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Practicing Pro-environmental Behaviour in Creating a Sustainable Future

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Abstract

Practicing "pro-environmental" behavior is one of the most significant in psychological research. Environmental issues have drawn international attention because environmental degradation has caused problems for human throughout the last few decades. It is feasible to connect this environmental degradation to human activity. Under sustainable environmental condition, that can be better human environmental behaviour. The term "pro-environmental behavior" describes the decisions and actions people take to improve sustainability and decrease their negative effects on the environment. In this review article, the authors makes an effort to comprehend how human behavior is influenced by the physical environment and how behavior and attitude affect the environmental circumstance with a special focus on green sustainable or pro-environmental practices. When it comes to engaging in pro-environmental behavior, there are various factors that play a vital role, such as knowing about the problem, human values, and environmental concerns. The writers offer a four-step model to encourage people to change their behavior in favor of the natural environment. A variety of theoretical and methodological strategies are available to enhance pro-environment behaviour. Additionally, the authors emphasize how important it is for people to form a strong connection with nature. This suggests that developing a common understanding and assessing people's unique subject-matter expertise in environmental education are essential.

Keywords: Degradation of the environment; Pro-environmental behavior; Models and theories of environment-behavior relationship; Psychological benefits of connecting with nature

1 Introduction

The word "environment" comes from the French word "environ," which might also mean "around," "round about," "to surround," or "to encompass." The environment is made up of the social structure, plants, water, and land. The natural and physical environments are also included. As a result, the term "environment" refers

to a broad range of contexts in which people see the world, interact with it, and adjust to changes. It is highly dynamic in nature and is always changing, whether or not humans are involved. Despite these changes, the ecology of a given region remains in a state of dynamic equilibrium. This is what is meant by the natural balance.

The mental and behavioral actions of humans are greatly influenced by environmental circumstances. Mental activities encompass human perception, thought, reasoning, attribution, belief, interpretation, and attitude development regarding various aspects of their surroundings. Contrarily, behavioral activities describe how people act, react, or respond in their surroundings as a result of their attitudes, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions.

The complex interaction between humans and their natural surroundings is the subject of environmental psychology. In short, it investigates how human experiences, behavior, and well-being are influenced by the environment, and how people can change their surroundings in return. It also investigates the main strategies for promoting pro-environmental behavior and the numerous elements that affect environmental behavior. This is the reason that "human factor science" is another term used to describe environmental psychology.

1.1 Environmental behaviour

A human's actions that impact the environment in some way, whether it is positive or negative, larger or smaller. However, human behavior can be categorized as environmental behavior because people engage with their environment almost constantly. This indicates that any actions, regardless of how little they may affect the environment—such as taking a walk or engaging in any other human movement, even breathing—would fall under this definition. Professionals are mainly concerned with environmental behavior related to the use of energy, raw materials, waste production, and pollution in this era where society is seeing changes in the environment, ecosystems, biosphere, and climate that are occurring as a result of human activity.

Therefore, any activity that has a substantial impact on the environment is considered environmental behavior in a limited sense. There are also rare instances where the term "environmentally-relevant behaviors" is used in this sense⁽¹⁾. People may behave in an unintentional and unreflected manner in the environment without realizing the effects. For example, many people smoke cigarettes, or cut flowers.

1.2 Degradation of the environment

Degradation of the environment is any alteration or disruption to the environment that is thought to be harmful or undesirable. In other words, it is the degradation of ecosystems, the loss of habitat, the extinction of species, pollution, and the depletion of resources including soil, water, and air. The environment deteriorates when there are insufficient natural resources, species in danger, excessive pollution, and out-of-control human expansion.

There are three types of environmental degradation: air, water, and land/soil degradation. The usage of pesticides from landfills, fertilizers, and poor farming practices are

the causes of the degradation of the land and soil. Illegal dumping and the disposal of industrial waste into water bodies are the main causes of water degradation. The two main factors contributing to atmospheric degradation are particle pollution and ozone layer thinning.

1.3 Pro-environmental behaviour

The majority of studies conducted in environmental psychology concentrate on pro-environmental behavior, which is also known as "ecological behaviour", "conservation behaviour"^(2–4), "environmentally friendly behaviour" (Dolnicar and Grun 2009), "environmentally responsible behavior," "environment-protective behavior," "environment-preserving behaviour"⁽⁴⁾, and "sustainable behavior"⁽⁵⁾. Conversely, "environmentally unfriendly behavior" and "environment-destructive behavior" are the reverse.

