

Exploring the Relationship Between Prosocial Tendencies and Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

This research explores how prosocial behavior relates to environmentally responsible consumer choices. Prosocial behavior—actions aimed at supporting others—can extend to ecological concern, shaping decisions that prioritize sustainability. In this study, adult participants completed assessments measuring both tendencies, and their scores were compared to identify patterns of association. The analysis revealed that prosocial orientations of all types showed a positive relationship with environmentally conscious purchasing, with the strongest connections appearing among individuals motivated by empathy, urgency, and deeply held moral beliefs. Acts driven by social recognition, obligation, or altruism also demonstrated notable links, though the associations were somewhat weaker. These results highlight that sustainable consumption is more strongly influenced by internalized, emotionally grounded motivations than by external pressures or conformity. Overall, the findings align with theoretical perspectives that emphasize moral responsibility and personal values as key forces in shaping pro-environmental behavior.

Keywords: Prosocial tendencies; Ecologically conscious consumer behavior; Sustainability; Environmental psychology

1. Introduction

In contemporary times, notable attention has been garnered by the interface of prosocial tendencies and ecologically conscious consumer behavior in both scholarly and pragmatic contexts. It is crucial to understand the factors that influence consumers toward sustainable behaviors, as environmental sustainability is becoming a progressively significant universal issue. Prosocial tendencies can be defined as an individual's predisposition to participate in behaviors that benefit others or society as a whole, and it is considered one of the potential driving forces behind ecologically conscious consumer behavior [1].

Prosocial behavior is characterized by voluntary actions proposed to help or support others, comprising acts of kindness, cooperation, and altruism. Internal motivations, such as empathy, moral values, and a sense of social responsibility, drive these behaviors [2]. Theories of prosocial behavior, namely Batson's Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis (1987), advocate that the helping tendency is a result of feeling empathy for their plight [3]. In terms of consumer behavior, prosocial tendencies expanded beyond interpersonal interactions and into broader societal and environmental concerns. Opting for the eco-friendly choices that benefit the environment is commonly done by consumers with strong prosocial tendencies, even when these choices may include personal sacrifices, such as inconvenience or higher prices [4].

Adherence to social justice and fairness is considered a major aspect of prosocial behavior, which frequently manifests in the need to protect and sustain the environment for future generations. Collective responsibility significantly affects

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the prosocial consumers, which may motivate them to encourage and support ecologically sustainable products and services. Another theory, "extended self" (Belk, 1988) [5], discusses that the inclination to act in ways that benefit society is because consumers view their actions as an extension of their social and environmental values. Prosocial tendencies, therefore, form a prominent psychological foundation for ecologically conscious consumer behavior.

Ecologically conscious consumer behavior can be described as the purchasing decisions and consumption trends that underscore environmental sustainability. The concept encompasses an array of actions such as purchasing eco-friendly products, decreasing waste generation, recycling, supporting ethical brands, and opting for energy-efficient alternatives. Theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior [6] and the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory [7] have been pivotal in comprehending how and why consumers engage in ecologically conscious behavior.

Environmentally conscious behavior can be explained by the theory of Planned Behavior, which emphasizes that attitudes toward a behavior, normative beliefs, and perceived behavioral control affect a person's motivations to engage in a specific behavior. Within this framework, a person exhibiting prosocial tendencies may uphold positive attitudes toward environmental conservation, conform with social norms that promote sustainability, and feel strengthened to act in an ecologically responsible manner [8]. Meanwhile, the VBN Theory proposes that individuals are prompted to engage in pro-environmental behaviors when they believe environmental degradation is a critical concern and feel an ethical responsibility to address it [7].

Multiple psychological mechanisms can be employed to understand the relationship between prosocial tendencies and ecologically conscious consumer behavior. Research has shown that prosocial individuals are motivated by values that benefit the well-being of others, both in their immediate social circles and in the global community, which makes them more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors. For instance, as shown by Schultz et al. (2005) that individuals who tend to participate in recycling and eco-friendly behavior are more likely to score higher on measures of prosocial personality traits [9].

