

International Journal of Educational Research and Technology

P-ISSN 0976-4089; E-ISSN 2277-1557 IJERT: Volume 4 [3]September 2013: 01 – 08 © All Rights Reserved Society of Education, India ISO 9001: 2008 Certified Organization Website: www.soeagra.com/ijert/ijert.htm

The Research of the Relationship between Primary School Students' Environmentally Responsible Behaviors and Conscious Consumer Behaviors

* Mustafa Kahyaoglu and ** Halit Kiriktaş

*Faculty of Education, SIIRT University, Turkey Email: mustafa.kahyaoglu56@gmail.com ** Faculty of Education at DokuzEylül University Email: halit58yyu@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to find out the relationship between primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer behavior. Additionally, the relationship between primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer behavior is investigated whether there is a significant difference through considering the socio-demographic variables such as gender, class. The students who are studying in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades of primary schools in the city of Siirtcreate the population of this study. The sample group is formed by 563 primary school students from five different schools contributing to the study voluntarily. The data was collected by using Saglam's (2010) "Scale of Conscious Consumerism Level" and Erdogan et.al.(2012) "Environmental Responsible Behavior Scale". Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, Independent Sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for the analysis of the data. Findings pointout that there is a significant positive and moderate level relationship between primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior and the level of conscious consumer behavior.

Key Words: Environment, behavior, conscious consumer, primary school students

Received 20/07/2013 Accepted 17/08/2013

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INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi stated that "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed." The main reasons of environmental problems we face in present day arise from industrialization together with pillaging of human nature mercilessly andhuman used nature based upon the principle of self-interest (Erten, 2003). Atasoy (2005) stated that industrialization, urbanization, technological improvements, over-growing and fast economic development, increasing population, different level of development of countries, national and local governments, unconscious consumption, inadequate environmental education, ecological ignorance, human centered worldview and undeveloped ecologic virtue ethics are the main reasons of environmental problems. According to Erten (2003) If A person who has ecological knowledgeable does not work to diminish waste, save energy and water, prefer returnable products and does not react towards other people who pollute the environment, the person can not be regarded as "ecological knowledgeable". Even though the people are well-informed about the environmental issues, if they do not comply with the their information, all this information is useless. Atasoy (2005) said that an eco-person is someone who perceives the relationships between human-nature and world-environment, has a high environmental responsibility and sensitivity interprets this information, are willing to adopt ecolifestyle instead of is knowing all plants and animal species and explaining all natural phenomena. Inthis context environmental responsibility in general terms can be defined as the behavior of person who intends to behave towards sorting the environmental problems out directly, considering social and environmental advantages more than thinking about the personal economic benefit (Kükrer, 2012). Environmentally responsible behaviors are highly important to prevent and reduce environmental problems. According to Goleman (2010); we buy "herbal" shampoos, contain industrial chemicals that can threaten our health or contaminate the environment. We dive down to see coral reefs but don't realizing that an ingredient in our sunscreen feeds bacterium that kills the

reef.We wear organic cotton t-shirts, but don't know that its dyes may put factory workers at risk of leukemia. Besides, he stated that we do not have knowledge of the effects of the products that we have been producing and consuming. Ozgen and Kahyaoglu (2012) demonstrate that perceiving the environmental problems, the primary school students have only knowledge that it was shown at social media rather than scientific knowledge.

According to Gul and Guven (2000) one of the major factors of increasing environmental problems is consumption habits and supporting consumption continuously. They also indicated that, considering the obligation consume of every individual in society, the behaviors of consumers contribute to increasing environmental problems or reducing the environmental problems. Nickell (1976) expressed that the responsible consumers having environmental consciousness can evaluate the effects of the presence of natural sources and the cost of usage of these sources, and the effects of using some products to the environment and to the people. Besides, "green consumers" term is defined as the individuals who are sensitive to environment and act environmental consciously all the stages of buying behavior process, to use both the purchasing power in order to build the sustainable environment conditions and consumer rights, and to think that they are also responsible for both the society they live with and the posterity in terms of habitat. Every individual in society is a consumer throughout life and he/she try to get the products and the services for continuity of his/her own life. The most important feature of being a consumer is either to purchase and use the products and services provide for needs of the economic, social and cultural or to produce them on their own (McGregor, 2005). Therefore when the consumer has been taken decision of consumption, should be aware of the responsibility. In this connection, consumer education helps to use the sources rationally and efficiently, adapt to technology and raise awareness among the consumers (Knights, 2000). In general term, consumer education can be defined as a process which covers ideas, understanding and information which enable an individual's actual economic and personal resources evaluating in a satisfactory and adequate way (Gurdal, 2003). The education is a teaching process that enables consumers to use their sources in the most rationalistic way in the market. Consumer education is a part of both formal and non-formal learning programmes in the European Community and consumers have been educated since their childhood. The topics about the subject are dealt with in the related lessons in formal learning, and in non-formal learning. The topics are presented in activities such as symposiums and workshops organized by consumer organizations and various educational institutions (Kavas, 1990). In some countries, to touch upon the state of the consumer education:

- Within the curriculum of Belgian civics lesson in primary schools in Belgium,
- Within the curriculum of general and vocational high schools, in the programme of compulsory courses in France.
- Within the curriculum of economic courses in high schools; a selective course in vocational high schools; within the curriculum of home economics courses in two-year vocational high schools in Germany (minimum forty days-long courses),
- Within the curriculum of compulsory civics courses in secondary schools; compulsory home economics lessons in vocational high schools in Spain,
- Within the curriculum of civic and citizenship course for 14-16 age group in England,
- Within the curriculum of selective home economics course in primary schools; in home economics course for applied science groups in Ireland,
- Within the curriculum of compulsory home economics courses in secondary schools in Scotland,
- Within the curriculum of compulsory consumer education courses in Norway,
- Within the curriculum of compulsory citizenship courses in Italy.

Children represent a major consumer group in society. Especially in the societies that have high young population like Turkey, children become more important regarding the consuming level. The children effect their parents' purchasing decisions in today's world. Additionally, The young population has the impact for allocating budget on education and entertainment besides the basic needs such as food, clothing and health expenses (Gonen and Ozmete, 2004). According to this study that it was published by Moschis and Moore in 1981 the brand perception started in early childhood period for products such as toothpaste, beverages and jeans whereas the brand loyalty for the products such as radio and computer started from childhood and it continues even in adulthood

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(Purutcuoglu, 2003). Experiences from childhood affect the individuals' consumption patterns and choices in their adulthood. Especially establishing the relationship between primary school students' environmentally responsible behaviors and conscious consumer behaviors is highly important to constitute environmental and consumer education. The purpose of the study was to indicate the relationship between primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer behavior. In this regard, the answers were sought to the following questions. Accordingly;

- 1- How are the primary school students' environmentally responsible behaviors and their conscious consumer behaviors?
- 2- What kind of a relationship is there between primary school students' environmentally responsible behaviors and their conscious consumer behaviors?
- 3- Is there a significant relationship between the primary school students' environmentally responsible behaviors and conscious consumer behaviors regarding the variants; their gender and class?

METHOD

Sample

The population of this study was formed by primary school students who have been studying in the city center of Siirt in Turkey. Because of the impossibility to contact all of the students in the city center, the sample representing the population was selected randomly and data was conducted within this sample group. The sample of this study consisted of 563 students that have been studying in five primary schools in the city center of Siirt in Turkey.

Data Collection

This study was conducted by using "Environmental Responsible Behavior Scale" which was developed by Erdogan et.al.(2012). The scale has 23 items. The questionnaire items were formed by using six point likert type and asked students to grade the items by giving points from 1 to 6. In the study, Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability was identified as .74. In order to measure the primary students' conscious consumer level "Conscious Consumerisms' Levels Scale" which was developed by Saglam (2010) was used. The scale has 18 items. The questionnaire items were formed by using four point likert type and asked students to grade the items by giving points 1 to 4. Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability was identified as .94.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the points obtained from the environmentally responsible behaviour and conscious consumer levels, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, LSD (Least Significant Difference) test and Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. The data obtain was analysed in SPSS 16.00 software.

RESULTS

Findings of the study that aims to determine the primary students' environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer levels are given below.

