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Eco-Friendly Buying Behaviour as a Means of Enhancing Emotional and Mental Well-being among Students

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Abstract

Moreover, there is growing concern of emerging economies towards sustainability and green brands. Both governments and customers are now more informed about the environmental problems. To be more specific, based on the data collected through the survey, people who are used to having green purchasing habits have a greater level of life satisfaction, strong self-esteem, positive emotions and less negative emotions. Also, one can observe that such connection could partly be explained by the fact that green purchasing leads to the formation of the attitude of altruism of the person, which is positively associated with the well-being of the individual.

In recent times, the connection between environmental sustainability and well-being is rather obvious. The current research paper focuses on the impact of green purchasing behaviour, which means purchasing sustainable, eco-friendly and ethical products, on the emotional and mental well-being of university students.

In this study, there will be an examination of the impacts of environmentally conscious consumptions on psychological factors such as stress, life satisfaction and emotion stability. The study also examines the determining factors behind the reasons why students engage in green consumption and the factors include environmental awareness, personal value, peer pressure and institutional methods. With the use of conceptual and analytical approach, I will demonstrate that for some students, engaging in green consumption not only conserves the environment but also develops a feeling of purpose and fulfilment. Recent statistics seem to indicate that there is a growing trend among consumers where their environmental awareness and attitudes towards environment have increased over time.

Keywords : Green Buying Behaviour, Mental Wellbeing, Emotional Wellbeing, Sustainable Consumption, Higher Education, Students, Eco-conscious consumption etc.

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1. Introduction

Environmental issues, green brands, and environment-consciousness are on the increase in developing countries. The government and the consumer are increasingly aware of environmental problems. In recent times, research on consumers' environmental behaviour and attitudes towards green products has attracted attention in developing countries. (Khare, 2015). Well-being in higher education has expanded beyond being just academic success to include emotional, mental, and social well-being. Environmental sustainability has emerged as an important issue in today's world which affects many aspects of human behaviour, including consumer behaviour. There are examples of growing consciousness amongst students about environmental issues such as global warming, pollution and depletion of resources due to consumer behaviour.

Green consumerism is characterized by buying products that are environmentally friendly, energy-efficient, reusable/recyclable and ethically produced. Green consumption is a problematic concept because "green implies the conservation of natural resources while consumption generally involves their destruction" (Tan et al., 2016) .

This form of consumer behaviour not only includes the selection of products but also represents certain values and identity of the individual. Scientific research has proved that sustainable consumption has a positive influence on people's psychological and emotional well-being. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of green buying behaviour as a method of improving psychological and emotional well-being of students in colleges and universities. It infers those consumers who are emotionally engaged with the environment and innovation-related activities tend to exhibit greater social concern for the present and future as compared to consumers with less emotional loyalty.(Sharma et al., 2022)

Modern life circumstances, which are marked by a variety of environmental problems, such as global warming, pollution, and depletion of resources, have led to the appearance of new consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviour. Development of new environmental attitudes has led to the appearance of eco-friendly purchasing behaviour, which can be defined as the efforts of consumers to purchase sustainable, environmentally friendly, recyclable and ethically manufactured products. Importance of the students' role in this issue cannot be overestimated because they are the active participants in this process and will become the future leaders of eco-friendly consumption. Through involvement of the students in environmental issues, green marketing aims at raising environmental awareness. Green marketing tools can be understood as elements that are vital in shaping customer's preferences and perceptions towards environmental friendly product (Mallick et al., 2024) .The examples of eco-friendly buying behaviour include the choice of organic products, reusable products and products that are not heavily packaged. To influence customer behaviour, the most useful tools are environmental advertisements. (Mallick et al., 2024)

In addition, the buying behaviour implies preference for the products that are produced using ethical production practices. The reasons for changing the buying behaviour are related to higher awareness of students due to education, media and global environmental movements. It implies that consumers who have more trust, belief and association with the environment would cogently buy green products.(Sharma et al., 2022).

