

Attitudes Of Algerian Students Towards The Environment And Environmental Development A Field Study On A Sample Of Students From Bouira University – Algeria

Dr. Khaldi Mustafa¹, Pr. Mounira Kouache², Dr. Khiri Asma³, Dr. Rédaouia Djazia⁴, Pr. Zouatini Abdelaziz⁵

¹ Laboratory of Individual, Family, and Society: A Socio-Psychological Approach, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Akli Mohand Oulhadj University, Bouira 10000, Algeria, mustapha.khaldi@univ-bouira.dz

² Laboratory of Individual, Family, and Society: A Socio-Psychological Approach, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Akli Mohand Oulhadj University, Bouira 10000, Algeria. m.kouache@univ-bouira.dz

³ Laboratory of Individual, Family, and Society: A Socio-Psychological Approach Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Akli Mohand Oulhadj University, Bouira 10000, Algeria. a.khiri@univ-bouira.dz

⁴ Laboratory of Individual, Family, and Society: A Socio-Psychological Approach Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Akli Mohand Oulhadj University, Bouira 10000, Algeria. d.redaouia@univ-bouira.dz

⁵ Laboratory of Individual, Family, and Society: A Socio-Psychological Approach Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Akli Mohand Oulhadj University, Bouira 10000, Algeria. a.zouatini@univ-bouira.dz

Abstract

This study aims to examine the attitudes of students at Akli Mohand Oulhadj University in Bouira, towards the environment and environmental development, considering these as crucial topics due to the importance of the environment and its resources in daily life. The study was conducted using a questionnaire consisting of 46 statements distributed to a random sample of 200 male and female students to assess their attitudes towards the environment and environmental development. After analyzing the respondents' answers using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality and the Student's t-test for differences in means, the results showed no significant differences in attitudes related to gender or place of residence.

Keywords: student attitude, development, environment.

INTRODUCTION:

now a day, the issue of the environment is the subject of intense debate among specialists, government bodies, and non-governmental organizations due to the extensive exploitation of natural resources by humans, who often attempt to use these resources to the fullest extent possible without considering the potential consequences. The significant technological and industrial progress achieved by humanity has led to severe degradation of natural environmental resources, causing environmental phenomena previously unknown in many aspects of daily life. Global warming has become a pressing problem troubling the entire international community. Additionally, environmental disasters such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, heatwaves, melting ice, forest fires, and the spread of diseases and epidemics are all consequences of human activities on Earth, undertaken to ensure welfare and a lifestyle different from previous generations, all at the expense of the environment and its resources.

These risks have compelled humans to change their perspectives toward the environment, which has become a priority and a major concern, prompting changes in lifestyles. People now demand that governments take effective measures to reduce the depletion of natural resources and rationalize their use to preserve the environment and ensure the rights of future generations to these resources. Governments and experts have worked to provide solutions for the conservation of these resources.

Attention to this issue has been further heightened by calls, especially from advanced countries, urging governments to rationalize resource use and respect environmental safety conditions in production and manufacturing processes. This concern has materialized in numerous conferences and seminars, resulting in agreements that bind the signatory countries to their outcomes. The most prominent solution emerging from these conferences is environmental protection within the framework of achieving sustainable development. However, differing and conflicting viewpoints, along with the dominance of economic considerations over sustainable development choices, have hindered progress toward this goal.

Problematic:

The environment is the place where humans originated and live, exploiting all the wealth and minerals it contains. It has always been their refuge, both in the past and today, to ensure their well-being. While primitive humans' exploitation of the environment was limited due to their limited means and initial focus on agriculture, modern humans have greatly increased the exploitation of environmental resources, aided by technological advancements and modern machinery. As humanity transitioned from the agricultural revolution to the industrial revolution, their way of thinking about the environment they inhabit also changed.

The modern era has witnessed remarkable scientific discoveries that have led humans to harness the environment in sometimes rational and other times irrational ways. This exploitation has caused many local and international problems directly related to the environment, such as pollution, rising temperatures, and the depletion of the ozone layer, among others. These issues have prompted many experts to sound the alarm, leading to numerous high-level international meetings on climate and the environment. These meetings coincided with demonstrations organized by environmental associations and nature advocates, all aimed at putting an end to the irrational exploitation of environmental resources and preserving nature.

