

Evaluating the Persistence of COVID-19 Induced Environmental and Financial Behaviour Changes Among College Students in Patiala District

Kiranjeet

Asian Educational Institute (an autonomous College) Patiala

Abstract-This study seeks to assess the long-term sustainability of COVID-19 induced pro-environmental behaviour and financial resilience among college students in Patiala district. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered lifestyles worldwide, prompting shifts towards more sustainable living practices and adjustments in financial management among young adults. This research aims to explore whether these pandemic-induced changes have persisted among university students as the world transitions into the post-pandemic era. Through a quantitative survey employing a Likert scale, this study will collect data on pro-environmental behaviours, financial habits, and the factors influencing their sustainability among students. The research objectives are to evaluate the continuation of these behaviours post-pandemic and to understand the demographic and psychological factors affecting their long-term sustainability. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into the effectiveness of pandemic-induced shifts towards sustainability and financial resilience, contributing to the development of targeted interventions to foster lasting pro-environmental behaviours and financial planning skills among young adults.

Keywords: Pro-Environmental, Behaviour Financial Resilience, COVID-19 Impact, University Students

INTRODUCTION

In early 2020, the world was confronted with an unprecedented challenge: the COVID-19 pandemic. This global health crisis not only impacted the physical well-being of millions but also significantly altered the daily lives and habits of people across the globe. Among these changes, two notable shifts have been observed in the behaviour of young adults, particularly college students: an increased commitment to pro-environmental practices and a newfound emphasis on financial resilience. In Patiala District, as elsewhere,

college students had to navigate through lockdowns, online learning, and uncertainties about the future, all of which could potentially influence their attitudes and behaviours towards the environment and their finances. This study seeks to explore whether the environmental and financial behaviours adopted by college students during the peak of the pandemic have endured as the immediate threat of the virus recedes. With a focus on the college-going population in Patiala District, this research aims to assess the long-term sustainability of these pandemic-induced behaviours. Are students still inclined towards eco-friendly habits and prudent financial planning as they were during the lockdowns? This inquiry is not just academic; it holds significant implications for policy-making, educational strategies, and the fostering of a sustainable future. By examining these behaviours, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the pandemic's lasting legacy on the lifestyle choices of the younger generation, potentially guiding efforts to support and reinforce these positive changes in the post-pandemic world.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant body of research has emerged, focusing on the multifaceted impacts on consumer behaviour, financial habits, and pro-environmental practices. Studies such as those conducted by Valaskova, Durana, and Adamko (2020) and Gerlich (2021) have been pivotal in highlighting the profound shifts in consumption patterns and the psychological underpinnings driving these changes. Valaskova and colleagues' exploration into Slovak consumers' purchasing behaviours underscores the pandemic's role in altering spending, investments, and financial

reserves, emphasizing the need for businesses to adapt to evolving consumer expectations. Similarly, Gerlich's analysis extends the discourse to the psychological impacts of financial uncertainty and the loss of welfare sources, suggesting a potential permanence in the adoption of new consumer habits developed during the pandemic. These studies collectively illustrate the complex interplay between economic conditions, societal restrictions, and individual responses to the pandemic, providing a foundational understanding of the changes in consumer behaviour across different contexts.

Furthermore, the research by Nirmala et al. (2022) and Bambi et al. (2023) delves into the specific areas of savings and investment patterns and the broader implications of lockdown measures on consumer demand and supply dynamics. Nirmala and colleagues' examination within the Tamil Nadu manufacturing sector reveals how lockdowns and lifestyle adjustments significantly influence financial decisions, while Bambi et al.'s investigation into the two-sector infinite horizon economy model offers insights into the potential for a post-pandemic rebound in demand for goods and services. These studies, alongside the work of Puđak, Šimac, and Trako Poljak (2023), which evaluates the pandemic's influence on pro-environmental behaviours among Croatian students, contribute to a nuanced understanding of the pandemic's long-lasting effects on consumer and financial behaviours. Together, they paint a comprehensive picture of the pandemic's legacy, suggesting a critical juncture for policymakers, educators, and businesses to reinforce positive behavioural shifts and address the challenges in sustaining these changes in a post-pandemic world.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite extensive research on pandemic-induced changes in consumer behaviour, a gap exists in understanding the long-term sustainability of these behaviours and the specific factors influencing their persistence among college students in regional contexts like Patiala District.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds critical importance by examining the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on

college students' pro-environmental and financial behaviours in Patiala District, offering valuable insights into the persistence of crisis-induced lifestyle changes. Its significance is multifaceted: it not only illuminates the potential for a global crisis to foster sustainable habits and financial prudence among young adults but also provides a data-driven basis for policymakers, educators, and institutions to develop targeted strategies that support and encourage these positive behaviours. Furthermore, by contributing to the academic discourse on behavioural changes during crises, this research enhances our understanding of how to effectively promote resilience and adaptability in the face of future global challenges. Ultimately, the findings aim to guide efforts in nurturing a generation that is environmentally conscious and financially resilient, ensuring that the pandemic's legacy includes a positive shift towards sustainability and prudent financial management within the community.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To assess the persistence of COVID-19 induced pro-environmental and financial behaviours among college students in Patiala District and identify factors influencing their long-term sustainability.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study encompasses evaluating the enduring nature of environmentally sustainable practices and financial management behaviours adopted by college students in Patiala District during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to quantify how these behaviours have evolved from the onset of the pandemic into the post-pandemic period, identifying key influencers such as demographic variables, educational exposure, and personal values that may affect the sustainability of these behaviours. The research focuses on a specific student demographic within a defined geographical area, offering insights into the broader implications of crisis-induced behaviour changes on future environmental and financial resilience initiatives.

RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION METHODS, AND ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES

Research Design: This study adopts a cross-sectional research design to evaluate the persistence of COVID-19 induced pro-environmental and financial behaviours among college students in Patiala District. The design facilitates the collection of data at a single point in time, allowing for the analysis of the current state of these behaviours and the factors influencing their sustainability. This approach is particularly suited to assessing the impact of a specific event (in this case, the COVID-19 pandemic) on behavioural changes within a defined population.

Sample Description: This study will focus on a targeted sample of 100 college students within Patiala District, selected to represent a diverse array of demographic backgrounds. The selection will aim for a balanced mix in terms of age, gender, field of study (STEM vs. non-STEM), and academic standing (from freshmen to seniors). Limiting the sample size to 100 students allows for manageable data collection and analysis while still providing sufficient variability to explore the persistence of COVID-19 induced behaviours. This sample size is considered adequate for preliminary analysis, offering insights into trends and behaviours that can be further explored in larger, more comprehensive studies.

Data Gathering Approach: Our study employs a structured quantitative approach through surveys, utilizing a Likert scale to gauge college students' eco-friendly and economic behaviours, including their persistence in these behaviours following the pandemic. The survey aims to quantify the frequency, intensity, and attitudes towards these behaviours, leveraging the Likert scale's ability to capture subtle variations in student responses. This method facilitates an in-depth examination of behaviour trends within our student sample.

Analytical Techniques: After gathering data, we will apply descriptive statistics to characterize the demographic profile of our respondents and to summarize their reported actions. We will then perform regression analysis to investigate how demographic attributes (independent variables) influence the sustainability of eco-friendly and financial behaviours (dependent variables). With a focus on 100 college students, this analysis is designed to uncover preliminary behavioural trends and the impact of demographic factors on the longevity of these behaviours.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Eco-Friendly Activities: The data indicates a strong engagement in eco-friendly activities among the students, with an average involvement in three different types of sustainable actions. Recycling stands out as the most common practice, with a significant 77.8% of students incorporating it into their daily routine. This suggests a broad acceptance and dedication to recycling within the student body, highlighting a proactive stance towards environmental conservation.

Economic Behaviour Adjustments: The pandemic's economic impact on students' savings and financial planning reveals a complex picture. Nearly half of the respondents noted an increase in savings, driven by the uncertainties brought on by the pandemic, showcasing a cautious financial approach. In contrast, 24.1% of students saw a decline in savings due to job losses or decreased income, while 27.8% reported no significant change, indicating a variety of financial experiences among students during the pandemic.

Discussion: The students' preference for recycling underscores their commitment to environmental sustainability, reflecting a broader societal endorsement of responsible waste management and resource conservation. The observed financial behaviours depict a nuanced pandemic response, balancing between increased savings as a precaution and the immediate financial challenges faced. This variability in financial strategies highlights the different economic realities affecting students.

FACTORS INFLUENCING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF BEHAVIOURS

1. Awareness and Education

Awareness and educational exposure to environmental sustainability and financial literacy significantly affect the continuity of these behaviours. Educational programs that integrate these topics into their curriculum can foster a deeper understanding and commitment among students.

2. Economic Stability

The financial stability of students and their families is a crucial determinant. Students with secure economic backgrounds are more likely to continue engaging in prudent financial behaviours.

3. Institutional Support

Support and infrastructure provided by educational institutions, such as recycling facilities and financial counselling services, play a fundamental role in encouraging the persistence of these behaviours.

4. Social Influence and Peer Networks

The behaviour of peer groups and social networks is a strong motivator for individuals to sustain adopted practices. Social acceptance and support can significantly reinforce these behaviours.

5. Personal Values and Beliefs

The individual's values and beliefs regarding environmental conservation and financial responsibility deeply influence their commitment to sustaining these behaviours over the long term.

6. Accessibility and Convenience

The ease and convenience of practicing sustainable and financial management behaviours are key to their long-term adoption. Facilitating easy access to necessary resources and tools is essential.

7. Policy and Economic Incentives

Policies and incentives designed to promote sustainable practices and financial savings can motivate students to maintain these behaviours. Government and institutional support in this regard can be very effective.

8. Technological Advancements

Technological innovations that make sustainable living and efficient financial management easier and more effective can drive the adoption of these behaviours in the long run.

9. Psychological Well-being

The psychological impact of the pandemic and overall mental health also play a role in the ability of students to sustain these behaviours. Addressing mental health needs is crucial for encouraging persistent behavioural change.

