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Influence of Environmental Concern and Cultural Biases on the Pro-Environment Behaviour of the Students

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Abstract

While deciding SDG (Sustainable Development Goals), one goal is about responsible production and consumption of resources. It is evident that the way humans are using natural and man-made resources is resulting in its scarcity. Various anthropogenic activities adopted have been contributing to the deteriorating condition of the environment. There are few research available where high environmental concern and knowledge led to more environment protective behaviour and also few failed to prove the same. The present study aims to understand the role of concern for environment and different cultural biases of students studying different course in Meerut on their pro-environment behaviour.

Keywords: Pro-Environment Behaviour (PEB), Environmental Concern, Environmental Knowledge, Cultural Biases

Introduction

The philosophy behind the concept of sustainable development implies giving better and classic future to our coming generations. In contribution, various policies and procedures developed for the sake of advancement and the neglected contribution done by individuals to protect the environment has been studied many times by the researchers (Turaga et al., 2010; Zenelaj, 2013). Anthropogenic activities are considered to be the main reason for many environmental problems out of all, pro-environment behaviour is considered as a major tool to protect the environment (Stern, 2000; Chen et al., 2017).

In 2015, UN established sustainable development goals (SDG), which were about "Life on Land" by showing "Responsible Consumption and Production" one of the SDG to be achieved by 2030. It is considered that to behave in an environmentally friendly manner, people should have a high level of awareness about the deteriorating conditions of the environment. In fact, various behaviour influencing factors should have been identified. There are many behavioural factors exist, which results in the creation of environment awareness, intention to protect the environment and at last environment friendly behaviour. In the same manner, an individual's concern as well as cultural orientation can also be proved dominant factors required to promote environmentally friendly behaviour (Adger et al.; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Tam & Chan, 2017; Bamberg & Möser, 2007; 2013; Price et al., 2014). Therefore, the present study of pro-environment behaviour will try to investigate the connection between environmental concern and cultural differences to behave pro-environmentally.

Pro-Environment Behaviour

Pro-environment behaviour is relatively not a new term in the research area. Many researchers have been done to know and understand the behavioural pattern, as it is a complex one to study pro-environment behaviour has been defined differently by different researchers and gave many alternate denominations also.

Authors	*Meaning/Denominations*
Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002)	Conscious behavior of any individual for the purpose to minimize the impact cynical impact on the environment of their actions.
Lynn (2014)	That behavior which has less impact than an alternate behavior.
De Young (2000)	Environmentally responsible behavior.
Kaiser (1998)	Ecological-Behavior.

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Authors	*Meaning/Denominations*
Axelord and Lehman (2009)	Environmental actions.
Steg and Vlek (2009)	Pro-environment behavior is that which harm the environment in the least possible way infact try to benefit the environment in some or other way.

Influencing Factors and Measuring Pro-Environment Behaviour

As earlier stated, various anthropogenic activities are the root cause of many environmental problems existing. So, it becomes essential to know the contributing motivational and influencing factors to behave pro-environmentally.

A long list of literature exist that successfully finds the factors such as various internal and external factors by:

Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002)	Influential Factors *Internal Factors:* Motivational level, level of environmental knowledge one is having, values, attitude, awareness about environmental condition, emotional connectivity with the environment and Locus of control. *External Factors:* Social factors, Economic factors, cultural and institutional factors.
Steg and Vlek (2009)	*Motivational Factors:* Cost and benefit analysis done, affection, moral values and norms.
Mc Donald (2014)	Various inter and intra personal factors, motivational, psychological and environment specific educational level.
Kurisee (2015)	Cognitive and affective dissonance, norms, attitudinal factors, various socio-demographic factors such as respondents age, their gender, level of education and income, situational factors, personality.

There are many models available that are used to explain the reasons for pro-environment behaviour like:

- Norm Activation Model (Schwartz, 1977).
- Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).
- Theory of Planned Action Behavior (Ajzen, 1991).
- Value-Belief-Norm Theory (Stern, 2000).

In, NAM Schwartz studied the generation of altruistic behavioural pattern, which consist of a combination of self-interested actions towards people, species and environment. Even NAM is considered capable of exploring various antecedent factors of humans to behave environmentally friendly manner (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). Theory of Reasoned Action, explained behavioural intentions influenced by willingness and an individual's beliefs about the point of view of the society for the action taken (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the theory of Planned Behaviour another behavioural factor was added, PBC (Perceived-Behavioural-Control). It refers to the belief one is holding in his/her own capabilities to behave in a certain environmentally-friendly way. Among the entire discussed model, the VBN (Value-Belief-Norms) model is widely accepted by the researchers. It consists of variables named as personal values, ecological worldview, awareness of consequences of the action taken, individual's ability to accept the responsibility to reduce threat to environment and a person's moral obligation to take actions that result in the favour of environment. This theory is a blend of value theory, Norm-Activation Model and NEP (new ecological paradigm).

Concern for Environment and Cultural Biases Impact on PEB

Environmental concern means worries about environmental problems. Around two decades ago, it was found to be the most important factor to study environment-specific (Harland et al., 1999; Fujii, 2006; Lee et al., 2014). It was also assumed that the people, who would be having or showing a high rate of concern for the environment, must be acting more environmentally friendly (Tam & Chan, 2017). But a study conducted by Kollmuss and Agyeman is also talked about that it's not necessary people who behave in an environmentally friendly manner will show high concern for the environment.

Research Methodology

To examine the impact of ecological concern on pro-environment behaviour, students from various institutions of Meerut was taken into consideration. These students are from technical courses like B.Tech, management students from BBA and MBA departments and also from

the educational department like B.Ed. and M.Ed. For analysing the data SPSS 21.0 was used.