The responsibility of protecting the environment lies with every individual across the globe. This can be achieved by adopting positive environmental behaviors that help preserve the environment in which we live. Such behavior is reflected in the culture and knowledge of society's members regarding environmental issues. This study seeks to explore this by attempting to answer the main question: What are university students' attitudes toward the environment and environmental education, and how do these attitudes differ according to study variables?

Hypotheses:

We adopt hypotheses that help us answer the main question, which are as follows:

- There are differences in university students' attitudes toward the environment based on the variable of gender.
- There are differences in university students' attitudes toward the environment based on the variable of place of residence.

Study Objectives:

Through addressing the topic of environment and environmental development, we aim to:

- Highlight the importance of the environment and environmental development;
- Assess the level of interest university students have in the environment;
- Identify differences in attitudes toward the environment according to the study variables.

Importance of the Study:

This study derives its importance from the critical role of the environment, which contains natural resources exploited to ensure human survival. It also emphasizes the role of natural resources used to produce what is needed for building homes, manufacturing cars, and vehicles.

STUDY METHODOLOGY:

Conducting any scientific research requires following correct methodological approaches to achieve the desired results. The method is defined as the path leading to the discovery of facts in sciences through a set of general rules that govern the course of reasoning and determine its processes until reaching a known conclusion. The researcher must envision their study by considering the methods, mechanisms, and tools they will use during the research stages.

The method is also defined as "a set of general rules and systems established to reach acceptable facts about the phenomenon under study; in other words, it is the approach the researcher employs to solve the research problem. Undoubtedly, such a method varies depending on the research problem." This study adopts a descriptive-analytical method, particularly suited to examining problems related to human sciences, as it is a scientific, organized way of analysis and interpretation based on a field study of the phenomenon.

Study tools:

To address the topic of the study, we used a questionnaire to collect data from the study sample. The instrument consists of four sections: personal information of the respondents, population growth, resource scarcity and depletion, and environmental development. The questionnaire included 46 statements, structured according to a three-point Likert scale, as shown in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1: Intensity of Responses to the Scale Dimensions

Opinions	disagree	neutral	agree
Coding	1	2	3

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS 26

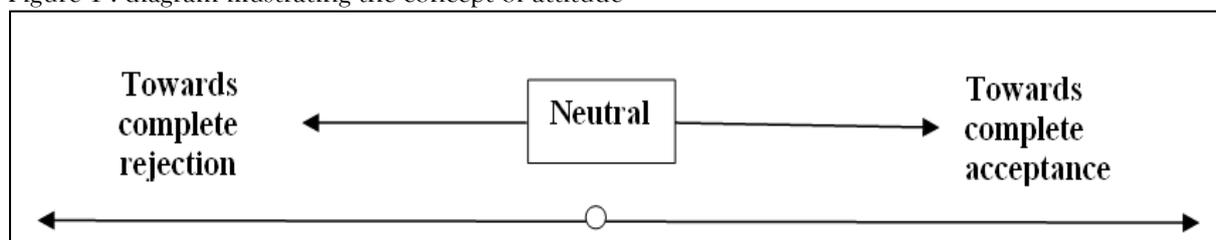
Study Fields:**Spatial and Temporal Scope:**

The questionnaire measuring students' attitudes toward the environment and environmental development was administered at Akli Mohand Oulhadj University in Bouira. The study was conducted during June 2024.

Theoretical Framework of the Study:**Concepts of the Study:**

- **Attitude:** The term "attitude" derives from the Italian word *Attitudine*, which comes from the Latin *Aptitudo*, meaning mental and nervous readiness. Attitudes are organized through a person's experience to exert a guiding or interactive influence. It is defined as "a relatively stable acquired psychological readiness that directs an individual's feelings and behavior toward stimuli around them." It is also described as "a state of mental and nervous preparedness organized by previous experience, which directs an individual's responses toward all related subjects or situations." According to Allport, attitude is a state of mental and nervous readiness that carries a positive or negative character toward a thing, position, idea, or similar, with a predisposition to respond in a predetermined way to such matters or anything related to them.
- Attitude is used to describe the correlation of multiple positive or negative responses of an individual toward people, objects, topics, situations, or symbols. Social researchers conceptualize attitude as a line extending between two points: one representing maximum acceptance related to the attitude and the other representing maximum rejection of the subject. This is summarized in the following figure (Figure 1).

