

# ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

**Abidin KEMEÇ**

*Department of Logistic, Usak University Karahallı Vocational School, Turkey  
abidin.kemec@usak.edu.tr*

**Özkan YALÇIN**

*Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Political Sciences, Trabzon University, Turkey  
ozkanyalcin@trabzon.edu.tr*

## Abstract

Because of humanity's environmental pressures and desire to regulate the environment, it has almost become essential to require a second planet to suit existing demands. The purpose of this study is to explore people's environmental sensitivity to prevent environmental degradation by considering the environmental negatives encountered in this setting. In this vein, a survey application was used in the study, which is one of the quantitative research methodologies, and the environmental sensitivities of Uşak University students were investigated. As a result of the study, it was determined that the environmental sensitivity levels of university students were sufficient.

**Keywords:** Environment, Environmental Problems, Environmental Sensitivity, University Students, Uşak.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The first serious interaction of humanity with nature took place about twelve thousand years ago with neolithic societies from the Nile and the Eastern Mediterranean to the Iranian Plain and the Indus Valley along Syria and Iraq (Childe, 2006: 69). The nomadic lifestyle that people had been living as hunter-gatherers became settled with the agricultural revolution. Communities that were not very large in terms of population began to live together in these regions. Agriculture, which was effectively realized with the transition to settled life, was also the beginning of ecological problems. Excessive use of soil and water, changing river beds, draining wetlands, and converting forested areas into agricultural areas were among the environmental problems observed in this period (Oruç, 2017: 7). With the progress made in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry in the historical process, yields have increased and it has become a necessity to manage the surplus product regularly. As a result of this necessity, relatively small urban settlements began to emerge. The higher organization of rural communities of 30-40 people in the Neolithic period led to an increase in population, food demand, and production. With the changing living conditions, serious problems such as famine, epidemics, and air and water pollution occurred in antiquity (Havlíček and Morcinek, 2016; Youngerman, 2008: 23-26). With the spread of this neolithic revolution, which started in Southeastern Anatolia and Northern Mesopotamia, to other parts of the world, man's struggle with nature gained momentum. With the development of cities, societies with a complex hierarchical structure were organized at a higher level as city-states, kingdoms, and empires. With the increasing population and the emerging competition, the destruction of nature gradually increased, and with the decrease in the fertility of the soil, especially famine became one of the biggest problems of civilizations in those years. From the fall of the Roman Empire in the mid-5th century to the beginning of mercantilist capitalist relations in the 15th century, environmental destruction continued in medieval feudal Europe. When this period is considered in the context of the human-nature relationship, it shows that it legitimized the idea of "human dominance over nature". Due to this perspective, humanity has faced a series of environmental problems. Wood consumption in Europe reached 60-80 million tons, while overuse and overgrazing of land caused famine (Foster, 2013: 43).

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

Environmental destruction was further deepened by geographical discoveries. The European people who settled in the newly discovered continents damaged the native ecosystem with the plant and animal species they brought with them (Oruç, 2017: 8). In this period, environmental problems took the form of diseases such as plague, dysentery and typhoid that threatened human life and nature due to the lack of adequate hygiene conditions and the detachment of some animal species from their natural habitat.

Starting with the Neolithic revolution and continuing with the industrial revolution, humanity's impact on the environment remained regional and relatively 'limited'. The negative impacts of humanity on the environment reached a different dimension at the global level with the Industrial Revolution. The industrial revolution, which began in 1763 with James Watt's invention of the steam engine in Scotland and lasted until the 1840s, is known as the acceleration of production based on machine power and the transition to mass production, has led to serious changes in socio-economic structures. Factors such as the increase in production with the Industrial Revolution, technological developments, and increased access to basic food have been among the factors that have significantly increased the world population. When population growth data are analyzed, the world population reached 750 million people in the 1750s and increased to approximately 1.2 billion people in 1850. By 1950, the human population had reached 2.5 billion people (Cipolla, 1967: 42). With these developments and changing economic and social structures, the built environment has changed rapidly, especially the use of resources. Humanity's use of natural resources has increased about 10 times compared to the pre-industrial revolution (Lacy and Rutqvist, 2015: xvi) and a lifestyle that has rapidly shifted from rural to urban areas has emerged. Eventually, with the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, most people started to live in cities, and natural resource consumption, waste generation, and environmental destruction accelerated. Accordingly, global environmental problems such as climate change, global warming, reduction of biodiversity, deforestation, destruction of the ozone layer, acid rain, air, water, and soil pollution, hazardous wastes, depletion of natural resources, sea and ocean pollution, acidification of the oceans have become issues that are frequently on the agenda and discussed. Since the 1970s, discussions on environment and ecology have intensified and various international meetings have been organized.

