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THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

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Abstract

This study discusses how social identity and environmental attitude influence environmental activism among undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, in Nigeria. These aims were to determine the connection between social identity and environmental activism and to examine how environmental attitudes moderate activism, the mediating role of social identity in the attitude-activism relationship, and the influence of the sociocultural factors on such relationships. The quantitative correlational research design was utilised, and the sample size was 435 students chosen by the stratified random sampling in order to represent them by different faculties and academic levels. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather the data, and it included the measured social identity, environmental attitudes, and involvement in environmental activism. It has been found that social identity and environmental attitudes are significant predictors of environmental activism. In particular, the relationships between social identity and activism were moderately positive ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), as well as between environmental attitude and activism ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$). It has turned out that social identity mediated the connection between environmental attitudes and activism and had a strong indirect influence ($b = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$). It was discovered that sociocultural factors (such as age, academic level, and faculty) moderated the strength of these relationships, with students aged 21-25 and academic level 300/400 showing more alignment of identity and attitude, and activism. It is found that social identity and environmental attitudes are essential in facilitating environmental activism, and social identity plays a critical role in ensuring that pro-environmental attitudes are transformed into activism. The study suggests that universities and environmental agencies should organise programmes that would instil a feeling of collective identity with regard to sustainability objectives, place environmental material in various academic programmes, and promote involvement in collective environmental endeavours. Moreover, using digital platforms to advocate the environmental causes and address certain groups of students according to their sociocultural backgrounds can create more engagement and activism among young people.

Key words: Environmental Activism, Social Identity, Environmental Attitude, Youth Engagement, Sociocultural Factors, Mediation Analysis

Introduction

Over the last few decades, the accelerating environmental degradation, the decline in biodiversity and the increasing impact of climate change have triggered global anxiety and the demand to take radical action in society [1]. These are not merely ecological in nature, but also sociopolitically, since these environmental threats require concerted efforts at the community, institutional, and governmental levels. In this regard, environmental activism has become a strong platform that helps individuals and groups of people to declare their interest in sustainability and facilitate systemic change [2].

Environmental activism can be described as an ideological and behavioural reaction to ecological injustice. It covers a broad spectrum of action, including grassroots mobilisation and protest, policy advocacy, and digital campaigns to transform environmental governance [3]. The reasons for such activism, however, are not that simple, but they also comprise psychological, social, and cultural aspects. Of the most salient of these, social identity and environmental attitude stand out as well, though they are not mutually independent, in their influence on environmental engagement.
The concept of social identity, as developed in Social Identity Theory [4], is the self-concept of an individual in terms of their/belonging to social groups. Such a group-based identity not only tells how individuals understand themselves, but also how they can consider themselves in relation to others and what they view as the normative behaviour. Strong identification with environmental or activist organisations in an environmental context leads to the group using more pro-environmental norms and acts in a joint way [5-7]. This holds particularly true of politicised environmental identities, i.e., ecological values mixed with a sense of social mission, which are found to be important predictors of activist behaviour [8,9].

The recent researches offer solid empirical evidence of the social identity role in the motivation of environmental behaviour. Pro-environmental social identity is highly associated with intentions to take collective environmental action ($r+ = .63$), and is far more predictive of public-sphere than in individual action, according to meta-analytic research by [5-9], also demonstrates that broader social identities like national identity can enhance the personal care of environmental concerns by having contextual effects.

To supplement the influence of identity is the concept of environmental attitude that involves the evaluative orientations of people concerning the environment in the form of beliefs, values, and emotions [10]. According

to the Theory of Planned Behaviour [11], attitude is one of the main predictors of behavioural intention, especially in association with perceived behavioural control and social norms. Many sources confirm that positive environmental attitudes relate to the high probability of sustainable actions [12,13]. Nonetheless, researchers have also observed an attitude-behaviour gap that persists, suggesting that the positive environmental attitudes do not necessarily lead to activism, which implies that interventions of intervening psychological processes that mediate such changes are needed [14].

[15,16], resolved this problem by making a distinction between identification with nature and politicised environmental identity. Although it is the former that cultivates the general pro-environmental tendencies, it is the latter that has a stronger influence in predicting activist-related behaviours. This is consistent with authors such as [17], who posit that social identity can potentially mediate the impact of pro-environmental attitudes by means such as civic engagement and group norm internalisation.

