

Behavioral Consistency: Environmental Engagement Perspective

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Abstract

Behavioral consistency, a judgment heuristic to which people default to ease decision making, appears to be an acceptable social norm. Is this phenomenon true to peoples' behavior in the workplace and at home? Some studies suggest that human behavior at home and at work is not always consistent because people have different home and work persona. To provide an interesting argument to this apparent contradiction, this paper examines the behavioral consistency in environmental engagement tasks at home and at work of 213 faculty from 9 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines. The study used Quantitative Approach employing the comparative and correlational analyses of the survey results derived from the duly validated instruments. Pearson Product Moment Correlation test shows that the respondents' environmental engagement at home is associated with their environmental engagement at work ($r=.445$, $p<.05$). Comparative analysis also reveals that 85% of the respondents have consistent environmental behavior at home and at work. However, environmental knowledge does not escalate the respondents' environmental behavior ($r=.043$, $p>.05$). High degree of behavioral consistency is shown in the level of environmental engagement on tasks that have direct economic value to the respondents like energy and water conservation both at home and at work. However, inconsistency in the level of environmental engagement is revealed on tasks with abstract value like waste segregation and recycling. The study concludes that the degree of consistency in the level of environmental engagement is influenced more by the cost-benefit principle than by the environmental knowledge. The study contributes to the latent literature of Consistency Theory and Environmental Engagement.

Keywords: Behavioral Consistency, Environmental Engagement, Environmental Knowledge, Mediating Environmental Behavior

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1. Introduction

There is a prominent space in both social and behavioral science studies that support the Behavioral Consistency Theory on why people behave in a manner that matches their past actions or decisions as their default behavior. Personality types and role positions are among the identified variables associated with behavioral consistency, but in many studies, causality is difficult to establish. On the other hand, there are studies that suggest that human behavior is not always consistent and that people have different persona at home and at work, defying the well-established Consistency Theory. To add an interesting discourse to this subject, this study examines the respondents' behavioral consistency in terms of the environmental tasks performed both at home and in the workplace. The role of environmental knowledge in mediating the consistency of the respondents' behavior is also explored.

2. Literature Review

Consistent behavior appears to be a favorable social norm though inconsistencies are not totally bad as some would argue. Yet, being consistent in behavior may mean stability of one's mind while inconsistency, no matter what the reason is, is often questioned. Do people really behave at home in the same way they do at work? Specifically, in terms environmental tasks, do people behave consistently? In the same light, does environmental knowledge really mediate environmental engagement at home and at work?

2.1 Behavioral Consistency

Fessenden (2018) wrote, "Behavioral consistency is a judgment to which we default in order to ease decision making." He argued that defaulting facilitates making new decisions every single time a new problem is presented. Behavioral consistency acts at both individual and social level. Exhibiting consistency of behavior appears to be an acceptable norm in the society. According to Cialdini (2020), the "high degree of consistency is

normally associated with personal and intellectual strengths” while “inconsistency is commonly thought to be an undesirable personality trait”.

Heberlien and Black (1981) used the term cognitive consistency similar to behavioral consistency and that it can be applied to environmental attitudes and behavior. Their study found that most individuals who were observed to engage in a pro-environmental behavior, like purchasing lead-free gasoline, have strong social support. Both Heberlien and Black (1981) explain this as cognitive consistency, and it “had two consistent cognitions- a belief that their behavior was economically expedient and a feeling of personal obligation.” This attitude – behavior consistency - is more likely to be observed when behavioral choice is unconstrained.

Yet, no matter how consistent a person’s behavior is, when he faces uncertainty brought about by new problem or uncharted environment, he likely withholds his natural behavior. In turn, he observes other peoples’ behavior towards a challenging situation before making decision. This is the view known as the “principle of social proof that operates most powerfully when we are observing the behavior of people” and thus provide an “insight into what constitutes correct behavior for ourselves” (Cialdini, 2020). In this unfamiliar situation, peoples’ behavior deviates from consistency to adaptability. But in general, once a choice or a stand has been taken, people encountering personal and interpersonal pressures will likely behave consistently with commitment. “Those pressures will cause us to respond in ways that justify our earlier decision” (Cialdini, 2020). “Commitment and consistency are, indeed, powerful motivators to increase engagement and persuade users to fulfill their goal” (Fessenden, 2018).