10. Cultural and Community Norms

The cultural and community context within which students operate can significantly influence their behavioural choices. Communities that value sustainability and prudent financial planning can foster the continuation of these practices among their members.

INTERPRETING RESULTS

Eco-Friendly Behaviours: The high prevalence of recycling among the students in Patiala District signals a robust commitment to environmental conservation,

demonstrating an awareness and willingness to adopt concrete measures for ecological preservation. This widespread practice of recycling represents a shift towards a more environmentally conscious mindset among this group.

Financial Planning Adjustments: The adjustments in financial planning during the COVID-19 pandemic reflect a thoughtful response to economic uncertainties. The substantial number of students enhancing their savings illustrates a strategic financial approach during uncertain times. Conversely, the decline in savings for some highlights the varied economic impacts of the pandemic, emphasizing the diverse financial resilience among students.

Overall Insights: These findings highlight the significance of promoting environmental awareness and financial stability among college students in Patiala District. The adoption of recycling indicates a positive step towards sustainable living, while the diverse financial planning responses during the pandemic call for targeted support measures.

Recommendations for Policy and Education: To support these behaviours, policies and educational programs could include:

Embedding environmental sustainability and financial literacy topics in college courses.

Providing support for students facing economic hardships through counselling and emergency assistance.

Encouraging campus-wide sustainable practices and conservation efforts.

Facilitating student involvement in community-based sustainability and financial stewardship projects.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Further studies could investigate the long-term sustainability of these pandemic-influenced behaviours and the factors affecting their persistence. Longitudinal research could provide insights into the evolution of eco-friendly practices and financial stability over time, evaluating the impact of support measures and the interrelation between environmental and financial decision-making among college students.

REFERENCE

- [1] Amuakwa-Mensah, F., Amuakwa-Mensah, S., Klege, R. A., & Adom, P. K. (2021). Stockpiling

- and food worries: Changing habits and choices in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, 101181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2021.101181>
- [2] Bambi, M., Ghilli, D., Gozzi, F., & Leocata, M. (2023). Habits and demand changes after COVID-19. *Journal of Mathematical Economics*, 102933. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmateco.2023.102933>
- [3] Das, D., Sarkar, A., & Debroy, A. (2022). Impact of COVID-19 on changing consumer behaviour: Lessons from an emerging economy. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12786>
- [4] Denegri, M., Sepúlveda, J., Demaría, M., Sandoval-Escobar, M., Silva, F., Van Der Woude, D., Quintano, F., & Riquelme, L. (Year). *Financial and Consumption Habits and Behaviors during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Short-Term Study of Argentina, Chile and Colombia*. Journal Name, Volume(Issue), Pages. Publisher: Expert Projects Publishing. Keywords: COVID-19, financial habits and behaviors, short-term study, middle class, economic psychology.
- [5] Gerlich, M. (2021). COVID-19 Induced Changes in Consumer Behavior. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 9(5), 131. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2021.95131>
- [6] Guglielminetti, E., & Rondinelli, C. (2021). Consumption and Saving Patterns in Italy during Covid-19 (Bank of Italy Occasional Paper No. 620). SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3891608>
- [7] Khanna, P., Sehgal, R., Malviya, M., & Dubey, A. M. (2022). Examining the role of saving and safety on the buying behavior: lessons from the Indian consumer's in COVID-19 crisis. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-01-2022-0001>
- [8] Matiuk, Y., Krikštolaitis, R., & Liobikienė, G. (2023). The Covid-19 pandemic in context of climate change perception and resource-saving behavior in the European Union countries. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 136433. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.136433>
- [9] Nirmala, A. R., Bhalaji, R. K. A., Bharani Kumar, S., Joe Patrick Gnanaraj, S., & Appadurai, M. (2022). Study on the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the savings and investment pattern of the manufacturing sector. *Materials Today: Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.matpr.2022.06.354>
- [10] Puđak, J., Šimac, B., & Trako Poljak, T. (2023). Pro-environmental changes in lifestyle and consumer habits of Croatian students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Original scientific paper. Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.2298/SOC220630010P>
- [11] Qaiser, S., Bashir, M. A., Ramish, M. S., Ansari, J., Gundala, R., & Sulaiman, M. A. B. A. (2023). Impact of consumer consumption adjustments on habits and purchase behavior during COVID-19. *Cogent Business & Management*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2265077>
- [12] Suvittawat, A. (2024). Consumer adjustment spending habits due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand. *Journal Name*, 9(1), Article 2051
- [13] Valaskova, K., Durana, P., & Adamko, P. (2020). Changes in Consumers' Purchase Patterns as a Consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Department of Economics, Faculty of Operation and Economics of Transport and Communications, University of Zilina. Univerzitna 1, 01026 Zilina, Slovakia.
- [14] Veselovská, L., Závadský, J., & Bartková, L. (2021). Consumer behaviour changes during times of the COVID-19 pandemic: An empirical study on Slovak consumers. *E+M. Ekonomie a Management (Economics and Management)*, 24(2), 136-152. Technická univerzita v Liberci
- [15] Waliszewski, K., & Warchlewska, A. (Date of Publication). Comparative analysis of Poland and selected countries in terms of household financial behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instytut Badań Gospodarczych.