

The Impact of Environmental Concern and the Perception towards Sustainable Green Lifestyle Practices among Youth with Special Reference to Chennai

Dr. Shirmila T^{1*}, Dr. Hannah Frederick²

^{1*}Asst Prof Of Commerce, Madras Christian College, Tambaram, Chennai – 600 059, ²assoc. Prof Of Commerce, Madras Christian College, Tambaram, Chennai – 600 059

Corresponding author*: shirmilastanley@gmail.com

Article Info

Volume 82

Page Number: 5916 - 5921

Publication Issue:

January-February 2020

Abstract:

The Climate change and its impact on environment has prompted many to wake up to the reality of the significance of their daily tasks and the decisions made on the ecology. In Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India it has been a rude awakening with the recent natural disasters such as the floods during December 2015 and the subsequent destruction of the city and the shrub jungles by Cyclone Vardha during December 2016. The compromises and the scant regard for the ecology was attributed as the major cause. However, during these disasters one could clearly note the active participation of the youth in rescuing the victims and in providing assistance to the affected. These incidents and gestures are likely to lead the youth to have a change in their perception that would lead to an increased awareness towards green practices. Hence this study is premeditated to identify the environmental concern present among the youth, the mediating role played by perception of the youth towards green lifestyle and awareness of green practices, in enabling the youth to adopt a sustainable green lifestyle. The study seeks to identify the obstacles or challenges faced by the youth in adopting a sustainable green lifestyle. The study also looks into the measures that need to be taken to overcome these obstacles.

Article History

Article Received: 18 May 2019

Revised: 14 July 2019

Accepted: 22 December 2019

Publication: 29 January 2020

Keywords - Environmental Concern, perception of green lifestyle, awareness of green practices, sustainable green lifestyle.

1. Introduction

The effects of climate change, green house effect, ozone depletion, acid rain, global warming, are faced by the present generation which has led to an awakening towards environmental consciousness. Today everyone's mails and social media are flooded with information on the reality of a disaster at hand and how vital it is to make an informed decision and a conscious choice to prevent further environmental harm. Kindling and awakening everyone's concern and consciousness towards environment has become a movement with more and more youth joining it. Consequently, consumers have become more concerned about their everyday habits and the impact that these can have on the environment (Krause, 1993). Sustainable refers to a level and pattern of consumption which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World commission on

environment and development, 1987). Sustainable or responsible consumption implies the satisfaction of personal needs without an adverse impact on the lives and consumption potentials of present and future generations and complies therefore with the principles of sustainability (Agenda 21, 1992; Belz et al., 2007; Belz and Peattie, 2009). Green purchase behaviour refers to the behaviour of purchasing and consuming products that have minimal impacts on environment (Mainieri, Barnett et al., 1997).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lee (2008) in his study surveyed adolescents in Hong Kong through multi-staged random sampling, on their green purchasing behaviour, environmental attitude, environmental concern, perceived seriousness of environmental problems, perceived environmental responsibility, perceived effectiveness of environmental behaviour,

social influence and concern for self-image in environmental protection. This study help identify important factors in affecting young consumers' green purchasing behaviour in Hong Kong. It offers practical guidelines to international green marketers planning to target the Asian markets.

John Thøgersen (2005) in his study has found that policies that increase a feeling of empowerment may also have a positive effect on consumers' motivation to make an effort, thus amplifying its effects, consumer policies can empower consumers for changing lifestyles by reducing personal constraints and limitations.

In another study conducted among 200 women respondents the researcher, Stanley Shirmila (2015) found that Eco conservation and green campaigns are gaining momentum among women in Chennai since most of the respondents are highly aware of such initiatives. This study is an effort to impart sustainable practices, and create green consumers, one who is mindful of the environment in their every consumption, and thereby transform the community into a sustainable community.

A study by Mostafa (2007) among Egyptian consumers found that consumer's attitude towards green purchase can influence their green purchase intention and directly affect their actual green purchase behaviour.

A study by Spash (1997) found correlation between environmental attitudes and ethical beliefs and used this correlation to suggest that contingent valuation studies of environmental amenities are biased against individuals with strong pro-environmental orientations. Specifically, individuals with strong pro-environmental attitudes are found more likely to hold rights-based beliefs than utilitarian beliefs about the environment.

Kotchen and Reiling (2000) In their study measuring the environmental attitudes and estimate non use values for protection of endangered species in Maine found environmental attitude as a significant explanatory variable. Pro environmental attitudes are also shown to result in higher estimates of mean willingness to pay (WTP).