2.2 Home and Work Persona

Garone (2017) wrote, “psychologists say that most of us adopt different personas at home or at work. Since work and home environment have different challenges and expectations, many people adapt a behavior to suit the social setting. Thus, “introverts often act as extroverts or vice versa for the sake of their careers” (Garone, 2017). Many people usually switch between different personas without knowing it. Sometimes this condition puts people at odds with their true sense of self, like they are different people at home and at work. Quoting Sanna Balsari-Palsule, a personality scientist at Cambridge University, “Introverts become extroverts to get ahead at work,” Garone (2017). Furthermore, Murch (2020) opined that when people are faced with tasks or challenges, they react according to their true nature at home but do self-control at work. People at work tend to manage their reactions in a healthy way, she added. As to the environmental tasks, Wells (2016) argued that most of us “ignore our environmental responsibilities at work, largely because of a lack of control, responsibility or financial interest”. Many environmental tasks at work are extra-role, and employees are not required as part of their jobs, while environmental behavior in the home is largely private and is motivated by individual values (Wells, 2016). Wells’ narrative explain the reason of inconsistencies in employees environmental behavior. Evans (2018) further added, “people have different personality at home and at work.” It is common for people to alter their personas to suit the different environment. “If your work environment is at odds with your true personality or differs greatly from your home environment, you may find the need to alter your personality in order to fit in better” (Evans, 2018).

2.3 Knowledge as Mediator of Behavior

From psychological perspective, knowledge is a competence for action and a precondition (Strube and Wender, 1993). Knowledge can be a prerequisite to action but also a consequence of an action. “How much knowledge is necessary for action?” Funke (2017) asked. Except for job knowledge that is specifically tailored for a person’s job, other forms of general knowledge may not necessitate much depth to trigger conscious actions. Is it possible that people act against their own knowledge? Evidence indisputably shows that smoking is detrimental to people’s health, yet many continue to smoke despite their knowledge of this fact (Funke, 2017). Climate change damage is for real, yet people continue to pollute the environment. “Even environmentalists litter in the mountain side” (Manalo and Manalo, 2022).

According to Funke (2017), “the gap between attitude and behavior is large,” and the Theory of Unconscious Thought by Dijksterhuis and Nordgren (2006) explains this phenomenon. This theory starts with the basic idea that the quality of decision-making depends on conscious and unconscious thought simultaneously. The term conscious thought is understood to mean “a mental state that encompasses a person’s rational awareness, whereas the term unconscious thought refers to the underlying influence, of which one is typically unaware” and which has an impact on one’s behavior (Funke, 2017). The theory argues that unconscious thought tends to outmatch conscious thought, especially in complex and un-transparent situations. Thus, “from the viewpoint of action, it is not possible to act without knowledge but that we humans can act—at least at a surface level—against our knowledge” (Funke, 2017). As such, there is truism in the study by Azcen, Joyce, Sheikh, and Cote (2011) that found “environmental knowledge having no effect on energy conservation, and alcohol knowledge was unrelated to drinking behavior.”

Environmental knowledge or awareness emphasizes the cognitive awareness of environmental issues and

concerns. The early 1970s frameworks and the latent models for analyzing pro-environmental behavior assumed that educating people about environmental issues would automatically result in more pro-environmental behavior, and the more educated and affluent the people were, the more likely that they had a deeper environmental knowledge and heightened sense of environmental awareness (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). Madsen and Ulhøi (2001) assert that environmental knowledge can transform and motivate individuals' perception to engage in pro-environmental activities. Moreover, Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) argued that when emotional involvement is weaker due to a lack of environmental knowledge, individuals do not show concern for addressing the immediacy of environmental degradation. Likewise, Ünal et al (2018) and Wang et al (2018) agreed that lack of environmental knowledge thwarts people from engaging in pro-environmental behaviour. The study of Saripah, et al (2013) examines the relation between environmental knowledge and pro-environmental behaviour of the residents, with environmental values as the mediator. Survey data was gathered from residents of five large urban neighborhoods in Malaysia. Structural equation modeling is used to analyse the data. Conclusively, environmental knowledge affects the inculcation of environmental values in the residents of urban areas, which in turn affects their pro-environmental behaviour.

3. Research Problem and Research Questions

The main problem focuses on whether the respondents' environmental behavior at home is consistent with that in the workplace and whether environmental knowledge mediates their behavior.

Specifically, the following research questions are identified:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' environmental behavior at home and at work?
2. Are the respondents consistent in their environmental behavior both at home and at work?
3. In which specific environmental tasks do the respondents exhibit consistent behavior?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' environmental knowledge and their environmental behavior at home and at work?