Figure 1 : diagram illustrating the concept of attitude



Source: Ahmad Yakoub Al-Nour, 2007, p. 286.

Definition of Environment:

Ibn Mandhour in *Lisan al-Arab* explains that the root of the word environment (Arabic: *bi'ah*) comes from the verb "bā'a" meaning to return or settle, as in "taba'atu manzilan" meaning to settle in a place. The Quranic verse "And those who have settled in the home and faith" (Surah Al-Hashr, 59:9) uses this root to signify making a place one's abode. The term *bi'ah* thus refers to a condition or state, often related to a dwelling or environment, which can be good or bad.

Environment means the surrounding natural and economic elements around humans. The Stockholm Conference defined the environment as the stock of physical and social resources available at a certain time and place to satisfy human needs and aspirations.

The environment consists of two main components:

- **Natural Element:** This includes all natural components that exist independently of human presence on Earth's surface, such as water, air, soil, seas, oceans, plants, animals, and their interactions including wind cycles and life cycles. It also encompasses renewable natural resources like agriculture, fisheries, and forests, as well as non-renewable resources like minerals and petroleum.
- **Artificial (or Man-made) Element:** This includes social factors such as social, political, economic, cultural, and administrative systems established by humans to organize life and manage activities and social relations within the natural environment. It also includes tools and means invented by humans to

control nature, as well as all human constructions in the biosphere like cities, roads, factories, airports, and transportation - essentially all human activities within the environment.

Definition of Development:

The dimensions and aspects of development are interconnected and interactive. As a result of this interaction and diversity, many attempts have been made to provide a clear definition of development. Some link it to the economic dimension, others to the social dimension, and still others to cultural and political dimensions. Economists focus on the economic aspect, while social thinkers emphasize the social aspect in defining development. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine economic development in the presence of administrative, political, social, or cultural backwardness, which involves a complex network of political, economic, administrative, cultural, and social factors.

Development represents progress occurring in various life domains to improve economic, social, or political conditions. This helps clarify a precise concept of development as a continuous, accelerated, and cumulative increase over time. Another concept of development is the ability of a society to rely on itself and develop the capacities of its members, with an emphasis on prioritizing the mobilization of local resources, manufacturing production tools and equipment, and building a local scientific and technological base. This includes disseminating knowledge, developing skills, and qualifying human resources capable of contributing to achieving development.

Definition of Environmental Development:

Environmental development refers to the promotion of sustainable practices, efforts to preserve the environment, and the responsible management of natural resources to ensure the well-being of both the environment and the people who depend on it. It is a holistic approach that integrates environmental considerations into various human activities, including economic development, social progress, and technological advancement.

Definition of University Student:

A university student is defined as any individual registered and enrolled in the database of Colonel Akli Mohand Oulhadj University in Bouira across different levels and specializations during the academic year 2023–2024.

Relationship Between Population Growth and the Environment:

The relationship between population growth and environmental resources has occupied the thoughts of many researchers, and philosophers across different civilizations and affiliations. For example, Chinese philosophers, led by Confucius (551–479 BCE), believed that rapid population growth leads to a decrease in production per unit area (the law of diminishing returns). This means that productivity declines as the number of workers increases, causing "land fatigue," which in turn lowers living standards and leads to social tensions.

This perspective differs from that of the Greeks, who linked population issues to their social and political conceptions of the city-state, aiming to find a political and social balance. Aristotle (384–322 BCE), in his work *The Laws*, set the number of citizens at 5,040. The Romans, aiming to build an empire "on which the sun never sets," favored population growth as the only means to renew their army and tax revenues. In this context, Julius Caesar's agrarian law of 59 BCE distributed farmland free to fathers with three or more children.