In parallel with the environmental changes and increasing debates on the environment, academic discussions have gained momentum. While academic studies in the technical dimension generally aim to reduce the pressure on the environment by using technology, studies in the social dimension focus on perceiving the perspective of 'humanity', the main factor that negatively affects the environment, on the environment and shaping it in favor of the environment. In this context, most of the interrelated studies such as 'environmental sensitivity', 'environmental attitude', 'environmental consciousness', 'environmental behavior', and 'environmental awareness' have tried to explain and analyze people's views and behavior toward environmental problems (Yoloğlu and Halisdemir, 2020: 97-98). This study, which was prepared with the assumption that the origins of environmental problems are systemic, is aimed to investigate environmental sensitivity at the individual level with the prediction that ecological and environmental disasters will not wait for systemic change. In this direction, the survey application, which is one of the quantitative research methods, was used in the study and the environmental sensitivity of university students was examined in a sample of university students.

## 2. ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY

The concept of environmental sensitivity refers to individuals' level of knowledge, understanding, and interest in environmental issues. Environmental sensitivity is the first step leading to the ability to sustain responsible citizenship behavior (Sengupta, Das, & Maji, 2010). Environmental sensitivity is a complex mix of emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and environmental knowledge that leads people to refuse to 'litter highways and natural areas', to conserve 'natural resources', to 'try to protect ecologically important natural areas', to respect 'hunting and fishing laws' and to insist on 'rational zoning requirements' (Hungerford et al., 1992: 83). Culiberg and Rojšek (2008: 132) defined environmental sensitivity as the predisposition to respond to environmental issues in a particular way. Peterson (1982: 5) defined environmental sensitivity as "a set of emotional characteristics that result in an individual viewing the environment from an empathic perspective". Stern (2000: 407) defined environmental sensitivity as a deliberate action taken by an individual/group to directly or indirectly affect changes in the environment or to benefit the environment.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

Environmental sensitivity has two main dimensions: developmental processes (change over time in response to past experiences) and immediate reaction (response to current experience) (Pluess, 2015). It also encompasses the recognition of the impact of human activities on the environment as well as taking action to reduce these impacts and promote sustainability. Environmental sensitivity plays an important role in shaping attitudes and behaviors toward the environment. Increased awareness of environmental issues and educational attainment are thought to lead to higher levels of environmental protection and promote a more environmentally conscious society. Willingness to support environmentally-oriented actions (e.g., supporting environmental laws, paying more taxes to protect forests, communicating with politicians to protect environmental resources) has been shown by research to increase environmental sensitivity when strong environmental attitudes are present (Stren et al., 1995: 723). Wallen and Daut (2018: 59) list the ways to encourage pro-environmental attitudes as follows;

- Education and awareness,
- Outreach, relationship building and trust,
- Social impact,
- Impulses and behavioral insights.

In this context, education and awareness is an important factor that aims to develop sensitization to the interplay between humans and the environment. Furthermore, education encourages individuals to understand the interrelationship of life on earth and the fundamental relationship between humans and nature. It goes beyond merely imparting ecological knowledge and emphasizes the ability and willingness to use this knowledge for a sustainable lifestyle. In essence, environmental sensitivity education not only develops students' understanding of ecology but also their understanding of their place in the ecosystem. A person with environmental sensitivity is an individual who has basic knowledge about the environment, exhibits positive attitudes toward the environment, and shows positive behaviors toward environmental protection (Erten, 2012). However, not every individual has the same level of environmental sensitivity. Tekeli (2002: 30) made such a distinction about the environmental sensitivity levels of individuals;

- The shallowest level is having the knowledge that human-environment relations create environmental problems, but not changing one's behavior and not demanding that others change their behavior.
- The second level is not changing one's behavior, but demanding that others change their behavior.
- The third level is to establish one's relationship with the environment as 'responsible'.
- The fourth level is not only acting responsibly but also trying to get others to act responsibly.

