



# Role Of Youth In Environment Protection:A Sociological Study Of University Of Lucknow, Lucknow

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**Abstract:** Environment became a more fancied topic among researchers of various disciplines in the recent years. Surfeit of attempts have been made to study the problem of environment protection. In India, the youth constitute an important section of society. They are young, dynamic and energetic, living with dreams. They have the power to transform the nation. By making lifestyle more environment friendly, youth can play an active role in protecting and improving the environment. Their involvement in environmental protection has a direct impact not only on their behaviour and attitude, but potentially on parents and relatives as well. The present paper focuses on awareness /knowledge, lifestyle and consumer behaviour of youth in protecting environment. This study is relevant because unplanned management of human activities and technological development has accelerated environmental problems. Therefore, there is a need to understand the problem of conservation and protection of ecosystems in order to protect the environment. The paper is descriptive and exploratory in nature based on primary data. Graduate students of university of Lucknow have been taken as sample for the present study.

**Keywords:** Environment protection, consumer behavior, youth, lifestyle, ecosystem

## I. Introduction

Environment protection has become a buzzword in the world today amongst environmentalists, politicians, in media and among elite masses. The term 'environment' is derived from the French word 'environer' which means to 'encircle or surround'. Thus, it refers to both abiotic (physical or non-living) and biotic (living) environment. In sociology, P.Gisbert defines Environment as "anything immediately surrounding an object and exerting a direct influence on it". And according to E.J.Ross, "Environment is an external force which influences us." As we all know clean environment is most important because the interrelationship between human beings and environment has been in existence since the former first came on the earth. Therefore, it is extremely important to make efforts to conserve, protect, rescue and develop this environment for the future. In ancient times, people used to worship trees, but today people cut trees for development; they do not know how much damage could be caused to the coming generation due to the development practices. In India, youth constitute an important section of society. They are young, dynamic and energetic. Youth is the age of dreams and have the power to transform the nation into a better place. By making the lifestyle more environment friendly, youth can play an active role in protecting and improving the environment. Understanding or changing consumer behavior is also important in this regard. The consumer behavior of youth refers to the actions and decisions they make when purchasing or using a product. Consumer behavior towards a product includes everything from the initial decision to buy a product and to use it quite unthinkingly about its implications for the environment. In the present era, therefore, it is important to promote environmental awareness among the people, youth a particular. For environmental awareness, it is necessary that the whole society should work at the grassroots level for the protection of the environment. To inculcate environmental values among youth, it is necessary for all and sundry to know one's responsibility towards the environment and to behave in an environment-friendly

manner. Environmental awareness is an integral part of any environmental curriculum (deep scientific understanding of environmental issues), which encourages the public, especially the youth, to participate in the protection of environment. The stance of unplanned management of human activities and technological development has indeed increased environmental problems. Therefore, there is a need to understand the conservation and protection of ecosystems in order to protect the environment. This research study will help the youths to develop an understanding of the living and non-living environment and increase their awareness about green consumer behavior.

## Global Perspective

The Environment Performance Index 2022 released by the World Economic Forum presents the ranking of ranking 180 countries in terms of climate change performance, environmental health and ecosystem vitality, with India occupying 180<sup>th</sup> rank, worse than Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Myanmar with a trifling score of 18.9, whereas Denmark ranked first with 77.90 score. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Food Industry Asia (FIA) released a regional survey of five countries (namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) in 2020 which shows that consumers are largely (91%) concerned about plastic waste, but fewer than half are less likely to buy a product from non-recycled materials.

## Indian Perspective

India, the second most populous country in the world, is represented by the largest youth population in the world; about 66 percent of the population is under the age of 35 (ILO; 1996–2022). According to the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP) report 2019, India has the highest number - that is 2.3 million deaths due to pollution.

The Government of India is trying to sensitize people towards the environment, enabling them to understand the value of natural resources and participate in activities related to environmental protection. To make India pollution free, many rules and policies related to pollution have been made by the state as well as the central government. The Indian Constitution is perhaps one of the rare constitutions in the world which contains specific provisions relating to environmental protection. A lot of efforts have been made by social organizations and citizen groups like the Chipko movement, Appiko movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Save Ganga campaign etc. to save our environment.

## II. Theoretical Perspective

Environmental sociology began in the 1970s in response to growing environmental issues and in support of environmental protection. In 1971, the book 'On Man in His Environment', published by Klausner, a sociologist and clinical psychologist, is widely considered to be the first publication in which the term "environmental sociology" is used. The word 'environment' has a different meaning in sociology. In sociology it refers to social and cultural influences on human behavior as opposed to heredity. Dunlap and Catton define environmental sociology as "the study of the connection between the environment and society." Thus, environmental sociology is concerned with the reciprocal interconnection between environment and society. In the 1970s, environmental studies began to inform sociologists about real environmental problems and ecological constraints. Rachel Carson described the harmful effects of toxic pesticides on birds and other animals in her book 'Silent Spring' (1962), which is widely considered to have marked the beginning of environmental movement in the domain of sociology.

