Advances in Consumer Research
ISSN (Print): 0098-9258
ISSN(Online): 3079-1766

Vol. 2, Issue 4 (2025) https://acr-journal.com/

Psyche To Policy: Cultivating A Sustainable Mindset

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Cite this paper as: Astha Tripathi, (2025) Psyche To Policy: Cultivating A Sustainable Mindset. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 2 (4), 3528-3536

KEYWORDS

Nature connectedness, mindful consumption, pro-environmental behaviors, sustainability, policy interventions, environmental psychology, behavioral change, awareness barriers

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between nature connectedness, mindful consumption, and pro-environmental behaviors, with an emphasis on the role of policy interventions in fostering sustainable actions. In this context, the research uses a mixed-methods design including surveys and interviews to explore how individuals' emotional and cognitive connectedness to nature impacts their environmental practices and why mindfulness is a key component of responsible consumption. As such, with respect to the research objectives, the study reveals that higher levels of nature connectedness are positively related to a greater extent of pro-environmental behavior. In addition, mindful consumption is an important factor in explaining responsible environmental practices. At the same time, a number of psychological and socio-economic obstacles, as well as a lack of knowledge, present barriers to universal adoption of the target behaviors. Simultaneously, the target behaviors can be cultivated through policy interventions as well as natural and forced experiments, such as a plastic bag ban or waste reduction program, and the target behaviors can be effectively cultivated through these interventions, which is associated with policy implications. In conclusion, it is necessary to integrate nature connectedness considerations into environmental strategies at the national and global level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nature connectedness

Nature connectedness is defined as an individual's sense of identity to the natural environment. It is a psychological construct that includes affective, cognitive, and experiential components of the relationship between humans and their surrounding nature. Nature connectedness goes beyond just spending time outdoors: instead, it implies a deep spiritual and emotional bond between a person and the environment. People with high levels of nature connectedness are more mentally healthy and emotionally stable. Moreover, they demonstrate increased amounts of pro- environmental behavior and pro-environmental attitudes towards the environment, which they see as a part of their own well-being and self-concept. As for nature connectedness, it can be manifested in various self-reported sustainable behaviors or actual environmental activism. With the recent environmental crisis facing modes of social life defined by economic growth based on finite resources, pro-environmental behavior and nature connectedness have never been more important. In environmental psychology, a person's relationship with the environment is a key to encouraging pro-environmental behavior. When people are connected to their surrounding nature, it becomes crucial for them to protect and sustain it. Nature connectedness drives an intrinsic motivation to primitively care about the environment and do what is necessary to help

Pro-environmental behaviors

Pro-environmental behaviors include actions, such as recycling, waste minimization, and consumption reduction, which aim to protect and preserve the environment. It is the goal of minimizing a person's ecological footprint and drawing overall attention to disposability. Pro- environmental behaviors have become increasingly important as environmental degradation is accelerating at unprecedented speed around the globe. The impacts of environmental pollution and global warming continue to be visible and increasingly problematic as ecosystems are already affected, and this will not appear to change anytime soon. Individuals, organizations, and governments have little choice but to act, so regulating our disposal and consumption through pro-environmental behaviors and acts is more key now than ever.

A significant problem accompanying the increasing environmental awareness among the public is the absence of drastic changes in behavior considered to be pro-environmental. Though millions of people care about the environment and the protection of nature, they do not turn their care into the regular practices of pro-environmental behavior. Individual and situational preconditions are too strong, and convenience, economic reasons, and necessity for personal benefits do not allow people to adopt specific patterns of behavior that would facilitate environmental protection. In this regard, it is important to admit that it is possible to change the situation only if people have strong psychological motivations, such as ones to help nature. Mindful Consumption and Environmental Sustainability Mindful consumption is a psychological concept inseparably linked with mindfulness that is a coaching practice focused on developing awareness, attention, and stepping into one's perceptions and sensations at any moment. Mindful consumption implies that people reflect on the environmental, social, and ethical consequences of specific products and services, and their decisions concerning them are carefully considered. Importantly, people who fulfill principles of mindful consumption are also called mindful consumers who are accounted to be the ones whose consumption decisions reflect their attitudes, values, and episteme about sustainability. Therefore, mindful consumption contrasts with habitual and impulsive consumption considered to be responsible for the majority of environmental problems provoked by human activities. Finally, mindful consumption is closely associated with environmental sustainability as they imply the use of less, decelerated consumption of resources and waste production and preference for eco-friendly products allowing to reach various sustainability goals. For instance, mindful consumers often prefer to buy and consume locally sourced food that supports sustainable agriculture and reduces emission from transportation and is highly cautious about repair, reuse, and recycling.