As seen in Table 1, the arithmetic mean of primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior is 2.91 and the standard deviation is .468. According to this, environmentally responsible behavior was found to be low. The highest arithmetic mean of primary school students' reply to questionnaire items are "I properly disposed of and avoided improper disposal of trash/ garbage in schools, home, picnic areas, parks, and streets" with 5.31, "I purchased fresh, healthy, organic/ecological products only after checking the expiration date" with 5.00 and "I took steps to conserve water (e.g. turning off the fountains not in use, using little water while brushing my teeth, bathing, and washing hands)" with 4.89. The lowest arithmetic mean of primary school students is found to be "I visited mayor and encouraged him/her to take environmental protection measures" with 1.29, "I visited district chief and encouraged him/her to take environmental protection measures" with 1.32 and "I talked to government officials inorder to enforce environmental laws or punish people who violate these laws" with 1.37.

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 ${\bf Table-1}. A rithmetic\ mean\ and\ standard\ deviation\ of\ primary\ school\ students'\ environmentally\ responsible\ behavior$

Items	N	X	SS
I planned to communicate with government officials (i.e. president, minister of environment and		•	
forest, and governor) regardingthe importance of environment and environmental protection. (i.e. preparing mail and e-mail)	563	1,40	,992
I visited mayor and encouraged him / her to take environmental protection measures	563	1,29	,920
I visited district chief and encouraged him / her to take environmental protection measures	563	1,32	,963
I talked to government officials in order to enforce environmental laws or punish people who violate these laws	563	1,37	1,08
I encouraged government officials to create a newspaper, a magazine, and public bulletin boards in order to increase public support for environmental protection	563	1,44	1,13
I cooperated withgovernment officials and non-governmental representatives to prepareenvironmental protection projects and implement these projects	563	1,55	1,22
I properly disposed of and avoided improper disposal of trash/ garbage in schools, home, picnic areas, parks, andstreets.	563	5,31	1,48
I picked up litter, trash,and garbage in schools, picnic areas,parks, and street and threw them ingarbage bins	563	4,55	1,84
I took steps to conserve water (e.g. turning off the fountains not in use, using little water while brushing my teeth, bathing, and washing hands)	563	4,89	1,77
I purchased products which are recyclable and which are made from recycled materials (e.g. I purchased the products on which there is a recycling sign)	563	2,96	2,07
I purchased products which were guaranteed / certified and tested by Turkish Standards Institute (TSE) and Ministry of Village Affairs and Forestry	563	4,09	2,17
I purchased fresh, healthy, organic/ecological products only after checking the expiration date	563	5,00	1,78
I warned my family, my friends, and other people not to use water and electricity if not necessary	563	4,60	1,85
I gave old books, dress, toys, and other things, which are not used, to people and institutions in need.	563	3,99	2,03
I talked with my family about what measures to be taken to protect and not harm the environment	563	3,05	1,96
I talked with my friends about what measures to be taken to protect and not harm the environment	563	3,03	1,98
I talked with other people about what measures to be taken to protect and not harm the environment	563	2,45	1,81
I planted and grew trees, flowers, vegetables, and other types of plants in order to embellish the environment.	563	3,21	1,96
I donated money to national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (i.e. TEMA, DHKD) working on protecting and beautifying the environment	563	1,93	1,51
I prepared posters, pictures, and writings about protecting environment in order to hang on the bulletin boards at school and on the streets.	563	2,11	1,66
Total arithmetic mean of environmentally responsible behavior.	563	2.91	.468

Table-2. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of primary school students' conscious consumer behaviors

Items	N	X	SS
I save what remains from my allowance.	563	2,74	1,01
I check the expiration dates of the products I purchase.	563	3,39	,895
I prepare a shopping list beforehand.	563	2,74	1,12
I notify Consumer Rights Association when I experience a problem with the product I purchase.	563	1,92	1,10
I return the product when the product I buy appears to be broken.	563	3,32	,985
I want my receipt after shopping.	563	3,32	,960
I like to spend the money I have.	563	2,18	1,07
Product has quality if it's "Known Branded".	563	2,71	1,08
I check if there is a better quality for the product I will purchase.	563	3,15	1,01
I'd be careful for the product I will purchase to be branded.	563	2,83	1,06
I buy the product with better quality.	563	2,97	1,06
I keep the Warranty Certificate of the goods I buy.	563	3,35	1,00
I check the necessity of the product I'll purchase.	563	3,22	,964
I investigate the price before buying anything.	563	3,12	1,02
I know that I cannot buy everything I like.	563	3,03	1,07
I take our family budget into account when I buy something.	563	3,17	,998
I want to buy a product when I see its commercial, regardless of the necessity.	563	1,75	1,01
I check how much money I have before shopping.	563	3,43	,912
Total arithmetic mean of conscious consumer levels	563	2.37	.279

