

# IDENTIFICATION OF THE VIEWS OF TEACHERS FROM MORPHOU (CYPRUS) SCHOOLS TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CONSUMPTION

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## Abstract

In our world that gets increasingly polluted and deals with numerous environment problems, the environmentally-friendly consumption sensitivities of people become vital for future generations and providing them a clean world to live. Having a sufficient level of knowledge on this matter and raising individuals with environmental education would be the most efficient way in the solution of environmental problems. Teachers, businesses, civil society organizations and governments, which have the awareness on the effects of consumption activity, have crucial roles with regard to the protection of natural environment. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify the knowledge of teachers from the schools in Morphou regarding the environmentally friendly consumption. A qualitative research method was used for this used. The population of the study is comprised of teachers working in Morphou city centre during the academic year of 2019-2020 while the study sample is a number of 60 teachers solely selected on voluntarism principle. Content analysis was performed for data analysis. Pursuant to the research outcome, teachers are sensitive to the environment; they care about environment protection; they have general knowledge on environmentally friendly consumption yet insufficient knowledge on eco-friendly products, and they complain that environmental friendly products are not that common but expensive.

**Keywords:** Education, environmental education, environmentally friendly consumption, environment friendly product, sustainable consumption

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Environmentally Friendly Consumption and Environmentally Friendly Consumers

A new consumer profile with the environmental friendly tendency in production and consumption has emerged due to the increasing environmental concern. Such consumers named as “eco-friendly consumer” or “green consumer” are also concern about production, scarcity of consumer resources and post-use procedures of products in addition to consumption (Yücel and Ekmekçiler, 2008: 328).

Environmentally friendly consumers that are also called green consumers exchange information about products, bear an environmentalist attitude while shopping, do not have any brand loyalty but at the same time make research regarding the product (Shrum et.al, 1995: 80). Green product or eco-friendly product is defined as products that do not pollute environment and exhaust natural

resources, and that can be recyclable (Shamdasani et.al, 1993: 488). In order to consider a product as green product, it must have a minimum negative effect on environment, be produced as environmentally conscious way, do not cause pollution (water, air and environment), have minimum effect on energy and natural resources and can be used as recycled material (Diglel and Yazdanifard, 2014: 11).

There is a general belief that consumers would consider environment more as criteria in their purchasing decisions as they obtain more sensitivity on environmental issues, and knowledge regarding the effect of their disposed products on the environment. Hence, the first step in nature protection and solution to environmental problems is to enhance the individual interest, concern and sensitivity.

Conscious consumers, who are aware of the effects of consumption on society, can use their rights to stop purchasing or boycott to guide the activities of businesses and know their powers, have the key role in the solution of environmental problems. Consumers, who are conscious,

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educated with responsibility and creation of ethics based new consumption approach, are required to meet the needs of individuals as consumers, enhance and maintain their standard of living as well as social development. Due to being educated, a conscious consumer would ensure the change in economy and society (Zureik & Mowshowitz, 2005).

An effective education is considered to be the key in raising individuals, who have knowledge on environmental issues, are conscious, have positive attitudes and required skills towards environment and show environmentally friendly behaviours (Hines, Hungerford and Tomera, 1986, p. 1). Hence, environmental education is crucial in prevention and resolution of environmental problems (Gardner and Stern, 1996), which firstly requires the identification of current status in society with regard to environmentally friendly behaviours and values. Therefore, this research aimed to determine the knowledge levels and views of teachers, who are considered as the most educated group within the society as the key element in the solution of environmental problems.

### 1.2. Consumer Education

Since the problems like deterioration of environment, environmental pollution and scarcity of natural resources are major and complicated, the required interventions and measures should be taken by everybody. While many environmental problems are anthropology-origin (Stern, 1992: 271), they particularly occur due to people behaviour. The solution of problems requires broad-scale and long-term changes in the behaviours, attitude and values of individuals (Geller, 1989: 33).

The comprehension of elements that designate consumer behaviours would be a right starting point in order to ensure sustainable consumption, effective use of resources, and better improve consumption habits that are present in sustainability. The sustainability in consumption is possible by integrating natural resources into production, processing and making them available for consumption, and ensuring that waste generated from consumption does not damage environment and resources to be used in production, and even reintroduce such waste into production process (Tekelli, 2001; Lebel, 2005).