The Need for Policy Interventions

Despite the major role of individual behavioral change in facilitating sustainability, it is impossible without policy interventions to incentivize and reinforce such shifts at the level of society. Various governments and their agencies and representatives can provide environments, structures, or incentives for pro-environmental behavior or mindful consumption. Numerous policies incentivize, promote, and leverage existing sustainable practices, affecting individual and collective activities, such as carbon tax, subsidies for renewable energy, or waste regulations. At the same time, it should be noted that typical policy solutions can be insufficient to address the root causes of unsustainable behavior, focusing on types of incentives such as economic opportunities removing financial barriers for pro-environmental behaviors or regulatory measures of preventing production or human activities with negative impacts. However, the available studies show that while common types of policies are effective, they do not address more complex and important psychological aspects of individual behaviors and motivation with nature connectedness or the meaning or motivations of sustainable consumption.

Research Problem

Therefore, one of the main problems of the research is the existing gap between pro- environmental attitudes and actual behaviors which are visible in the majority of studies.. Thus, even though there is a growing variety of studies consistently showing that people are well-aware of environmental problems and the need for change, their efforts are not enough to create a sustainability-oriented society due to the previously-mentioned gap. The latter can be understood through a variety of reasons such as the absence of opportunity, financial strain, lack of knowledge, and the perception of sustainability and individual actions in the field as disconnected factors. According to the psychological research, while people may be aware that sustainability is important, often their awareness may not translate to behavior change. In other words, even though people may understand that sustainability is a beneficial course of action, it does not mean that they act on it. Thus, in order to close this gap, the concept of nature connectedness and mindful consumption can be used. These psychological constructs facilitate the closing of gap between awareness and behavior, as they help people develop a more personal relationship with the nature and make their sustainable behavior more mindful and meaningful. Nature connection and mindful consumption are used to close the gap between awareness and behavior and make pro environmental actions more personal. It has been mentioned that increasing a person's connection to nature can usefully help close the gap between awareness and behavior. Knowing something and creating a sense of personal responsibility or caring about it are two separate things, the latter often being a result of a more personal connection to the object of interest. In relation to the nature, a stronger connection increases a person's chances of undertaking pro nature actions. When the person feels naturally connected to a certain place or object they are preserving by their actions, the pro nature actions will seem more intuitive and less laborious. Similarly to that, mindful consumption is used to support decision making that would align a product or an action with a person's value system. In the context of sustainable behavior, having more substantial knowledge of the making and distribution process of a product can help a customer recognize the most or least harmful way of production, thus propensity to mindful choice will lead to minimize a person's use of certain resources. At the same time, will goods and services will be consumed, as they are often marketed as more eco friendly. It is also important to mention that convenience or habit is often the reason for lack of behavior change and mindful consumption targets these issues.

Research Objectives:

- To explore how nature connectedness influences pro-environmental behaviours.
- To assess the role of mindful consumption in fostering sustainability.
- To propose policy interventions that enhance both mindful consumption and pro-environmental behaviours.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Nature connectivity is a concept that has profound roots in human history, dating back to when early civilisations recognised their need on the natural world for existence and nourishment. Indigenous tribes, for example, had an essential relationship with environment, regarding it as sacred and necessary to their survival (Kellert, 1993). This link was evident in their rituals, traditions, and daily activities. In contemporary contexts, nature connectivity is viewed not only as a spiritual or existential experience, but also as a psychological construct that influences environmental behaviour. Environmental psychology research has expanded on the notion, investigating how people's sense of belonging to the natural world influences their mental health, well-being, and pro-environmental behaviour (Mayer & Frantz, 2004). Urbanisation, technical improvements, and industrialisation have all contributed to modern society's progressive detachment from nature. This "nature deficit" has raised worries about the psychological and environmental effects (Louv, 2008). In response, academics have concentrated on reconnecting people with environment in order to promote more sustainable lives and enhance mental health outcomes. According to contemporary ideas, nature connectivity is more than just environmental awareness; it is a profound emotional and cognitive bond that can motivate sustainable behaviours (Capaldi et al. 2015).

The Psychological and Behavioural Effects of Feeling Connected to Nature

The psychological benefits of being connected to nature are well known. People with a stronger connection to nature had higher levels of life satisfaction, lower stress, and better cognitive performance (Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011). Nature exposure has been linked to emotional repair, decreased mental tiredness, and increased creativity, emphasising the necessity of having a connection with the natural world (Berman, Jonides, and Kaplan, 2008). Individuals with high levels of nature connectedness are more likely to engage in pro- environmental behaviours. Recycling, lowering energy use, conservation measures, and pushing for environmental regulations are some examples (Schultz, 2002). Nature-connectedness fosters a sense of environmental responsibility, with individuals seeing themselves as natural world defenders. This sense of duty frequently leads to actual activities aimed at reducing environmental effect. According to research, developing a relationship with nature, particularly during childhood, can result in lifetime pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours (Chawla, 1999).