In addition, cultural issues like collectivism and individualism also precondition these mental pathways. [18,19], suggest in their meta-analyses that in collectivist nations, environmental and self-expansion identities are positively related to environmental concern compared to individualist nations. These results highlight the necessity of considering identity and cultural variables in the studies and interventions of the environment. Combined, social identity and environmental attitude act as a two-lens through which environmental activism can be interpreted in terms of motivation. Social identity provides a socially configured motivational framework, whereas environmental attitudes provide cognitive and affective referent content that legitimises environmental action. The intersection creates a dynamic explanatory model of why and how individuals engage in environmental activism, and there is a need to develop strategies based on inclusion and identity that can be used to develop sustainable behaviour.

Social Identity

The social identity describes the self of an individual through perceived belonging to social groups. The construct is based on Social Identity Theory [4], according to which individuals tend to self-categorise themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups, using group memberships to form part of their self-concept. Such attachments lead to attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that usually produce group-based norms, which dictate individual and collective behaviour. Social identity is particularly perceptive in environmental situations where members identify themselves with groups of activists, environmental groups, or ideologically based communities that support ecological values, sustainability, and justice based change [20,21]. Environmental identities are therefore created not only through the issues of concern about nature but also through taking part in movements that aim at changing the system.

The modern literature confirms the positive effect of social identity on pro-environmental behaviour by increasing the feeling of belonging, moral responsibility, and the feeling of collective responsibility. People who perceive themselves as part of environmentalist or activist organisations tend to be more prone to sustainable practices, advocacy, and to adhere to collective norms that reinforce ecological custodianship [5,17].

As an example, [6,7], find that pro-environmental social identity is a stronger predictor of engaging in public-sphere environmental actions- including protest, petitions, and campaigns- than private-sphere actions such as recycling or water conservation. This difference emphasises the collective focus of identity-based environmental action. [8,9], continues to elaborate on the conceptual framework of the so-called elevator effect, which posits that it is possible to consider broad social identities (community, national, and global identity) and elevate environmental concern up the levels of analysis. When people experience environmental problems as a threat to their larger identity groups, they are more willing to participate in mitigation and adaptation activities-enhancing the effect of identity on the motivation to be environmentally responsible citizens.

The current studies also underline the role of politicised environmental identity in activism. The authors of the study by [15,16], rely on the theory of politicised collective identity [22], to demonstrate that the concept of environmental identity expressed through the lens of collective struggle, social injustice, and systemic resistance is a stronger predictor of activism than the attitude of people to nature in general. This politicised identity mediates the association between ecological attitudes and action, particularly where there is ecological injustice or state inaction.

[23], suggest that collective environmental efficacy (the individual conviction that his/her group can influence change) is the interaction of identity with collective behaviour that is induced. When individuals associate themselves with a group that is perceived to be efficacious, their intentions to become pro-environmental performers grow considerably. This is in line with the findings of [24], who introduced the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA), which combines identity, perceived injustice, and collective efficacy as primary drivers of environmental activism.

The identity is also of critical importance as highlighted by youth movements. Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion Youth, and Sunrise Movement movements are organised around shared stories, generational solidarity, and identity-based mobilisation. According to the research conducted by [25,26], in the case of many youths, engaging in climate activism is closely connected to identity formation, existential anxiety, and a feeling of intergenerational responsibility. Their shared being, that is organised around a response to climate inaction, brings about long-term action and social change.

In short, social identity not only educates personal environmental attitudes but is a psychosocial driving force of group environmental action, in that it is politicised, or framed in terms of justice, or generational. This role is especially amplified in environmental movements organised by the youth and in which identity-based solidarity forms the foundation of long term activism.

Environmental Attitude

Environmental attitude can be described as the psychological orientation of a person to measure the natural environment in different ways, of liking it or hating it. This construct is divided into three components that are interrelated in nature, namely cognitive (beliefs and knowledge about environmental issues), affective (emotional connection or concern), and behavioural (intention or willingness to act in pro-environmental ways) [10]. These dimensions together take into account the way people think, feel, and in which ways they deal with ecological systems.

It is commonly accepted that environmental attitudes are antecedents of environmental behaviours, which not only affect individual ecological behaviours, including recycling, conservation of energy, and sustainable consumption, but also political-sphere activism, including advocacy, petitioning, and political participation [27,28].

