

# Everyday Choices Impact on Environment: An Empirical Study on Awareness and Willingness to Change

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**Abstract:** *To shed light on how individual decisions affect the environment and the economy, this empirical study explores the complex interaction between environmental consciousness, everyday choices, and economic dynamics. This study aims to reveal the nuances of decision-making processes and their consequences using an extensive questionnaire survey given to a varied group of participants. Focusing on young students enrolled in Master's programs, the study investigates how this demographic group views, interacts with, and incorporates economic and environmental elements into daily decision-making. The research uses a Likert scale-based questionnaire and demographic questions to look for trends, correlations, and insights that can help guide education programs, policy decisions, and individual behavior change efforts. The study's main conclusions and suggestions may influence policies to encourage environmentally conscious spending and sustainable lifestyles in young adults, supporting larger initiatives to create a more sustainable and greener future.*

**Keywords:** Awareness, Willingness, Lifestyle, Sustainability, Environmental impact

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the intersection of individual choices, environmental consciousness, and economic dynamics has garnered increasing attention as societies grapple with the pressing need for sustainable development (Katherine Farrow, 2018). As populations continue to grow and resource consumption escalates, the impact of everyday decisions on the environment becomes ever more pronounced (Tourism and water: Interactions, impacts and challenges., 2019). Concurrently, economic considerations play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, often influencing choices with long-term environmental ramifications (Paul Peter, 2019). This intricate interplay underscores the urgency of understanding how individuals, particularly young adults, navigate their daily choices amidst evolving environmental and economic landscapes.

Amidst the backdrop of escalating environmental challenges and growing concerns over climate change, young adults, including those pursuing higher education, represent a critical demographic in shaping the trajectory of sustainable development (Werner, 2019). With access to resources, knowledge, and agency, this cohort possesses the potential to drive meaningful change through their consumption patterns, lifestyle choices, and advocacy efforts (UN Young Champions of Earth, 2018). Understanding the factors influencing their decision-making processes is paramount in devising effective strategies to promote environmental stewardship and sustainable living practices among future leaders and decision-makers (Anja Kollmuss, 2010).

Recent studies have highlighted the influence of various socioeconomic factors, educational backgrounds, and personal values on individuals' environmental attitudes and behaviors (Paul C Stern, 2017). However, gaps remain in understanding how these factors intersect with economic considerations and everyday choices, particularly within the context of young adults pursuing advanced degrees (Lorraine

Whitemarsh, 2011). Furthermore, the role of media and information dissemination channels cannot be overlooked, as they shape perceptions and behaviors regarding sustainability and environmental responsibility (David Peterson, 2011).

According to a recent article in The Guardian (Youth Leading the Charge for Sustainability, 2018), young adults are increasingly recognizing their role in driving sustainability efforts. They are demanding more action from policymakers and institutions. This underscores the importance of understanding and harnessing the potential of this demographic in addressing pressing environmental challenges.

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to address the following research questions: How do young students enrolled in master's degree program perceive the relationship between their everyday choices, environmental awareness, and economic dynamics? To what extent are individuals willing to take small steps toward sustainable consumption and environmentally responsible practices? By exploring these questions through a comprehensive survey and demographic analysis, this research endeavors to provide insights that can inform targeted interventions, educational initiatives, and policy measures aimed at fostering sustainable lifestyles and promoting environmental stewardship among students. The following hypothesis statements are supported by the study from the extensive literature reviews.

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between students' consideration of the environmental impact of everyday products and their willingness to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors, including reducing plastic consumption.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between students' consideration of the environmental impact of everyday products and their willingness to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors,

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including reducing plastic consumption.

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between students' willingness to pay for eco-friendly alternatives and their household income.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between students' willingness to pay for eco-friendly alternatives and their household income.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

- To measure the level of awareness among students about environment impact on their daily choices.
- To evaluate the willingness of students to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors.
- To investigate how the demographic characteristics of students influence their environmental consciousness.