Ecologically conscious consumer behavior is hugely influenced by the concept of "social norms" as prosocial individuals are usually more attuned to social norms that encourage sustainability, such as community efforts to help the reduction of carbon footprints or corporate responsibility initiatives [10]. Their consciousness of these norms encourages them to align their consumption trends with pro-environmental objectives. Consequently, the prevalence of prosocial tendencies can increase the probability of individuals preferring sustainable products, embracing energy-saving practices, and promoting brands that are devoted to ecological initiatives [11-13].

A range of empirical studies across cultures and contexts have examined how prosocial tendencies intersect with ecologically conscious consumer behavior, offering diverse theoretical and practical insights. Neaman et al. [11] examined the common psychological mechanisms behind prosocial and ecological behaviors, highlighting empathy and a strong link to nature. Their research posits that individuals who act sustainably are more emotionally inclined to help others. They claim that ecological behavior can be significantly impacted by internal motivations, like moral values and social responsibility, and suggest further research across diverse populations to examine these relationships in greater depth.

Chen, Wu, and Jiang [12] assess how prosocial tendencies mediate the association between environmental concern and eco-friendly purchasing. Their study uncovers that individuals with increased levels of prosocial tendencies opt for conscious consumer choices to respond to their environmental values. They draw attention to the salience of moral and altruistic traits in consolidating sustainable behavior, showcasing that prosocial values can augment the efficacy of environmental messaging and impact long-term green purchasing behavior.

Ghali-Zinoubi [13] analyzes how ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) is impacted by societal belief systems like collectivism and long-term orientation in Tunisia, employing the Theory of Planned Behavior. The study reveals that the substantial predictors of pro-environmental actions are group-centric norms and future orientation. According to the study, environmental attitudes are shaped by the sociocultural framework, which serves a crucial role. Additionally, existing societal conventions of a population must conform to the programmatic efforts to encourage sustainability.

The study conducted by Khan and Thomas [14] focuses on studying pro-environmental behavior in Saudi Arabia, with emphasis on shared societal standards and cultural predispositions. They report that spiritual orientations, peer-driven norms, and governmental frameworks have been predominantly conditioning eco-conscious behavior, such as mitigating gasoline use. Their study illuminates that the stimulation or inhibition of green behavior can be a result of

the cultural-contextual dynamics. To effectively propel ecological consumer practices, it is essential to have productive environmental policies that reflect upon socio-cultural dynamics.

Wenting, Wang, and Gao [15] assess how purchasing priorities for environmentally conscious items can be impacted by social congestion. They report that eco-friendly products are chosen more by individuals in crowded settings, notably if they exhibit strong prosocial personality traits. The study implies that green consumer behavior is shaped by a cognitive-emotional framework and interindividual variations, illustrating the requirement to evaluate both environmental stimuli and personal attributes in sustainability research.

Han [16] focuses on interpreting eco-conscious behavior in tourism by providing scholarly overviews of psychological theories, like the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory and the Norm Activation Model (NAM). He emphasizes that internalized values, moral imperatives, and eco-centric attitudes are central for sustainability-oriented behaviors. The review indicates that the compelling drivers for environmentally conscious conduct are self-identity and emotional affiliation and calls for future research to delve into how these mental components prevail or modify across varied settings and cultural landscapes.

Čapienė, Rūtelionė, and Krukowski [17] explore how Lithuania's sustainable buying behavior stems from embedded societal norms, beliefs, and environmentally focused worldviews. Their findings demonstrate that internalized ethical standards and eco-conscious convictions substantially impacted buying decisions. They illuminate that for modification in actions, the relevance of behavioral strategies integrating ethics and affective commitment is required. The study also advocates that to promote enduring sustainability habits; an interaction of cognitive and situational factors is viewed as fundamental.

