Green Minds, Ethical Choices: Understanding the Environmental Awareness and Consumer Behaviour of Undergraduate Students

by Jana Publication & Research

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Abstract

Environmental awareness plays a crucial role in shaping ethical consumer behaviour, particularly among young individuals. This study, conducted at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, explores the relationship between environmental awareness and ethically minded consumer behaviour among undergraduate students. The research employed two standardized tools—the SRCB Scale and the Environmental Awareness Ability Measure Scale (EAA)—for data collection, with SPSS used for statistical analysis. According to the findings of this study, researchers found that the majority of students showed a greater inclination towards socially conscious consumer behaviour (SCCB) than ecologically conscious consumer behaviour (ECCB), except for male students and the students of the Arts stream, who were more inclined towards ecologically conscious consumer behaviour (ECCB). The research also revealed that there was no significant difference in the environmental awareness ability of SCCB and ECCB groups in the total sample and across the sub-sample, such as gender, stream, and locality. Notably, female students demonstrated greater environmental awareness ability than male students, while no substantial differences were observed across academic streams and localities. The findings of this research emphasized taking initiatives that promote socially and environmentally conscious consumer behaviour and promoting sustainable consumption habits among the students. These findings call for targeted educational programs and policy interventions to bridge the gap between awareness and action, encouraging responsible consumerism among university students.

Key words: *Environmental awareness; Ethical consumer behavior ; Socially conscious consumer behaviour (SCCB); Ecologically conscious consumer behaviour (ECCB); Undergraduate students; Aligarh Muslim University*

Introduction

All biotic factors, such as people, plants, animals, and microbes, as well as all abiotic factors, such as water, light, soil, air, and so forth, make up the environment that an organism lives in. Stated differently, the environment can be defined as the accumulation of incidental circumstances that both promote and dictate the course of an organism's existence. Problems with environmental degradation are growing quickly as a result of population growth, growing industrialization, and unplanned urbanization. Our environment is being threatened by a number of issues, including deforestation, soil erosion, droughts, global warming, ozone depletion, and pollution. Human activity is the primary cause of the majority of these urgent environmental issues. Without sufficient preparation or ecological awareness, humans constantly misuse the environment. Since environmental sustainability is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, the concept of sustainable development, which was recently formed, has placed an increased emphasis on it. As such, we must educate people about the environment and raise their level of awareness of it. The process of fostering values, attitudes, abilities, knowledge, skills, and awareness in people towards the environment and its preservation is known as environmental education. There are three types of environmental education: education via the environment, education for the environment, and education about the environment. The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which took place in Stockholm, Sweden, gave environmental education widespread status. India, like a few other nations worldwide, has mandated environmental education at all levels of formal schooling. Awareness is the understanding or perception of a situation or of facts. It is the capacity for immediate knowledge and sense recognition. Being aware of environmental issues and their implications, as well as the environment itself, is a sign of environmental awareness. The primary objective of environmental education and environmental awareness programs is environmental protection **(Bhowmik and Verma, 2019).**

1: Ethically Minded Consumer Behaviour (EMCB)

The term "Ethically Minded Consumer Behaviour" (EMCB), which first gained popularity in the 1980s, describes the purchasing decisions made by consumers who give moral

principles, codes, and values first priority while making decisions. Conscientious consumption that reflects individual values and addresses social welfare, environmental sustainability, and health is what defines this behaviour. EMCB encourages consumers to select goods that adhere to moral principles like fair trade and environmental responsibility in the retail industry, especially in hypermarkets. As a result, consumers actively support businesses they perceive to be committed to sustainable development, thereby reinforcing their loyalty and commitment to companies that uphold ethical practices **(Sánchez-González et al., 2020).**

2: Critical appraisal

Environmental awareness and its impact on the environment have been areas of extensive research with multiple variables such as sustainable development, pollution, human health, climate change, consumer behaviour, and problem-solving ability related to the environment.