Radhakamal Mukherjee's contribution to the study of 'social ecology' is unique. For him, social ecology was a complex formulation in which several social sciences interacted. Geological, geographical and biological factors together constitute an ecological region. In turn, ecology is conditioned by social, economic or political factors. Mukherjee also wrote extensively on the danger of deforestation. The cutting of trees makes the soil subject to the wrath of floods and reduces the fertility of the soil. In his pre-1930 essays, he introduced the concept of 'environmental destruction'. The perspective of sociology entails the relationship between human and natural affairs. His notion of social ecology highlights the human role in maintaining the 'ecological balance' implying the conservation of the land with its flora and fauna, use of water, management of forests and rivers, animal husbandry and control of insects.

The term "young", on the other hand, describes the phase of life between childhood and adulthood. Youth is a special period of life in which, together with biological and mental maturity, develops the process of inclusion of an individual in the community. During this period, it is expected of young people do

develop skills and capabilities in order to undertake the roles in all fields of social activities. Process of inclusion of the individual in the society lasts as long as the individual reaches the appropriate level of social autonomy, responsibility and independence (Jović-Lazić, 2003). From a sociological perspective, youth are viewed as an ascribed group. They are socially constructed, rather than biological condition of being young. The college students only form one section creating one or two special problems of their own. Youth does not exhaust the number of boys and girls attending college. The term youth is statistical and includes all those who fall under the age group of 15-25 years (Mukerjee, 1946).

### III. Review of Literature

Shutaleva et al. (2021) in their article focuses on the experience of the environmental behavior of young people in metropolis. The research paper builds upon a survey conducted in Ekaterinburg, the administrative center of the Sverdlovsk region (Russia). The study shows that from the point of view of young people, the ecological situation of the city of Yekaterinburg is one of the most pressing problems. It is also concluded that environmental practices change society's social and cultural reality and the behavior patterns of individuals concerning nature and other people. Sustainable development of society requires the education of individuals responsible for their eco-friendly behavior. Most common practices of environmental behavior among young people are marked by the acceptance of recyclable materials.

Dimitrova et al. (2021) conducted a study on preparedness of young people for a sustainable lifestyle. The definition of sustainable lifestyles is what they identified as most suitable in the context. The study noted the sense of willingness of youth to shift towards more pro-environmental habits. Brno as a city offers a wide range of opportunities for young people to be more responsible consumers and, get involved in environmental activism: As an element of the individual initiative, the adoption of more sustainable and low-impact habits, is recognised as a positive sign of pro-environmental change. Consumers do have the power to impact the decision making of businesses and industries. A reliable and approachable source of information could contribute towards increased awareness and understanding of the impact of environmental issues.

Narwal (2021) in his research study focused on environmental awareness among youth. Based on secondary data, the study reveals that most of students, including those in schools, are aware about environment. But the awareness level of graduate students is certainly higher than school children. The study also exposed that science and commerce students have more environmental awareness in comparison to that of arts and humanities.

M.Radha and Sivakumar (2021) in their research paper brought to fore the level of awareness on environmental protection among secondary school students from the vantage point of gender and locality on the basis of a random sample of 50 students. The study found no significant difference in the awareness on environmental protection among secondary school students with reference to their locality.

Punam and Bala (2020) studied the role of the youths in maintaining cleaner and greener environment in MehalPanchyat. Her analysis found them as the important force in upkeeping greener environment.

Wahyuningsih (2020) analyses youth's attitude towards the environment and their preference for green products. The results showed are no significant difference between men and women in intra-personal attitudes towards the environment, indicating that young people have relatively equal knowledge.

Mishra and Asem (2020) conducted a study on "Reflections of Indian Youth Engagement in Environmental Concerns: An Analysis of the Media's Role". The empirical study based on the survey of a sample of 360 Delhi-based youths focusses on the emerging issues of environment and the role of media on environmental engagement of the youth of India's capital. The findings brought forth the important role of mass media in raising awareness among the youth on various environmental problems such as air pollution, water scarcity and disasters, and environmental cleanliness. It is also observed that as youth are exposed to the mass media, they tend to adopt a positive attitude towards environmental issues.

Nair and Simon (2018) have highlighted consumers' buying behavior towards green products in their study, "To study consumer buying behavior towards green products". The objective of this study was to measure the participation of selected adolescent and youth consumers in Thrissur city of Kerala. This study shows that consumers who are environmentally conscious are more likely to buy green products, but product attributes such as price, quality and brand are still the most important that consumers consider while making green purchasing decision.