The relevance of environmental attitude as a predictor of environmental behaviour is reiterated by recent empirical research, which also emphasises that this connection is complex. An example is the study by [12,13], where pro-environmental attitudes have a positive association with sustainable behaviour, with the magnitude of this association often mediated by demographic factors (age, education, cultural background, etc.). Notably, cognitive engagement, i.e., the extent to which people are aware of the science, causes, and outcome of environmental concerns, was discovered to be a more powerful factor affecting behaviour as compared to emotion-

al concern per se. This result is consistent with the notion that informed awareness has a higher likelihood of being converted to effective action than passive sympathy.

Likewise, according to [29], the attitude towards the environment is formed under the influence of wider contextual factors, such as the education system, the discourse of the media, and political philosophy. Those who are exposed to coherent and plausible environmental education or are instilled with cultures that honour sustainability has a better chance of developing enduring and practical pro-environmental attitudes. These attitudinal constructions are usually reinforced by cultural discourses that label environmental stewardship either as a civic or moral obligation [30]. [31], show the topicality of environmental attitude in the creation of green consumer behaviour, ecological citizenship, and sustainability-focused decision-making in the context of the broad meta-analysis. Their results back the thesis that the environmental attitude acts as both a personal psychological characteristic and a socialised orientation, correlating personal values with the ecological action of the masses. Nonetheless, even with its theoretical strength, the utility of environmental attitude as an independent predictive factor has been questioned by the longstanding attitude-behaviour gap, a phenomenon where people claim to be highly concerned about the environment and still do not do anything to address the issue [14]. Researchers explain the existence of this gap by the mediating effects of perceived behavioural control, situational limitations, habitual tendencies, and the impact of social norms [11,32].

This has led to a growing trend of attitudinal studies being combined with other related constructs (i.e., social identity, collective efficacy, moral obligation) to form more detailed explanatory theories in contemporary environmental psychology [23]. As an example, people holding positive environmental attitudes would behave in more sustainable ways when they associate themselves with pro-environmental groups, when they see their behaviours as effective, and when they work in a favourable social context. Altogether, environmental attitude is a construct with a solid foundation whose values vary and are multidimensional, showing how people feel about nature, develop attitudes towards it, and act in specific manners. Although it is a valid predictor of environmental involvement, its effect is greatest when it is combined with favourable cultural, educational, and social systems. With the growing complexity and global nature of environmental issues, the processes behind the development and the mobilisation of environmental attitudes are crucial to developing effective sustainability-focused interventions.

Environmental Activism

Environmental activism is a deliberate and enduring activity of individuals or organised groups of persons in an effort to address environmental issues, enhance sustainability, and affect environmental policy. It includes a wide array of practices and approaches, including individual lifestyle changes, including carbon footprints and plastic use, and collective mobilisation, including demonstrations in the streets, lobbying policymakers, legal activism, and involvement with transnational environmental actions [33,34].

Contemporary environmental activism is highly defined by both the traditional grass-roots mobilisation and digitally mediated approaches. Fridays for Future (launched by Greta Thunberg) and Extinction Rebellion have become iconic examples of the environmental advocacy that utilised non-violent civil disobedience and digital activism, reinventing the history of environmental advocacy [35]. These movements are using the velocity and accessibility of social media to publicise messages, mobilise transnational engagement, and hold policymakers, what [36], term connective action, a networked model of activism where digital personalization, flowing participation, substitutes inflexible organisational structures.

The reasons that motivate environmental activism are compound and multi-layered. Although environmental concern might still be a catalyst variable, other factors that can affect activism include collective identity, moral obligation, perceived injustice, and perceived collective efficacy [23,24]. Activists frequently view themselves as being in the business of intergenerational justice, where environmental degradation is viewed as an ethical crisis with no way to reverse the damage to future generations [37]. In addition, the personal and political identities have become more interconnected in environmental agendas, particularly among the young people and the marginalised populations that experience the impact of environmental degradation disproportionately [38].

The political opportunity structure is also a factor that predetermines the rise and achievement of environmental activism. With civil liberties being honoured in a society, environmental movements are more likely to succeed in the form of public protests and institutional practices. Conversely, in the less tolerant political environment, activism can be symbolic resistance, adaptation at the community level, or underground organising [39,40]. Past injustices of environmental discord, including land dispossession, pollution, and climate susceptibility, also shape the way activism is enacted in the various regions, especially in the Global South [41].