In modern times, Robert Malthus (1766–1834) was among the most pessimistic about population growth. He focused on the relationship between population size and production and its impact on living standards. Malthus proposed that population grows geometrically while agricultural production grows arithmetically, leading to a ratio of population to resources reaching 256:9 within two centuries. Consequently, agricultural production cannot keep pace with population growth, concluding that population is the primary cause of poverty rather than the nature or forms of government.

Problem of Population Growth:

The world has witnessed remarkable population growth. Initially, population growth was relatively slow, taking about half a million years to reach the first billion, which was achieved around 1800 AD. After that, the growth rate accelerated: it took 130 years to reach 2 billion by 1930, 30 years to reach 3 billion, and just over 15 years to reach 4 billion. By 1987, the global population reached 5 billion, followed by the 6th billion in 1997, the 7th billion in 2011, and the 8th billion in 2023. It is projected to reach 10 billion by 2050.

This rapid increase has exacerbated problems related to food security, poverty, and famine, as fast population growth places increasing pressure on natural resources worldwide. The growing population

not only increases the demand for food but also impacts all components of the natural environment, leading to crises in energy, overcrowding, and pollution of water, air, and soil.

Problem of Resource Depletion:

Resource depletion refers to the reduction or disappearance of resources within an ecosystem. This leads to an imbalance between available resources and the needs required to sustain human life. The issue is often caused by a lack or absence of awareness regarding the consumption of available resources. Irrational exploitation of resources causes imbalances and unequal distribution, especially since many natural resources are non-renewable.

The rate at which humans deplete natural resources to achieve prosperity exceeds the ecosystem's capacity to restore balance, inevitably creating a gap between consumption rates and the environment's ability to regenerate. Experts have repeatedly confirmed that human exploitation of natural resources surpasses the Earth's capacity for renewal.

Excessive consumption of certain minerals and resources results in gas emissions and the spread of diseases related to resource use. High consumption rates of fuels and petroleum products increase emissions, contributing to the greenhouse effect, which raises the Earth's temperature, leading to ice melting and rising sea levels. This rise threatens to flood many coastal cities.

Fieldwork:

Study Sample:

The study sample consisted of 200 male and female students from the Faculty of Social Sciences at Akli Mohand Oulhadj University in Bouira. They were selected through a random sampling method. The following table shows the distribution of the study sample according to the studied variables.

Table 2: distribution of sample units by gender and place of residence

gender	Male	female	Total
Duplicates	88	112	200
Percentage (%)	44	56	100
place of residence	Urban	rural	total
Duplicates	119	81	200
Percentage (%)	59,5	40,5	100

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS 26

Presentation of Results:

Test of Normality:

To select the appropriate statistical test, it was first necessary to assess the normality of the distribution for the dependent variable, which is the attitude toward the environment and environmental development. For this purpose, we used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The test results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Results of the Normality Test

	Total
Sample size	200
Test value	0,062
Statistical significance	0,061

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS 26 software.

Based on the values in the table above (Table 3), we observe that the significance value is 0.061, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the values of the dependent variable (attitude toward the environment and environmental development) are normally distributed.

First: Results Related to the First Hypothesis:

Since the dependent variable is normally distributed, parametric tests are appropriate. When examining differences in attitude according to the independent variables of gender and place of residence, we use the Student's t-test for differences in means because the independent variable (gender) has two categories (male, female). Based on this, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis Formulation:

- H0: There are no statistically significant differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development related to gender.
- H1: There are statistically significant differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development related to gender.

Regarding Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, the value was 1.566 with a significance level of 0.212, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis of equal variances and rely on the values in the first row of Table 4.

Reading the values in this row:

The t-test value for differences between means was -0.266 with a significance level of 0.790, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we reject the alternative hypothesis that there are statistically significant differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development related to gender.

Table 4: Results of the t-test for Significance of Differences in Scale Dimensions According to Gender Variable.