Shanthakumar (2017) emphasizes that the concept of environmental resource management through the participation of citizens from all walks of life. According to him, "Governments cannot bridge the existing gap in public awareness and education on environmental issues due to the relentless pursuit of material progress at the cost of environmental degradation" (p. 365). It calls for the need of educating the public,

youth in particular, and raise awareness among them. For the environmental process makes them aware of the finiteness of natural resources and the imminent threat of environmental pollution.

Katok (2016) studied students' attitudes in relation to environmental awareness and, discovered no significant attitudinal difference among school students. Both boys and girls understand the environment equally.

Borojevic et al. (2014) in their research paper entitled "Youth and Environmental Education for Sustainable Development" outlines the need of adequate environmental education among youths, which, in turn, also leads to the sustainable development of society. Accordingly, youths be given appropriate environmental education and opportunities to engage in discussions on economic, social and environmental issues.

Almossawi (2014) examined four environmental factors in the sample of 243 educated youth in Bahrain: environmental knowledge, environmental attitudes, environmental concern, and environmental buying behavior. It is noted that green buying behavior is influenced by knowledge and concern about the environment and the impact of green marketing on it. The study made it explicit that the environmental behavior of youth could be boosted by boosting their environmental knowledge, attitudes, and concern among youth in Bahrain underprivileged by the inadequacy of knowledge and concern, rather positive attitudes towards the environment.

The study of Brondi et al. (2012) surveys the role of young people in the construction of meaning and actions that define their participation in community in the Chiampo Valley, Italy. It focuses on 229 secondary school students to gauge their understanding of themselves as members of the local community, their contributions and priorities and address environmental issues. The results call for the need of giving youth a voice in institutional decision-making about environmental policies and community life.

#### IV. General Objectives

The following objectives were framed for the present study:

1. To study the environmental awareness among youths of university of Lucknow.
2. To examine the consumerist behavior of youth in protecting environment.

#### V. Research Question

In order to achieve the objective of the present study following research question was formulated:

1. What is the attitude of the youth of the University of Lucknow to the practice of environmental behavior?

#### VI. Research methodology

Lucknow, the 'City of Gardens', is located in the middle Gangetic plain at 26°30' to 27°10' latitude and 80°13' to 80°30' longitude (Prasad and Sanyal, 2016). It enjoys a subtropical climate with cool dry winters (December–February) and summers (March–June). The average temperature is about 45 °C in summer and 30 °C in winter, with an annual rainfall of about 100 cm (Meteorological Centre, 2010). The total population of Lucknow city is approximately 2,815,601 and the geographical area is stated to be 470.70 sq km. And the population density is 5981 sq km. (Census of India, 2011). Lucknow University is a public state university located in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Established in 1920, the University of Lucknow is one of the oldest government-owned institutions of higher education in India. It is a teaching, residential and affiliating university with more than 500 colleges and 17 institutes located all over the city and other four districts. The University has recently been awarded A<sup>++</sup> status by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. As per the University Annual Quality Assurance Report 2020-21, the total number of 16,365 students were admitted during the academic year.

A descriptive and exploratory research method was adopted for the study. The primary data has been collected through survey method, besides the use of convenience non-probability sampling technique to select a representative sample of 130 youth from the University. For the purpose of this research study, the definition of 'youth' comprises people in the age group of 15-29 years (as per the National Youth Policy – 2014, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Govt. of India). The United Nations, moreover, defines 'youth' as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. For the present study, youths in the age-group between 18-35 years were selected. Closed ended questionnaire comprising 32 questions with all possible options were structured via Google form and sent randomly to selected students to respond to.

## VII. Results and Discussion

**Table 1-Distribution of youth respondents by age and gender**

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
<b>Below 18</b>	1 (1.86)	0 (0)	<b>1</b> <b>(0.77)</b>
<b>18-23</b>	35 (4.82)	46 (60.53)	<b>81</b> <b>(62.31)</b>
<b>24-29</b>	13 (24.07)	27 (35.52)	<b>40</b> <b>(30.76)</b>
<b>30-35</b>	5 (9.25)	3 (3.95)	<b>8</b> <b>(6.92)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b> <b>(41.53)</b>	<b>76</b> <b>(58.46)</b>	<b>130</b> <b>(100)</b>

\*Source: Primary Data

\*\*Parentheses indicate percentage

In this study, youth respondents are classified into four age groups shown in Table 1. Out of the sample of 130 youths, majority belongs to the age-group of 18-23 years, followed by 81 (62.31%) respondents in which 35 (4.82%) are male and 46 (60.53%) are female. It is inferred from the table that 40 (30.76%) respondents are included in the age group of 24-29 years in which 13 (24.07%) are male and 27 (35.52%) are female and, 8 of them (6.92%) belongs to age category of 30-35 years comprising 5 (9.25%) male and 3 (3.95%) female. Only one male respondent is below 18 years.