In addition to the positive impacts on the environment, eco-shoppers are also very good for the psychological well-being of the students. When the students become environmentally conscious consumers,

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they always get a feeling of happiness and satisfaction because what they do will bring about something good. It removes that guilty feeling one gets from indulging in negative behaviours and contributes towards emotional equilibrium. Ecological shopping practice ensures awareness that is necessary for decision making and in avoiding financial stress because the student is aware of what he or she needs and spends. This is a very vital consideration for psychological well-being. Eco-shoppers encourage interaction among people through team work. In addition, ecological consumption involves other values such as responsibility, compassion and awareness of future consequences. Every time students perform according to these values, their self-respect and overall happiness is improved. The relationship between values and behaviour is a very significant consideration in ensuring emotional equilibrium and peace of mind.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the concept and level of eco-friendly buying behaviour among students.
2. To identify the factors influencing students to adopt eco-friendly purchasing practices.
3. To analyse the relationship between eco-friendly buying behaviour and emotional well-being of students.
4. To evaluate the impact of eco-friendly consumption on the mental well-being of students.
5. To assess the extent to which sustainable buying habits contribute to reducing stress, guilt and anxiety among students.
6. To explore students awareness and attitudes towards environmentally responsible consumption.
7. To determine whether eco-friendly buying behaviour promotes a sense of satisfaction, purpose and overall life happiness among students.

3. Conceptual Framework

The relationship between green buying behaviour and well-being can be understood through the following dimensions:

3.1 Green Buying Behaviour

It includes purchasing products that are:

A. Biodegradable or Recyclable Products

Biodegradable items refer to those items which are capable of decomposing through the action of microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi, but not damaging the environment by leaving any harmful residues behind. Recyclable items refer to those items which are capable of being re-used again and again in the process of manufacturing and thus, prevent waste generation and conserve natural resources. Those customers who choose biodegradable or recyclable products contribute to lessening of wastes and environmental pollution. An instance would be the use of paper bags instead of plastic bags and recycling materials for packaging purposes. Petrochemical polymers find it very difficult to biodegrade in the case of their disposal into the landfills. Recently, a lot of focus has been placed on creating biodegradable polymers using renewable resources to address this issue,which is additionally motivated by global environmental consciousness; by using enzymatic catalysis processes, microorganisms (e.g., bacteria and fungus) typically cause the destruction of biodegradable polymers dumped in bioactive settings (such as landfills)(El-Sayed & Youssef, 2023)

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B. Energy-Efficient Products

Energy-efficient goods are the ones that are created in a manner that they make use of low amounts of energy and still perform in a comparable manner as other products. Some examples of these kinds of goods are LED bulbs, energy-efficient fridges and ACs and electronic devices that meet energy-saving standards. Purchase of such goods will contribute towards decreasing the total amount of energy used by the household as well as decreasing the level of greenhouse gases and dependence on fossil fuels. It will also lead to savings on electricity bills. Consumers who plan to purchase long lasting goods like fridge and washing machines will have less experience with that particular good (as opposed to the case of purchasing frequently replaced goods).Thus, their perceptions and beliefs about energy-efficient products as well as the environment will be shaped positively by objective factual information(Ha & Janda, 2012)

C. Products Free from Harmful Chemicals

This kind of product is produced without using any kind of substance that may be dangerous for human life as well as the environment; these substances include poisonous elements, artificial chemicals, and many other things that may affect both human life and the environment adversely. Organic food, natural cosmetic products, and natural cleaners are some examples of this type of product. Such products are consumed by people because of their knowledge about their health as well as environmental issues. As a result of the absence of any such harmful chemical substance, there are no chances of any disease occurring. The use of waste packaging materials made up of non-biodegradable polymers has contributed to the creation of another environmental worry. Abandoned packaging presents a substantial waste management concern because it is an obvious source of litter.(El-Sayed & Youssef, 2023)

D. Ethically Produced Products

Ethically produced goods imply products that have been manufactured through ethical labour practices whereby workers are treated ethically, earn their due salaries, and work in healthy environments. Ethical products also imply products which are not produced through exploitation of child labour and products that do not harm the environment during manufacturing process. Individuals who purchase such products advocate for social justice and sustainable development. Such actions go beyond considering environmental issues alone but consider other ethical concerns in purchasing actions. For example, individuals who purchase fair trade products or socially responsible corporations practice green buying behaviour comprehensively.

