

The Environmental Commitment of Moroccan Students: Measures and Determinants – Case of Cadi Ayyad University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the chapter is to investigate the factors that motivate Moroccan students to engage in pro-environmental behavior. In this study, the authors tried, within the framework of the theory of the motivation towards protection, to measure the degree of the environmental commitment and to explain the pro-environmental behavior of the students of Cadi Ayyad University Marrakesh, the FLESS. In this case, the authors took a sample of 415 students on which they proceeded to an analysis of their pro-environmental behavior through structural equation modeling. The major findings of this study support the notion that students' pro-environmental conduct is positively influenced by their environmental attitudes. Additionally, the escalating severity of environmental issues motivates individuals to accept environmentally friendly behaviors. Given the significance of environmental attitudes, it is possible to raise the likelihood of pro-environmental activities among students by using strategies and incentives aimed at enhancing their environmental attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, learning is considered a national priority in Morocco. That's why the government has carried out several reforms to make higher education a locomotive of economic growth in the country. In addition to the pedagogical aspects, the reforms also tend to stimulate responsible behavior among students towards society. This responsibility encompasses economic, environmental, and societal dimensions.

It is in this perspective that this chapter fits to measure and evaluate the environmental commitment of students. This theme rhymes with the objectives of this book. The effectiveness of the human dimension depends on the profiles of citizens who must demonstrate certain qualities such as a sufficient degree of environmental awareness. In this regard, several studies have been carried out by scientists from several fields and disciplines, in an attempt to provide scientific knowledge on environmental behaviour (Borden, 1977). In this perspective, interest was in studies of environmental behaviour which was limited, in the mid-1960s, to the measurement of public concern about the quality of the environment (Li et al., 2019). Over time, it has gradually evolved into a desire to understand the elements that lead to the acceptance and implementation of pro-environmental practices. (Casaló and Escario, 2018). Indeed, several studies have been conducted to explain the environmental lifestyles of various social groups, namely farmers (Wang et al., 2018), students (Chen et al., 2017), consumers (Akbari et al., 2019) and workers (Latif et al., 2022). These studies have attempted to explain human behaviour on the basis of several theories relating to environmental psychology, of which the most widespread remain: the Theory of “Reasoned Action” (M Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980), the Theory of “Planned Behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991), the Norms Activation Model (Schwartz, 1977), the Value-Belief-Norm Model (P. Stern, 2000) and the Protective Motivation Theory (Rogers, 1975). Referring to the literature, protective motivation theory has already proven its effectiveness in explaining health-related behaviours. In addition, compared with the other theories mentioned above, it provides more predictors of human behavior as well as it can identify the elements that encourage individuals to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors (Bockarjova and Steg, 2014; Keshavarz and Karami, 2016). The protection motivation theory goes beyond the analysis of the costs related to adaptive practices to the analysis of the benefits of the present behaviors, that are not very respectful of the environment, in order to arouse beyond the emotional variable (fear), the rational variable which is also decisive in the adoption of preventive behavior following a persuasive message (Bockarjova and Steg, 2014; Wang et al., 2019). Then, “Protection motivation theory” regarding the costs and benefits of adopting a pro-environmental behaviour considers both existing behaviours and expectations of new sustainable acts. (Bockarjova and Steg, 2014). This makes it possible to simultaneously identify the barriers and the factors of acceptance of an environmental adaptive behaviour.

Morocco, like many other countries, is aware of the various problems to which it is exposed. This is why it is present in most of the summits organized in this perspective. As it continues to express its strong commitment to environmental protection under the enlightened leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, with the aim of designing a development model which focuses on sustainable development. This model will then make it possible to deal with the degradation of its environment which endangers the health of the population and hinders the sustainability of its development.

Morocco, in this case, has adopted several strategies to move to a new model of sustainable human development in order to be able to meet ecological challenges. This model grants a central role to citizens, something that requires them to adopt a profile that meets the necessary conditions for the success of this transition. In addition, the current context manifested by the continued presence of non-environmentally friendly behaviours has only worsened the already critical situation. The responsibility for past and present environmental disrespect must surely fall on the shoulders of the students since they represent the community’s youth and because they are tomorrow’s decision-makers (Leeuw et al., 2015). Likewise, they represent the class of people endowed with the technical and specialized knowledge necessary to advance adequate keys to modify environmental behaviours (Vicente-Molina et al., 2018). Therefore, gaining scientific knowledge about what motivates pro-environmental behaviour is an area of great concern that prompts practical applications to advance a sustainable future (Shafiei and Maleksaeidi, 2020).

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