4. Research Methodology

The quantitative approach to research is used in this study, and the comparative and correlational analyses aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28 and Microsoft Excel are employed. The survey method is used with the self-made and expert-validated questionnaire. Relevant literature materials set the foundation of the study and provided the discourse in the findings.

The research instrument used the 5-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked of their environmental engagement at home (10 questions) and at work (10 questions), and their environmental knowledge (10 questions) as well. The environmental issues outlined in the questionnaire cover the basic issues such as energy and water conservation, recycling, waste segregation, plastic use, paper consumption, environmental laws, among others.

4.1 Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, 2 sets of experts, consisting of 3 members each, were sought. The first set is composed of environmental experts while the second consists of credible accomplished researchers. The experts were provided with content-validity sheet using the prescribed criteria. Their feedbacks were incorporated in the instruments. The face-validity, on the other hand, was done by the authors, considering their long experience in research. Furthermore, to ensure the reliability of the self-made questionnaires, 24 sets of questionnaires representing 11% of the total respondents were tested. The reliability coefficient of the test was computed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, a statistical tool commonly used to measure the internal consistency or reliability of a psychometric test score for a sample of examinees. The computed alpha was found to be 89.73 which connotes that the instrument is reliable.

4.2 Respondents

The respondents are the faculty members from 9 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from the Province of Negros Occidental, Philippines. These participating HEIs are as follows: Carlos Hilado Memorial State University, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, Philippine Normal University Visayas (Cadiz Campus), Central Philippine State University (College of Education), Visayan Maritime College, Colegio San Agustin (College of Education), Binalbagan Catholic College, Kabankalan Catholic College, and La Carlota City College. Quota sampling was used in the study. The HEIs were provided with survey link and a total of 213 respondents, representing 30% of the HEIs population participated in the study.

The data culled from the survey are described per range of values of the mean scores. The respondents' engagement at home and at work is categorized as: Disengaged, Somewhat Disengaged, Minimally Engaged, Moderately Engaged, and Highly Engaged. The level of environmental knowledge is categorized as Very low, Minimal, Moderate, High, and Excellent. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the categories.

Table 1. Data Range of Values and Interpretations

Range of Values	Environmental Level of Engagement (Home & Work)
1.00 - 1.80	Disengaged
1.81 - 2.60	Somewhat Disengaged
2.61 - 3.40	Minimally Engaged
3.41 - 4.20	Moderately Engaged
4.21 - 5.00	Highly Engaged

Table 2. Environmental Knowledge Score

Environmental Knowledge Score	0 - 3	4 - 5	6 - 7	8 - 9	10
Description	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Excellent

5. Major Findings

The discourse is presented per research question as follows:

Research Question 1. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' environmental behavior at home and at work?

The comparative analysis and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical tool were used to answer the research question.

Using a comparative analysis, the level of respondents' environmental engagement at home and at work was first determined. The mean score represented the respondents' environmental engagement levels. Findings reveal that there are 11% at home and 12% at work who are highly engaged, a negligible 1% gap (11% -12%). However, the moderately engaged respondents show a gap of 9% (43% at home and 54% at work). Furthermore, a gap of 9% for minimally engaged respondents (41% at home and 32% at work) is observed. In summary, the high and moderately engaged respondents are higher at work which is 66% (12% + 54%) than at home, 54% (11%+43%). Other details are summarized in table 3 below.

Table 3. Respondents' Level of Environmental Engagement at Home and at Workplace

Level of Engagement	Home		Workplace	
	Number	%	Number	%
Disengaged	2	1%	0	0
Somewhat Disengaged	9	4%	4	2%
Minimally Engaged	87	41%	68	32%
Moderately Engaged	92	43%	115	54%
Highly Engaged	23	11%	26	12%
Total	213	100%	213	100%

To determine the association of the respondents' environmental engagement at home and at work, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) test was used. PPMC or Pearson r shows the linear relationship between 2 sets of data. The higher the Pearson r , the closer the relationship of 2 sets of data. Furthermore, to determine the level of statistical significance, p -value (between 0 and 1) was determined. The smaller the p -value, the stronger the evidence that null hypothesis is to be rejected. The p -value of .05 or less indicates significance of the relationship.

Analysis reveals, that the respondents environmental engagement at home has significant relationship with the respondents' environmental engagement at work. This means that the respondents with higher level of engagement at home tends to have higher engagement at work. Specifically, home engagement has positive correlation with work engagement ($r=.445$, $p < .05$) and the p -value is less than 5%, implying rejection of null hypothesis and thus acceptance of alternative hypothesis. Table 4 summarizes the test of significance.