Sustainable living and development process are mainly concentrated on conscious consumer behaviours. Considering all of such factors, the concept of "consumer education", which has vital role in bringing conscious consumption habits, has become a universal subject. The main objective of

sustainable consumer education is to inform individuals about the available alternatives and help them to choose the best option for them rather than divert their choices. Without any personal interest, an individual can only show responsible consumption behaviour with consumer education. Consumer education is an education and information investment aiming to guide economic activities of individuals, meet their needs, utilize their resources consciously, learn fundamental rights and market influence power. From this perspective, consumer education and provision of information are two major complementary elements (McNeal, 1992; Makela and Peter, 2004).

Consumers, who previously believe that it was possible to reduce pollution and solve environmental problems through less consumption, discovered in 1990s that they can meet their needs with ecologically less harmful products – also called eco-friendly products- rather than buying products produced by scarce resources, and reducing consumption as emphasized by Fisk (1973) many years ago. Therefore, the negative effects of less consumption on national economy are eliminated while environment is protected (Yeşilada, 2009).

As a whole process, the awareness to protect the environment should be firstly acknowledged by individuals as a notion; then positive feelings should be developed, which should evolve into behaviours. Individuals that have the awareness to protect environment would act with that awareness in their daily lives and in their purchasing and consumption activities. Consumers should be encouraged to show behaviours such as buying organic products, avoiding products that would harm environment, preferring recycled products, support local production, choosing to buy packaged products less, using energy resources economically, separating waste and adopting recycling habits (Gök and Türk, 2011)

Consequently, consumers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to meet their needs through utilizing goods and services. Such knowledge and skills are not stable and they change respectively. It is a known fact that education has a vital place in meeting new needs. With the supporting role of education during change, both existing values are protected and the adaptation to change becomes easier. Within this framework, the significance of consumer education should not be neglected, and sustainable consumer education should be provided by educators in every sphere of life and every phase of education.

### 1.3. Teachers in Environmental Education

Teachers that are one of the most important groups among conscious consumers have a significant role in determining the existing consumption habits and taking necessary measures against potential future negative scenarios.

Regardless of the environmental education approach in communities, teachers are considered as locomotive in formal education. In terms of environmental education, teachers amplify the interest of students on environment-related matters and encourage students to act in an eco-friendly manner (Tuncer, Ertepinar, Tekkaya and Sungur, 2005).

Teachers are at the focal point of education and education reforms. The pedagogical approach of teachers has an intense effect on student products. In general, the identities and belief systems of teachers affect their way of teaching (Pajares, 1992). Teachers enter the classroom with their certain characteristics, which they reflect on their teaching processes. Various psychometric variables such as teachers' knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, risk perceptions, beliefs and ethical judgements affect their teaching practices accordingly (Kılınc, 2010). Consequently, the attitudes and beliefs of teachers towards environmental education are considered to influence environmental education practices. Thus, it is important to analyse teachers' environmental sensitivity, environmentally friendly behaviours and attitudes towards eco-friendly consumption.

## 2. Material and Method

The aim of this research is to identify the knowledge levels of teachers working in the schools in Morphou on eco-friendly products and environmentally friendly consumption, and reflect their views on environmental consumption.

Qualitative research method was applied for this study. One of the most significant features of qualitative case studies is that they analyse one or more cases in detail. In other words, the factors (individuals, events, environment, processes etc.) on a related case are investigated with a holistic approach where the main concentration is on how they affect and are affected from the related case (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011).

The population of the research is comprised of teachers working at schools in Morphou city centre during the academic year of 2019-2020 while the study sample is a number of 60 teachers solely selected on voluntarism principle. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 teachers to collect the views of teachers through a 15-question

survey.

Content analysis was conducted to analyse the data. The main aim in content analysis is to organize and interpret data within the framework of similar concepts and themes (Arıkan, 2007). Hence, the collected data firstly should be conceptualised, then organized in reason based on the generated concepts, and the themes explaining such data should be determined accordingly (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

In content analysis, data are analysed in four phases (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2011): data coding as 1<sup>st</sup> phase, identification of themes as 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, organisation and identification of data by codes and themes as 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, and interpretation of findings as 4<sup>th</sup> phase. Based on such phases, eight different dimensions were established from the questionnaire that has 15 questions.

## 3. Research Findings

### 3.1. Findings on the Views of Teachers Regarding Environmentally Friendly Consumption

#### DIMENSION 1: VIEWS ON THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS FOR THE PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT

In the context of this dimension, the objective was to identify the views of 60 participants (teachers). The following table shows the views of teachers regarding the question on the first dimension "*the duties and responsibilities of conscious consumers for the protection of environment*" under the given rates and themes.