Environmental awareness has been extensively researched on a global scale, the researcher discovered, and the relationship between environmental awareness and a number of factors, including pedagogy, environmental quality, the use of digital devices and multimedia, sustainable development, pollution sources, human health, the role of the arts, the influence of religion, and climate change are all examined. Few studies have been done in the Indian setting (Hassan, A et. Al.,. 2010; Sivamoorthy et al., 2013; Abbas, M.Y. et al., 2014) but by looking at a variety of aspects and variables, these studies have given important insights into environmental awareness and its significance worldwide. Environmental awareness is a less explored topic in India than in other countries; there is a growing interest and need for it. Because of India's several environmentally related problems, fast urbanization, and population expansion, research on environmental awareness is crucial. A better environment for future generations can be fostered by addressing pollution, resource depletion, and climate change through sustainable practices that are promoted by effective regulations and educational initiatives that take into account local attitudes and behaviours.

The past research explored criteria such as pedagogy, quality of environment, use of digital devices and multimedia, sustainable development, pollution sources, human health, the role of arts, the influence of religion, climate change, etc. In relation to environmental awareness

and consumerism studies (Perron, G.M. et al., 2006; Gadenne, 2009; Duroy, 2005; Simsekly, Y, 2015).

Similarly, over the past decade, a large number of studies mostly conducted in foreign settings have examined ethically minded consumer behaviour. These studies look at the ethical considerations that consumers make when making decisions about what to buy, including fair trade, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility (e.g. Papper, M. et al., 2009; Duarte, P. et al., 2024; Ghali, Z. 2023; Le, T. D. et al., 2022; Bateman, T. 2016; Hiller, A. 2023) However, there is still a lack of research suited to the Indian context. Given India's distinct socioeconomic environment, cultural variety, and growing middle class, it is essential to comprehend how ethical issues affect consumer behaviour in this area. In order to have a more thorough grasp of global ethical consumerism and its effects in India, this gap emphasizes the necessity for focused research that examines regional values, customs, and motives. So, researchers examined key factors that affect sustainable purchasing decisions in a study on environmental awareness and ethically minded consumer behaviour. These factors include societal norm effects, perceived consumer effectiveness, and an awareness of environmental issues. The study further looks at how multiple variables, including gender, location, and streams, influence ethical consumption habits. Furthermore, the effects of marketing tactics that prioritise corporate social responsibility and sustainability are examined. Through comprehending these interrelated factors, the study seeks to shed light on how increased environmental awareness can influence consumers to make more moral and sustainable decisions when making purchases.

Therefore, showcasing the important variables—environmental awareness and ethically minded consumer behaviour, the researchers try to determine how undergraduate students' consumer behaviour is influenced by environmental awareness. By examining the relationship between environmental awareness and ethical-minded consumer behaviour, the study aims to promote ethical consumerism and sustainability.

3: Significance of the study

Undergraduates are the future consumers and representatives of the community globally in various fields. For both academic studies and real-world sustainability applications, it is crucial to comprehend how consumer behaviour is influenced by awareness of the major environmental crises and social issues facing the global community.

This study investigates how much undergraduate students, a crucial group for upcoming market trends, consider environmental and social factors while making judgments about what to buy. The study sheds light on the factors that influence young consumers to select sustainable goods over traditional products by examining the connection between environmental consciousness and ethical purchasing tendencies.

It also emphasizes how educational institutions have the power to significantly influence these views, implying that improved environmental curricula may result in more conscientious purchasing practices. The findings can assist both marketers and companies in realising the significance of aligning their activities with the ideals of environmentally conscious consumers, which will ultimately lead to more sustainable business models.

Furthermore, the study can help policymakers create policies to encourage sustainable consumption behaviours by highlighting the obstacles that students have when trying to make choices that are ethical.

Overall, this study can add to the expanding body of research on ethical consumerism and sustainability by offering a foundation for further investigations and initiatives meant to promote a society that is more environmentally aware and socially conscious.

4: Objectives

The study was conducted with the following objectives in mind:

1. To identify the Ethical Consumer Behaviour among undergraduate students in the total sample and sub-sample based on gender, stream & locality.
2. To identify the Environmental Awareness Ability among undergraduate students in the sub-sample based on gender, stream and locality.

3. To study the Environmental Awareness Ability in relation to Ethically Consumer Behaviour among undergraduate students in the total sample &sub-sample based on gender, stream and locality.