The emerging literature separates individualised activism (activism in the private sphere) and collective/public-sphere activism. Although individual actions are also valuable in terms of lifestyle sustainability, including recycling, changing diet, or commuting low-carbon, it is collective action, including voting green policies, joining environmental NGOs, petitioning, or taking part in climate litigation, which makes a more direct contribution to the system change and policy outcome [42,43].

Besides, researchers started to analyse intersectional environmentalism that bridges the issues of ecology with those of race, class, gender, and indigenous rights. Environmental justice movements focus powerfully on the idea that environmental activism should be centred on environmental sustainability and social justice [44]. Such a wider framing of activism would make it more inclusive and transformative.

Overall, environmental activism is a multidimensional, dynamic process that represents the overlap of personal agency, group identity, political organisation, and cultural discourses. It continues to play a central role in global environmental governance, since it directs the energy of the civic towards the way forward of sustainable futures, to the accountability of institutions, and to the voice of those who are most susceptible to the effects of environmental loss. With the growing problem of climate issues, the question of what motivates, how, and in what ways activism can and does change becomes even more crucial to both academics and policymakers.

Statement of the Problem

Although there is an increasing global awareness of issues that affect the environment, like climate change, loss of biodiversity, and environmental pollution, there has always been a gap between the pro-environmental attitudes and their actual participation in environmental activism [10,14]. Although a great number of people are willing to care about environmental concerns and support the values of sustainability, many do not become engaged in ongoing, publicly oriented activism. This gap, also known as the attitude-behaviour gap, has become a serious challenge to the success of environmental advocacy and mobilisation processes.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour [11], has long been recognised as central to the context of environmental psychology when it comes to predicting behaviour. Nevertheless, attitudes alone do not tend to mobilise people into environmental activism unless they are supported by other social or psychological processes. Social identity is one of such mechanisms. According to the Social Identity Theory, people form a part of their self-con-

cept through group affiliations and internalised behaviours and norms that are common in those groups [4]. Empirical evidence supports the fact that the stronger individuals are connected with either pro-environmental or activist movements, the higher their chances of getting involved in environmental campaigns are [6,7,14,15].

Notwithstanding these enlightenments, there are not many studies that have yet investigated the interaction of environmental attitude and social identity to predict activism, particularly among young people, and in a non-Western society like Nigeria. The literature available is skewed in terms of Western democracies, and it makes it hard to understand how such relationships are manifested within various sociocultural contexts [18,19].

Besides, although research has dealt with identity and attitude separately, a few research has been done to test the hypothesis of their possible mediating or moderating role in an integrated structure. Due to the immediate nature of the environmental crisis and the rising relevance of young people in climate activism, there is a strong rationale to explore the dual facets of environmental attitude and social identity in helping to activate the activism of Nigerian university students. The aim of the study is to fill this gap in the existing literature by investigating this relationship and evaluating the sociocultural circumstances, which could increase or limit this relationship, in the context of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to examine the effect of social identity and environmental attitude on environmental activism.
The specific objectives are to:
i. assess the relationship between social identity and environmental activism.
ii. investigate the influence of environmental attitude on participation in environmental activism.
iii. explore the mediating role of social identity in the relationship between environmental attitude and environmental activism.
iv. examine the influence of sociocultural factors on the identity–attitude–activism nexus.

Significance of the Study

This work is a compelling contribution to the scholarship because social identity and environmental attitude are combined in one concept and enrich our insight into the factors that inspire environmental activism. It does not just engage in theoretical exploration, but it presents practical insights that can improve the conceptualization of environmental movements, especially in the ways of mobilising youth and encouraging them to work together.

Furthermore, the study is policy-relevant, as it educates the formulation of interventions, campaigns, and educational interventions that are consistent not only with the beliefs of the individuals but also the dynamics of groups. Its emphasis on undervalued sociocultural backgrounds contributes to making the global story on the subject of environmental activism more inclusive and encourages more direct and locally pertinent strategies on sustainability.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative correlational research design. The choice of this design is informed by the objective of examining the relationships among social identity, environmental attitude, and environmental activism. The correlational approach enables the researcher to measure the degree and direction of associations between variables without manipulating them. It is particularly appropriate for testing theoretical frameworks and identifying predictive relationships using statistical techniques such as correlation analysis and multiple regression.