**Table 2- Distribution of youth respondents by level of education and gender**

Gender	Level of Education				Total
	Graduated	Pursuing Graduation	Post Graduated	Pursuing Post Graduation	
<b>Male</b>	6 (33.33)	16 (53.33)	19 (36.5)	13 (43.33)	<b>54</b> <b>(41.54)</b>
<b>Female</b>	12 (66.67)	14 (46.67)	33 (62.5)	17 (56.67)	<b>76</b> <b>(48.46)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(13.84)</b>	<b>30</b> <b>(23.08)</b>	<b>52</b> <b>(40)</b>	<b>30</b> <b>(23.08)</b>	<b>130</b> <b>(100)</b>

\*Source: Primary Data

\*\*Parentheses indicates percentage

From the above table, it has been observed that at overall level, total number of 18 (13.84%) respondents were graduates, 30 (23.08%) pursuing the graduation program, 52 (40%) have the post graduate degree and the rest 30 (23.04%) continuing with post-graduation. Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by level of education and gender.

**Table 3- Distribution of youth respondents by age and family background**

Age	Family Background						Total
	Rural		Urban		Semi- Urban		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<b>Below 18</b>	1 (4.35)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	<b>1</b> <b>(0.77)</b>
<b>18-23</b>	13 (56.52)	9 (60)	8 (72.73)	26 (56.52)	13 (65)	14 (82.35)	<b>83</b> <b>(63.84)</b>
<b>24-29</b>	6 (26.09)	4 (26.67)	3 (27.27)	20 (43.48)	5 (25)	2 (15.38)	<b>40</b> <b>(30.77)</b>

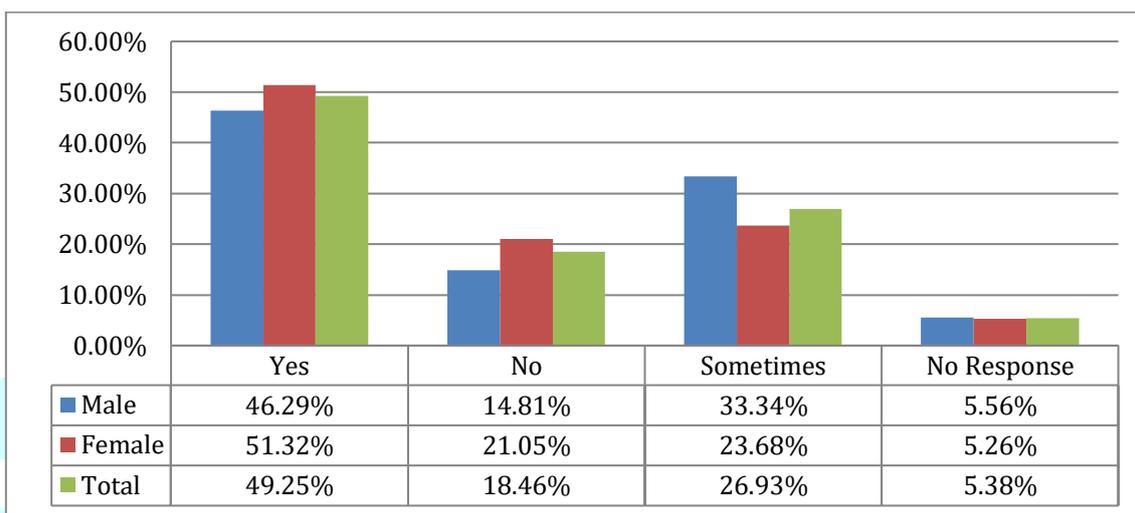
<b>30-35</b>	3 (13.04)	2 (13.33)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (10)	1 (7.69)	<b>8</b> <b>(6.15)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b> <b>(17.69)</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(11.55)</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(8.46)</b>	<b>46</b> <b>(35.38)</b>	<b>20</b> <b>(15.38)</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(11.54)</b>	<b>130</b> <b>(100)</b>

\*Source: Primary Data

\*\*Parentheses indicates percentage

The table 3 shows the different kinds of family background to which youth respondents belong. Evidently, out of all 130, 46 (35.38%) female respondents have urban family background which is highest among female incumbents of all four groups. In case of male respondents, 20 (15.38%) hail from semi-urban background - the highest among male respondents of all age group.

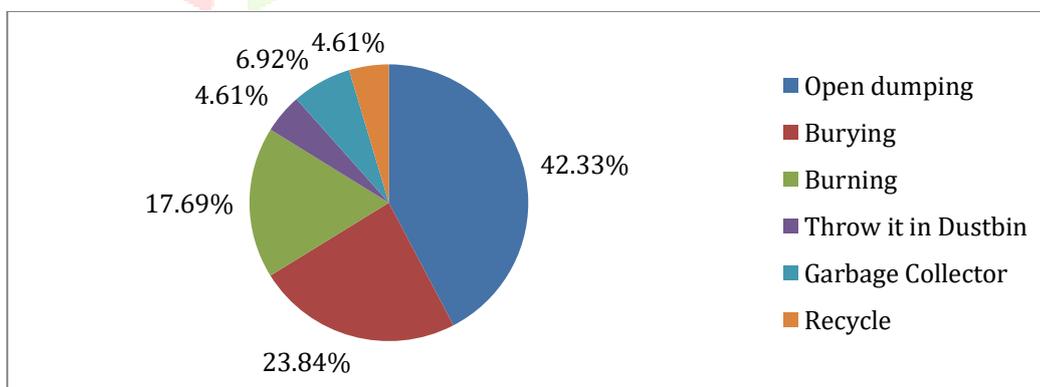
**Chart1- Distribution of Youth Respondents' taken part in environment Activitiesgender wise**