5: Population of the Study

The population of the study involves undergraduate students of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

6: Sample Size

The study sample consisted of 192 undergraduate students, evenly divided by gender (50% male and 50% female). Among them, 34.37% were from rural areas, while 65.62% belonged to urban areas. In terms of academic disciplines, 40.10% were from the social science stream, 32.29% from the science stream, and 27.60% from the arts stream. All participants were selected from Aligarh Muslim University. The sample was chosen using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure balanced representation across key demographic and academic categories.

7: Tools which are used in this study

The following tools are used in the present study:

7.1: The Environmental Awareness Ability Measure (EAAM) Scale, standardized by Dr. Praveen Kumar Jha (1998), is a psychometric tool designed to assess an individual's environmental awareness. The scale comprises 51 items, with responses scored dichotomously—1 point for agreement and 0 for disagreement. For negatively framed items, the scoring is reversed. The total score on the scale ranges from 0 to 51, representing the overall environmental awareness level of the respondent. The reliability of the EAAM scale has been established through multiple statistical measures. Split-half reliability, assessed using the Kuder-Richardson (K-R) method, yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.61. Test-retest reliability was determined at different intervals—0.84 for the immediate test-retest, 0.71 at three months, and 0.74 at six months—demonstrating the scale's temporal stability. The validity of the EAAM scale has been supported through correlational analysis. A correlation coefficient of 0.83 was found between the EAAM and Tarniji's Environmental Awareness Scale, confirming its concurrent validity.

7.2: The Original SRCB Scale (Roberts, 1993, 1995, 1996a, 1996b) is a psychometric tool designed to measure socially responsible consumer behavior (SRCB). The scale follows Roberts' original five-point scoring system, where 1 = never true, 2 = rarely true, 3 = sometimes true, 4 = mostly true, and 5 = always true. A higher score indicates a greater degree of ethically minded consumer behavior.

The reliability of the scale has been established using Cronbach's alpha, with all alpha scores falling within an acceptable range. Additionally, corrected item-total correlations exceed 0.4, with most surpassing 0.6, demonstrating strong internal consistency.

For validity, preliminary analyses assess the scale's relationship with environmentalism-related behaviors. Scores on Environmental Moral Concern Behavior (EMCB) are found to be significantly higher among individuals engaged in ethical or environmental activities compared to those who are not.

8: Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Objective 1: To identify the Ethical Consumer Behavior in the total sample and sub-sample based on Gender, Stream & Locality.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Ethical Conscious Behaviour (ECB)

Ethically Minded Consumer Behaviour (ECB)					
Ecologically Conscious Behaviour (ECCB)			Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour (SCCB)		
N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.

Total	192	30.39	5.58	192	30.65	4.49
Male	96	30.44	5.92	96	30.41	4.83
Female	96	30.33	5.25	96	30.88	4.13
Rural	66	30.89	5.10	66	31.04	4.53
Urban	126	30.12	5.81	126	30.44	4.87
Social Sciences	77	29.72	5.52	77	30.15	4.24
Science	62	30.50	5.22	66	31.09	3.84
Arts	53	31.22	6.04	53	30.84	5.46

Source: Survey, 2024

The result of the descriptive analysis is presented in Table 1. It is observed that Ethically Minded Consumer Behaviour in the total sample of undergraduate students (N = 192) is divided into two groups according to the dimensions. The difference in the mean scores of both dimensions has a marginal difference in the total sample and all the sub-samples based on gender, locality and stream. In the total sample, it was found that the SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour),* group had a slightly higher mean score than the ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Behaviour)*, group. The SCCB mean score was (M = 30.65 ± 4.49) and the ECCB score was (M = 30.39 ± 5.58).

The gender-based analysis in both groups shows that males scored higher in the ECCB dimension (30.44±5.92) as compared to the SCCB dimension (30.41±4.83). However, the female undergraduates scored higher on the SCCB dimension (30.88±4.13) than on the ECCB dimension (30.33±5.25). Even though the difference is marginal it shows that both genders are inclined towards one of the dimensions. Male undergraduate students are towards ECCB (Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour), and female undergraduates are towards SCCB (Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour).