Developing environmental sensitivity will help individuals live in a healthier and safer environment, which is only possible by raising qualified individuals with environmental education (Çetin & Nişancı, 2010). Environmental sensitivity refers not only to knowing the environment, but also to being acquainted with a set of values, attitudes, and skills to address environmental issues (Abbas & Singh, 2014). Especially university students are considered important actors for the future improvement of the environment and environmental sustainability (Oğuz, Çakci, & Kavas, 2010: 2630). Promoting environmental sensitivity and sustainability is also in line with the objectives of the Europe 2030 strategy, which emphasizes the importance of integrating environmental factors into societal interests and long-term environmental goals (Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, 2023). In this context, it is very important to promote environmental sensitivity and education, to develop university students' environmental awareness, and sense of responsibility towards the environment, and to promote sustainable practices to create a more environmentally sensitive and sustainable society. Equipping university students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to address environmental challenges and make informed decisions that contribute to sustainable practices can play a vital role in the environment.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

### 3. RESEARCH ON ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY

Uşak, which was determined as the research area, is located in the Central West Anatolia section of the Aegean Region. It is bordered by Kütahya to the north, Afyon to the east, Denizli to the south, and Manisa to the west (Uşak Municipality, 2024). The population of the city in 2022 is 445,325 people. Most of these people (334,121 people) live in urban areas. In terms of age, the majority of the population is between the ages of 20-24 (TÜİK, 2023). In addition, a significant portion of this young population in the city consists of university students (Higher Education Information Management System, 2024).

### 4. MATERIAL AND METHOD

For this research, which aims to measure environmental sensitivity and analyze it with the data provided, the survey method was used in quantitative research methods. The population of the study was defined as 27694 students continuing their education at Uşak University (Uşak University, 2024) and the research was carried out with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence interval. Considering the universe, the number 384, which is sufficient to represent the universe, was determined as the lower limit of the sample (Baş, 2008: 41). As a result of the field research, data were collected from university students randomly selected from the population. The study aims to reveal the sensitivities of university students on environmental issues with different dimensions. In this direction, the questionnaire form was not prepared by the researchers; instead, a scale form previously developed by Yeşil and Turan (2020) on environmental sensitivity was taken as a basis.

After the field research was completed, the data collected were analyzed through the SPSS program, which is frequently used in social sciences. Firstly, the reliability test results of the scale, excluding the demographic questions, were analyzed. As a result of the reliability test, the overall Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.937 ( $p < 0.001$ ). As can be understood from this result, the scale has a highly reliable quality (Yıldız & Uzunsakal, 2018: 19). In other words, the scale developed as a measurement tool is capable of giving the same result in repeated measurements. After the reliability test, to decide which analyses to apply to the data set, the normality test was performed for the questions in the scale and the skewness and kurtosis values in the data set were examined. It was observed that the skewness and kurtosis values of the questions in the data set were between +1.5 and -1.5. This shows us that the questions in the data set are normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001: 73-77). In line with these indicators, the data set was analyzed using parametric tests.

### 5. FINDINGS

Within the scope of the study, the demographic findings of the participants were presented first. Following the demographic information of the participants, the scale averages and analyses for the knowledge/emotion and behavior factors indicating the environmental sensitivity of the participants were included.