\*Source: Primary Data

The result shows that 51.32% female and 45.29% male respondents prefer to take part in environmental protection activities; whereas 14.81% male and 21.05% female incumbents of the sample group tend to refrain from environment activities. Further, 33.34% male and 23.68% female youths involve themselves in these activities, and the rest of 5.56% male and 5.26% female didn't respond. This indicates that the students are conscious of most environmental issues.

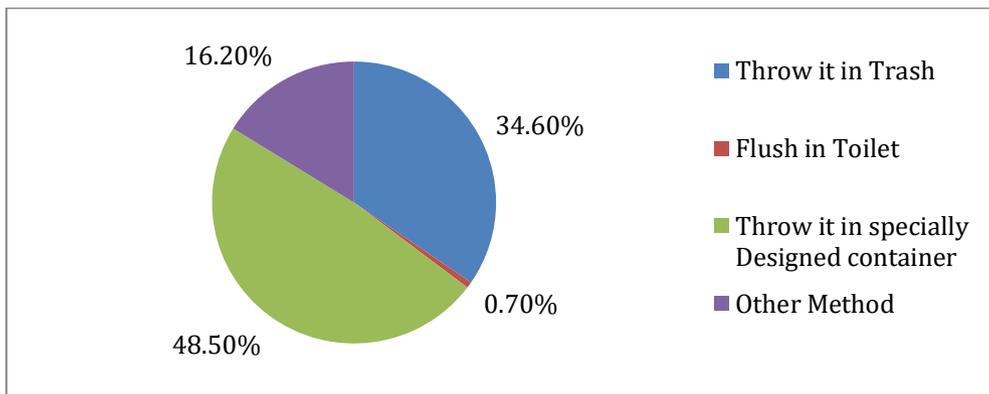
**Chart 2- Disposal method of plastic bags/materials**



\*Source: Primary Data

As regards the question of the disposal of plastics, 42.3 % prefer the environmentally disastrous way of open dumping. Remaining 23.8 % go for burying and 17.74% opt for burning method. There are various other methods by which respondent dispose of plastics. Dustbins are used for rag pickers to collect and forward to recycling facility.

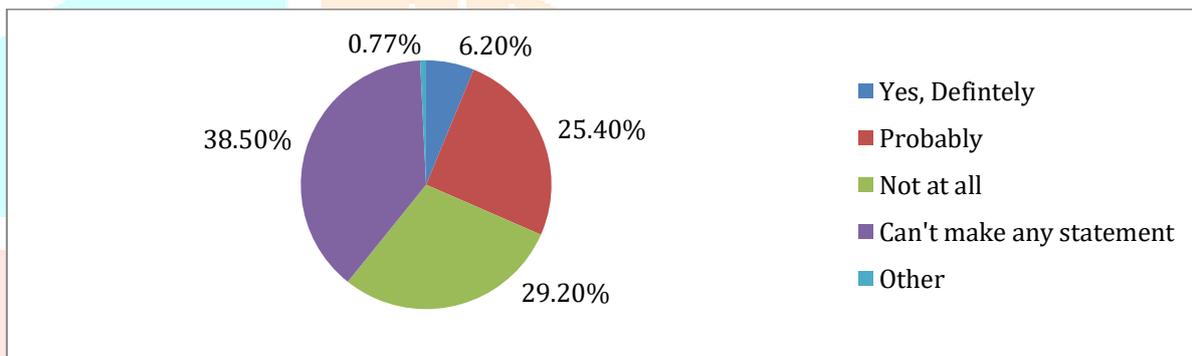
**Chart 3- Disposal method of used sanitary napkins**



\*Source: Primary Data

The results indicated that the majority of the respondents, accounting for 48.50%, disposed of their used sanitary napkins in a specially designed container. A significant proportion of the respondents, 34.60%, threw their used sanitary napkins in the trash. A small percentage of the respondents, 0.70%, flushed it in the toilets. Additionally 16.20% of the respondents reported using other method to dispose of their used sanitary napkins.

**Chart 4- Data on denim jeans are healthier for environment**



\*Source: Primary Data

We all know denim jeans and we love them! But most of us don't know about the impact of the huge quantity of water - about 10,000 liters, along with extensive use of harmful chemicals for dyeing to make a single pair of jeans. Greatest share of respondents, that is, 38.5%, couldn't make any statement. However, 29.2% believed that denim were harmful, barring the 6.20% of them holding a negative opinion.