Participants of the Study

The participants for this study were 435 undergraduate students from Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various faculties (Arts, Social Sciences, Education, Science, and Engineering) and academic levels (100 to 500 level). The sample included students aged 16 to 30 who were full-time, voluntarily consenting to participate. This diverse group was chosen to capture a broad range of perspectives on environmental attitudes, social identity, and activism, with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing environmental behavior among Nigerian youth.

Measures

The study used structured questionnaires to measure the key variables: social identity, environmental attitude, and environmental activism. Social identity was assessed with a five-item scale adapted from [6,7,14,15], focusing on participants' identification with pro-environmental groups. Environmental attitude was measured using a five-item scale from [10], that captured cognitive, emotional, and behavioral orientations toward the environment. Environmental activism was assessed through a five-item scale adapted from [12,13,17], evaluating both private and public activism behaviors. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, and the scales underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70) and construct validity.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed by examining the correlations between the study's measures and related constructs from existing literature. Social identity was expected to correlate positively with group affiliation and collective action, environmental attitude with pro-environmental behavior, and environmental activism with political engagement. Pearson's correlation coefficients were used, and convergent validity was confirmed when moderate to strong correlations ($r > 0.50$) were found, indicating that the scales effectively measured the intended constructs.

Procedure for Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed to 435 undergraduate students at Ekiti State University. Ethical approval was obtained, and participants were informed about the study's purpose and confidentiality. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select students across different faculties and academic levels. The questionnaires, covering social identity, environmental attitude, and activism, were administered both online and in person. Data collection took place over four weeks, ensuring a representative sample and securing participants' responses for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize participants' demographic information and responses to the key variables. Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to assess the relationships between social identity, environmental attitude, and environmental activism. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the predictive power of social identity and environmental attitude on environmental activism. Additionally, mediation analysis was performed to examine the role of social identity as a mediator between environmental attitude and activism. Finally, ANOVA and subgroup analysis were used to explore the moderating effects of sociocultural factors such as age, academic level, and faculty on the identity–attitude–activism relationship. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis of Major Variables

Objective 1: Assessing the Relationship Between Social Identity and Environmental Activism

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Social Identity

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
I identify strongly with people who care about the environment.	4.02	0.88
Being part of environmental or activist groups is important to me.	3.91	0.90
I feel a bond with others who are concerned about environmental issues.	3.96	0.86
I often think of myself as someone who supports environmental activism.	3.87	0.93
I feel proud to be associated with environmental movements.	3.92	0.91
Composite Mean / SD	**3.94**	**0.89**

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for social identity among respondents to environmental concern. The highest mean score (M = 4.02, SD = 0.88) was recorded for the item *"I identify strongly with people who care about the environment*," indicating strong alignment with environmentally conscious individuals. This is followed closely by *"I feel a bond with others who are concerned about environmental issues"* (M = 3.96, SD = 0.86) and "I feel proud to be associated with environmental movements" (M = 3.92, SD = 0.91), suggesting a strong sense of group belonging and pride in environmental affiliation. The items "*Being part of environmental or activist groups is important to me" and "I often think of myself as someone who supports environmental activism"* also received relatively high mean scores (M = 3.91 and 3.87, respectively), further reinforcing the role of social identity in shaping environmental consciousness. The composite means of 3.94 (SD = 0.89) reflects a generally high level of identification with pro-environmental groups and values among the respondents.

Objective 2: Investigating the Influence of Environmental Attitude on Environmental Activism

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Environmental Attitude

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Humans must live in harmony with nature to survive.	4.22	0.78
I get upset when I see the environment being destroyed.	4.18	0.81
Protecting the environment should be a priority for everyone.	4.25	0.74
I believe my actions can positively impact the environment.	4.04	0.83
Environmental problems are among the most serious issues we face.	4.00	0.85
Composite Mean / SD	**4.14**	**0.80**