The locality-based analysis in both groups reveals that rural undergraduate students scored higher in the SCCB dimension (31.04±4.53) as compared to the ECCB dimension (30.89±5.10). The same observance is for urban undergraduate students, where the SCCB

dimension (30.44±4.87) scores higher than the ECCB dimension (30.12±5.81). It means that rural and urban students are tended towards SCCB (Socially Conscious Consumer Behavior). However, there is a marginal difference between these two that shows rural undergraduate students are more inclined towards SCCB (socially conscious consumer behaviour) than ECCB (Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior).

The stream-based analysis reveals that groups like social sciences and sciences scored higher in the SCCB dimension as compared to the ECCB (So Sc: 30.15±4.24 Vs 29.72±5.52) and (Sc: 31.09±3.84 Vs 30.50±5.22). It shows that both social sciences and science undergraduate students tend towards Socially Conscious Consumer Behavior. On the contrary art stream analysis revealed different results, the undergraduate students of art stream scored higher on the ECCB dimension (31.22±6.04) than on the SCCB dimension (30.84±5.46). This shows that the art stream undergraduate students manifest Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior.

To sum up, it can be shown that, despite a slight discrepancy between the two dimensions, all groups in the undergraduate student sample as a whole and the sub-sample based on gender, locality, and streams exhibited a tendency toward SCCB (Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour). The male, rural, arts stream undergraduates who tended to lean toward ecologically conscious behaviour were the exception.

Objective 2: To compare the Environmental Awareness Ability based on Gender, Stream and Locality.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of EAA(Environmental Awareness Ability)

	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.

Male	96	186.64	8.68	3.16	0.02
Female	96	191.02			
Rural	66	188.96	.890	11.18	.139
Urban	126	188.76			

Source: Survey, 2024

The descriptive statistic tabulated in Table 2 discloses that the *Environmental Awareness Ability* is higher in females as compared to male undergraduate students (191.02±8.68 versus 186.64±10.42). An independent t-test analysis further extrapolated the result that *Environmental Awareness Ability* was associated with a statistically significant effect t(190) = 3.160. p= .002, at 0.05 level.

Thus, the null hypothesis *(H_{01}), "There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between male and female undergraduate students"*,***is rejected.***

According to Table no. 2, the rural undergraduates had marginally higher mean scores in EAA than urban undergraduates (188.96±11.18 versus 188.76 ±9.06).The t-test analysis pointed out that even though there was a marginal difference in the mean scores of *Environmental Awareness Ability,* they did not differ significantly in their mean scores, t(190) = .139. p= .890.

Therefore, the null hypothesis *(H_{02}), "There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between rural and urban undergraduate students"*, ***fails to be rejected.***

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics ofEAA (Environmental Awareness Ability)

	Sum of Squares	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	119.822	2	59.911	.619	.539
Within Groups	18282.845	189	96.735		

Total	18402.667	191

Source: Survey, 2024

Interpretation: Table no. 3 yields the result of one-way ANOVA which shows that the difference in *Environmental Awareness Ability* of the three streams was not significant, F (2, 189) = .619, p = .539.

This implies that the three groups Science, Social Science and Arts did not differ in their mean scores on EAA.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{03}), *'There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability among the undergraduate students''* ***fails to be rejected.***

Objective 3: To study the Environmental Awareness Ability in relation to ethical consumer behaviour in the total sample & sub-sample based on Gender, Stream and Locality

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of EAA (Environmental Awareness Ability)

ECCB group	SCCB group

	EAA							
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	t- value	Sig.
Total	102	188.35	10.66	90	189.37	8.78	-.721	.472
Male	56	186.60	11.08	40	186.70	9.56	-.043	.966
Female	46	190.47	9.83	50	191.52	7.53	-.585	.560
Rural	41	188.87	12.61	25	189.12	8.58	-.085	.933
Urban	61	188.00	9.22	65	189.47	8.91	-.914	.363
Social Science	38	189.26	8.08	39	190.25	7.90	-.545	.587
Science	32	187.75	10.23	30	189.20	7.87	-.622	.536
Arts	32	187.87	13.64	21	188.00	11.43	-.035	.972

Source: Survey, 2024

Interpretation: According to Table no. 4 the total sample of undergraduate students had a higher score on *Environmental Awareness Ability* in the SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group as compared to the ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group of undergraduate students. (M = 189.37±8.78 versus 188.35±10.66).Further analysis of the t-test revealed that the *Environmental Awareness Ability* in the SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* and ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Behaviour)* groups did not differ significantly t (190) = -. 721, p= 472.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{04}), *'There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour groups of undergraduate students'',* ***fails to be rejected.***