Of the 404 students who participated in the study, 55.2% were female and 44.8% were male; only 3.5% of the participants were married and 96.5% were single. At the age level, the majority of the respondents were above the age of 18, which is the age at which higher education starts. The 18-22 age range constitutes 83.3% of the total mass. It is seen that the income status of the participant students mainly varies between 0-2000 TL. In addition, almost all of the participants in the study are associate and undergraduate students. A very small number of them continue their education at the graduate level (0.5%). This is because the number of graduate students at the university where the study was conducted is much lower than the number of undergraduate and associate degree students. Of the students participating in the study, 62.1% live in provincial centers. Detailed data are shown in Table 1.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

TABLE 1 - DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	223	55,2
	Male	181	44,8
	Total	404	100,0
		Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status	Married	14	3,5
	Single	390	96,5
	Total	404	100,0
		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-22	336	83,2
	23-27	52	12,9
	28-32	9	2,2
	33-37	5	1,5
	38-42	2	0,5
	Total	404	100,0
		Frequency	Percentage
Income Status	0-1000	213	52,7
	1001-2000	79	19,6
	2001-3000	35	8,7
	3001-4000	15	3,7
	4001-5000	9	2,2
	5001-6000	15	3,7
	6001 and above	38	9,4
	Total	404	100,0
		Frequency	Percentage
Education	Associate Degree	264	65,3
	License	138	34,2
	Postgraduate	2	0,5
	Total	404	100,0
		Frequency	Percentage
Unit of Residence	Province	251	62,1
	District	126	31,2
	Village	27	6,7
	Total	404	100,0

TABLE 2 - STUDENTS' ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

		Frequency	Percentage
Have you taken any courses or training on the environment	Yes	113	28
	No	291	72
	Total	404	100,0
		Frequency	Percentage
Are you a member of any environmental organization	Yes	29	7,2
	No	375	92,8
	Total	404	100,0
		Frequency	Percentage
Have you been a member of an environmental student organization at any university?	Yes	26	6,4
	No	378	93,6
	Total	404	100,0

It is seen that 72% of the participants have not taken any courses or training related to the environment, while 28% have taken courses related to environmental issues. In addition, 92.8% of the participants are not members of any environmental organization. Only 7.2% of Uşak University students who participated in the

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

survey are members of an environmental organization. The majority of the participants (93.6%) are not members of any environmental student community of any university. Detailed data are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 3 - STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE/EMOTION LEVEL

	Average
1. People throwing garbage into the environment disturbs me.	4,06
2. The unplanned construction of cities disturbs me.	3,90
3. Base stations in living environments negatively affect health.	3,74
4. Unnecessary use of electricity disturbs me.	3,91
5. I am disturbed by the lack of open green areas in cities.	3,94
6. Behaviors that damage green areas disturb me.	4,02
7. Pollution of seas/natural water resources upsets me.	4,09
8. The gradual warming of the earth will cause disasters in the future.	4,01
Mean of Total	<b>3,96</b>

1. Strongly disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Undecided; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly agree

To determine the knowledge/emotion factor in the environmental sensitivity of the participants, their opinions on the items in Table 3 were asked. The participants were asked to rate the related questions from one to five (1. Strongly disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Undecided; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly agree). Table 3 shows both the average for the items in the factor and the general average showing the level of knowledge/attitude. According to the data obtained, it was concluded that the environmental sensitivity of the participants was high at the level of knowledge/emotion (3.96). Pollution of the seas/natural water resources upsets me with the highest level of emotion (4.09). The level of knowledge that base stations in the living environment negatively affect health is at the lowest level (3.74). As can be understood from the findings, it was determined that the participants in the study were sensitive to environmental issues and were disturbed by environmental problems such as littering, unplanned urbanization, lack of green areas, and global warming.

TABLE 4 - ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIORS OF STUDENTS

Responsive Behavior	Average
1. I make an effort to inform people about air pollution.	3,33
2. I pay attention not to throw garbage on the ground.	4,44
3. If there is an opportunity to plant trees, I take care to make use of it.	3,78
Mean of Total	<b>3,85</b>
Attentive Behavior	Average
4. I take care to save water consumption.	4,20
5. I take care not to make noise that disturbs people.	4,27
6. I take care to use both sides of the paper.	4,22
Mean of Total	<b>4,33</b>
Energy/Product Savings	Average
7. I always save money on disposable paper products (napkins, wet wipes, toilet paper, etc.).	4,06
8. I do not leave electronic devices such as TVs and computers on stand-by (sleep mode) after using them, I turn them off.	3,97
Mean of Total	<b>4,00</b>
Recycling	Average
9. I try to set an example of environmental sensitivity.	4,08
10. I take care not to mix empty batteries with household waste and throw them in the waste battery box.	3,81
11. I take care to classify the garbage and throw it into the recycling bin suitable for reuse.	3,78
12. I take care to use products with recyclable packaging.	3,64
Mean of Total	<b>4,00</b>