Table 4. Significance of Relationship between Home engagement and Work Engagement

Test	Pearson r	P value	Interpretation
Home Engagement	.445	.04	Relationship with Work Engagement is significant

Source: Data/SPSSV28

Research Question 2. Are the respondents consistent in their environmental behavior both at home and at work? Comparative analysis using the mean score addressed this research question.

Each of the 213 respondents was accounted for in terms of their level of environmental engagement at home and at work. Specifically, the respondents who were deemed to adhere to behavioral consistency concept, those with the same level of environmental engagement both at home and at work, were examined. Comparative analysis reveals that 85% (181) of the respondents have level of environmental engagement or behavior that is consistent at home and at work. Practically 23 highly engaged respondents at home are also highly engaged at work. Among the 92 respondents who are moderately engaged at home, only 90 of them are moderately engaged at work. The 25 (115-90) moderately engaged respondents at work are either minimally engaged or

somewhat disengaged at home. Only 15% (32) of the total respondents are not consistent in their environmental engagement. They are highly or moderately engaged at home, but are not at work, or vice versa. Table 5 summarizes the findings

Table 5. Number of Respondents with Consistent Level of Home & Work Engagement

Level of Engagement	Home	Work	No of Respondents with Consistent Level of Engagement
Disengaged	2	0	0
Somewhat Disengaged	9	4	4
Minimally Engaged	87	68	64
Moderately Engaged	92	115	90
Highly Engaged	23	26	23
Total	213	213	181 (85%)

Research Question 3. In which specific environmental tasks do the respondents exhibit consistent behavior?

Comparative Analysis reveal that based on the mean scores of the respondents' environmental engagement both at home and at work, there is consistency of behavior across all environmental tasks except for waste segregation. The respondents have medium engagement in waste segregation (3.40) in the workplace but have low engagement (2.80) at home. Furthermore, based on the average mean scores, the top 3 well-engaged environmental tasks both at home and at work are the energy conservation (4.25), water conservation (3.84), and re-use of papers (3.79). These tasks have direct economic value to the respondents. On the other hand, tasks with abstract economic value for the respondents like limiting the use of plastics and waste segregation are consistently at the bottom of the respondents' engagement both at home and at work. Overall the average mean score of engagement for all tasks is 3.63 at home and 3.58 at work. The margin of .05 (3.63-3.58) is very negligible, and both scores are categorized as moderately engaged. Moreover, Pearson *r* has affirmed the consistency (.445) of the linear relationships of both variables. Figure 2 illustrates the minimal gap in the mean scores, implying consistency of environmental engagement both at home and at work.

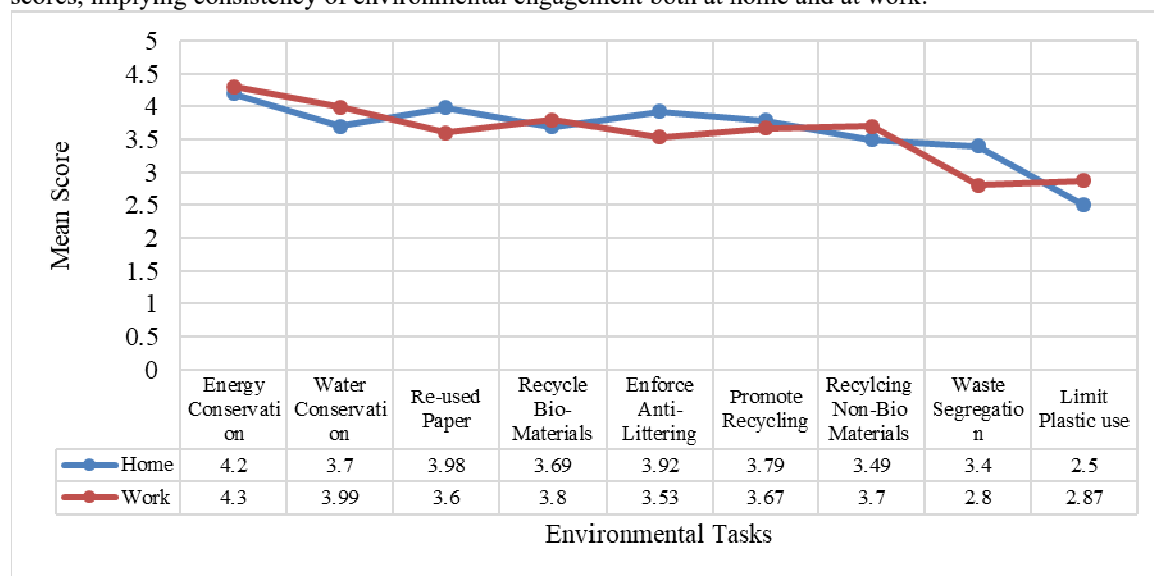


Fig 1. Home & Work Environmental Engagement Level

Research Question 4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' environmental knowledge and their environmental behavior at home and at work?