**Table 4 - Distribution of youth consumers by buying green products and what makes to buy green product?**

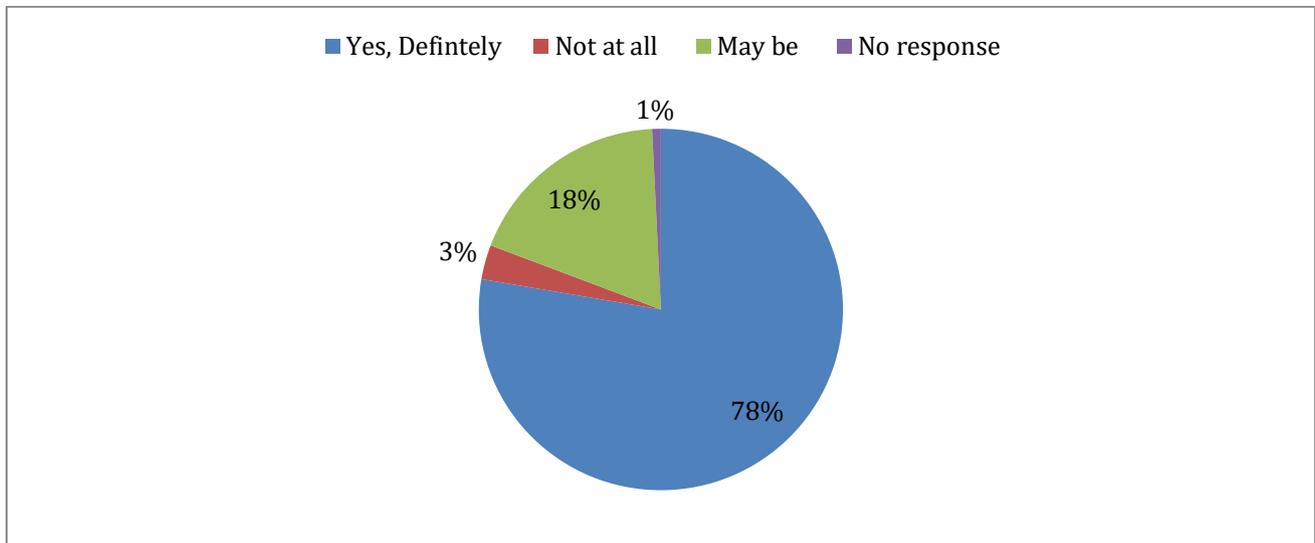
What makes to buy a Green product?	Buying Green Product				Total
	Yes	No	May be	Sometimes	
<b>Features of Product</b>	7 (8.14)	0 (0)	4 (30.77)	2 (10.53)	<b>13 (10)</b>
<b>Packaging</b>	2 (2.32)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (5.26)	<b>3 (2.32)</b>
<b>Environment Friendly</b>	75 (87.22)	0 (0)	9 (69.23)	16 (84.21)	<b>100 (76.92)</b>
<b>Promotion Campaign</b>	2 (2.32)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	<b>2 (9.23)</b>
<b>Never Purchased</b>	0 (0)	12 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	<b>12 (9.23)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>86 (66.15)</b>	<b>12 (9.23)</b>	<b>13 (10)</b>	<b>19 (14.61)</b>	<b>130 (100)</b>

\*Source: Primary Data

\*\*Parentheses indicates percentage

In order to study the attitude of young people to green products, we enquired about the consumer behavior of youths. Based on the data obtained through the questionnaire, out of 86 (66 %) respondents, maximally, 75 (87.22%) buys green products considering them environment friendly. While the remaining 12(9.23%) individuals never purchased green product. A certain number of them (19 - 14.61%) buy such products but occasionally.