1. Never; 2. Rarely; 3. Occasionally; 4. Mostly; 5. Always

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

The opinion items in Table 4 were administered to determine the behavior factor within the environmental sensitivity of the participants. The behavior dimension is divided into sub-factors sensitive behavior, attentive behavior, energy/product saving, and recycling. Participants were asked to rate the relevant questions on a scale of one to five (1. Never; 2. Rarely; 3. Occasionally; 4. Mostly; 5. Always). Table 4 shows both the mean of the items included in the factor and the overall mean showing the factor and sub-factor levels. According to the data obtained, it was determined that the average environmental sensitivity of the participants was 3.85 at the level of sensitive behavior; (4.33) at the level of attentive behavior; 4.00 at the level of energy/product saving, and 4.00 at the level of recycling. In general, it was concluded that the behavior level averages were high (4.11). The item "I pay attention not to throw garbage on the ground" has the highest value (4,44), while the item "I make an effort to inform people about air pollution" has the lowest value (3,33). As can be understood from the findings, it was determined that the participants showed environmental sensitivity and acted sensitively to reduce environmental problems in issues such as not throwing garbage on the ground, and saving water and energy.

TABLE 5 - ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIORS OF STUDENTS

		Frequency
What kind of contribution would you like to make to protect the environment (You can check three)?	I take care of myself	323
	I warn people who pollute the environment	180
	I work voluntarily to protect the environment	153
		Frequency
What do you think are the top 3 most important environmental problems in Turkey?	Air pollution	294
	Water pollution	189
	Distorted urbanization	117

The researchers examined whether there are significant differences between socio-demographic characteristics and the factors in the scale. Thus, in this study, it was tried to analyze whether there are differences in terms of environmental sensitivity depending on the socio-economic variables of the participants. Independent Samples T Test, one of the parametric tests, was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the averages of the data values obtained from different groups. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that there were statistically significant differences in terms of gender, marital status, and membership in environmental organizations/communities. On the other hand, it was observed that there were no significant differences in terms of variables such as age, personal income level, province of registration, type of place of registration, and education. Findings on significant differences are presented in Table 6, Table 7, Table 8, Table 9, and Table 10.

TABLE 6 - THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON KNOWLEDGE/EMOTION FACTOR

Knowledge/Emotion Factor					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Female	223	4,1020	1,21057	0,08107	Sig. 0,003
Male	181	3,7818	1,32989	1,32989	

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that there was a significant difference between the gender of the participants and the knowledge/feeling factor. It was observed that women (4,1020) had higher environmental sensitivity at the level of knowledge/feeling than men (3,7818). In other words, it is concluded that women have higher environmental sensitivity in terms of knowledge/emotion dimension than men. Detailed data are shown in Table 6.

There is a significant difference between the gender of the participants and the sub-factors of sensitive behavior, attentive behavior, energy/product saving, and recycling within the behavior factor. In terms of the sensitive behavior sub-factor, women (4,0194) have higher levels of environmental sensitivity than men (3,6446); In terms of the attentive behavior sub-factor, women (4,4395) have higher levels of environmental sensitivity than men (3,9742); In terms of energy/product saving sub-factor, women (4,1726) had higher

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

levels of environmental sensitivity than men (3,8260); and in terms of recycling sub-factor, women (4,0336) had higher levels of environmental sensitivity than men (3,57). This shows that women have higher environmental sensitivity in terms of behavior dimension than men. It is understood that women are more sensitive than men, especially in terms of recycling and saving. Detailed data are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7 - THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON BEHAVIOR FACTOR