Straughan and Roberts (1999), study has provided a method of profiling and segmenting college students based upon ecologically conscious consumer behaviour. Findings indicate that despite a significant amount of past research attention, demographic criteria are not as useful a profiling method as psychographic criteria.

Chang.(2008), in his study has stated that business that regularly increases their new eco-friendly products in the market; allocate themselves a place in the new marketplace, to enhance their effectiveness, and to take pleasure in economical advantages more than the businesses that are not worried about ecological problems.

Hartmann, P., Ibanez, V.A., &Sains, J.F. 2005 in the study find an overall positive influence of green brand positioning on brand attitude, their findings further suggest distinct functional and emotional dimensions of green brand positioning with the interaction of both dimensions in the formation of brand attitude, Highest perceptual effects were achieved through a green positioning strategy that combined functional attributes with emotional benefits

Chan, R.Y.K. 1999 in his study surveys the environmental attitudes and behaviour of 549 subjects from Beijing and Guangzhou in China using the refined Maloney and Ward ecological scale. Overall the survey findings suggest that Chinese people's ecological concerns are still rather low even though they have expressed exceptionally strong emotional attachment to ecological issues, a phenomenon probably attributed to traditional cultural values. He suggested that green marketers should not exaggerate their environmental claims and should continually improve the quality of their green products.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To ascertain the relationship between environmental concern among youth and sustainable green lifestyle, perception of youth towards green lifestyle and sustainable green lifestyle, the awareness of green practices among youth and sustainable green lifestyle.
2. To determine perception of youth towards green lifestyle as a mediator in the relationship between environmental concern among the youth and sustainable green lifestyle.

HYPOTHESIS

1. H1: There is a relationship between environmental concern among youth and sustainable green lifestyle, awareness of green practices among youth and sustainable green lifestyle and perception of youth towards green lifestyle and sustainable green lifestyle.
- 2) H2: Perception of youth towards green lifestyle and awareness of green practices is a mediator between environmental concern and sustainable green lifestyle

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Before administering the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 25 randomly selected

respondents and the questionnaire was modified accordingly.

Data collection: This study employed the quantitative survey method. The method of data collection that has been practiced in this study is personally administered questionnaires. All the data from the collected questionnaires was entered using SPSS 21 with Amos 21 as a tool for analysing the obtained data.

Respondent profile

The respondents considered as youth were of the age group between 18 years to 29 years (National youth policy, 2014). They were almost evenly split with respect to gender (52.9 % were males and 47.1% were females). 67.6% were under graduates, 32.4% were postgraduates and professionals. 26.3% were students, 24.8 % were self employed, 9.6% were employed in government and the remaining 39.8% were from private organizations.

DATA ANALYSIS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table - 1 Variables in each construct after CFA

Constructs	Variables	Standardized regression coefficient	Model fit summary	Value	Outcome
Environmental concern	Should practice green consumption for the benefit of the society	0.744	χ^2/df	2.124	Good fit
	Realisation of everyday lifestyle having an impact on climate change	0.705	CFI	.984	Good fit
	Immediate steps to be taken to prevent future environmental disasters	0.688	TLI	.989	Good fit
	Recommend others to consume green products for protecting the environment	0.750	RMSEA	.073	Good fit
	Neglect of green practices lead to natural disasters	0.756			
	Environmental issues	.693			
Awareness of green practices	Use of organic items	.684	χ^2/df	1.099	Good fit
	Green campaigns	.748	CFI	.999	Good fit
	Concept of growing home gardens	.747	TLI	.997	Good fit
	Knowledge about recycling	.759	RMSEA	.022	Good fit
Perception of youth towards green lifestyle	Durable	.781	χ^2/df	.809	Good fit
	Helps prevent future natural disasters	.752	CFI	1.000	Good fit
	Necessity to implement strict laws	.858	TLI	1.004	Good fit
	Benefit the future generation	.752	RMSEA	.000	Good fit
	Enhances personal image	.786			
Sustainable green lifestyle	Use of paper cups and bags	.676	χ^2/df	1.700	Good fit
	Use of Recycled products	.787	CFI	.987	Good fit
	Use of energy conservation products	.672	TLI	.979	Good fit
	Segregate waste	.71	RMSEA	.058	Good fit
	Avoid using plastic	.743			
	Use of biodegradable products	.722			
Obstacles faced in adopting green lifestyle	Greatly exaggerated	.707	χ^2/df	1.395	Good fit
	Effects of climate change are too far in the future	.691	CFI	.990	Good fit
	Not worth supporting, when others do not cooperate	.713	TLI	.983	Good fit
	Not available	.713	RMSEA	.053	Good fit
	Only green claims	.787			
	Costly	.723			

Benchmark value - $\chi^2/df \leq 3$ (Chau, 1997), CFI = ≥ 0.90 , (Hu and Bentler, 1999), TLI > .90 (Hu and Bentler, 1999), RMSEA ≤ 0.08 (Hooper et al).