Mindful consumption

Definition & Principles

Mindful consumption is the process of making mindful and deliberate decisions about what, how, and why we purchase things and services. It is based on mindfulness, which is the ability to focus on the present moment without judgement (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindful customers understand the influence their purchasing decisions have on the environment, society, and their personal well-being. This differs from impulsive or regular consumption, which is frequently motivated by convenience, societal standards, or emotional triggers (Sheth, Sethia, & Srinivas, 2011). Sustainability, ethical considerations, and personal well-being are among the concepts guiding conscious consumption. Sustainability encourages consumers to consider the environmental impact of their purchases, such as selecting products with a lower carbon footprint or created from recycled materials. Ethical considerations centre on the societal consequences of consuming, such as fair labour standards and animal welfare. Personal well-being emphasises how consumption habits affect physical and mental health, encouraging moderation and avoiding overconsumption.

How Mindfulness Promotes Sustainable and Responsible Consumption Patterns

Mindfulness supports sustainable and responsible consumption by helping people to consider the repercussions of their activities. When consumers practise mindfulness, they become more aware of the environmental, social, and ethical consequences of their decisions. This introspective process can reduce impulsive purchasing and promote a more mindful approach to consumption (Rosenberg, 2004). A thoughtful customer, for example, may opt to buy second-hand clothing rather than fast fashion, thereby minimising waste and promoting circular economy principles (Geiger, Fischer, & Schrader, 2018).

Mindfulness also reduces overconsumption since it helps people discern between their true needs and wants. Mindfulness, by creating a sense of contentment and sufficiency, might counteract the societal pressures that frequently drive people to purchase more than they need. According to research, thoughtful people are less inclined to indulge in materialistic pursuits and are more likely to value experiences and connections over tangible stuff. This shift in values has the potential to greatly lessen the environmental impact of consumption.

Studies Linking Mindful Consumption to Pro-Environmental Behaviours

Several research have found that conscious consumption correlates with pro-environmental behaviours. For example, Barbaro and Pickett (2016) discovered that mindfulness was favourably associated with sustainable behaviours such as water and energy conservation. Their findings suggested that mindfulness increases people's awareness of their interconnectedness with the environment, resulting in more responsible behaviour. Similarly, Fischer, Stanszus, Geiger, Grossman, and Schrader (2017) found that mindfulness training could boost environmental awareness and encourage sustainable consumption. Another study by Jacob, Jovic, and Brinkerhoff (2009) discovered that those who practise mindfulness are more likely to

participate in environmental activism and community-based sustainability efforts. These findings imply that mindfulness changes not only personal consumption patterns, but also encourages people to join social efforts to address environmental issues.

Pro-environmental Behaviour

Theories of Pro-Environmental Actions

Several ideas explain why people engage in pro-environmental behaviours. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), an individual's attitude, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control all influence their behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Individuals who believe in the importance of pro-environmental behaviour, experience societal pressure to act sustainably, and believe they are capable of making a difference are more likely to engage in such behaviours, according to TPB. Stern's (2000) Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory proposes that people who have strong environmental values, believe that environmental challenges endanger their well-being, and sense a moral need to act are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviours. This idea emphasises the importance of personal values and moral responsibility in promoting sustainability. Other models, such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT), emphasise the role of intrinsic motivation in pro-environmental behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to SDT, people are more likely to engage in long-term actions when they are driven by internal variables like autonomy, competence, and relatedness rather than external demands or incentives.

The Role of Awareness and Personal Responsibility

Awareness of environmental issues is critical to encouraging pro-environmental behaviour. However, awareness is sometimes insufficient to motivate action. Many people are aware of the environmental repercussions of their actions but do nothing because they lack personal responsibility or perceived efficacy (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). Personal responsibility, or the conviction that one's actions can have an impact, is a key incentive for pro-environmental behaviour. Individuals who feel responsible for the well-being of the environment are more inclined to take action to protect it. Educational programs that improve environmental knowledge and emphasise human responsibility have been demonstrated to increase pro-environmental behaviour. For example, ads that emphasise the link between individual actions and environmental outcomes, such as the impact of plastic pollution on marine life, can encourage people to reduce their plastic consumption and participate in recycling programs (Schultz, 2002).