Responsive Behavior					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Female	223	4,0194	0,77312	0,05177	Sig. 0,029
Male	181	3,6446	0,87813	0,06527	
Attentive Behavior					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Female	223	4,4395	0,75682	0,05068	Sig. 0,002
Male	181	3,9742	0,89887	0,06681	
Energy/Product Savings					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Female	223	4,1726	0,93386	0,06254	Sig. 0,004
Male	181	3,8260	1,07178	0,07966	
Recycling					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Female	223	4,0336	0,86911	0,05825	Sig. 0,000
Male	181	3,57	1,02690	0,07633	

TABLE 8 - THE EFFECT OF MARITAL STATUS ON KNOWLEDGE/FEELING FACTOR

Knowledge/Emotion Factor					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Married	14	3,2232	1,73009	0,46239	Sig. 0,004
Single	390	3,9849	1,24935	0,06326	

There is a significant difference between the marital status of the participants and the knowledge/feeling factor. It was determined that the environmental sensitivity of single people (3,9849) was higher at the knowledge/feeling level than married people (3,2232). In other words, it is concluded that single people have higher environmental sensitivity in terms of knowledge/emotion dimension than married people. Detailed data are shown in Table 8 above.

TABLE 9 - THE EFFECT OF MEMBERSHIP TO AN ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION (TEMA FOUNDATION, WWF, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, ETC.) ON KNOWLEDGE/EMOTION FACTOR

Knowledge/Emotion Factor					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Yes	29	3,4655	1,53962	0,28590	Sig. 0,006
No	375	3,9967	1,24527	0,06431	

As a result of the analyses, it was observed that there was a significant difference between being a member of any environmental organization such as TEMA, WWF, or Wildlife Conservation Foundation, and the knowledge/emotion factor. It has been determined that the environmental sensitivity of the people who are members of any environmental organization (3,4655) is lower at the level of knowledge/emotion than the people who are not members of any environmental organization (3,9967). While it was expected that the environmental sensitivity of the members of any environmental organization would be higher in the knowledge/emotion dimension, it was concluded that the environmental sensitivity of the non-members of any environmental organization was higher in terms of knowledge/emotion dimension. This situation, which is not expected theoretically, is estimated to be the result of the cognitive contradiction experienced psychologically by the students who participated in the research and who are members of an environmental organization. Students who are members of an environmental organization attribute themselves as sufficiently sensitive to the environment and behave less sensitive to the environment than other participants. Detailed data are shown in Table 9.



## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

TABLE 10 - THE EFFECT OF MEMBERSHIP TO AN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDENT SOCIETY OF A UNIVERSITY ON THE KNOWLEDGE/EMOTION FACTOR

Knowledge/Emotion Factor					
	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	
Yes	29	3,6106	1,54973	0,30393	Sig. 0,013
No	375	3,9825	1,25155	0,06437	

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that there was a significant difference between the knowledge/feeling factor and the membership of the participants in a student community related to the environment at any university. It has been determined that the environmental sensitivity of the people who are members of a student community related to the environment of any university (3,6106) is lower at the level of knowledge/emotion than the people who are not members of a student community related to the environment of any university (3,9825). In other words, while it is expected that the environmental sensitivities of those who are members of a student community related to the environment of any university will be higher in the knowledge/emotion dimension, it is concluded that the environmental sensitivities of those who are not members of a student community related to the environment of any university are higher in terms of knowledge/emotion dimension. This situation, which is not expected theoretically, is estimated to be the result of the cognitive contradiction experienced psychologically by the students who participated in the research and who are members of a university's environmental student community. As a result of being a member of an environment-related student community of a university, students attribute themselves as sufficiently sensitive to the environment and behave less sensitive to the environment than other participants. Detailed data are shown in Table 10.