The aforementioned factors together constitute green buying behaviour in its multidimensional nature including all these dimensions. It is vital to understand these dimensions in order to understand the effects of green buying behaviour on people's emotional and psychological well-being particularly students. Fossil fuels are burned, whether directly or indirectly, at every stage of the process of manufacture; for instance, mining involves using machines to extract ore from the earth. Large drills are used followed by smelting furnaces that utilise exceptionally high power that are not readily available from solar or wind power stations(Baron, 2013) In an attempt to achieve competitive pricing yet obtain high profit margin, most manufacturers utilize the cheapest factors of production or determine ways to reduce the cost of these resources. There are a number of ways through which companies engage in unprofessional practices; these include manufacturing in places where labour costs are lower or where there is no labour union in place; manufacturing in countries where environmental regulations are lax so that waste products can be disposed

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of cheaply; or engaging in such illegal practices as price fixing, using and abusing child labour and illegal immigrants, and subjecting their employees to unsafe work conditions. As stated by Mary Catherine Bateson in a letter to the American Society for Cybernetics, Bateson (2011): "We are at a time of great danger . Yet researchers in the earth systems sciences have limited understanding of social systems, while some politicians deny what is happening, and non-specialists around the world simply do not recognize the larger picture.(Baron, 2013)

3.2 Emotional Wellbeing

Emotional well-being can be described as an individual's ability to enjoy positive emotions, manage negative emotions, and maintain psychological equilibrium. Taking into account the context of green consumption behaviour, emotional well-being is related to the degree of satisfaction achieved through responsible consumer behaviour. The dimensions include the following:

A. Feelings of Satisfaction and Happiness

Eco-friendly purchases always result in the emergence of strong feelings of happiness and satisfaction. Individuals believe that their actions match their principles and values, as well as their ideas about environmental friendliness and nature conservation. This results in people feeling happy and at ease. Moreover, eco-friendly behaviour helps people feel proud about themselves because they do something for a good reason. Feelings of joy that emerge during this process contribute to the reinforcement of the behaviour and motivate individuals to continue buying eco-friendly products. Not all consumers feel that purchasing eco friendly products is an index of social status, of social approval, of prestige, is now to be measured in terms of our consumption patterns. The very meaning and significance of our lives today expressed in consumptive terms.(Baron, 2013)

B. Reduced Guilt and Anxiety

One of the major emotional rewards that consumers enjoy from engaging in environmentally-friendly behaviours by means of their purchasing practices is that they help to minimize the feelings of guilt and stress arising from environmentally-unfriendly buying behaviours. Currently, individuals are extremely concerned about environmental issues including pollution, global warming, and depletion of natural resources. An individual who purchases environmentally-unsustainable goods might feel guilty or suffer from cognitive dissonance. By opting for environmentally-friendly alternatives, an individual can avoid these negative emotions. This makes one certain that he/she is not harming the environment through his/her behaviour. This implies that such an approach based on expected emotions is capable of explaining the behaviour of such consumers who are already interested in the problems of sustainability. .This means that an approach focused only on anticipated emotions can explain the behaviour of those consumers who are alread concerned with issues of social and environmental sustainability.(Antonetti & Maklan, 2014)

C. Sense of Contribution to Society

The process of being a green consumer results in the formation of social awareness and contribution. Those who engage in green consumption feel that they are really contributing in terms of protecting the environment and acting ethically. Thus, people feel themselves socially involved in something. The feeling of contribution results in emotional satisfaction in the form of fulfilment and meaningfulness of one's actions. People become emotionally resilient because of the realisation that their actions are having a positive impact on society as well as future generations to come. Pride is also an emotion that supports

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ethical conduct because it is a positive feeling that increases consumers' motivation to behave according to personal standards(Antonetti & Maklan, 2014)

