

# ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND BEHAVIOR OF PEOPLE IN TURKEY'S MEDITERRANEAN

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**Abstract:** The environment is a biological, physical, social, economic and cultural environment in which living and lifeless beings live, maintain and interact (Cepel, 1995). Therefore, the environment is vital for all living creatures. It should be noted that the sooner the environmental hazards are recognized and the sooner solution can be reached, the more secure and healthy the future social life will be.

In this study it was investigated, how the people living in Turkey's Mediterranean region think about the environment, how they usually behave to their environment, and their awareness. This study was conducted by face to face questionnaire survey method with 370 randomly selected people. 201 of them were female, 169 of them were male and the average age was 36.

71 % of them have high school and lower education level. It was determined that 70,7% of the individuals used an energy saving tools and 64.3% of these do not run the washing machine before it is filled to save water. 52.4 % of the participants do not believe that changing their way of the life would solve the environmental problems. 33.2 % of individuals emphasized that environmental problems affect their health. While 50.5% of the individuals stated that they would welcome the increase in the water bill to be taken against water pollution, 49.5% did not respond positively, even if it prevents water pollution.

**Key Words:** Turkey's Mediterranean, Environment, Economy, Behavior

## Introduction

Human and nature have interacted with each other throughout history. In the beginning while nature directs humans, in the later ages human has started to direct the nature. The rapid, distorted and unhealthy development of cities, as well as the problems of urban identity created by urbanization causes the loss of historical, cultural, and natural values and all this make it impossible to sustain these values (Keleş, 2007: 45-46, Mengi, 2007: 47-49). It is also the person who harms the environment and protects and develops it and humans can do many things to protect and keep available resources as they continue to advance in science and technology. Respect for the environment should be perceived as a result of human respect for himself and his humanity. Hence environmental awareness should be institutionalized within the framework of culture as it is an expression of the sense of solidarity and responsibility towards future generations (Keleş, 1987:87).

Although it is very new to deal with the impact of human activities on the natural environment, the problem of the environment is increasingly being of interest to international and national organizations (Meadows ve ark., 1990; Beck, 1990). In order to prevent environmental pollution, each country should participate in environmental protection policies.

Efforts to prevent pollution, national and international efforts to protect resources aims to human being as well as the rational use of resources and natural life aims to not lose balance.

The protection of degraded and polluted resources will be ensured through awareness and the awareness and understanding will be provided only through research and education (Asmaz, 1995).

In light of the growing environmental problems, the need to tackle these problems is becoming a great importance. Therefore "The solution of environmental problem" is only possible when people become sensitive to these problems.

In other words people's knowledge and awareness needs to be increased to focus more on environmental protection. It can be said that people can contribute to the protection of the environment through their environmentally friendliness behaviors and environmental awareness. Environmental awareness is to be aware of the importance of urban and environmental resources. In other words, environmental awareness means to being able to evaluate the effect of the bad use of natural sources to environment to itself and to future generations, and to have knowledge about it.

Mankind should avoid actions that can be considered a crime against the city, stone, nature, and the cultural accumulation of society (Keleş, 2005:16), and be aware of its responsibility towards nature and other living things.

In summary, environmental awareness means that the individual should respect both himself/herself and nature without forgetting the past, present and future. (Türküm, 1998:172).

In this study it was investigated, how the people living in Turkey's Mediterranean region think about the environment, how they usually behave to their environment, and their awareness.

## **Material and Method**

The main material of the study consists of data obtained from face-to-face surveys with randomly selected individuals who living in Turkey's Mediterranean region in Izmir, Manisa and Aydın provinces, in urban areas.

In this study was investigated, how the people living in Turkey's Mediterranean region, think about environment, how they usually behave to their environment and their awareness.

This study was conducted by face to face questionnaire survey method with 370 randomly selected people. For the data obtained from the study, a database was created in the appropriate package program and data entry was provided. Afterwards, various analyzes such as frequency tables, percentage calculations, average, and standard deviation were performed.

## **Research Findings**

### **Socio-Economic Factors**

The data showing the socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics of the individuals participating in this research study are given in Table 1.

In this study, 169 of the individuals were male and 201 were female and the average age was 36.08. Beside this, 71 % of the individuals participating in this research have high school and lower education level. According to the data obtained, 71% of the individuals who participated in this study has high school or less education level.

The distribution of the number of family members of the individuals is divided into 6 groups and is shown in Table 1.