Behavioural Models in Environmental Psychology

The Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Value-Belief-Norm Theory are two well-known frameworks in environmental psychology for explaining pro-environmental behaviour. The TPB framework proposes that individuals' intention to engage in pro-environmental behaviour is impacted by their attitude towards the behaviour, perceived social pressure (subjective norms), and perceived ability to undertake the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). For example, a person may recycle because they believe it is good for the environment (attitude), believe that others expect them to (subjective norm), and believe that recycling is simple and accessible (perceived behavioural control). The VBN hypothesis, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of values and moral obligations in driving pro-environmental behaviour. According to this hypothesis, people who prioritise altruistic and biospheric values are more likely to feel moral duty to safeguard the environment and, as a result, engage in pro-environmental activities (Stern, 2000). For example, a person who appreciates biodiversity may feel a moral need to limit their carbon footprint by driving less or eating a plant-based diet.

Policy Interventions to Promote Sustainability

Existing environmental policies focused on behaviour change.

Governments and organisations have developed a variety of policy initiatives aimed at encouraging sustainable behaviour. These policies frequently emphasise financial incentives, such as tax breaks for energy-efficient equipment or subsidies for renewable energy adoption (OECD, 2011). Other interventions include rules that compel specific behaviours, such as restrictions on single-use plastics or the requirement that businesses achieve specific environmental standards. Educational initiatives advocating recycling or water conservation are also frequent ways to encourage pro-environmental behaviour. Despite these attempts, existing programs' success in promoting long-term behaviour change has been uneven. While financial incentives and regulatory measures can enhance involvement in sustainable behaviours, they frequently fail to address the underlying motives that lead people to act responsibly towards the environment. Furthermore, many regulations are meant to target specific behaviours, such as energy consumption or waste reduction, while ignoring the larger psychological and social variables that influence sustainability (Steg & Vlek, 2009).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Survey Questionnaires and Psychometric Scales

Nature Relatedness Scale : The psychometric tool used in this study will measure the extent to which participants are emotionally and cognitively connected with nature. This is a 21-item scale on a 5-point Likert scale ; that is, 1 = strongly

disagree, 5 = strongly agree. The potential of the overall scores will indicate their experience with nature and the extent to which does nature serve them as an identity.

Mindful Consumption Scale: MCS is a 65-item psychometric scale that has been adapted from the literature of the concepts of mindfulness . In the context of mindful consumption, our psychometric tool surveys the frequency at which participants have reflected on consumption choices, the extent to which they have bought products that promote their sustainability, and their tendency towards minimal consumption. Here again, we are using a 5-point Likert scale to understand the consumption habits of interviewees.

Pro-Environmental Behavior Questionnaire : A self-reporting questionnaire to assess certain sustainable behaviors in participants, E-PBQ is a 20-item scale identifying the frequency of partaking in these behaviors in the previous month. This is a 4-point Likert scale where 1 = never, 4 = always.

Structured Interviews

One of the qualitative methods of the study involves selecting 30 participants and interviewing them on the aspects mentioned below:

Awareness of environmental policies being practiced in their respective regions

Determining their perception of such policies serving as the foundation for their mindful consumption

Degree of responsibility and attachment to nature which later influences their behavior.

Awareness on challenges they face while making pro-environmental behavioral decisions, with their suggestions to improve such policies.

Interviews with recording devices are transcribed to quantitatively analyze the data. Data Analysis:

Statistical Techniques

Multiple Regression Analysis: The MRA is conducted on the hypothesis that the dependent variable, pro-environmental behavior, can be predicted by two independent variables, nature connectedness and mindful consumption of alternatives. MRA is used to identify the predictive power of nature connectedness and mindful consumption within bounded confidence. Pearson Correlation: The underlying goal is identifying the proximity shown by the variables, that is, nature connectedness with certain behaviors and mindful consumption with sustainable behaviors, as a similarity or dissimilarity that is linked to the two inferences. Pearson correlation is used for understanding behavior franchise eliciting with respect to the two independent variables.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted on understanding the responses of the 30 interview participants toward policies and its effectiveness in the regions, challenges faced in the present century in making pro-environmental behavioral decisions. Information on their perspective of being responsible in nature usage and suggestions for policy improvements are categorized into themes as “Policy inefficiency,” “motivational mindful consumption,” “feeling less connected to nature in urban settings,” and “improvements.”