Reliability and Validity

To analyze the reliability of the variables, this study used the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability refers to the internal consistency of measures used in this study and was assessed through the Cronbach's α .

To test validity of the data, Convergent Validity was assessed by means of: (a) Construct Reliability (CR), (b) Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Discriminant Validity. Table 2 shows that reliability and validity criterion is satisfied in this test.

Table:2 Reliability and Validity for the constructs

Construct	Reliability Cronbach alpha	AVE	CR	Validity			
				Discriminant Validity			
				Awareness of green practices	Environmental concern	Perception of youth towards green lifestyle	Sustainable green lifestyle
Awareness of green practices	.841	.522	.845	.772			
Environmental concern	.835	.505	.657	.423	.710		
Perception towards green lifestyle	.864	.612	.887	.384	.484	.782	
Sustainable green lifestyle	.863	.517	.845	.487	.439	.444	.719
Obstacles in adopting green lifestyle	.870	.517	.816				

The diagonal figures in **bold** indicate the square root of average variances extracted (AVE) for constructs.

Benchmark value-Reliability: Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$ (Nunnally and Bernstein (2010)); Convergent validity: AVE > 0.5 (Fornell, C., and Larcker, D. F., (1981) , Composite reliability (CR) > 0.60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988); Discriminant validity is adequate when the proportion of average variance extracted (AVE) in each construct exceeds the square of the coefficient representing its correlation with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Relationships between the constructs (ie.), environmental concern among the youth, perception towards green lifestyle, awareness of green practices, and sustainable green lifestyle

To test the hypothesis that proposes that there is a relationships between the different constructs (ie.), environmental concern among the youth, perception towards green lifestyle, awareness of green practice and, sustainable green lifestyle, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to measure the strength and the direction of associations.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation coefficients for relationships between the different constructs and sustainable green lifestyle

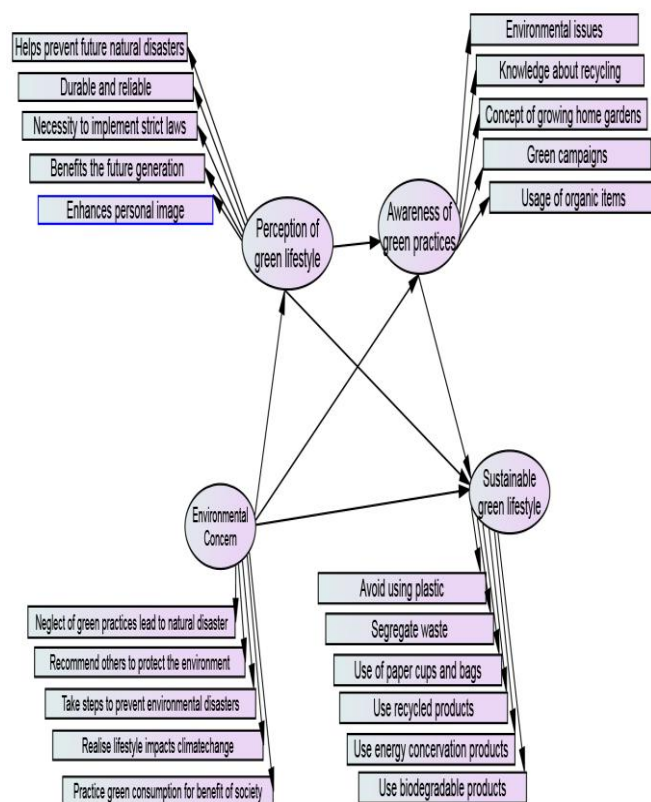
Constructs	Sustainable green lifestyle
Environmental concern	.439**
Perception of youth towards green lifestyle	.444**
Awareness of green practices	.487**

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Based on the reported results, it was possible to verify that there is positive correlation between awareness of green practices among youth and sustainable green lifestyle, environmental concern among youth and sustainable green lifestyle, perception of youth towards green lifestyle and sustainable green lifestyle. The hypothesis H1: There is positive relationship between environmental concern among youth and sustainable green lifestyle, perception of youth towards green lifestyle and sustainable green lifestyle, awareness of green practices among youth and sustainable green lifestyle and is accepted.