Gopalakrishna Pillai and Arun [18] study how buying patterns are determined by eco-friendly purchasing values and receptiveness to environmental messaging. They demonstrate that buyers who express approval of sustainable brand messaging and clarity are the ones who attribute significance to environmental responsibility. The study highlights that eco-efficient advertising must extend past promotion to include honesty and effective appeal. Their data-driven observations are relevant for firms seeking long-term consumer trust through green-centered engagement and harmony with consumer ethics.

Datta and Khandelwal [19] analyze the consequences of sustainable business practices on user perception, brand loyalty, and purchasing behavior. Their insights highlight that to strengthen brand reputation and long-term customer involvement; it is required to openly disclose the environmentally ethical practices. The study underscores the importance of perceived reliability and consistency in sustainable brand identity and advises that embedding sustainability principles into the main corporate agenda can add to a competitive advantage, predominantly in consumer segments where consumers maintain environmental responsibility.

Bedi and Gulati [20] assess the discrepancy identified in the Indian market segment between green sensibility and practical sustainable buying behavior. They detect limitations such as inadequate market reach, consumer doubt regarding sustainability claims, and price consciousness. Albeit having heightened comprehension, numerous purchasers are unable to make green choices due to these impediments. The study illuminates the crucial necessity to counteract the behavioral inconsistency in sustainability programs by addressing foundational and psychological blocks.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 200 individuals aged between 18 and 65 years who actively engaged in making purchasing decisions for themselves or their households. Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique, wherein initial respondents were approached through personal networks and invited to share the survey with others. Inclusion criteria required participants to be within the specified age range, make purchasing decisions, and provide consent to participate. Exclusion criteria included being under 18 or over 65 years, not being involved in purchasing decisions (e.g., fully dependent individuals), or declining to participate.

The sample comprised 147 females (73.87%), 51 males (25.63%), and 1 participant identifying as other (0.50%). Additional demographic details included marital status and educational attainment. Data on socioeconomic status, region, and language were not collected, which may limit the diversity analysis. No participants were excluded from the

analyses. While gender and basic demographics were collected, socioeconomic status, region, and language were not, limiting representativeness.

2.2. Sample Size Rationale

A target of 200 participants was determined based on practical constraints and alignment with prior correlational research examining similar psychological-behavioral relationships. This sample size was considered adequate for detecting medium to large correlations ($\rho \geq 0.3$) with sufficient statistical power [2].

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Prosocial Tendencies Measure – Revised (PTM-R)

The PTM-R [9] is a 26-item self-report scale assessing six subscales of prosocial behavior: Public, Anonymous, Dire, Emotional, Compliant, and Altruistic tendencies. Items are rated on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of each helping style. Reported Cronbach's alpha values for the subscales range from 0.74 to 0.89, indicating good internal consistency. Construct validity has been demonstrated through factor analysis and correlations with related measures of empathy and moral reasoning. In the present sample, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$, indicating very good reliability.

2.3.2. Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior (ECCB) Scale

The ECCB scale [10] comprises 30 items measuring eco-friendly purchasing, conservation, recycling, and advocacy for sustainability. Responses are scored to yield an overall index of ecologically conscious behavior. Reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceed 0.80, supporting strong internal reliability. Construct and criterion validity have been established through associations with environmental attitudes and related behavioral measures. In the present sample, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$, indicating excellent reliability.

2.4. Procedure

Participants were informed of the study's aims and procedures and provided with an online survey link. After confirming eligibility and providing informed consent, they completed demographic questions followed by the PTM-R and ECCB measures. The order of the measures was fixed to maintain consistency across responses. Completion time averaged 15–20 minutes. Data were collected anonymously, and participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using JASP. Inferential statistics were conducted to examine the relationship between prosocial tendencies and ecologically conscious consumer behavior. Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (ρ) was calculated to assess the strength and direction of the association between the two variables. All statistical tests were two-tailed, and significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

2.6. Ethics Statement

This study was conducted as part of a university coursework requirement and therefore did not require formal institutional ethics committee approval. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. The study procedures were carried out by the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

