disciplines were randomly sampled across the educational institutes in Mumbai metropolitan region on random basis. Demographics included 55% females and 45% males, aged 18–21 years.

4.3 Instruments

Perceived Environmental Consciousness Scale (PECS): A validated Likert scale assessing environmental knowledge, concern, and commitment.

Eco-Centric Behaviour Inventory (ECBI): A behaviour frequency scale.

Environmental Self-Efficacy Scale

Peer Influence Indicators

4.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using regression analysis in MS-Excel. Qualitative interviews were coded thematically.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Mean scores indicated moderate to high perceived environmental consciousness (M = 3.90, SD = 0.96) and varying levels of eco-centric behaviour (M = 2.97, SD = 0.83).

5.2 Hypothesis Testing

H1: Perceived environmental consciousness significantly predicted eco-centric behaviour (χ^2 = 0.87, $p < 0.05$).

H2: Environmental self-efficacy positively influenced this relationship (correlation coefficient r = 0.213).

H3: Peer influence significantly moderated the association, strengthening the effect when peer norms favored sustainability ($\chi^2 = 2.656$, $p < 0.05$).

5.3 Qualitative Insights

Interviews highlighted barriers such as lack of institutional infrastructure and inconsistent social reinforcement, social media influence and peer pressure despite strong personal convictions.

6. Discussion

The findings support the notion that perceived environmental consciousness is a strong predictor of eco-centric behavior, even though it does not operate independently. Self-efficacy and social contexts are significant factors. Students who feel they can make a difference and are a part of peer networks that are focused on sustainability are more likely to act in an environmentally conscious way on a regular basis.

According to this study, knowledge and information are not sufficient, so supportive environments and psychological empowerment are essential. Workshops, hands-on trainings, recycling facilities, nature trails and well documented practical policies are needed for practice of eco-centric behaviour in daily life.

7. Conclusion

This study advances our knowledge on students' perceptions of environmental consciousness impact on their behavior. The data highlights how important it is to encourage sustainable lifestyles by fostering positive social environments, self-assurance and awareness. Higher education institutions should integrate peer-led programs and practical sustainability initiatives to bridge the knowledge-behavior gap.

8. References

1. Agyeman, A. K. (2002). Mind the Gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior? *Environmental Education Research*, 239-260.

2. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 179-211.
3. Bissing-Olson, M. J. (2013). Relations between environmental self-identity, self-efficacy, and pro-environmental behaviour. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.
4. Bron Taylor, G. C. (2020). The need for ecocentrism in biodiversity conservation. *Conservation Biology*, 1089-1096.
5. Catell, R. (2021). Peer influence and sustainability on campus. *Sustainability Education Review.*
6. O'Connor, J. A. (2000). Environmental Education and Attitudes: Emotions and Beliefs are What is Needed. *Environment and Behaviour*, 711-723.
7. Schultz, P. W. (2004). Linking attitudes and behaviour. *Journal of Social Issues*.