As shown in Table no. 4 gender analysis reveals that male undergraduate students in ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* and SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* groups differed marginally in their *Environmental Awareness Ability* mean scores, i.e.(186.70±9.56) versus (186.60±11.08). Further analysis of the t-test shows that the *Environmental Awareness Ability* of male undergraduate students in the ECCB & SCCB groups did not differ significantly t(94) = -.043. p= .966.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{05}), *'There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour groups of male undergraduate students'*, ***fails to be rejected.***

According to table no.4 The analysis of female undergraduate students in the ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* and SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* groups highlighted that *Environmental Awareness Ability* in the SCCB group had a higher mean score (191.52±7.53) as compared to the ECCB group (190.47±9.83).The analysis of the t-test showed that the *Environmental Awareness Ability* of female undergraduate students in the ECCB & SCCB groups did not differ significantly t(94) = -.585. p= .560.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{06}), *'There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour groups of female undergraduate students'*, ***fails to be rejected.***

As data given in Table no. 4 Locality-wise analysis was done and it was found that the rural undergraduate students in SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group had a higher mean score (189.12±8.58) in comparison to ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group (188.87±12.61). An independent sample of t-test revealed that the *Environmental Awareness Ability* of rural undergraduate students in the ECCB & SCCB groups did not differ significantly t(64) = -.085. p= .933.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{07}), *'There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Consumer*

Behaviour and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour groups of rural undergraduate students', ***fails to be rejected.***

Data mentioned in the above table no. 4 The statistics data analysis of the urban undergraduate students in the SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group had a higher mean score (189.47±8.91) than the ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group (188.00±9.22). An independent sample of t-test highlighted that the *Environmental Awareness Ability* of urban undergraduate students in the ECCB & SCCB groups did not differ significantly t(124) = -.914. p= .363.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{08}), *'There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour groups of urban undergraduate students'*, ***fails to be rejected.***

Based on Table no. 4 Stream-wise analysis uncovers the following result, the social science undergraduate students in the SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group had a higher mean score (190.25±7.90) as compared to the ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* group (189.26±8.08). The analysis of the t-test confirms that the *Environmental Awareness Ability* of social science undergraduate students in the ECCB & SCCB groups did not differ significantly t(75) = -.545. p= .587.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{09}), *'There will be no significant difference in the mean scores of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour groups of social sciences undergraduate students'*, ***fails to be rejected.***

According to Table no. 4, Further analysis of Science stream undergraduate students in both ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Behaviour)*and SCCB *(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* groups points out that Environmental Awareness Ability in the Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour group had a higher mean score (189.20±7.87) in comparison to Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour group (187.75±10.23).An independent sample of t-test examination exposes that the Environmental Awareness Ability of Science undergraduate students in the ECCB & SCCB groups did not differ significantly. t(60) = -.622. p= .536.

Thus, the null hypothesis *(H_{010}), "There will be no significant difference in the mean score of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Behaviour and Socially Conscious Behaviour groups of science undergraduate students"*, ***fails to be rejected.***

Data provided in the Table no.4 shows findings of Arts stream undergraduate students in both ECCB *(Ecologically Conscious Behaviour)* and SCCB*(Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour)* groups showing that Environmental Awareness Ability in the Socially Conscious Behaviour group had a higher mean score (188.00±11.43) as compared to Ecologically Conscious Behaviour group (187.87±13.64).

The conclusion of the t-test demonstrates that the Environmental Awareness Ability of Arts undergraduate students in the ECCB & SCCB groups did not differ significantly. t(51) = -.035. p= .972.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{011}), *"There will be no significant difference in the mean score of Environmental Awareness Ability between Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour groups of Arts undergraduate students", **fails to be rejected***

9: Discussion based on major findings

Findings based on Ethical Consumer Behavior in SCCB & ECCB groups

Findings based on the total sample

The current study indicated that undergraduate students prefer socially conscious consumer behaviour (SCCB) as their preference instead of ecologically conscious consumer behaviour (ECCB). Research findings indicate that students choose socially responsible consumer behaviour over ecologically oriented consumer behaviour because social values hold more importance during consumption. The study findings match those of **Pepper and Uzzell (2009)** by confirming that kindness, moral principles, environmental concerns and social responsibilities are the main motivating factors.