As seen in Table-2 arithmetic mean of primary school students' conscious consumer behavior is 2.37 and standard deviation is .279. The highest arithmetic mean of primary school students' reply to questionnaire items are "I check how much money I have before shopping." with 3.43, "I check the expiration dates of the products I purchase." with 3.39 and "I keep the warranty certificate of the goods I buy." with 3.35. The lowest arithmetic mean of primary school students is found to be "I want to buy a product when I see its commercial, regardless of the necessity." with 1.75, "I notify consumer rights association when I experience a problem with the product I purchase." with 1.92 and "I like to spend the money I have." with 2.18.

Table-3. The relationship between the levels of environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer levels of primary school students

of printary school students				
	Conscious			
	consumer levels			
Environmentally responsible behavior	r	.332		
	р	.000***		
	N	563		

*p>.05; **p<.05; ***p<.01

As shown in Table-3, it is determined there is a meaningful mid-level relation in positive direction between primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer levels.

Table-4. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation and t-test results of primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer levels according to the variables of gender

behavior and conscious consumer levels according to the variables of gender						
	Gender	N	X	SS	t	p
Compaiana Compuman lavala	Female	288	2.43	.271	2 200	021**
Conscious Consumer levels	Male	275	2.34	.287	2.309	021**
Environmentally responsible	Female	288	2.94	.463	1.852	.065*
behavior	Male	275	2.87	.471	1.852	.005

*p>.05; **p<.05; ***p<.01

As seen in Table-3, when primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior is analyzed by gender, female students' arithmetic mean with a value of 2.43 is found to be higher than male as it is 2.34 and this difference was statistically (t=2.309; p<.05) significant. Nevertheless when primary students' conscious consumer levels by gender are analyzed, female students' arithmetic mean is determined to be 2.94 while male students' is 2.87 and this difference is found to be statistically (t=1.852; p>.05) no significant.

Table-5. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation and ANOVA test results of primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer levels according to the variables of class.

	Class	N	X	SS	F	р	Difference (LSD-test)
	6th grade	94	2.19	.310	24.864	.000***	
Conscious	7th grade	163	2.42	.250			6-7
consumer levels	8th grade	306	2.40	.264			6-8
	Total	563	2.37	.280			
E 6th gr	6th grade	94	2.79	.471			
Environmentally	, th grade 163	163	2.95	.477	2.740	.024**	6-7
responsible behavior	8th grade	grade 306 2.92 .458 3.740	3.740	.024***	6-8		
Dellavioi	Total	563	2.91	.468			

*p>.05; **p<.05; ***p<.01

As seen in Table-4, arithmetic mean of primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior has been identified as 7th grade highest with a value of 2.95 followed by 8th grade with 2.92 and 6th grade with 2.76. As a result of ANOVA test which is done to determine whether this difference is statistically significant, primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior is found to be statistically (F=3.740; p<.05) significant by the variables of class. As a result of the LSD test to determine the source of difference, it is found to be between 6th and 7th grade and 6th and 8th grade.