While 31 of the participants (8,4%) were living alone, 86 participants (23,2%) has 2, 93 participants (25,1%) has 3, 101 participants (27,3%) has 4, 32 participants (8,6%) has 5 and 27 participants (6,5%) has 6 or more family members. The average number of family members living in the household is 3.27, this value is a close value to the average (3.4) of Turkey (TUİK, 2017). When the monthly income of the participants was examined, 143 (38,6%) of them stated that they were low, 222 (60%) of them were middle and only 5 (1,4%) of them were high incomes (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Socio-Economic Characteristics of Individuals

Features	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	201	54,3
Male	169	45,7
Total	370	100,0
<b>Age Groups</b>		
18-24	90	24,3
25-34	106	28,6
35-44	78	21,1
45 and above	96	25,9
Total	370	100,0
<b>Education level</b>		
Literate	3	0,8
Primary school	76	20,5
Middle School	9	6,8
High school	164	44,3
University and above	107	29
Total	370	100,0
<b>Number of Family Individuals</b>		
1	31	8,4
2	86	23,2
3	93	25,1
4	101	27,3
5	32	8,6
6 and above	27	6,5
Total	370	100,0
<b>Level of Income</b>		
Low	143	38,6
Middle	222	60
High	5	1,4
Total	370	100,0

### Energy-Saving

In order to understand the attitudes of the participants about energy saving, they were asked whether they use energy saving bulbs and low consumption devices. It was determined that 63.5% of individuals use energy saving bulbs and 70,7% of the individuals used an energy saving tools that would save energy in order not to harm the environment.

In addition, when 370 people are asked if you are running your washing machine before it is full to save water, 64.3% of them stated that they do not run the washing machine before it is filled to save water. While 50.5% of the individuals stated that they would welcome the increase in the water bill to be taken against water pollution, 49.5% did not respond positively, even if it prevents water pollution.

### Individuals Perceptions on Environmental Issues

In this study, to reveal the attitudes about the environmental issue of the individuals living in the Turkey's Mediterranean region and their thoughts about the environment some questions such as impact of environmental problems on health, the compatibility of food and products for health and environment, about believing that environmental problems will be solved without changing the way of life etc. were asked and the findings obtained are given in Table 2. While 33.2% of the participants stated that environmental problems affect their health very much, 6.8% stated that they did not. The average is 2.01 and the standard deviation is 0.900. When the health of food and products were asked to the individuals, 4 (1,1%) of them stated they are very suitable, 24 (6,5%) stated suitable, 65 (17,6%) stated middle, 140 (37,8%) stated tolerable and 137 (37%) participants stated they are not suitable. The average is 4.03 and the standard deviation is 0.951.

On the other hand, to the question 'the suitability of food and products to the environment' 28 (7,6%) participants stated they are very suitable and appropriate 140 (37,8%) participants stated tolerable and 137 (37%) participants stated they are not suitable. The average is 4.04 and the standard deviation is 0.899. Whereas 52,4 % of the participants do not believe changing their way of the life would solve the environmental problems. On the other hand, when we asked how much they agree with the sentence 'if we continue like now, we are going to environmental disaster', 78 of participants (21.1%) completely agreed, 126 participants (34.1%) agreed, 98 participants (26.5%) partially agreed , 41 participants disagreed (11.1%) and 27 (7.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The average is 2.49 and the standard deviation is 1.155 (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Perspectives of Interviewed Individuals on Environmental Issues

<b>Impact of environmental problems on Health (average) 2,01 (0,900)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Very effective	123	33,2
Effective	146	39,5
Low Effective	76	20,5
ineffective	25	6,8
Total	370	100,0
<b>The health of food and products (average) 4,03 (0,951)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Very suitable	4	1,1
Suitable	24	6,5
Middle	65	17,6
Tolerable	140	37,8
Not Suitable	137	37
Total	370	100,0
<b>The suitability of food and products to the environment (average) 4,04 (0,899)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Very suitable	3	0,8
Suitable	18	4,9
Middle	71	19,2
Tolerable	149	40,3
Not Suitable	129	34,9
Total	370	100,0
<b>If we continue like now, we are going to environmental disaster (average) 2,49 (1,155)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Totally agree	78	21,1
Greatly agree	126	34,1
Partially agree	98	26,5
Disagree	41	11,1
Strongly disagreed	27	7,3
Total	370	100,0
<b>Changing the way of the life would solve the environmental problems (average) 3,37 (1,295)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Totally agree	34	9,2
Greatly agree	67	18,1
Partially agree	93	25,1
Disagree	79	21,4
Strongly disagreed	97	26,2
Total	370	100,0

<sup>a</sup> Standard deviations are given in parentheses.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

As the number of human species in the world increases their needs have also increased. The main human damages to nature are; advanced technology productions, destroying places where previously used as agricultural areas, polluting the areas they live in and consume natural resources (Türküm, 1998). This caused deterioration in the harmony of the natural environment.

Mankind has used unlimited the opportunities offered by nature during the struggle for existence in the universe (Şimşek, 2004). Again, people will be able to find solutions to various environmental problems caused by humans.

In recent years, people have become more sensitive to both the environment and the products they consume. People have begun to pay attention to the use of electricity, water consumption, energy-saving bulbs, low-consumption tools and to the use of environmentally and health-friendly products. They have started to contribute to the solution of the problems by using the complaint lines in consumer arbitration committees and municipalities.

In addition, in order to increase environmental awareness and environmental awareness, it is recommended to include applied environmental education in the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education. Other individuals in the society should be made aware. If necessary, perception of environmental sensitivity should be created by using mass media.

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