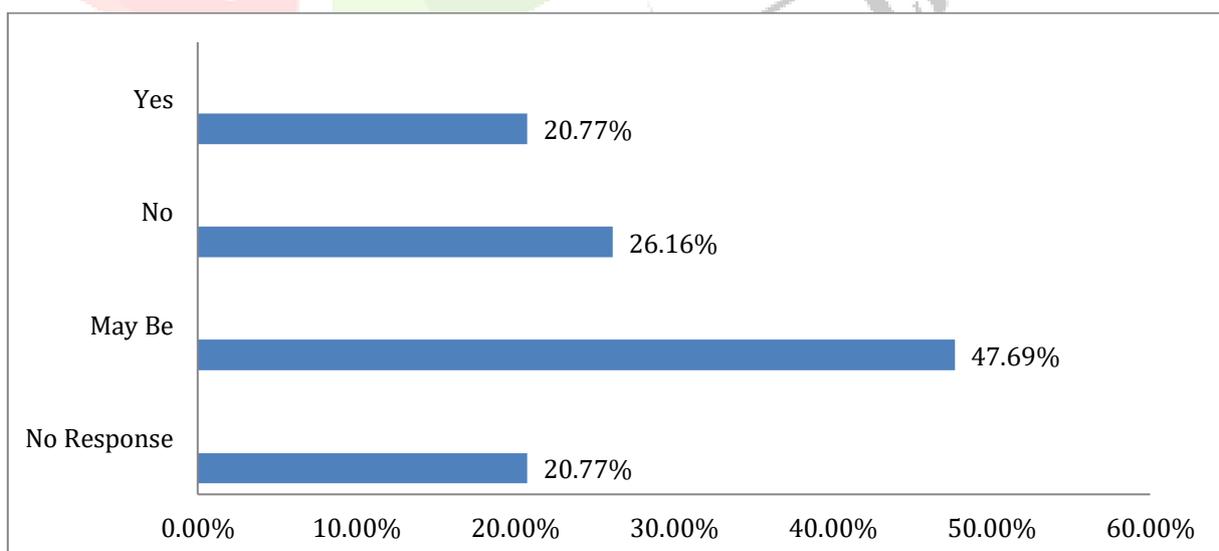
**Chart 5 - Distribution of Youth respondents believe that their consumption activities have an impact on environment**



\*Source: Primary Data

The pie chart depicts the distribution of responses to the question of whether consumer behavior has an impact on the environment. The majority of the respondents, accounting for 77.69%, believed that their consumer behavior activities had an impact on environment, while 18.46% were uncertain about the impact of their behavior on the environment. A small proportion of them, 3.08% provided a negative response to the question of consumer activities harm the environment.

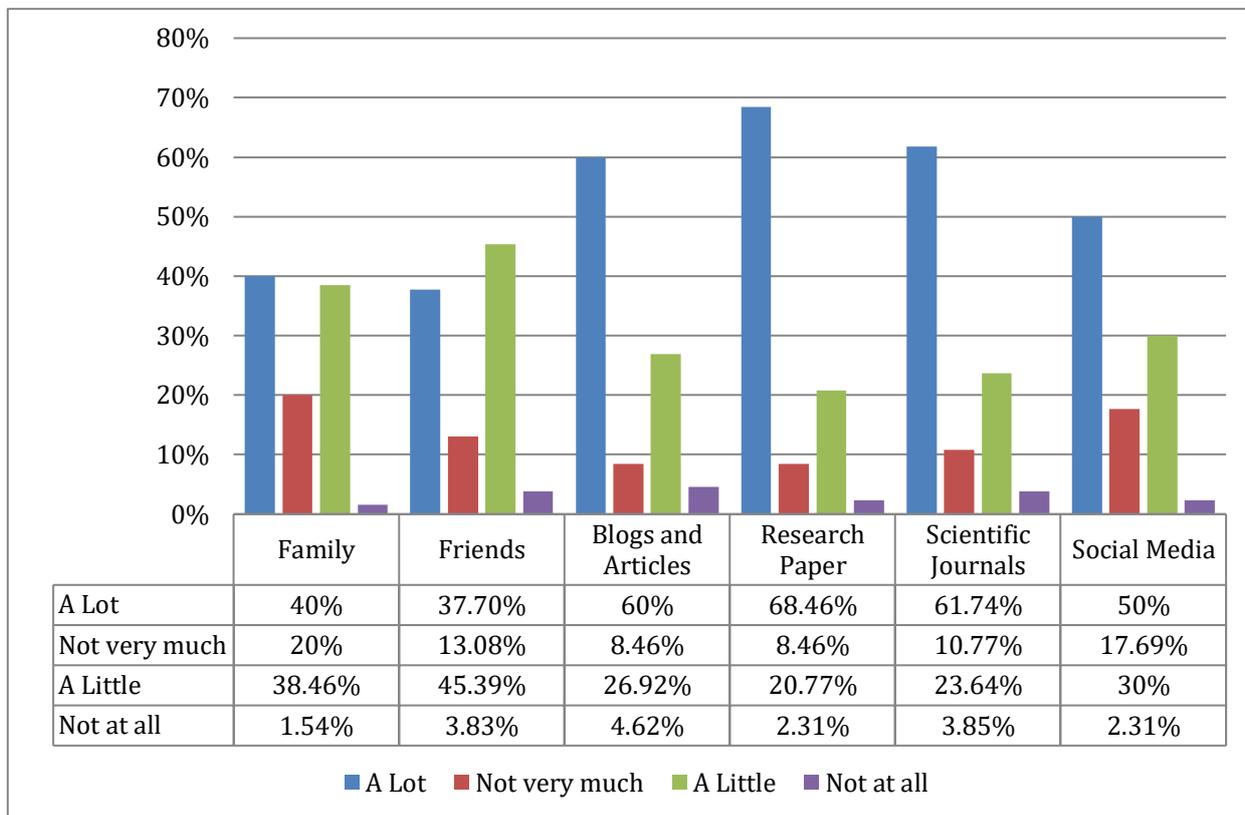
**Chart 6 - Youth respondents make sure that plastic they use is biodegradable**



\*Source: Primary Data

The above graph shows that most respondents, i.e., 47.69%, were of the use of only biodegradable plastics. A good proportion of them (26.16%) had no idea about the biodegradability of plastics they use. Another 20.77% believed consumer plastics could be biodegradable and 5.38% registered no response.