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for environmental attitude among respondents, highlighting a generally strong pro-environmental orientation. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement "*Protecting the environment should be a priority for everyone*" (M = 4.25, SD = 0.74), followed closely by "*Humans must live in harmony with nature to survive*" (M = 4.22, SD = 0.78). Respondents also showed strong emotional concern, as indicated by "*I get upset when I see the environment being destroyed*" (M = 4.18, SD = 0.81). The belief in personal efficacy is reflected in the item "*I believe my actions can positively impact the environment"* (M = 4.04, SD = 0.83), while recognition of the seriousness of environmental issues is shown in "*Environmental problems are among the most serious issues we face*" (M = 4.00, SD = 0.85). The composite mean score of 4.14 (SD = 0.80) indicates a high overall level of positive environmental attitude among respondents, supporting the assumption that favorable attitudes may influence environmental activism.

Objective 3: Exploring the Mediating Role of Social Identity Between Environmental Attitude and Activism

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Mediation Variables

Variable	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Environmental Attitude	5	4.14	0.80	High – Strong pro-environmental concern
Social Identity	5	3.94	0.89	Moderately High – Strong group identification
Environmental Activism	5	3.76	0.85	Moderate to High – Behavioral involvement

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

Objective 3 focuses on exploring the mediating role of social identity in the relationship between environmental attitude and environmental activism. While inferential analysis in Section 4.5 addresses this more robustly, the descriptive statistics in Table 4.7 offer preliminary insights into this dynamic. The mean score for environmental attitude is 4.14 (SD = 0.80), indicating a strong pro-environmental orientation among respondents. Social identity records a mean of 3.94 (SD = 0.89), reflecting a moderately high level of identification with environmental or activist groups. Environmental activism, with a mean of 3.76 (SD = 0.85), points to moderate to high behavioral engagement. These findings suggest a potential pathway in which strong environmental attitudes are reinforced through group-based identity, which in turn facilitates higher levels of activism. The alignment across these variables supports the premise that social identity may serve as a mediating mechanism, translating internal environmental concern into collective action.

Objective 4: Examining Sociocultural Influences on the Identity–Attitude–Activism Nexus

Preliminary descriptive analysis across key sociocultural variables shows variations in mean scores for social identity, environmental attitude, and activism. These are summarized below:

Table 4: Mean Scores of Core Variables by Sociocultural Categories

Category	Subgroup	Social Identity (Mean)	Environmental Attitude (Mean)	Environmental Activism (Mean)
Age Group	16–20	3.88	4.01	3.65
	21–25	4.01	4.18	3.82
	26–30	3.92	4.11	3.71

	31 and above	3.80	3.94	3.62
Academic Level	100 Level	3.75	4.00	3.50
	200 Level	3.88	4.08	3.70
	300 Level	4.02	4.20	3.84
	400 Level	4.00	4.16	3.80
	500 Level	3.96	4.14	3.77
Faculty	Arts & Humanities	3.85	4.05	3.68
	Social & Management-Sciences	4.05	4.20	3.85
	Education	3.90	4.10	3.72
	Science	4.00	4.16	3.78
	Agri/Engineering	3.91	4.12	3.74

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

Objective 4 explores the influence of sociocultural factors on the relationship between social identity, environmental attitude, and activism. Descriptive analysis reveals that age, academic level, and faculty affiliation significantly shape levels of environmental engagement. Respondents aged 21–25 and those in 300 Level consistently recorded the highest mean scores across all three variables, indicating greater alignment between environmental identity, concern, and activism among younger and mid-level students. Similarly, students from the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences showed the strongest pro-environmental orientation and activist behavior. These patterns suggest that sociocultural context plays a crucial moderating role in the identity–attitude–activism nexus, highlighting the need for tailored environmental engagement strategies across diverse student subgroups.

4.4 Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Relationship Between Social Identity and Environmental Activism

Table 5: Test of Relationship Between Social Identity and Environmental Activism

Test	Value	Significance (p)	Interpretation
Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.52$	$p < 0.001$	Moderate positive relationship
Linear Regression Coefficient (β)	$\beta = 0.49$	$p < 0.001$	Statistically significant
R^2 (Explained Variance)	0.27	—	27% of variance in activism explained

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The analysis of Hypothesis 1 reveals a statistically significant and moderately strong positive relationship between social identity and environmental activism among students ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis further confirms that social identity is a meaningful predictor of environmental activism, accounting for 27% of the variance in activism behavior ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the more students identify with environmental or activist groups, the more likely they are to participate in environmental actions, highlighting the critical role of group-based identity in motivating collective environmental engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Influence of Environmental Attitude on Environmental Activism