3.3 Mental Wellbeing

Mental well-being is about the state of mind and thinking processes of the individual. For example, the state of thinking and coping with stress, feeling of purpose and building one's self-concept. In respect to eco-friendly consumption behaviour, the concept of mental well-being is influenced by the behaviour of the consumer that is environmentally and ethically sound. These include the following dimensions:

A. Reduced Stress and Eco-Anxiety

What eco-anxiety means is the stress and anxiety caused by the destruction of the environment, global warming, and other ecological problems. The persons who are very conscious about their environment can get stressed due to whatever the future might hold for them. The green buying behaviour acts as a coping mechanism against such kind of stress. When people buy environmentally friendly products, they think that they have control over their actions and the impact it causes to the environment.

B. Increased Sense of Purpose

Environmental responsibility in terms of consumption is normally associated with the perception of a sense of purposefulness on the part of the individual. Making decisions in favor of buying environmentally friendly products is perceived by the individual as something meaningful for a greater cause. This sense of purposefulness is positive for psychological well-being because it provides guidance in decision-making processes. It results in intrinsic motivation of people and their dedication to environmental responsibility. This sense of purposefulness works especially well for students.

C. Enhanced Self-Esteem and Identity

It should be highlighted that green buying behaviour plays a crucial role in the formation of the self-concept of a person. The individuals that buy environmentally friendly products see themselves as socially responsible and ethical people. The self-image positively impacts self-respect and development of identity. Furthermore, harmony of attitudes and behaviour contributes to the reduction of internal conflicts and increases psychological comfort.

3.4 Influencing Factors

Influencing factors are the primary factors that affect and motivate the consumers in order to practice green buying behaviour. These factors help in guiding individuals to adopt environmentally friendly behaviour and consumption. It becomes very important to study these factors as they decide how and why people indulge in green buying behaviour. In a study on green buying, it has been found out that the consumer's pro-environmental attitudes, environmental consciousness, and green buying behaviour are affected by

psychographics, past attitudes, social norms, and environment awareness.(Khare, 2015) The influencing factors are as follows:

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A. Environmental Awareness

The notion of environmental awareness is associated with the extent to which individuals are aware of the environment. These individuals are expected to be knowledgeable about the different types of environmental issues such as global warming, pollution, exhaustion of resources, and extinction of biodiversity. The notion of environmental awareness is also concerned with the amount of knowledge that individuals have about the impact of their actions on the environment. Individuals with high levels of environmental awareness will engage in green purchasing since they are aware of the consequences of unsustainable behaviour. Environmental awareness results in deliberate actions where individuals consume environmentally friendly products. It aims at determining what factors contribute to individuals' knowledge about environmental conditions and individuals' actions in order to protect the environment. It was demonstrated that the degree of urbanization, the level of subjective well-being and the level of income inequality have direct effects on awareness, while education, population pressure and happiness are significantly correlated with environmental behaviour.(Duroy, 2005)

B. Personal Values and Ethics

Personal values and ethics could be understood in terms of the moral and personal values of an individual, who governs his/her own behaviour and decision-making on the basis of those values. Values of individuals in this sense would involve their sense of responsibility towards the environment and future generations and so forth. Such people are more concerned about sustainability than comfort and cost while making a purchase. In addition to the features of the product, the impact of the product on the environment also affects the purchase decision of such individuals.

C. Peer and Social Influence

Peer and social influence involves the influence that the individuals' families, friends, co-workers, etc., have on their actions and decisions. Social norms, expectations of others and culture have a great impact on consumer behaviour. People are more likely to follow environmentally-friendly behaviours when other people display such behaviours. Media use and discussions also help to strengthen the peer influence on the consumer behaviour from an environmental responsibility perspective. Some studies in collectivist societies suggest that factors like social/peer influence, past green buying behaviour, and environmental norms would influence purchase decisions (Khare, 2015) .