Table 1.

Themes	n	%
Buying eco-friendly product	35	58
Being a conscious consumer	15	25
Keeping the environment clean and not polluting it	10	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked about their views regarding "*the duties and responsibilities of conscious consumers for the protection of environment*". Within the framework of this dimension, 58% of the participants shared as buying eco-friendly products, 25% as being a conscious consumer and 17% as keeping the environment clean and not polluting it.

#### DIMENSION 2: VIEWS ON WHETHER TEACHERS KNOW ABOUT ANY ASSOCIATIONS, FOUNDATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS WORKING FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CONSCIOUSNESS

60 participants (teachers) were asked about

their views on this dimension. The following table shows the views of teachers regarding the question on the second dimension **“whether teachers know about any associations, foundations and organizations working for the dissemination of environmental protection consciousness”** under the given rates and themes.

Table 2.

Themes	n	%
Biologists Association	27	45
TEMA Foundation	15	25
Greenpeace and ÇEVKO	10	17
Ministry of Forestry	8	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on whether teachers know about any associations, foundations and organizations working for the dissemination of environmental protection consciousness”**. The participants shared their views with 45% as Biologists Association, 25% as TEMA Foundation, 17% as Greenpeace and ÇEVKO, and 13% as the Ministry of Forestry.

### DIMENSION 3: VIEWS ON THE MEANING OF ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CONSUMPTION (GREEN CONSUMPTION)

60 participants (teachers) were asked about their views on this dimension. The following table shows the views of teachers regarding the question on the third dimension **“v the meaning of environmentally friendly consumption (green consumption)”** under the given rates and themes.

Table 3.

Themes	n	%
Choosing environmentally non-hazardous products	35	58
Using environmentally friendly products	15	25
Recyclable products	10	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on the meaning on environmentally friendly consumption (green consumption)”** where 58% of participants said choosing environmentally non-hazardous products, 25% as using environmentally friendly products and 17% as using recyclable products.

### DIMENSION 4: VIEWS ON THE GREEN CONSUMER PROFILE

60 participants (teachers) were asked about their views on this dimension. The following table shows the views of teachers regarding the question

on the fourth dimension **“the green consumer profile”** under the given rates and themes.

Table 4.

Themes	n	%
Avoids unnecessary consumption	28	47
Uses environmentally non-hazardous products	17	28
Environmentalist	15	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on the green consumer profile”** where 47% of participants said avoiding unnecessary consumption, 28% as using environmentally non-hazardous products and 25% as environmentalist.

### DIMENSION 5: VIEWS ON THE EXAMPLES TO ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

Under this fifth dimension, the views of 60 participants (teachers) were asked on **“the examples to environmentally friendly products”**. The following table presents the related views of teachers under the given rates and themes.

Table 5.

Themes	n	%
Organic products	29	48
Biodegradable products	19	32
Products with ecological certificate	12	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on the examples to environmentally friendly products”** where 48% of participants said organic products, 32% as biodegradable products and 20% as products with ecological certificate.

### DIMENSION 6: VIEWS ON THE REASONS WHY ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS ARE MUCH EXPENSIVE THAN OTHER PRODUCTS

Under this sixth dimension, the views of 60 participants (teachers) were asked on **“the reasons why environmentally friendly products are much expensive than other products”**. The following table presents the related views of teachers under the given rates and themes

Table 6.

Themes	n	%
Using very expensive methods	25	42
Too much effort	21	35
Difficult to produce	14	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked

about their ***“views on the reasons why environmentally friendly products are much expensive than other products”*** where 42% of participants said using very expensive methods, 35% as too much effort and 23% as difficult to produce.

#### **DIMENSION 7: VIEWS ON THE EXPECTATIONS FROM ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS**

Within this context, 60 participants (teachers) were asked about their views. The following table presents the views of teachers about the seventh dimension ***“the expectations from environmentally friendly products”*** under the given rates and themes.

Table 7.

Themes	n	%
Easy to access	30	50
Cheap and healthy	30	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked about ***“their expectations from environmentally friendly products”*** where 50% of participants said such products should be easy to access while 50% said they should be cheap and healthy.