## 6. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The environment-human interaction that started with the existence of humanity did not initially cause serious problems at a global level. Environmental problems became a serious problem after the Industrial Revolution, with humanity's desire to control nature. People have destroyed the natural environment by thoughtlessly using natural resources as if they would never run out. As a result of this situation, humanity is faced with important problems such as climate change, global warming, decrease in biodiversity, deforestation, destruction of the ozone layer, acid rain, air, water, and soil pollution, hazardous waste, depletion of natural resources, sea and ocean pollution, acidification of the oceans. faced. On the one hand, while trying to minimize environmental problems through the search for solutions developed within the current economic system on the axis of sustainability; On the other hand, it is aimed to increase people's environmental sensitivity. Depending on these changes, various studies have been carried out by social scientists to perceive and measure human behavior. In this regard, this study aimed to investigate the environmental sensitivity of Uşak University students. The important findings obtained as a result of the research are listed below;

- 72% of the participants did not take any courses or training regarding the environment; It is seen that 28% received it. In addition, 92.8% of the participants are not members of any environmental organization; The rate of members is only 7.2%. The majority of the participants (93.6%) are not members of any university's environmental student community.
- The three most important environmental problems in Turkey are air pollution, water pollution, and unplanned urbanization.
- It has been determined that the participants pay the most attention to their behalf in terms of environmental protection, and take less responsibility in terms of warning others or working voluntarily to protect the environment.
- According to the data obtained, it was concluded that the environmental sensitivity of the participants was high at the level of knowledge/emotion (3.96).

**ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY**

- Participants' environmental sensitivity was 3.85 at the sensitive behavior level; and 4.33 at the level of attentive behavior; It was determined that the energy/product saving level was 4.00 and the recycling level was 4.00. It was concluded that the average behavior level was generally high.
- It was concluded that women's environmental sensitivity is higher than men's in terms of both knowledge/emotion and behavior.
- It has been concluded that single people have higher environmental sensitivity in terms of knowledge/emotion dimension than married people.
- It has been determined that the environmental sensitivity of members of environmental organizations is lower in the knowledge/emotion dimension. In other words, it was concluded that those who are not members of any environmental organization have higher environmental sensitivity in terms of knowledge/emotion dimension.
- It has been concluded that there are no significant differences in terms of variables such as age, personal income level, province of registration, type of place of registration, and education.

Based on the results obtained; It was understood that the students who participated in the study had high environmental sensitivity, although they did not take any courses related to the environment, were not members of any environmental organization, and were not members of any environmental society of the university. In addition, based on the data examined, it was concluded that variables such as students' age, personal income level, province of registration, type of place of registration, and education levels (associate degree, bachelor's degree, and master's degree) do not affect environmental sensitivity. From a theoretical perspective, it is expected that students' membership in any environmental organization or any university's environmental student community will increase their environmental sensitivity; The opposite result was obtained in the data examined. It is estimated that this theoretically unexpected situation arises as a result of the cognitive dissonance experienced by the students psychologically. In other words, it is estimated that by becoming a member of any environmental organization or a university's environmentally-related community, students consider themselves to be sufficiently sensitive to the environment, and fulfill their responsibilities, and thus their environmental sensitivity is less than other participants.

**REFERENCES**

- Abbas, M. Y. and Singh, R. (2014). A survey of environmental awareness, attitude, and participation amongst university students: A case study. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 3(5), 1755-1760.
- Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye (2023). *Energy - EU Objectives*. Retrieved at: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/t%C3%BCrkiye/enerji-ab%E2%80%99nin-hedefleri\\_tr?s=230#:~:text=AB%20%C3%9Cye%20%C3%9Ckeleri%2C%202030%20y%C4%B1%C4%B1,en%20az%20%27%20oran%C4%B1nda%20art%C4%B1rmak](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/t%C3%BCrkiye/enerji-ab%E2%80%99nin-hedefleri_tr?s=230#:~:text=AB%20%C3%9Cye%20%C3%9Ckeleri%2C%202030%20y%C4%B1%C4%B1,en%20az%20%27%20oran%C4%B1nda%20art%C4%B1rmak).
- Baş, T. (2008). *Anket: Anket Nasıl Hazırlanır?, Anket Nasıl Uygulanır?, Anket Nasıl Değerlendirilir?*. Ankara: Seçkin Publishing.
- Cetin, G. and Nisanci, S. H. (2010). Enhancing students' environmental awareness. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 1830-1834.
- Childe, G. (2006). *Man Makes Himself*. İstanbul: Varlık Publications.
- Cipolla, C. M. (1967). *World Economic History*. İstanbul.
- Culiberg, B., Rojšek, I. (2008). "Understanding environmental consciousness: a multidimensional perspective", in Grbac, B., Meler, M. (Eds.), *Vrijednost za potrošače u dinamičnom okruženju*, Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, CROMAR – Hrvatska zajednica uduga za marketing, Rijeka, 131-145.
- Erten, S. (2012). Türk ve Azeri öğretmen adaylarında çevre bilinci. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 37(166), 88-100.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF USAK UNIVERSITY