To determine the association of the respondents' environmental knowledge with their Environmental Engagement (EE) at home and at work, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) test is used. Findings reveal that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' environmental knowledge and environmental engagement. Based on PPM correlation test, Knowledge is not significantly associated with EE ($r=.043$, $p>.05$) and the *p*-value is more than 5% implying acceptance of null hypothesis. Table 6 summarizes the findings.

Table 6. Significance of Relationship between Environmental Knowledge with Environmental Engagement

Test	Pearson <i>r</i>	<i>P</i> value	Interpretation
Environmental Knowledge	.043	.534	Relationship with Environmental Engagement is Insignificant

Source: Data/SPSSV28

Moreover, though statistical association between environmental knowledge and environmental engagement

is found to be insignificant, comparative analysis, however, shows that the highly engaged respondents have really higher level of knowledge based on the mean score while those who have low level of engagement tend to have lower level of knowledge as shown in Figure 2 below.

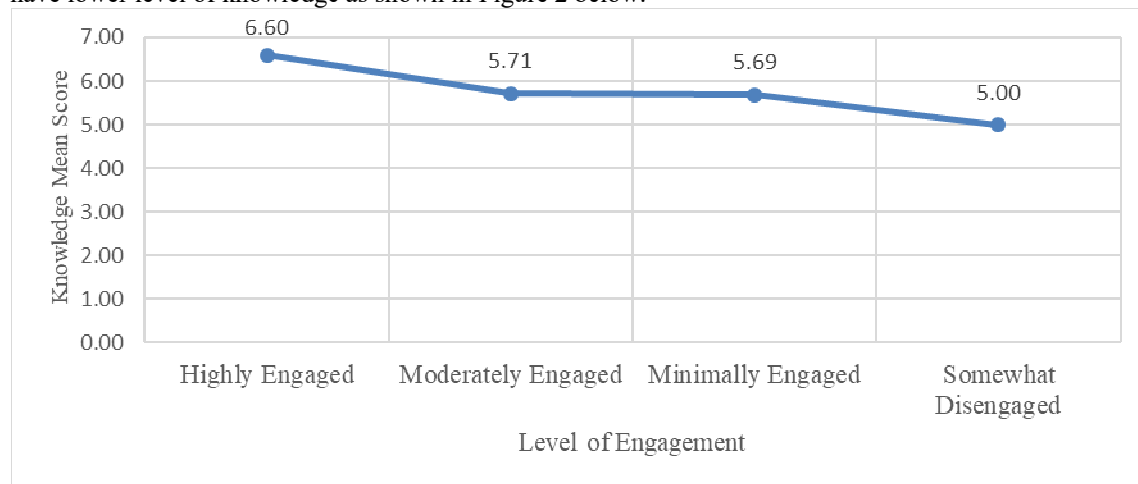


Fig.2. Respondents Levels of Engagement Vs Their Knowledge Mean Score

6. Discussion

6.1 On Behavioral Consistency

From the context of the study that focuses on the respondents' environmental engagement, behavior consistency which is a default in man's behavior to ease decision making, is proven by 3 evidences. The first is the statistical significance of relationship using correlation test ($r=.445$, $p<.05$) showing the respondents higher engagement at home that is equally higher at work, or vice versa. Also, 85% of the respondents have the same consistency in their level of engagement both at home and at work. Another evidence further suggests high degree of consistency in environmental tasks that have direct economic value to the respondents. While it is difficult to prove that the high degree of consistency in this study is normally "associated with personal and intellectual strengths" as Cialdini (2020) claimed, the result debunked the argument of Wells (2016) that "most of us ignore our environmental responsibilities at work, largely because of a lack of control, responsibility, or financial interest. Instead, the study is inclined to accept Heberlien and Black (1981) Cognitive Consistency Theory which explains that 85% of the respondents' "behavior was economically expedient and a feeling of personal obligation." There is no evidence as well that inconsistent behavior is being "looked down by others" as Cialdini (2020) opined.