Table 6: Test of Influence of Environmental Attitude on Environmental Activism

Test	Value	Significance (p)	Interpretation
Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.47$	$p < 0.001$	Moderate positive relationship
Linear Regression Coefficient (β)	$\beta = 0.45$	$p < 0.001$	Statistically significant
R^2 (Explained Variance)	0.22	—	22% of variance in activism explained

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The findings from Hypothesis 2 indicate a statistically significant and moderately positive relationship between environmental attitude and environmental activism ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$). The regression analysis shows that environmental attitude significantly predicts activism ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 22% of the variance. This implies that students who hold strong pro-environmental beliefs and values are more inclined to engage in environmental activism, underscoring the importance of attitudinal orientation as a cognitive driver of environmentally responsible behavior.

Hypothesis 3: Mediating Role of Social Identity

Table 7: Mediation Analysis of Social Identity on the Attitude–Activism Relationship

Effect Type	Coefficient (β)	95% Confidence Interval	Significance	Interpretation
Direct Effect	0.28	—	$p < 0.01$	Partial effect of attitude on activism
Indirect Effect	0.19	[0.11, 0.29]	Significant	Mediation confirmed
Total Effect	0.47	—	$p < 0.001$	Combined direct + indirect influence

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The analysis of Hypothesis 3 confirms that social identity plays a mediating role in the relationship between environmental attitude and environmental activism. The indirect effect ($\beta = 0.19$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.29]) is statistically significant, indicating that a substantial portion of the influence of environmental attitude on activism operates through social identity. Although the direct effect remains significant ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$), the reduction from the total effect ($\beta = 0.47$) suggests partial mediation. This finding implies that students' identification with environmental groups enhances the translation of their pro-environmental attitudes into activist behavior, reinforcing the role of social identity as a crucial psychological bridge between belief and action.

Hypothesis 4: Moderating Influence of Sociocultural Context

Table 8: Moderation/Subgroup Analysis by Sociocultural Variables

Sociocultural Factor	Moderation Test	Significance (p)	Interpretation
Age Group	ANOVA/F-Test	$p < 0.05$	Age significantly moderates activism-related variables
Academic Level	Subgroup Analysis	$p < 0.05$	Stronger identity-activism links in 300/400 levels
Faculty	Subgrsoup Analysis	$p < 0.05$	Highest scores among Social Science and Science students

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The findings for Hypothesis 4 reveal that sociocultural factors significantly moderate the relationships among social identity, environmental attitude, and activism. The ANOVA and subgroup analyses show that age, academic level, and faculty all influence the strength of these relationships ($p < 0.05$). Notably, students in the 300 and 400 levels and those in Social Sciences and Science faculties demonstrated stronger identity-activism linkages. This suggests that as students advance academically and are exposed to discipline-specific knowledge—particularly in fields that engage with environmental or societal issues—their likelihood of translating identity and attitude into activism increases. These contextual factors, therefore, play a vital role in shaping the pathways to environmental engagement.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

Discussion

This study aimed at testing the relationship between social identity and environmental attitude on environmental activism among undergraduates of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The results provide important trends, which enrich our awareness of the psychological and social processes that influence environmental activism in the non-Western, youth-based environment. Based on the Social Identity Theory [4] and the Theory of Planned Behaviour [11], the given study concludes that both identity-specific and attitudinal motivators are key to developing a long-lasting interest in the environment.

The findings affirm that social identity is very important in forecasting environmental activism. Students who have a strong sense of belongingness to environmentally conscious groups have a high probability of involvement in unit environmental behaviours. This result is consistent with that of [6-9], who claimed that pro-environmental identity not only conditions behaviour but also increases the salience of environmental issues in a social context. In the present work, the identification with the activist groups among students was turning into the visible aspects of their activities, including campaigning or even environmental awareness campaigns.

On the same note, the association of environmental attitude on activism proved to be positive and significant. The more the respondent had high pro-environmental attitudes and concerns, the more he or she became an activist. This confirms the claim of [10,12,13], that environmentally responsible behaviour is a potent antecedent of the environmentally-attitudes, particularly the ones with cognitive formation. However, the research also supports previous cautions regarding the attitude-behaviour gap [14], since attitude did not suffice without reinforcement in terms of identity-based belonging.