3.5 Institutional Support

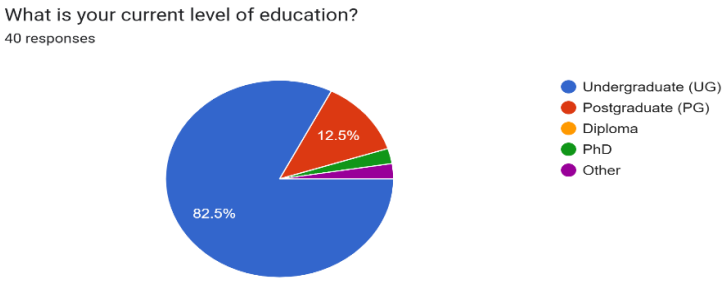
Support from Institutions refers to the type of support provided by educational institutions, government institutions, and other institutions with regard to green purchasing. This type of support is through policies, incentives, campaign programs, infrastructure, and availability of environmental goods. Some of the institutions that can make use of these methods include universities promoting environmental activities, the government providing incentives for energy-saving goods, and corporations practicing environmental labeling which can enable customers to purchase environmental goods.

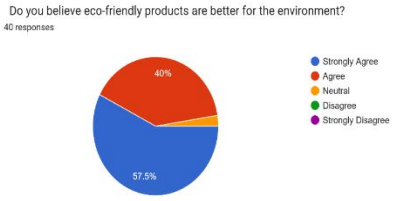
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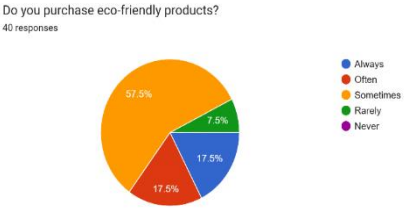
4. Research Methodology

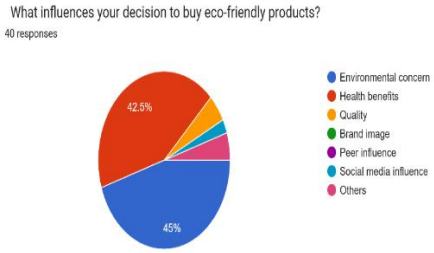
This research is largely conceptual and analytical in its approach; it depends mainly on the primary data gathered from students through Google Forms and also from some interviews conducted with students along with the secondary data which is obtained from academic journals and reports.

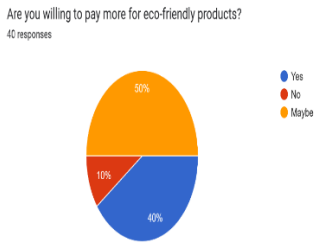
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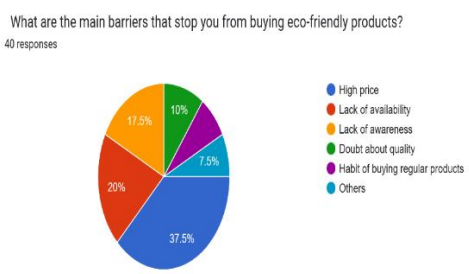