Findings based on gender

The study revealed that male undergraduate students are becoming more ecologically conscious, despite being often portrayed as environmental supporters. This change is influenced by peer dynamics, access to environmental education, and cultural norms. **Schlegelmilch et al. (1996)** found that while males are generally less concerned with environmental issues than females, they can still act environmentally responsibly in certain situations. Situational elements, such as social norms and product attributes like eco-labelling, can heighten their ecological consciousness and encourage sustainable buying behaviours.

On the other hand, **Auger et al. (2003)** also found that females show greater concern for environmental issues, which influences their purchasing habits. They often select eco-friendly products, aligning with their beliefs about sustainability and ethical business practices. Females play a vital role in fostering societal movements towards sustainable consumption by endorsing companies that prioritise environmental responsibility.

The Chipko Movement, which started in Uttarakhand, India, in the 1970s, was a significant example of women's involvement in environmental activism. Women like **Gaura Devi** led protests against deforestation, demonstrating their environmental concern and empowerment. This study supports the idea that gender differences in environmental awareness and behaviour can be addressed through increased awareness and participation in environmental activities.

Findings based on Stream

The study revealed that students of different academic streams have disparities in their eco-conscious and socially responsible consumer behaviour. Arts students have a more ecological concern than science and social science students have a more social concern. The reason for this difference may be the various curricula and philosophical paradigms of these areas. Social science students typically tackle social issues academically using critical thinking and empirical research, raising awareness that it is of social justice. Arts students, who raise the question of sustainability and ecology, follow a deeper ecological consciousness to achieve sustainable growth and respectful environmental leadership. This is in line with the findings of **Kagan's (2014)** study, in which it is suggested that students of the arts stream are more ecologically conscious because of their introspective analysis and critical thinking.

This study also found no significant difference in Environmental Awareness Ability (EAA) between Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB) and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour (SCCB), regardless of demographic factors like gender, locality, or academic stream choice. This suggests that environmental awareness is widespread among the sample under consideration. However, a study by **Mishra (2012)** focused on socially conscious consumer behaviour in India, specifically the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs on social issues. The research suggested that Indian consumers are more inclined to support socially conscious initiatives addressing local development and poverty reduction, rather than solely addressing environmental concerns.

Regarding the *Environmental Awareness Ability*, the findings highlighted that female undergraduate students are more environmentally aware than their male counterparts, perhaps because women are more socialised and have an educational background or an innate inclination towards environmental awareness. This is evidenced by studies done by **Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), Gifford and Nilsson (2014), and Tanner (1999).** Women's socialisation, empathy, and emotional involvement in environmental issues influence greater scores on environmental concern. Moreover, women are more likely to adopt sustainable practices such as recycling, energy saving, and waste reduction, particularly at home, while also fulfilling gender-specific social roles like motherhood and caregiving that promote pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

Locality-wise analysis did not find a significant difference in Environmental Awareness Ability (EAA) among undergraduate students from rural and urban areas. This implies that ecological awareness might also be influenced by attributes that are independent of the place. Access to environmental learning about resources, information, and community engagement opportunities could be pretty close in both areas. The diffusion of environmental information via the mass media and social networks may contribute a shared knowledge of ecological issues. Experiential learning activity e.g. in the direction of environmental initiatives, may raise awareness even more. However, residents of rural areas are more aware of the environmental conservation problems since they have to rely on natural resources. They implement sustainable farming, efficient water dealing and energy preservation to conserve resources as well as place great focus on ecological health and wellness. This finding can be opposed by the study of **Stern,**

P. C., and Dietz, T. (1994), who suggested that residents in rural areas are frequently more sensitive to environmental conservation issues since they depend more on natural resources for their livelihoods.

10: Educational Implications

10.1: For the teachers:

Teachers should combine Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB) and Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour (SCCB) lessons to market environmentally aware consumerism. ECCB touches on how consumer behaviours impact the environment, and SCCB concentrates on sustainable behaviours. Lesson plans can include practical exercises, for example, product life cycles and community local campaigns, and sustainability applies in real companies. This dual focus trains students to select things that can support the surroundings and culture.