## 3. Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data and the major data is collected from 123 students through a structured questionnaire and questionnaire consists important questions on environmental understandings and objectives. A convenient method of sampling was employed to select the sample and ensured that those taking part would come from a range of academic backgrounds and pursuing their studies in colleges. Questionnaire also helped to collect demographic data, such as gender, age, qualification, and household income of respondents.

The study illuminates the environmental awareness of young adults (students) and identifies perceptions of these respondents on different variables affecting their actions.

The findings used to make recommendations to encourage eco-friendly practices and sustainability among students and others. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed with the help of few statistical techniques such as frequency analysis, ANOVA and chi-square test and results were used to identify its implications.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The analysis covered in this section is of two parts. The awareness and willingness to change and its impact on environment sustainability is covered in the first part. The objective wise analysis is presented in few tables here under.

### Objective 1: To measure the level of awareness among students about environment impact on their daily choices.

This study aims to investigate students' understanding of how their daily choices affect the environment. The students comprise a cohort of individuals with a variety of experiences and viewpoints, which makes the study of environmental consciousness in an academic setting. The research aims to provide insights into the current level of environmental consciousness among students and propose areas for intervention to encourage sustainable practices by evaluating their awareness, attitudes, and behaviors.

**Table 1:** Awareness level among students about environment impact on their daily choices

Actively participate in any environmental organizations or activities				
Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	cumulativePercent
Yes	36	29.3	29.3	29.3
No	87	70.7	70.7	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
Level of awareness regarding the environmental impact of your daily choices				
Level of awareness	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Not at all Aware	4	3.3	3.3	3.3
Slightly Aware	41	33.3	33.3	36.6
Aware	66	53.7	53.7	90.2
Very Much Aware	12	9.8	9.8	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
How much plastic do you think you consume per week?				
Level of Consumption	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Very little	22	17.9	17.9	17.9
A moderate amount	65	52.8	52.8	70.7
A significant	19	15.4	15.4	86.2
I am not Sure	17	13.8	13.8	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Consolidated from questionnaire data

According to the data from Table 1, 29.3% of the students who were surveyed said they actively participated in environmental organizations or activities. This indicates that students are involved in environmental projects to a moderate extent. The majority (70.7%), however, stated little active participation, indicating a possible area for improvement in encouraging MCC master's students' environmental involvement. The findings indicate an array of awareness of environmental effects among students. About 33.3% of

respondents said they were only marginally well-informed, and 3.3% said they were unaware. A higher percentage (53.7%) said they were aware, whereas a smaller percentage (9.8%) said they were extremely informed. The breadth of attitudes and perceptions that students have toward environmental issues is highlighted by this awareness range.

The study of how students view their use of plastic reveals some interesting results. Although 17.9% of students think

they use plastic quite very rarely, a sizable majority(52.8%) think they use plastic partially. Furthermore, 15.4% of students admit to using significant quantities of plastic every week. Remarkably, 13.8% of respondents say they are unsure about how much plastic they use. The complexity of evaluating the individual actions and perceptions of students regarding plastic usage is brought to light by this data, which suggests that focused interventions are required to raise awareness and encourage responsible plastic consumption practices.

Overall, the results highlight how critical it is to raise environmental consciousness and encourage sustainable practices among students. To support environmental conservation efforts, the data points to ways to improve involvement in environmental activities, increase awareness, and promote responsible consumption habits.

**Objective 2: To evaluate the willingness of students to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors.**

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between students' consideration of the environmental impact of everyday products and their willingness to adopt

environmentally responsible behaviors, including reducing plastic consumption.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between students' consideration of the environmental impact of everyday products and their willingness to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors, including reducing plastic consumption.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2019), which holds that attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control influence people's intentions to engage in activities, justifies the option of the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>). A significant factor influencing attitudes toward environmentally responsible behavior is environmental awareness, which is demonstrated by people's assessment of the environmental impact of common products (Bamberg & Moser, 2007).