Arithmetic mean of primary school students' conscious consumer levels has been found as 7th grade highest with a value of 2.42 followed by 8th grade with 2.40 and 6th grade with 2.16. As the ANOVA test result, primary school students' conscious consumer levels are found to be statistically (F=24.864; p<.05) significant by the variables of class. As a result of the LSD test to determine the source of difference, it is found to be between 6th and 7th grade and 6th and 8th grade.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Environmental problems and elimination or minimization of them have become the most important problem of the world. Along with these countries, various institutions and organizations are more sensitive to environmental problems. Businesses' environmentally responsible behavior is trying to be changed by countries through the laws and regulations with arrangements such as recycle of products, waste reduction and use of environmentally friendly products. However, rules and laws prepared to protect the natural environment are not enough to reduce environmental problems alone. Environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer behavior is very important for the individuals who can be referred as consumers. Findings from study reveals that primary school students' environmentally responsible behavior is found to be low. Likewise, in a similar study Alp, Erpinar, Tekkaya and Yilmaz (2006) reported primary school students' knowledge about the environment as insufficient. Atasoy and Erturk (2008) stated t primary school students' knowledge of environment and positive attitude environmentally as in insufficient levels. Simsekli (2004) specified that the primary students' environmental awareness is not at desired levels. On the other hand, in the study of Balci (2012), it is highlighted that primary school fifth grade students' attitude toward water and energy saving is high and positive, they are sensitive to recycling and to worry about the environmental pollution and its effects. In this study, primary school students' conscious consumer behavior are found to be mid-level with high "I check how much money I have before shopping.", "I check the expiration dates of the products I purchase." and "I keep the Warranty Certificate of the goods I buy." expressions. This situation can be explained with Diekmann and Preisendörfer's (1992) low cost / high cost theory. According to this theory, individuals think in terms of their "cost - benefit" aspect while carrying out beneficial activities to environment. If a behavior does not require spending money and sacrificing from self- conformity and easy-toperform these kinds of behaviors can be defined as "Low-cost", if they are vice versa can be defined as "High-cost" behaviors. For example separating the waste, switching off the electronic gadgets, turning off the faucet are "Low-cost" behaviors whereas using public transportation instead of private cars, taking the gathered glass to the recycling glass bin are "High-cost" behaviors. In the light of this information, we should be careful when promoting environmentally friendly behaviors to children. According to Bögeholz (1998) environmentally friendly behaviors can be gained by giving stimulus, raising awareness by mass media and with the help of family, friends, the supportive actions and experiences from nature itself (Erten, 2002). In addition, the sooner starting the environmental education, the better is the outcome. Because the interests and attitudes formed in pre-school and primary school period shape the future behaviors. Especially, the attitudes and value judgment developed in early age as childhood and adolescence are highly important to form the love of nature and the empathy in the relationship with nature. These elements are crucial for performing environmentally friendly behaviors to protect the environment (De Haan, 1998). In this study, it is found that there is a significant positive relationship between primary school students' environmentally responsible behaviors and conscious consumer behaviors. It was stated that there is a significant difference between primary school students' conscious consumer behaviors and their gender; on the other hand, there is insignificant difference between environmentally responsible behaviors and their gender. In addition, it was found that there is insignificant difference between primary school students' environmentally responsible behaviors and conscious consumer behaviors regarding the class variance. In the similar studies, Purutcuoglu (2003) stated that young generation do not assess themselves as conscious consumers and they are not well-informed about economical resource management, the notions about consumption, environmental awareness and consumer rights and responsibilities. Bayraktar (1995) emphasized that working women compared to nonworking are more conscious about the consumer behaviors. Bayazit (2003) asserted that women consumers are more conscious about durable consumer goods before and after the buying process. Erten (2002) pointed that there is an interesting difference with the aim of energy saving between

female and male students. According to Atabek (2002) money boxes which had been delivered by various banks were the symbol of reminding the children not spending all of their pocket money but saving an amount. Nowadays the credit cards are the consumption symbol encouraging the adolescents to spend without earning money. The changing social values cause adolescents to build such behaviors as having much more money and properties, in this way preceding other people and proving this preceding to everybody. According to the results obtained from the study, the following can be suggested:

- 1. Conducted research showed that most of the taste, desire and preferences which are the principles of consumption habits are shaped in the infancy and from the age of three the children can show purchasing behavior. Therefore, eco-friendly and conscious consumer education should be provided to the children from their earlier age.
- 2. Environmentally responsible behavior and conscious consumer behaviors should focus on the environmental effects of purchased products beyond the financial worries.
- 3. The elements (family, socioeconomic status, marketing, media, school, peers, etc.) that affect primary school students' conscious consumer behaviors should be examined and marketing strategies towards increasing environmentally friendly consumption among individuals should be developed.
- 4. The environmental risk perceptions of primary school students' should be presented and the relationship between their environmental attitudes and behaviors should be examined.
- 5. The courses about conscious consumer behavior and environmentally responsible behavior should be included in pre-school and primary school curriculum.

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Citation of This Article

Mustafa Kahyaoglu and Halit Kiriktaş. The Research of the Relationship between Primary School Students' Environmentally Responsible Behaviors and Conscious Consumer Behaviors. Int. J. Educat. Res. Technol. Vol 4 [3] September 2013.01-08