Looking at the standardised regression coefficients for each constructs as shown in Table 3, the dominating variables with regard to environmental concern is neglect of green practices lead to natural disasters , recommend others to consume green products for protecting the environment and should practice green consumption for the benefit of the society. The dominating variables with regard to perception of youth towards green lifestyle is necessity to implement strict laws and enhances personal image. The dominating variables with regard to awareness of green practices is knowledge about recycling and green campaigns. The dominating variable with regard to sustainable green lifestyle is use of recycled products and avoid using plastics.

Figure 1 Model 1: Relationship between environmental concern and sustainable green lifestyle with perception of youth towards green lifestyle and awareness of green practices as a mediator



This model studies the relationship between environmental concern and sustainable green lifestyle with perception of youth towards green lifestyle and awareness of green practices as a mediating variable

Inference

It can be concluded from structural equation model that Mode 1 is a fit model. As hierarchical regression analysis shows that there is partial mediation, perception of youth towards green lifestyle and awareness of green practices partially mediate the relationships between environmental concern and sustainable green life style.

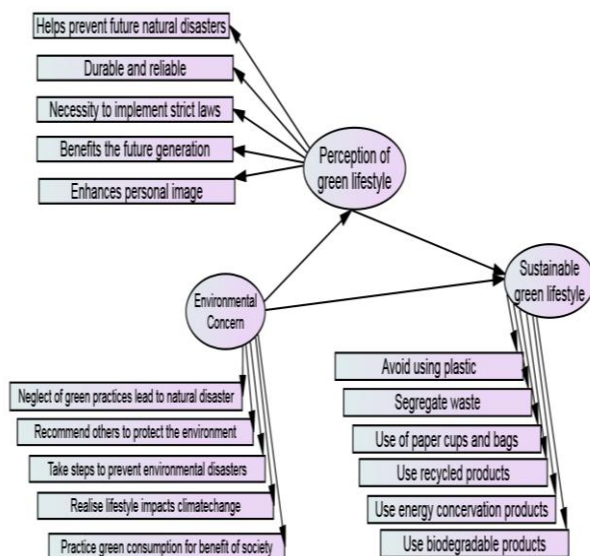
Sub Model 1:

This model studies the relationship between environmental concern and sustainable green lifestyle with perception of youth towards green lifestyle as a mediating variable. Hence the

- Independent Variables: Environmental concern.

- Dependent Variable: Sustainable green lifestyle.
- Mediator Variable: Perception of youth towards green lifestyle is a mediating variable that mediates the relationship between Independent Variable (Environmental concern) and Dependent Variable (Sustainable green lifestyle).

Figure 2 Sub Model 1



The fitted model indicated good fit with all the fit-indices better than the recommended cut-off values. $\chi^2/df = 1.746$ (≤ 3); CFI = .952 (≥ 0.90); TLI = .943 (> 0.90); RMSEA = .060 (≤ 0.08)

DISCUSSIONS

As there is positive correlation between, environmental concern among youth and sustainable green lifestyle, perception of youth towards green lifestyle and sustainable green lifestyle, awareness of green practices among youth and sustainable green lifestyle any impact on one construct will have a considerable impact on the other. Thus, an increase or decrease in environmental concern among youth, perception of youth towards green lifestyle and awareness of green practices among youth, will bring about an increase or decrease in sustainable green lifestyle. Environmental concern plays a major role towards sustainable green lifestyle. But it is interesting to note that there is more impact on sustainable green lifestyle among youth when environmental concern, influences the perception of the youth towards green lifestyle and also when environmental concern, bring about awareness of green practices among youth. However, though environmental concern help to bring about awareness of green practices, this awareness

among youth about green practices is boosted only when environmental concern influences the perception of the youth.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Environmentalism has taken on a new sense of urgency. The environmental concern among the youth, their perception towards green lifestyle and awareness of green practices, are considered vital for sustainable green lifestyle. The youth could act as catalysts to bring changes towards a greener lifestyle among peers and the community and the world at large. Knowledge creates awareness among the youth, Latest technology, social media and the vast connectivity can always bring the youth together to share not only awareness but also their concern for certain issues relating to the environment.

This could be done by providing incentives and introducing policies towards green practices which would encourage the youth to go green and embrace green lifestyle. They could demonstrate their involvements and supports by taking initiative to expand consumer awareness of green products by creating effective green marketing campaigns or environmental-related activities such as energy conservation to contribute to a better sustainable green lifestyle. Marketers on the other hand should play their role to make sure that their products are green products according to standards and are competitively priced. This research therefore adds support to previous research, offering a theoretical and a practical basis for understanding that the consumers' environmental concerns, awareness of green practices, perception of green lifestyle which significantly influenced their decision to adopt a sustainable green lifestyle. Thus, the results of this study offer a new forward motion to the findings of earlier studies on sustainable consumption.

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