Therefore, it is hypothesized that there is a strong correlation between students' readiness to adopt environmentally conscious activities, such as reducing back on plastic usage, and their awareness of the environmental impact of common products.

**Table 2: Environmental Consciousness among Students**

How much do you consider the environmental impact of everyday products, such as plastic toothpaste tubes, water bottles, carriers, etc. before using them?				
Level of Consideration	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	6	4.9	4.9	4.9
Slightly	77	62.6	62.6	67.5
Very Much	30	24.4	24.4	91.9
Extremely	10	8.1	8.1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 2 shows that how differently master's students think about how common products affect the environment. A significant portion (4.9%) states that they aren't thinking about the environmental impact at all, despite the majority 62.6% reporting slight concern and 24.4% showing very much

consideration indicating at least some level of consideration. This range of degrees of thought highlights how crucial it is to comprehend how human views toward the influence of the environment shape behavioral intentions.

**Table 3: Willingness to Change**

Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? Water bottle				
Level of Consideration	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Unwilling	5	4.1	4.1	4.1
Somewhat unwilling	16	13	13	17.1
Somewhat willing	61	49.6	49.6	66.7
Very Willing	41	33.3	33.3	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? Dish scrub				
Level of Consideration	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Unwilling	6	4.9	4.9	4.9
Somewhat unwilling	23	18.7	18.7	23.6
Somewhat willing	61	49.6	49.6	73.2
Very Willing	33	26.8	26.8	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? Takeaway containers				
Level of Consideration	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Unwilling	7	5.7	5.7	5.7
Somewhat unwilling	15	12.2	12.2	17.9
Somewhat willing	57	46.3	46.3	64.2
Very Willing	44	35.8	35.8	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? Plastic toothbrush				
Level of Consideration	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Very Unwilling	9	7.3	7.3	7.3
Somewhat unwilling	25	20.3	20.3	27.6
Somewhat willing	50	40.7	40.7	68.3
Very Willing	39	31.7	31.7	100
Total	123	100	100	
<b>Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? Plastic cutlery</b>				
<b>Level of Consideration</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Very Unwilling	4	3.3	3.3	3.3
Somewhat unwilling	20	16.3	16.3	19.5
Somewhat willing	55	44.7	44.7	64.2
Very Willing	44	35.8	35.8	100
Total	123	100	100	

Source: Questionnaire

Further an ANOVA test was performed to determine the students' willingness to cut down on their use of plastic in a variety of products, including as water bottles, dish soaps, takeout containers, plastic toothbrushes, and plastic cutlery.

The purpose of this analysis was to investigate possible disparities in students' perspectives regarding reducing the use of plastic for various products and to determine the significance of these disparities.

**Table 4:** Result of Anova

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? (Plastic cutlery)	BetweenGroups	5.604	3	1.868	3.074	0.03
	WithinGroups	72.314	119	0.608		
	Total	77.919	122			
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items?(Water bottle)	BetweenGroups	10.552	3	3.517	6.477	0
	WithinGroups	64.619	119	0.543		
	Total	75.171	122			
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items?(Takeaway containers)	BetweenGroups	3.983	3	1.328	1.946	0.126
	WithinGroups	81.187	119	0.682		
	Total	85.171	122			
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? (Dish scrub)	Between Groups	9.13	3	3.043	5.112	0.002
	Within Groups	70.838	119	0.595		
	Total	79.967	122			
Willingness to Reduce Plastic Consumption for the following items? (Plastic Toothbrush)	Between Groups	9.568	3	3.189	4.203	0.007
	Within Groups	90.302	119	0.759		
	Total	99.87	122			

Source: Author Compiled

**Objective 3: To examine the influence of household income on students' willingness to pay for eco-friendly alternatives compared to their plastic counterparts.**

- **Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between students' willingness to pay for eco-friendly alternatives and their household income.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between students' willingness to pay for eco-friendly alternatives and their household income.