3. Results

Descriptive statistics for participant characteristics are presented in Table 1, and inferential analyses examining the relationship between prosocial tendencies and ECCB are presented in Tables 2–4.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Sample Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	147	73.9
	Male	51	25.6
	Other	1	0.5
Marital status	Unmarried	180	92.8
	Married	10	5.2
	Divorced	3	1.6
	Separated	1	0.5
Education	High School/Below	39	20.1
	College/Associate Degree	23	11.9
	Bachelor's Degree	121	62.4
	Master's Degree	9	4.6
	Doctorate or Higher	1	0.5

Note. n = 200

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Participant Responses Across Different ECCB Dimensions

	Public	Emotional	Dire	Anonymous	Altruism	Compliant	ECCB total average
Mean	2.065	3.474	3.368	3.095	1.848	3.753	2.346
Std. Deviation	0.895	0.821	0.821	0.833	0.466	0.871	1.123
Shapiro-Wilk	0.921	0.961	0.960	0.982	0.97	0.926	0.781
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.012	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
Minimum	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	3.000	5.000	4.087

3.2. Inferential Statistics

The relationship between prosocial tendencies and ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) is hypothesized to have a meaningful positive relationship for the study. To explore the link, from 200 participants Spearman's rank-order correlation analyses were carried out using scores from six prosocial tendencies subscales (Public, Emotional, Dire, Anonymous, Altruism, and Compliant) and the ECCB scores as well.

The findings (see Table 3) showed a strong positive correlation between the Anonymous subscale and ECCB ($\rho = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals who practice ecologically responsible consumer behaviors are the ones who help others anonymously. ECCB is associated with those emotionally driven and urgent helping tendencies because of the strong positive correlations found for the Emotional ($\rho = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$) and Dire ($\rho = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) subscales. Public helping behaviors showed a mid-range positive correlation with ECCB ($\rho = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$), while Compliant ($\rho = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$) and Altruism ($\rho = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$) also indicated significant, though weaker, positive links. The different types of prosocial behavior are associated with environmentally conscious consumer behavior according to the findings, as these uphold the assumption.

Table 3 Spearman's Correlation Coefficients (ρ) Between Helping Tendencies and ECCB

	Public	Emotional	Dire	Anonymous	Altruism	Compliant	ECCB total average
Public		0.139 (0.047)	0.113 (0.107)	0.219 (0.002)	0.456 (<0.001)	0.005 (0.942)	0.543 (<0.001)
Emotional			0.669 (<0.001)	0.405 (<0.001)	0.007 (0.917)	0.472 (<0.001)	0.666 (<0.001)
Dire				0.455 (<0.001)	-0.016 (0.823)	0.526 (<0.001)	0.684 (<0.001)
Anonymous					0.0108 (0.123)	0.365 (<0.001)	0.745 (<0.001)
Altruism						-0.173 (0.013)	0.355 (<0.001)
Compliant							0.494 (<0.001)

Note. Values are Spearman's ρ correlations with p-values in parentheses. $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$. † The Vovk-Sellke p-ratio indicates the maximum possible odds supporting the alternative hypothesis over the null, applicable when $p \leq 0.37$ (Sellke, Bayarri, & Berger, 2001).

To examine the associations between helping tendencies and ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB), Spearman's rank-order correlations were computed. Confidence intervals for Spearman's ρ were estimated using bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples. As shown in Table 4, all PTM-R subscales were positively correlated with ECCB, with the strongest associations observed for the Anonymous ($\rho = 0.745$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.66, 0.81]) and Dire ($\rho = 0.684$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.59, 0.76]) subscales.

Table 4 Spearman's Correlation Coefficients (ρ) Between Helping Tendencies and ECCB

Subscale Pair	ρ	P	95% CI
Public	0.543	< 0.001	[0.43, 0.64]
Emotional	0.666	< 0.001	[0.57, 0.74]
Dire	0.684	< 0.001	[0.59, 0.76]
Anonymous	0.745	< 0.001	[0.66, 0.81]
Altruism	0.355	< 0.001	[0.22, 0.47]
Compliant	0.494	< 0.001	[0.38, 0.60]

Note. Values are Spearman's ρ correlations with p-values in parentheses. 95% confidence intervals were calculated using Fisher's z transformation. $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$. † The Vovk-Sellke p-ratio indicates the maximum possible odds supporting the alternative hypothesis over the null, applicable when $p \leq 0.37$ (Sellke, Bayarri, & Berger, 2001).