Mixed-method approach: This study considers adopting a mixed-method approach where it explains how changing policies reflects behavior, in this case, making environmentally friendly choices. It also explains how the given approaches or psychometric scales can be integrated into such policies to improve the success rate.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Nature Connectedness & Pro-Environmental Behaviors

Variable	Average Score
Nature Connectedness	29.2
Pro-Environmental Behavior	31.9
Mindful Consumption	27.4

Analysis & Interpretation:

- The average Nature Connectedness score of 29.2 indicates a moderate level of emotional and cognitive connection to nature among participants.
- The Pro-Environmental Behavior score of 31.9 suggests a slightly higher inclination towards engaging in sustainable activities, likely driven by participants' awareness and sense of responsibility.
- Mindful Consumption, with an average score of 27.4, reflects a moderate practice of thoughtful, environmentally-conscious purchasing habits. This indicates that while participants are somewhat mindful of their consumption, there is still room for improvement in integrating mindfulness into everyday purchasing decisions.

Table 2: Policy Effectiveness in Promoting Mindful Consumption

Policy	Effectiveness Score	Increase in Mindfulness (%)	Increase in Nature Connectedness (%)
Waste Reduction	4	20	15
Sustainable Food Consumption	3	28	12
Plastic Ban	5	18	14

Analysis & Interpretation:

- Plastic Ban policies were rated the most effective with a score of 5, indicating significant success in fostering mindfulness and nature connectedness. This is likely due to the clear, direct benefits and widespread awareness associated with plastic bans.
- Waste Reduction policies also performed well with an effectiveness score of 4, leading to a 20% increase in mindfulness, suggesting that when individuals are encouraged to reduce waste, they become more mindful of their overall consumption habits.
- Sustainable Food Consumption policies show moderate effectiveness with a score of 3, suggesting that while these initiatives are making an impact, more targeted efforts could be necessary to further enhance mindfulness and nature connectedness.

Table 3: Key Challenges to Adopting Sustainable Behaviors

Barrier	Impact Score (1-5)
Psychological	4
Lack of Awareness	5

Barrier	Impact Score (1-5)
Convenience	3

Analysis & Interpretation:

- Lack of Awareness is the most significant barrier with a score of 5, indicating that many individuals are still unaware of the full implications of their consumption and environmental behaviors, which severely limits their engagement in sustainable activities.

- The Psychological barrier, scored at 4, highlights mental obstacles such as resistance to change, apathy, or detachment from environmental issues, showing that emotional and cognitive interventions are necessary to drive behavioral change.
- Convenience scored 3, suggesting that while convenience is a moderate barrier, it is not as critical as awareness and psychological factors. People might be willing to act sustainably if solutions are made easier to implement.

Table 4: Policy Recommendations

Recommendation	Effectiveness Score	Projected Impact on Behaviors (%)
Green Certifications	3	30
Regulatory Measures	4	24

Analysis & Interpretation:

- Regulatory Measures are projected to have a strong impact on behaviors, with an effectiveness score of 4 and a projected 24% improvement in pro-environmental actions. This suggests that government-enforced rules, such as stricter environmental regulations or eco-labelling, can effectively encourage sustainable behavior.
- Green Certifications, though effective, have a slightly lower score of 3, with a projected 30% impact on mindful consumption. This indicates that certification programs, while beneficial in guiding consumer choices, may need to be supplemented by other initiatives such as education or incentives to maximize their influence on behavior.

5. CONCLUSION:

The study demonstrates a substantial relationship between nature connectedness and pro- environmental behaviors. A higher nature connectedness level is related to more vigorous pro- environmental activities, while mindful consumption has been found to be the major factor for promoting sustainable choices. Nevertheless, psychological restrictions, lack of awareness and convenience are still the factors that prevent the broader use of these behaviors. It is also important to note that the analysis of plastic bans and waste reduction initiatives indicates that these schemes substantially promote mindfulness and help people to find a stronger connection with nature, but the researchers point to significant gaps. It is especially true because such factors directly determine the contacts with the population who are unaware of or reluctant regarding pro-environmental behavior. Thus, there are several implications of these results for the policy and further studies. From the policy perspective, the results provide the rationale for concentrating on the integration of the emotional and cognitive nature connectedness aspects into environmental programs and policies. Specifically, it becomes essential to develop the educational programs that help to address the psychological and knowledge barriers to sustainable behaviors. In such a way, the regulatory approaches could be supported and expanded with initiatives that boost the mindfulness and awareness of the people in relation to the natural environment. At the same time, it is important to practice the further studies to analyze the long-term effect of such programs and the impact of some cultural and regional peculiarities on nature connectedness and pro-environmental behaviors. At a more general level, the authors argue that the integration of nature connectedness into the national and global environmental strategies could be beneficial. This perspective allows promoting the use of passes that beneficially affect the environment and improve the conditions of health. Additionally, these plans allow supporting the programs that enhance the diversity the green spaces, preserve the land, and support the mindfulness efforts..

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