		Levent test of homogeneity of variances		T test to equalize arithmetic means		
		Test value	Statistical significance	Test value	Freedom degree	Statistical significance
Attitudes towards environment and environmental development	Equality of variances hypothesis	1,566	0,212	-0,266	198	0,790
	Unequality of variances hypothesis			-0,264	178,572	0,792

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS 26 software

The results of the test for differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental education show that there are no differences between the two genders in the study sample. The concept of the environment and the participants' views on environmental development do not differ between males and females. This similarity in attitudes between genders can be attributed to several reasons, summarized as follows:

- The study population consists of university students; therefore, the concepts and intellectual acquisitions related to the study topic are similar among both males and females, as they receive knowledge at the same pace.
- The absence of significant individual differences between genders in all aspects of life, due to women's entry into the workforce in fields that were previously male-dominated, which has increased women's knowledge in related topics.
- The high educational level of women, supported by the widespread and horizontal expansion of educational institutions across different educational stages, which has enhanced women's opportunities to learn and acquire scientific knowledge used in daily life.

Second: Results Related to the Second Hypothesis:

We use the Student's t-test for differences in means because the independent variable (place of residence) has two categories (urban, rural). Based on this, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis Formulation:

- H0: There are no statistically significant differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development related to place of residence.
- H1: There are statistically significant differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development related to place of residence.

Results of the t-test for Significance of Differences in Scale Dimensions According to Place of Residence Variable:

Levene's test for homogeneity of variances yielded a value of 2.489 with a significance level of 0.116, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis of equal variances and rely on the values in the first row of Table 5.

Reading the values in this row:

- The t-test value for differences between means was -0.818 with a significance level of 0.415, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we reject the alternative hypothesis that there are statistically significant

differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development related to place of residence.

Table 5: Results of the t-test for Significance of Differences in Scale Dimensions According to Place of Residence Variable.

		Levent test of homogeneity of variances		T test to equalize arithmetic means		
		Test value	Statistical significance	Test value	Freedom degree	Statistical significance
Attitudes towards environment and environmental development	Equality of variances hypothesis	2,489	0,116	-0,818	198	0,415
	Unequality of variances hypothesis			-0,838	185,711	0,403

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS 26 software

Based on our reading of the results in Table 5 above, we conclude that there are no differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental education related to the variable of place of residence. This can be explained by the similarity in perspectives between individuals living in urban areas and those in rural areas, as both groups value the environment in their lives. Urban residents prefer their environment to be clean and free of dirt. They also seek green spaces that allow them to relax, spend leisure time, and provide safe play areas for children, especially since urban housing is often cramped and does not accommodate all life activities. For them, the environment represents an ideal refuge that must be preserved. Meanwhile, rural residents clearly understand that an environment rich in natural resources such as water, soil, and green spaces is an indispensable source of livelihood. Consequently, they are well aware of the importance of this environment for all rural inhabitants, who rely on it in their daily lives and sustenance.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS:

Regarding differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development among the study sample based on gender and place of residence, the results showed no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) according to the study variables. The absence of differences in attitudes toward environmental engagement among students can be explained by several factors, summarized as follows:

Regarding Gender:

The lack of statistically significant differences in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development based on gender is due to the convergence of interests and living conditions among students (both male and female). We now witness similar lifestyles and shared participation in activities and interests regardless of gender.

Additionally, students today actively participate in scientific clubs, organizations, and associations that include both genders together. These circumstances have relatively equalized attitudes toward the environment between males and females, especially since we live in a generation where gender distinctions in many life areas are minimal, unlike in the past when information was restricted to certain groups, creating differences in opinions and attitudes.

Regarding Place of Residence:

No statistically significant differences were recorded in attitudes toward the environment and environmental development between urban and rural areas. This is attributed to several factors, most importantly:

- The convergence in recent years of living conditions and development between the two areas, as rural areas have benefited from several development programs that helped eliminate previous disparities with urban areas. This was achieved through large development projects such as the Highlands and Isolated Areas Project, which significantly contributed to reducing social disparities between urban and rural areas in sectors like roads and transportation.
- The widespread influence of communication means (the Internet), which has greatly contributed to the simultaneous dissemination of information to all members of society.

- The increase in rural population, leading to more housing and higher demand for services, with some villages evolving into secondary population centers resembling urban neighborhoods to a large extent.