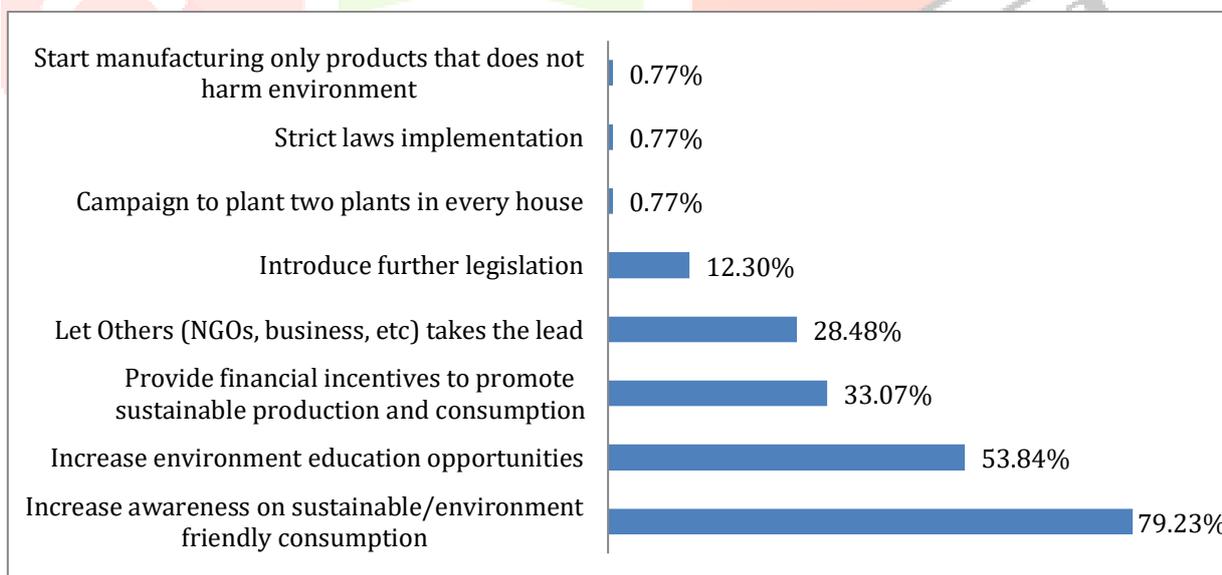
Chart 7- Level of trust on information about environmental issues



\*Source: Primary Data

The chart 7 shows the trust level of respondents on information about environmental issues. It is divided among family, friends, blogs & articles, research papers, scientific journals and social media. Most of the respondents, i.e., 68.46%, exhibited faith on research papers; 61.74% named scientific journals, and 60% blogs and articles.

Chart 8 –Measures that Government should take to act on environment protection



\*Source: Primary Data

The responses related to the government measures which should be taken to protect the environment is presented in table 12. The table clearly indicates that out of total 130 respondents, 79.23% believed that government should increase awareness on sustainable or environment friendly consumption, followed by greater proportion of (53.84 %) favored enhanced environment education. Moreover, 33.07% believed that providing financial incentives will promote sustainable production and consumption. Furthermore, the result of the study also reveals that few of the respondents wants strict regime of law and campaign to plant two plants in every house.

## VIII. Conclusion

It is to be concluded that the study could be useful in promoting green products among young consumers and promoting environmental awareness among upcoming generations by augmenting their knowledge-base. This research is based on youth respondents in University of Lucknow drawn from different section of society study. The paper classifies youth respondents into four age-groups under the age category of 18-35 years. Out of the total number of 130 respondents, 54 were males and 76 females. The research findings show that environmentally conscious youths are more likely to buy green products considering them environment friendly. Moreover, despite environmental awareness, a certain share of them was not willing to change their behavior. The findings also demonstrate greater environmental activism among female respondents as compared to their male counterparts and the findings suggest that there is a need for increased awareness and education on proper disposal methods of plastics as well as used sanitary napkins to promote environmental sustainability and hygiene.

Fortunately, our results brought focus on youths suggesting environmental protection measures for government, encompassing awareness building on sustainable or environment friendly consumption, increased environmental education, providing financial incentives to promote sustainable production and consumption, strict implementation of appropriate legislations and campaign to plant two saplings in every house. Thus, it can be said that there is some degree of relationship between environmental awareness and consumer behavior among youth.

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