6.2 On environmental tasks that have high degree of consistency

Of the 9 major environmental tasks investigated, the high degree of environmental engagement consistency is on energy and water conservation and limiting the use of papers. The respondents' stable behavior can be due to the cost-benefit attributes of the tasks. Unlike in the tasks with abstract economic benefits like recycling and waste segregation, the 3 aforementioned tasks have immediate impact on their finances both at home and at work. As Heberlien and Black (1981) stressed, the "behavior was economically expedient."

6.3 On insignificance of Environmental Knowledge

It sounds unfathomable that knowledge is not associated with the respondents' environmental behavior. While knowledge is a competence for action, in this study, it is apparent that the respondents' level of environmental knowledge does not define their level of engagement at home or at work. The result of PPM correlation test shows ($r=.043$, $p>.05$) insignificant association between knowledge and environmental engagement, although comparative analysis reveals that the respondents with high environmental engagement tend to have higher level of knowledge than others. Overall, this finding is similar with that of the study of Azcen, Joyce, Sheikh, and Cote (2011) stating that "environmental knowledge had no effect on energy conservation, and alcohol knowledge was unrelated to drinking behavior."

6.4 If knowledge was not a factor for behavioral consistency, then what caused the latter?

The commonly held assumption is that "environmental knowledge or awareness emphasizes the cognitive awareness of environmental issues and concerns, that educating people about environmental issues would automatically result in more pro-environmental behavior, and that when emotional involvement is weaker due to a lack of environmental knowledge, individuals do not show concern for addressing the immediacy of

environmental degradation” (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). Likewise, Madsen and Ulhøi (2001) assert that environmental knowledge can transform and motivate individuals' perception to engage in pro-environmental activities. Moreover, Ünal et al (2018) and Wang et al (2018) agreed that lack of environmental knowledge thwarts people from engaging in pro-environmental behaviour. However, the result of this study suggests that knowledge alone does not directly cause environmental engagement, as proven by Saripah, et al (2013) who concluded that “environmental knowledge affects the inculcation of environmental values,” which are formed by a number of factors, “which in turn affects their pro-environmental behaviour.”

One unexplored point in this study is the respondents' personality, which may best explain their passion for environmental engagement, and not caused by their knowledge alone. Thomas (2014) writes in the Yale Environment Review, “scientists have found that personality factors can influence our likelihood to engage in environmentally sensitive practices.” Milfont and Sibley (2012) determined the association between each of the 5 Big personality types – Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism and environmental engagement. Using large cross-cultural databases on country-level personality traits and country-level environmental engagement, the authors found evidence on how personality is associated with environmental concern. “Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to experience were the traits most strongly linked to environmental engagement” while Neuroticism is not (Milfont and Sibley, 2012). Specifically, the study found that environmental values and engagement are most related to Openness and Extroversion, and to a lesser extent, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. The study concludes that the different people's personality can mean that appeals for the environment work differently for different people. Moreover, Funke (2017) suggests that man's behavior appears to be “a product of conscious and unconscious influences that are primarily logical, not causal.”

7. Conclusion

The following can be concluded:

1. Behavior consistency among people in relation to environmental engagement, especially with tasks that have direct cost-benefit, is prevalent. In this context, how most people behave at home is likely the same at work, debunking the argument that people have different persona at home and at work in terms of environmental engagement. Behavioral consistency becomes an individual norm because people will always find it easy to act, behave, and make decisions relating to environment.
2. Knowledge is not the only factor of behavior consistency in environmental engagement just as knowledge about smoking cigarette does not directly make a smoker or a non-smoker. While knowledge helps define peoples' action at work, it is not necessarily the same in environmental engagement. The conscious effort to act pro-environmentally is multi-factored. As such, contexts like individual conscious behavior, experiences, and regulations significantly shape one's engagement in the environment. Just as many studies have opined, there is often a gap between knowledge and actions.
3. Consistency in environmental engagement does not connote good behavior, nor does inconsistency connote bad behavior. Specific contexts such as job role and work environment play crucial role in peoples' behavior. There are also number of factors that are yet to be explored from this study.

8. Recommendation

1. Since the respondents are not only consistent but more importantly have high level of engagement in environmental tasks with direct personal cost-benefit, it is logical to incentivize the environmental tasks with abstract economic benefits like recycling and segregation for HEIs faculty. Incentivizing means quantifying the environmental engagement scores and using these for job performance or ranking and promotion criteria.
2. There is a need to further explore the respondents' personality to validate the cited literatures whose findings point to the Big 5 Personality Theory as a factor in environmental engagement.

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