4. Discussion

Examination of the relationship between helping tendencies and environmentally aware consumer behavior (ECCB) is considered the most important goal of the study. Spearman's rank-order correlation revealed that though the strength of each of the links differed, it was found that ECCB is connected with all six parts of helping tendencies in a meaningful and positive way. Anonymous part ($\rho = 0.75$), followed by Dire ($\rho = 0.68$) and Emotional ($\rho = 0.67$) helping tendencies are found to have the strongest connection with ECCB. These results strongly support the idea that one who acts environmentally responsibly is the one who helps others in emotional or urgent situations, or without expecting recognition. It can be considered that the influence of each correlational link is not the same due to the weaker yet meaningful connections seen with these links, Public ($\rho = 0.54$), Compliant ($\rho = 0.49$), and Altruism ($\rho = 0.36$).

These findings support earlier research that highlights sustainable choices have a connection to deep emotional involvement and moral responsibility (Schwartz, 2010; Schultz et al., 2005). The strong link with anonymous helping matches ideas like the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model, which indicates that the major predictors of eco-friendly

behavior are personal values and internal ethical standards. The better indicators of steady, long-term ecological commitment are anonymous and emotionally motivated behaviors that may tap into a person's inner drive, unlike public or showy helping acts.

Cultural and contextual factors may also have influenced these results. Norms around humility, empathy, and moral duty vary across cultures and social settings, affecting how people express helping tendencies and how these translate into environmental behaviors. For instance, in societies valuing quiet responsibility over public recognition, anonymous helping may more strongly predict eco-conscious actions. Thus, the cultural context of the sample should be considered when interpreting these findings, as it may shape both the strength and nature of these relationships.

Since the correlation strengths differed across types, this study highlights the need to see helping as a multi-faceted idea when predicting eco behavior. The null hypothesis is rejected, and the findings back the claim that certain helping tendencies, especially those based on emotion, urgency, or inner moral codes, are more likely to lead to ecologically aware consumer actions.

Limitations and generalizability

This work sheds light on how certain helping traits connect with eco-minded buying habits, yet it comes with a few caveats worth noting. The pool of participants was built through snowball sampling, handy for reaching people in a network, but it can end up giving you a group that's too similar in background or outlook. That sameness can make it harder to say the results apply everywhere. On top of that, every bit of information came from self-filled surveys. People tend to remember things imperfectly, and some will unintentionally paint themselves in a better light, so the accuracy of what they reported is never guaranteed.

The design of the study was a snapshot in time and looked only for connections, not cause and effect. Even though the anonymous, dire, and emotional subscales showed especially strong links with eco-conscious behavior, those links can't prove that one produces the other. Plus, the whole thing focused solely on ECCB, without factoring in elements like income, cultural leanings, or environmental know-how — all of which might tweak or even reshape the patterns we found.

Going forward, a mix of sampling from different walks of life, and maybe tracking the same people over time or setting up experiments, would give us a better shot at untangling whether one trait truly drives the other. It'd also help to weave in more variables — both psychological quirks and situational factors — to see what else feeds into sustainable buying across different communities. These limitations suggest caution when extending the findings to broader or more diverse populations, particularly those from socio-economic, cultural, or linguistic groups underrepresented in the present sample.

5. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that prosocial tendencies, particularly Anonymous, Dire, and Emotional helping behaviors, are positively associated with ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB). These findings highlight the role of intrinsic moral and emotional motivations in promoting sustainable consumer choices. Further research should explore additional psychological and contextual factors influencing ECCB.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

All authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study.

Statement of ethical approval

This study was conducted as part of a university coursework requirement and posed minimal risk to participants; therefore, formal institutional ethics approval was not required.

Statement of informed consent

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and data were collected anonymously in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

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