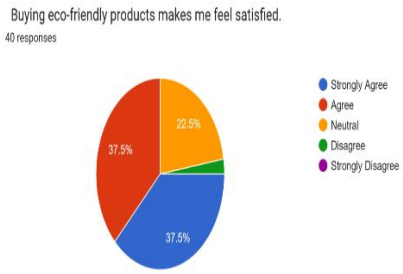




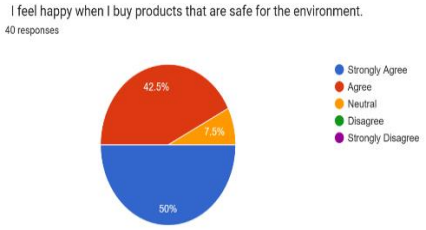




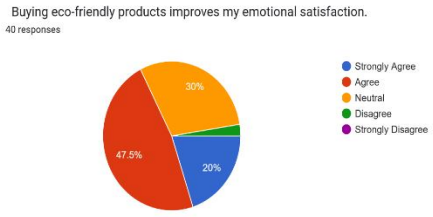


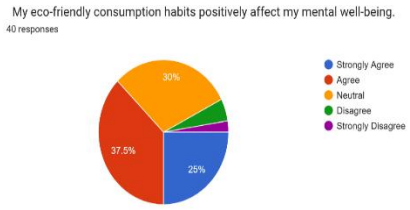


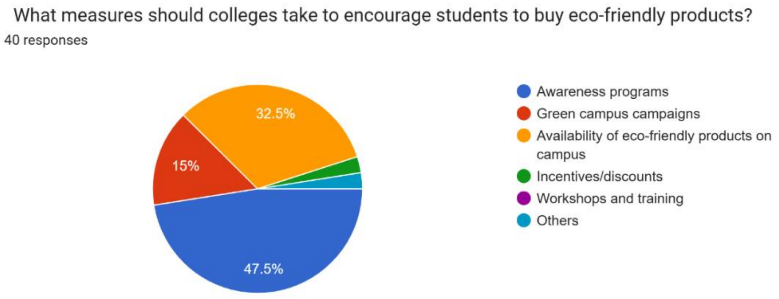
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4.2 Measures to Encourage Eco-Friendly Buying Behaviour

From the above data analysis, one can infer that 47.5% of the participants consider awareness programs to be the most effective tool that can be used in order to promote eco-friendly purchasing by universities. This is followed by 32.5% of the individuals who recognize the significance of eco-friendly products availability. Besides, 15% of the participants considered green campus campaigns as well as some other tools.

From the above analysis, one can conclude that knowledge sharing and availability are the two most significant factors that will help in promoting eco-friendly consumption behaviours among students.

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4.3 Impact on Mental Well-being

The responses given to the question "Eco-friendly consumption practices positively impact my psychological well-being" indicate that 25% of students strongly agree while 37.5% agree; it totals 62.5% of positive answers. On the other hand, 30% of the respondents have neutral opinion regarding this question and very few disagree.

This indicates that there is definitely a positive connection between eco-friendly consumption and psychological well-being. If a student acts in accordance with the eco-friendly practices, he/she will feel psychologically better owing to his/her responsibility and control over the environment.

4.4 Emotional Satisfaction from Green Purchasing

As regards the issue of whether eco-purchasing enhances emotional satisfaction or not, 20% of respondents strongly agree, while 47.5% agree to it. Hence, the percentage of those who give positive responses on the issue is 67.5%. The other 30% of the respondents remain neutral on this issue.

It is therefore evident that green buying is an important factor in enhancing emotional satisfaction and happiness.

4.5 Reduction in Guilt

The reaction to the statement "I feel less guilty when buying green products compared to harmful products" was highly favorable, where 30% agreed and 50% strongly agreed, which totals the percentage of agreement to the statement by 80%. Only 7.5% were disagreeing, whereas the rest 12.5% were neutral.

So, from the above result, we can infer that purchasing eco-friendly products is helpful for reducing feelings like guilt. It is another advantage of making green purchases.

4.6 Happiness because of the Eco-Friendly Purchases

Based on the numbers provided, 50% of the people strongly agreed and 42.5% agreed with the fact that they felt happy because of the purchase of environmentally friendly products, totaling 92.5% of people who had positive feelings regarding the purchase of environmentally friendly products. 7.5% were neutral but none of the participants disagreed. This is an indication that environmentally friendly purchases have an effect on the emotional well-being of the respondents.

4.7 Impact on Emotional Wellbeing

The behaviour of green purchasing is positively impacted by the creation of moral satisfaction sentiments. Green purchasing students have the feeling of doing good for the larger cause, which adds to the psychological stability of consumers. The behaviour of going green results in lowering the level of guilt associated with any harm done to the environment.

4.8 Effect on Mental Well-being

Mental health is associated with different factors including stress, anxiety, and satisfaction with life. Green consumption assists in reducing the eco-anxiety which has recently become a trend among young people.

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Additionally, green consumption can assist in increasing self-respect of students who feel like responsible persons.

4.9 The Role of Educational Institutions

The educational institutions play an important role in the formation of student behaviour. For instance, campus greening and environmental education programs encourage the students to become eco-friendly in their everyday life.