Gender-based strategies are the key to engagement effectiveness. Male students may relate to technology and innovation-based ecological concerns, while female students may relate to social justice topics. Adding in initiatives and cases of imaginative green businesses can also inspire and move people in the direction of addressing ecological issues.

To promote ecological awareness, ecologically oriented topics can be incorporated into the art projects, like eco-sculptures or recycling materials. Community-based projects can help students learn the application of sustainable design and motivate them towards sustainability.

Promoting gender equity in environmental campaigning requires students to take charge of environmental sustainability efforts. This visibility hails cooperative learning and a discussion about ecological challenges, biases eradicated, and meaningful respect promoted.

The use of technology in the classroom can serve in the analysis of consumer behaviour and sustainable environmental practices. Classrooms can be created in a more interactive way that cooperates with projects, including virtual simulation and real-time data analysis using digital tools and platforms. Online forums and debates may provide a platform for sharing best

practices and observing sustainable consumer behaviour, while multimedia materials like podcasts and videos can present various views on environmental issues.

10.2: For the students:

Students gain an in-depth understanding of the ethical, social, and environmental effects of consumer actions since they engage in discussions related to Socially Conscious Consumer Behaviour (SCCB) and Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB). This satisfies critical thinking and deters awareness of fair trade, environmental practice, and the global impacts of excessive consumerism on global issues like social injustice and climate change.

Moreover, gender dimensions can be explored further, such as that female students are in charge of undertaking the environmental activities and response, and the logic of male students learnt from diverse points of view and experiences; engagement in community projects related to ECCB and SCCB can give students hands-on application of their theoretical knowledge and real-life skills, along the way also improving their leadership and teamwork skills.

Courses like workshops, seminars, online courses, etc., help students gain insight into consumer behaviour and environmental concerns. These platforms provide students with real access to communities in need via professional opinions as well as current research and practical solutions, enabling students to take action and advocate for positive change in communities near and far.

Regular thinking on personal consumer behaviour can lead to critical thinking and consumer responsibility. This reflection helps students to reflect on the long-term consequences of, for example, the carbon consequences of items or the ethical consequences of supporting particular components of the economy. This process can effectuate righteous decisions that advance social justice and defile the natural world.

10.3: For the policy makers:

It must also include the study program curriculum for environmentally and socially conscious consumer behaviour (ECC and SCCB) principles to increase the knowledge. This involves producing materials that inform students of the impact that consumption has on society and the environment to educate moral decision-making, sustainable practices, and community values. Interactive projects, discussions, and real-life scenarios help students know how their actions impact the environment and society.

Campaigns of awareness should be launched to educate students about environmental aspects and to make them understand that the consumption of sustainable practices and the long-term effects of daily decisions on the environment are very necessary. These campaigns should be a means of education and habit formation of the culture of ecological responsibility, inspiring students to implement ecologically friendly activities.

Community-based projects need to be conducted in order to take action on particular environmental problems found in urban and rural areas. These programs should discuss urban waste and the environment, pollution, resource conservation and competition, food production mode, land preservation, water usage, etc.

The multidisciplinary way of developing a comprehensive understanding of sustainability issues should be encouraged. This approach has a sociological, environmental, and consumer behaviouristic character to observe how social dynamics, consumer decisions, and environmental dilemmas are related. By encompassing these subjects, students may form imaginative and well-informed answers.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to ascertain the connection between ethically minded consumer behaviour and environmental awareness among undergraduate students. The study's findings demonstrate that, with the exception of male students and those enrolled in the arts stream, who favour ecologically conscious consumer behaviour (ECCB), undergraduate students significantly prefer socially conscious consumer behaviour (SCCB) over ECCB. A

consistent degree of environmental consciousness among students, irrespective of gender, locality, or academic streams, is also suggested by the study's finding that there are no appreciable differences in environmental awareness ability (EAA) between the two groups and across the sub-sample based on stream & locality, but in gender, interestingly, the mean EAA score of female students was higher than that of male students, suggesting that they were more concerned with environmental issues. These findings highlight how crucial it is to help all students develop a balanced understanding of their social and environmental obligations, especially through focused educational programs that take into account the unique preferences and strengths of various demographic groups.

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