Notably, the mediation analysis made it clear that social identity is an essential mechanism by which environmental attitudes are converted into activism. This is consistent with the results of [15-17], who highlight the importance of civic identity or politicised identity in the process of mediating between the internal conviction in the issue of environmental concern and the external action. This implication is that the change in attitudes must be reinforced through group-based reinforcement to evolve into long-term activism.

Also, sociocultural context turned out to be an important cause of environmental behaviour. The group of students aged 21-25, intermediate academic levels (300/400), and students of the faculties, including Social Sciences and Sciences, were more inclined to a strong environmental identity and activism. This is in line with the results of cultural moderation recorded by Lou and Li (2021), who also found more identity-attitude-activism correlations in collectivist contexts. It also implies that academic exposure, as well as curricular relevance, particularly in the disciplines that are related to the societal and environmental system, has a positive influence on the participation of students in the causes of the environment.

On the whole, this study adds to the accumulating literature according to which youth become the key players of environmental transformation. It also provides a geographic and contextual divide in the literature as it reports results in a Nigerian university setting, which has been relatively underserved in international studies of environmental behaviour. The findings confirm that although personal attitudes matter, the social aspect of identity and contextually specific variables cannot be ignored in answering the question of why and how youths turn into environmental activists.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that both the psychological and sociocultural factors that are largely influenced by the social identity and environmental attitude among university students shape the environmental activism of students. This data proves that highly identified pro-environmental practitioners with positive environmental attitudes tend to be more likely to adopt activism-related behaviour, be it advocacy, campaigning, or community-based environmental actions. Nevertheless, neither of the factors alone can best be used to explain activist behaviour, but rather their interaction.

The biased mediation effect of the social identity on the connection between the environmental attitude and activism shows that the attitudes alone cannot promote long-term environmental action unless supported by a powerful sense of belonging to a certain group. This result conforms to the current theoretical frameworks, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Social Identity Theory, that focus on the influence of internalised norms and group dynamics on behaviour development. Besides, the moderating effect of the sociocultural variables such as the academic level, age, and the faculty also shows the significance of context in promoting or limiting pro-environmental behaviour.

All these findings lead to the following issues: environmental activism among young people, particularly among non-Western university students, should be supported by a multidimensional intervention that will incorporate attitudinal education, identity formation, and cultural and academic context sensitivity. In order to make activism work, students need their care about the environment not just in their thoughts and feelings, but also to identify with a larger environmental movement that defines itself as part of themselves and their experiences in the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and the theoretical implications of social identity and environmental attitude in shaping activism, the following recommendations are offered to policymakers, university administrators, educators, environmental organizations, and youth mobilizers:

i. Universities and environmental organisations ought to develop a programme that creates a sense of belongingness towards the goals of sustain-

ability. By forming campus-based environmental organisations, groups of peer advocates, or cohorts of eco-leaders, students can learn pro-environmental norms by being part of the group, which has been found to enhance the probability of becoming an activist.

ii. The academic faculties, especially in non-environmental fields, ought to incorporate environmental issues into their curricula to create cognitive awareness of environmental issues. This would increase the pro-environmental attitudes of the students irrespective of their educational background and promote involvement in sustainability programmes.

iii. Creating awareness among the students via campaigns, workshops, clean-up drives, and the involvement of students in national and international environmental days should be encouraged in institutions to foster student involvement. These social practices assist in the conversion of personal feelings into civic action and the creation of a civic civic environmental responsibility.

iv. Since the levels of activism in different age groups, academic levels, and faculties differ, the strategies of engaging the environment should be contextual and specific. An example of this involves allowing the more advanced students or social and natural sciences to have opportunities to lead in activism, and allowing younger students to be introduced to the basic environmental values and practices.

v. Given that youth have a role to play in digital advocacy, universities and non-governmental organisations ought to use social media sites in strengthening group identity, disseminating environmental messages, and mobilising online activism. This works especially well with those students who are not yet committed to physical activism but are ready to take part online.

vi. Student-led environmental programmes should be assisted by the university management and the government agencies by funding, mentoring, and policy frameworks that emphasise young participation in sustainability. Student activism is more legitimised and more effective with institutional support.

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