5. Barriers to Green Purchasing Behaviour

Despite having an optimistic approach, certain barriers affect the usage of green products. The barriers are as follows:

- High cost of eco-friendly products

Several previous studies have, nevertheless, shown that environmentally conscious consumers lack consistent preferences for environmentally-friendly products (Ha & Janda, 2012)

- Low availability of the products

- Convenience of other non-green products

- Lack of knowledge about the products

the relationship between environmental knowledge and behaviour seems to be more complicated than that Studies about barriers to GCB offer additional insights into why consumers who state that they are motivated to perform GCB, in practice do not. As per reports, situational barriers such as economic restrictions and absence of choice and availability (Gleim et al., 2013; Tanner &Wölfing-Kast, 2003) may act as barriers to GCB. Likewise, factors such as quality perceptions, a lack of information and cynicism can also affect consumption decisions.(Tan et al., 2016)

6. Findings

These findings can be made from the study titled Eco-Friendly Buying Behaviour as a Tool for Enhancing Emotional and Mental Well-being among Students:

A. Higher Awareness Results in Environmental Behaviour

The majority of the respondents cited awareness programs as the ideal tool to induce eco-friendly purchase behaviour. This indicates that environmental awareness plays a significant role in influencing the buying behaviour of students.

B. Accessibility of Eco-Friendly Products is a Major Factor

Many of the participants stressed on the availability of eco-friendly products on campus as the main factor to change their behaviour.

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C. Mental Well-being is Improved

The majority of respondents felt that green consumption practices have a positive impact on their psychological well-being. That is, green behaviour facilitates psychological balance regarding environmental matters. In fact, most students, during the interviews, did not seem to be concerned about the environment but rather about their personal health.

D. Enhancement of Emotional Satisfaction

From the results shown above, it is apparent that students obtain emotional satisfaction from buying eco-friendly products. It can be seen clearly that these behaviours fit in with their value systems and contribute to increased emotional satisfaction. The two variables have a very high positive relationship between each other, and feelings of guilt are minimized.

E. Significant Reduction in Feelings of Guilt

The majority of the respondents noted that they experienced less guilt when they purchase environmentally friendly products as opposed to destructive products. It is a sign that green buying behaviour helps reduce feelings of guilt towards the destruction of the environment.

F. Happiness

The majority of the students indicated that buying environmentally friendly products made them happier.

G. Limited Negative Perception

However, a few respondents were against the positive statements related to green buying behaviour.

H. Role of Institutions in Behaviour Formation

Institutional involvement is an important aspect for the development of green buying behaviour via awareness, campaigns, and sustainable choices.

7. Overall finding

A. The study shows that there is a huge significance of green buying behaviour in enhancing the psychological and emotional well-being of students. This is because of the promotion of positive feelings such as happiness and satisfaction and reduction of negative feelings such as guilt and anxiety.
B. Sustainable consumption aids in enhancing the psychological well-being of students as it reduces stress and increases purpose.
C. Environmental awareness is very significant in making purchase decisions among students.
D. Institutions play a vital role in fostering green behaviour.
E. Economic limitations are the hindrance for adopting green products among students.

8. Suggestions and Recommendations

A. Workshops/Programs: Workshops and other programs need to be held by universities so that students can be taught about sustainable consumption.

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B. Subsidized Green Goods: Educational institutes need to collaborate with suppliers to make sure green goods are available at subsidized rates.
C. Green Activities on Campus: Creating a green campus environment through activities like recycling and energy conservation.
D. Teaching Sustainability: Inclusion of sustainability topics in the curriculum.
E. Incentives for Behaviours: Incentives should be provided to students who follow eco-friendly consumption practices.

9. Conclusion

Green purchasing behaviour not only serves to demonstrate ecological awareness of the students, but it also serves to benefit their psychological condition. Green purchasing behaviour leads to a positive feeling, reduced stress levels and high self-respect of the person. The importance of the involvement of educational establishments in promoting green purchasing behaviour cannot be underestimated.

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