According to⁽⁶⁾, "behavior that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world" is described as pro-environmental behavior. Hence, this kind of behavior might be called goal-directed pro-environmental behavior, which is behavior that people engage with the express intention of improving the environment. Some research suggests that the study of goal-directed behavior is the only thing that environmental psychology can and should focus on⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ outline the steps (see Figure 1) required for transforming behavior from unsustainable to proenvironmental. This four-step model is designed to motivate individuals to alter their behavior in support of the environment. They propose the following four actions:

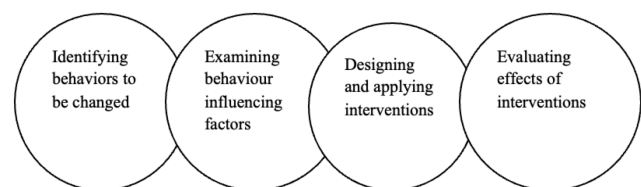


Fig. 1. Supporting Sustainable Behavior Change Framework⁽⁷⁾.

- 1. Identifying behaviors to be changed-** Choose a specific behaviour to be changed that will improve the quality of the environment. The identification of behavioral patterns, including behavioral antecedents (such as attitude, contextual circumstances, etc.), is preferred by environmental psychologists.
- 2. Examining behaviour influencing factors-** After identifying behaviors that require modification, it is important to investigate the underlying causes of these behaviors.
- 3. Designing and applying interventions -** Selecting the right interventions to alter current habits is the next

stage in encouraging sustainable change. According to⁽⁷⁾, there are several categories of potential strategies to reduce its environmental impact, but the two most commonly mentioned are (1) antecedent and consequence and (2) informational and structural. The goal of antecedent strategies, which include modeling, information and education, prompting, environmental design, behavioral commitments, and raising problem awareness and informing about options, is to alter the conditions that precede behavior by announcing the possibility of either positive or negative outcomes. In the meanwhile, the goal of the consequence strategies—which include rewards, penalties, and feedback—is to change the outcomes that accompany behavior.

4. **Evaluating effects of interventions-** The last step in the process of supporting sustainable behavior is evaluation of effects of interventions. It should pay attention to many factors in addition to alterations in environmental behaviors. For example, it is important to record changes in behavioral determinants that can provide an insight into why intervention programs were successful or not

1.4 Models and theories of environment-behavior relationship

An effective model can improve our insights into behaviour and help us understand what we can do to change it. Some models promote pro-environmental behaviour that concentrates on individual behaviour change.

Behavioural Change Model: According to this model, individuals would naturally be encouraged to act in an ecologically responsible manner if they were better informed and more aware of the issues affecting the environment. After gaining this knowledge, people would have different mindsets, which would cause them to behave differently.

Reasoned/Responsible action theory: This theory was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein, and they believed that human behaviour is grounded in rational thought. The theory highlighted how at times individual have good intentions, but they may not always act accordingly because they lack confidence or a sense of control over their actions.

Health Belief Theory: As per this theory, people's perceptions of health and behavior are primarily based on two factors: threat perception, which refers to an individual's perceived vulnerability to illness and the expected severity of its consequences, and behavioral evaluation, or coping appraisal, which involves the belief that taking a particular course of action will be beneficial. For this reason, people are more likely to follow advised preventive behaviors when they believe they have a high chance of getting sick. Environmental psychologists apply this theory to environmental concerns and find that people adopt pro-environmental behaviors out

of a fear of the negative consequences of harmful environmental practices.

1.5 Psychological benefits' of connecting with nature

Spending time in nature has been found to be an effective way to reduce stress. It has been demonstrated to drop blood pressure and hormone levels, improve immune system function, boost mood, lessen anxiety, raise self-esteem, and lower nervous system excitation.

Benefits of Being in Nature: Engaging in physical activity and accessing green spaces on a regular basis encourages people to step outside, resulting in reduced stress and improved short-term and working memories. Being in nature enhances mood, relieves depression and anxiety, reduces mental fatigue, and fosters a more enthusiastic and relaxed attitude toward work. Spending time in nature also aids in better focus and provides a dose of vitamin D from sunlight, potentially lowering the risk of developing Alzheimer's and dementia.

2 Conclusion

Practicing pro-environmental behavior is crucial for creating a sustainable future. By reducing pollution, managing resources responsibly, and adopting sustainable practices, individuals contribute to environmental protection. Pro-environmental behavior promotes economic sustainability, social responsibility, and improved quality of life. Engaging in these behaviors provides educational opportunities, empowering individuals to make informed, environmentally conscious decisions. In essence, pro-environmental behavior is a collective responsibility that makes the earth a better place to live for both present and future generations.

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