CONCLUSION:

Through our study of this topic, we have sought to highlight the importance of the environment we live in for the members of society. The issue of the environment is far greater than merely viewing it as a surrounding in which we live and exploit its resources without appreciation or rationality. We all individuals and institutions, peoples and governments-must seriously strive to find solutions to the environmental problems that surround us, which will cause us losses if we fail to limit them and to curb the depletion of natural resources without considering the rights of future generations.

Therefore, we must act according to effective environmental policies that can contribute to eradicating poverty and illiteracy, and to caring for the health and well-being of individuals. Since the environment cannot be seen as an independent entity in itself, but rather as a social practice that inevitably involves all members of society in one way or another, it has become necessary for governments to help spread environmental awareness among the people and guide them on the proper ways to interact with and preserve their environment.

Based on the above, we recommend the following:

- Intensify efforts to protect the environment;
- Implement the outcomes of international forums related to sustainable development;
- Make environmental conservation a collective behavior adopted by all members of society;
- Actively address environmental problems as an integral part of the growth process.

If you need this in a more formal or simplified style, just let me know!

Attached :

Questionnaire to measure Algerian youth's trend towards the environment and environmental education

First axis: demographic variables.

Sex: Male Female

Age: Year

Accommodation Center : Rural Urban

Educational Level: Bachelor Master Doctorate

Second theme : Population growth	disagree	Neutral	Agree
I think population growth does not affect the exploitation of the environment's resources.			
I find that increasing the world's population accelerates the process of development			
I don't think there's a correlation between population growth and resource scarcity.			
I am not afraid of the degradation of the ecosystem as a result of population growth			
I find that increasing population increases the world's poverty rate.			
I think increasing the population affects green spaces.			
I don't think population growth is affecting the deterioration of the social environment.			
I find a tendency to know the relationship between increasing family members and feeling comfortable in the social environment			
I find no correlation between the rapid growth of the world's population and the lack of forests			
I believe that rapid population growth has led to an even greater ozone hole.			
I feel there is a correlation between rapid population growth and damage to environmental balance.			
I don't think the high population density in poor countries depletes their resources.			

I find that high population density results in heavy land use and damage to the environment			
I think high density does not lead to a high rate of waste polluting the environment.			
I have no connection between increasing population size and worsening economic problems in developing countries.			
I think the unequal distribution of the population has put pressure on some countries' environmental resources.			
Theme III: Resource scarcity and depletion			
I think the scarcity of resources is caused by my saying in nature			
I don't find a tendency to make a big use of resources.			
I find in myself the desire to strike a balance in investing resources			
I don't think the scarcity of resources is caused by human abuse.			
I find that expanding the exploitation of resources is a natural right of man.			
It is necessary to strike a balance in the exploitation of the environment's resources			
I don't tend to think that future generations have the right to resources.			
I feel like contributing to solving the lack of resources.			
I think human beings can overcome the problem of lack of resources.			
I find the scarcity of resources a global problem that must be addressed internationally.			
I don't think states can tackle the lack of resources.			
I find it necessary to solve the problem of resource scarcity by finding alternatives to it			
I don't think the irrational exploitation of resources is why I said it.			
I think the scarcity of water is caused by its invalidity as a result of pollution.			
Human damage to forests does not lead to major climate changes			
I don't think the unequal distribution of resources is one of the causes of contamination of the social environment.			
Theme IV: Environmental development			
I think sustainable resource development doesn't help to get rid of famine.			
I find a tendency to contribute to the development of natural resources			
I think the problem of development is not getting attention in the geographical curriculum.			
I have no idea how to invest and develop resources			
I do not tend to synchronize the process of sustainable development with the continued exploitation of resources			
I don't think natural resource development provides a solution to the problem of population growth.			
I find that resource development guarantees generations' right to natural resources.			
I find that sustainable development of resources can only be achieved through education			
I feel like developing green spaces to improve the environment			
I think sustainable resource development is detrimental to the environment.			
I don't think development increases human well-being at the expense of the environment.			
There is no correlation between development and resource scarcity			

I find it necessary to develop development plans based on environmental considerations			
I think the development of forests or the increase in their area leads to an improvement in the environmental situation. I make no difference between the concept of development and sustainable development			

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