- Foster, J. B. (2013). *The Vulnerable Planet*. Ankara: Epos Publications.
- Havlíček, F. and Morcinek, M. (2016). Waste and Pollution in the Ancient Roman Empire, *Journal of Landscape Ecology*, 9(3), 33-49.
- Hungerford, H.R., Litherland, R., Peyton, R., Ramsey, J. and Volk, T. L. (1992). Investigating and evaluating environmental issues and actions: Skill development modules 1990 Champaign, IL Stipes Publishing
- Lacy, P. and Rutqvist, J. (2015). *Waste to Wealth: The Circular Economy Advantage*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Oğuz, D., Çakci, I. and Kavas, S. (2010). Environmental awareness of university students in Ankara, Turkey. *African Journal of Agricultural Research*, 5(19), 2629-2636.
- Oruç, Z. (2017). *Çevre ve Ekolojik Kavramları Kapsamında İdeolojik Yaklaşımlar ve Sanat*, İstanbul Kültür University, Social Sciences Institute, Master's Thesis, İstanbul.
- Peterson, N. (1982). *Developmental variables affecting environmental sensitivity in professional environmental educators*. Master's Thesis. Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.
- Pluess, M. (2015). Individual differences in environmental sensitivity. *Child development perspectives*, 9(3), 138-143.
- Sengupta, M., Das, J., and Maji, P. K. (2010). Environmental awareness and environment related behavior of twelfth grade students in Kolkata: Effects of stream and gender. *Anwesa*, 5(1), 1-8.
- Stern P. (2000). Toward A Coherent Theory Of Environmentally Significant Behavior, *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 407-424.
- Stern P.C., T. Dietz, G. A. Guagnano (1995). The New Ecological Paradigm İl Social-Psychological Context, *Environment and Behavior*, 27(1995), 723-743.
- Tabachnich, B. G. and Fidell, L. S. (2001). *Using Multivariate Statistics* (sixth edition). Boston: Pearson.
- Tekeli, İ. (2002). Türkiye İçin Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Öncelikleri: Dünya Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Zirvesi İçin TÜBA'NIN Görüşü. *Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi*, Ankara.
- TÜİK (2024). Address-Based Population Registration System Results. Retrieved at: <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/medas/?kn=95&locale=tr>
- Uşak Municipality (2024). *Geographical Structure*. <https://www.usak.bel.tr/sayfa/cografi-yapisi/>
- Uşak University (2024). *Total Number of Students*. <https://bys.usak.edu.tr/Ogrenci/Toplam>
- Wallen, K. E. and Daut, E. F. (2018). The challenge and opportunity of behavior change methods and frameworks to reduce demand for illegal wildlife. *Nature Conservation*, 26: 55-75.
- Yeşil, M. and Turan, Y. (2020). Çevresel Duyarlılık Üzerine Bir Ölçek Geliştirme Çalışması, *ODU Journal of Social Sciences Research*, Temmuz 2020; 10 (2), 418-435
- Yıldız, D. (2018). Alan Araştırmalarında Güvenirlik Testlerinin Karşılaştırılması ve Tarımsal Veriler Üzerine Bir Uygulama. *Journal of Applied Social Sciences*, 1.
- Yoloğlu, A. C. and Halisdemir, B. (2020). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Çevre Bilinci ve Çevresel Tutumları Üzerine Ampirik Bir Çalışma: Mersin Üniversite Örneği. *Academic Journal of Social Research*, Yıl: 8, Sayı: 103, Nisan 2020, 91-107.
- Youngerman, B. (2008). *Pandemics and Global Health*. New York: Infobase Publishing.
- Higher Education Information Management System (2024). *Student Statistics*. Retrieved at: <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>