Higher levels of income may lead people to believe they have more financial resources and control over their purchases, according to the Theory of Planned Behavior. Because of this, individuals could be more likely to spend extra money on environmentally friendly options than on their plastic alternatives. Research shows that people with higher incomes are frequently more likely to adopt ecologically friendly practices, which lends support to this (Kallus & Agyeman, 2018).

In addition, a non-linear relationship between economic development (typically measured by income levels) and environmental degradation is put forward by the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) theory. At first, higher consumption and industrial activities may contribute to environmental damage as income rises. However, after a

particular financial level, people and society may put more value on environmental quality, which would reduce environmental damage. This shows that as they place a higher value on environmental conservation, people with higher incomes would be more likely to invest in eco-friendly alternatives (Stern, 2004).

Thus, it is hypothesized—considering these theoretical vantage points—that there exists a noteworthy correlation between the home wealth of students and their propensity to pay for environmentally friendly substitutes as opposed to their plastic counterparts.

**Table 5:** Willing to pay for eco-friendly alternatives compared to their plastic counterparts

<b>Income of your Households</b>			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Below Rs20000	12	30.8	-18.8
Rs20000- 40000	22	30.8	-8.8
Rs40000- 60000	49	30.8	18.2
Above 60000	40	30.8	9.2
Total	123		
<b>How much are you willing to pay for eco-friendly alternatives compared to their plastic counterparts?</b>			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Considerably more	3	24.6	-21.6
Slightly more	45	24.6	20.4



Slightly less	7	24.6	-17.6
About the same	66	24.6	41.4
Much less	2	24.6	-22.6
Total	123		

Source: Author complied

The household income and willingness to pay frequencies of students for eco- friendly versus plastic alternatives are presented in the table together with the expected and observed frequencies for each. Expected frequencies are computed using the entire distribution, whereas observed frequencies show the actual number of students expressing varying levels of willingness to pay and falling into each income category. The variations between observed and expected frequencies are indicated by residuals, which draws attention to data discrepancies.

Table 6: Chi-Square test

Test Statistics		
	Income of your Households	How much are you willing to pay for eco-friendly alternatives compared to their plastic counterparts?
Chi-Square	27.537a	138.911b
Df	3	4
Asymp.Sig.	0	0

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 30.8.

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 24.6.

There is a significant relationship between the household income of students and their willingness to pay for eco-friendly options as opposed to their plastic competitors. It was found using the chi-square test that there were statistically significant relationships between household income and willingness to pay. The null hypothesis, which suggested no significant connection, was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, which showed a significant relationship between household income and willingness to pay for eco-friendly alternatives, with p-values below the traditional threshold of 0.05. This conclusion is further supported by the chi-square values for household income and willingness to pay, which are 27.537 and 138.911, respectively, adding to the evidence for this conclusion. These results suggest that students' tastes for environmentally friendly products are noticeably influenced by their household income by their household income in an evident way. Thus, it can be said that students from different socioeconomic backgrounds have different preferences when it comes to buying environmentally friendly products, highlighting the impact of socioeconomic variables on sustainable purchasing practices.

## 5. Conclusion

Many significant findings on the relationship between environmental consciousness, daily decisions, and economic dynamics among students may be made based on the results of the three main objectives of this study. First, the examination of students' environmental awareness levels showed that they varied in their levels of consciousness, with a significant percentage showing that they were moderate to highly aware of how their daily actions affected the environment. Second, the assessment of students' readiness to

embrace eco-friendly habits, especially reducing back on plastic use, revealed strong correlations between their inclination to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors and socioeconomic factors like household income. Finally, the study of how demographics affect environmental consciousness brought to light the significance financial standing plays in influencing people's environmental perceptions and behaviors. All things considered, these results highlight how challenging it is for young adults to make decisions and how crucial it is to change personal habits to support environmental sustainability. The knowledge gathered from this research can help guide behavioral modification efforts, policy interventions, & educational programs designed to help young adults develop more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

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