#### **DIMENSION 8: VIEWS ON WHETHER THERE IS ANY INSUFFICIENCY IN RAISING THE AWARENESS OF CONSUMERS TO INCREASE THE USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CONSUMPTION AND IF ANY, WHAT CAN BE DONE**

60 participants (teachers) were asked about their views on this dimension. The following table shows the views of teachers regarding the question on the eighth dimension ***“whether there is any insufficiency in raising the awareness of consumers to increase the use of environmentally friendly consumption and if any, what can be done”*** under the given rates and themes.

Table 8.

Themes	n	%
Lack of advertisement and promotion	21	35
Not much included in education	11	18
Insufficiency in government policies	28	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Teachers from different schools were asked about their ***“views on whether there is any insufficiency in raising the awareness of consumers to increase the use of environmentally friendly consumption and if any, what can be done”*** where 35% of participants said lack of advertisement and promotion, 18% as not much included in education and 47% as insufficiency in

government policies.

#### **4. Conclusion and Discussion**

In the recent years, the individual consumption started to have more impact on the deterioration of environment since many consumer products such as cars, laundry detergents, aluminium pollutants, insecticides, artificial fertilizers cause environmental deterioration (Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed, 1974).

The protection of environment can only be achieved with the education of individuals, who have the biggest effect on it. The aim of such education is to introduce certain behaviours to the individuals, which would help them to tackle and solve environmental problems. Hence, the education to be provided for students as the owners of future is vital for the future of environment. As the most important components of formal education, teachers have significant duties in the establishment of environmentally conscious behaviours (Groves & Pugh, 1999; Khalid, 2001). Plevyak, Noe, Henderson, Roth & Wilke (2001) indicated that teacher is the most important element that designate the success of environmental education, and it would not be possible to raise students with environment literacy where teachers do not have the knowledge, skills and responsibility to prepare their courses on environment.

Consequently, this study was performed to identify the views of teachers on environmentally friendly consumption. The knowledge levels of teachers and dimensions deemed as important by the teachers are reflected respectively. This study also has the objectives to better understand the eco-friendly product market and propose guiding tips to develop innovative products suitable for the related market. The research outputs are summarized hereinafter.

The participants that teach in different schools were asked about their views on ***“the duties and responsibilities of conscious consumers for the protection of environment”*** where 58% of participants answered as buying eco-friendly product, 25% as being a conscious consumer and 17% as keeping the environment clean and not polluting it. Hence, teachers are sensitive about environment and care about the protection of environment.

Teachers from different schools were asked about their ***“views on whether teachers know about any associations, foundations and organizations working for the dissemination of environmental protection consciousness”***. It is

possible to say that teachers knew a few of such organizations. Majority of teachers had difficulties in answering this question but they shared their views with 45% as Biologists Association, 25% as TEMA Foundation, 17% as Greenpeace and ÇEVKO, and 13% as the Ministry of Forestry.

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on the meaning on environmentally friendly consumption (green consumption)”**. Within the framework of this dimension, 58% of participants said choosing environmentally non-hazardous products, 25% as using environmentally friendly products and 17% as using recyclable products.

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on the green consumer profile”** where 47% of participants said avoiding unnecessary consumption, 28% as using environmentally non-hazardous products and 25% as people with environment awareness and environmentalist. Therefore, teachers know the meaning of environmentally friendly consumption (green consumption) and describe environmentally friendly profile (green consumer profile).

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on the examples to environmentally friendly products”** where teachers had difficulties to answer this question, yet provided a general view with 48% as organic products, 32% as bio-degradable products and 20% as products with ecological certificate. Only a few teachers gave certain examples for such products that show a lack of information on this matter.

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on the reasons why environmentally friendly products are much expensive than other products”** where 42% of participants said using very expensive methods, 35% as too much effort and 23% as difficult to produce. In general, teachers consider eco-friendly products as expensive since they are difficult to produce.

Teachers from different schools were asked about **“their expectations from environmentally friendly products”** where 50% of participants said such products should be easy to access while 50% said they should be cheap and healthy. Considering the answers of teachers, they mainly complain that eco-friendly products are expensive and they cannot be found everywhere.

Teachers from different schools were asked about their **“views on whether there is any insufficiency in raising the awareness of consumers to increase the use of environmentally friendly consumption and if any, what can be**

**done”**. All teachers indicated that there are shortcomings on this matter and 35% of participants expressed their views as lack of advertisement and promotion, 18% as not much included in education and 47% as insufficiency in government policies. Briefly to say, the majority of teachers expressed the insufficiency in government policies in addition to individual measures, education, promotion and advertisement.

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