For the construction of the questionnaire, the revised version of NEP (new ecological paradigm) scale was used. This NEP scale is used to measure worldview with different dimensions. To measure through this scale, responses were taken from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Another instrument used to measure cultural biases was given by Price et al. (2014). They found four dimensions to measure cultural differences, which are A) Egalitarianism- which represents those individuals who have firm belief in the fragile nature of nature itself to behaviour in an environmentally friendly manner. B) Individualism- is those who considered nature a resilient activity about which they don't worry at all and so their actions. C) Hierarchism- consists of individuals who loved to have and follow policies or rules/regulations for their behaviour towards nature. D) Fatalist- believes that nature is something that cannot be predicted at all, so they don't think their power is sufficient to solve environment-specific problems.

Apart from ecological concern and cultural biases, 10 pro-environment behaviour practices questions were also asked of the students where responses ranged from 1-never to 5-always. A total of 42 items questionnaire was used to record responses. Both undergraduate and post graduate students were purposely selected for the current study as in the country like India, we have a population of young people, and they are expected to be highly aware of the present condition of the environment as well as this population is going to be the future doer for protecting the environment (Conte, 2016).

Table 1: Demographic Factors of the Sample under Study

Demographic Factors	*Categories*	*Rate of Responses*	*Responses (%)*
Gender	Female	35	31.8
	Male	73	66.4
	Desire not to say	2	1.8
Education	Undergraduate	62	56.4
	Graduate	48	43.6
Course	Technical Dept	74	67.3
	Management Dept	21	19.1
	Educational Dept	15	13.6

It is evident from the table that there are 67% of students who are male and around 32% are female students who took part in this study. Out of all the respondents, 57% are from UG and 44% are from PG. 68% of students are from technical courses (B.Tech), 19% are from management (BBA/MBA) and rest 13% are from educational department (B.Ed/M.Ed).

Analysis

Analysis for this study was done by using SPSS software 21.0 and a paired sample *t*-test analysis was done to recognise the impact of cultural biases on concern and environmentally friendly behaviour.

Table 2: Paired Sample t-Test

Measures	*Mean*	*SD*	*T*	*df*	*Sig.*
Hierarchical-Egalitarian	-.307	.679	-4.746	109	.000
Hierarchical-Individualistic	.907	1.097	8.674	109	.000
Hierarchical-Fatalist	1.067	1.096	10.213	109	.000
Egalitarian-Individualistic	1.214	1.014	12.558	109	.000
Egalitarian-Fatalist	1.374	1.054	13.672	109	.000
Individualist-Fatalist	.160	1.02	1.637	109	.104

From the above table it is evident that the first environmental cultural tendency of the respondents is towards egalitarian as values ranging from 4.75 to 13.7 at a significant p-value (p>.000). After its hierarchical tendency was found to have values from 8.67 to 10.21 (p>.000). Furthermore, it was also found that there exists no considerable difference between individualists and fatalist cultural biases.

Another test was one-way ANOVA again with the help of SPSS 21.0 software. The purpose of using this test was to find the difference among technical, management and educational students.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA

Measures	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig.*
Ecocentric	110	3.909	.571	14.266	.000
Anthropocentric	110	2.836	.576	4.189	.018
Hierarchical	110	3.960	.729	4.912	.009
Egalitarian	110	4.267	.638	6.978	.001
Individualist	110	3.053	.746	3.084	.050
Fatalist	110	2.893	.780	.502	.607
Pro-environment Behavior	110	3.608	.580	5.679	.005

Because there was a variation in the respondents of different courses, so Hochberg's GT2 Post-hoc Test was used. From the above it is clear that there is a significant difference in the ecological worldview of the students studying different streams. ANOVA test shows that the technical courses have more hierarchical as well as egalitarian cultural biases in comparison to other courses students considered for this study. As, more the egalitarian tendency among the students signifies their high concern for environment. So, we can say among all technical students, they are expected to behave more environmentally friendly in their actions.

Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to determine how cultural prejudices and environmental concerns affected the pro-environment behaviour of Meerut students enrolled in various courses. The results provide insight on the intricate interaction between these variables and how they affect behaviour that is environmentally beneficial.

The investigation showed that cultural prejudices and environmental concern had a considerable impact on pro-environment behaviour. Environmental concern—a measure of people's anxieties about environmental issues—has been linked favourably to pro-environment behaviour. High levels of environmental awareness were noted, although this did not necessarily convert into environmentally responsible behaviour.

Different cultural biases, such as equality, individualism, hierarchism and fatalism, were found to influence pro-environment behaviour to varied degrees. Higher levels of pro-environment behaviour were demonstrated by students with egalitarian tendencies, who recognised the vulnerability of the environment and felt morally obligated to preserve it. It has been suggested that following rules and regulations can encourage environmentally friendly behaviour because hierarchical tendencies are favourably connected with pro-environment behaviour. Individualistic and fatalistic attitudes, however, did not significantly affect behaviour that was pro-environment.

The study also looked at the disparities in cultural prejudices and pro-environment behaviour among students in various courses. In comparison to management and educational students, technical course students were shown to have higher levels of both hierarchical and egalitarian cultural biases, indicating a greater concern for the environment and a higher likelihood of engaging in pro-environment behaviour.

These findings demonstrate the significance of taking into account cultural biases in addition to environmental concerns when analysing pro-environment behaviour. They contend that encouraging environmental knowledge and developing a sense of environmental responsibility can have a favourable impact on pro-environment behaviour. Additionally, knowing people's cultural prejudices and adjusting environmental interventions

accordingly can help develop more successful tactics for encouraging sustainable behaviour.

These findings emphasise the need to address both individual concerns and cultural factors in order to encourage pro-environment behaviour among students and, ultimately, help achieve the SDG related to responsible production and consumption. These findings have implications for policymakers, educators and environmental practitioners.

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