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Article

The Sustainable Curricular Experience and Ecological Vision on the Pro-Environmental Behavior of Chilean University Students

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to explain the effect of the sustainable curricular experience on the pro-environmental behavior of Chilean university students, mediated by the new ecological paradigm and moderated by political perception variables. The sample consisted of 750 participants. A modeling analysis was performed by structural equations, observing adequate fit indices ($\chi 2$ = 479.968 gl (146), $p < .001$, RMSEA = .055, CFI = .95, TLI = .94, SRMR = .057). Curricular emphasis had a significant effect on pro-environmental behavior ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$), while instructional practice had no significant effect on it ($\beta = .05$, $p > .05$). The new ecological paradigm had a direct and indirect effect by partially mediating between curricular emphasis and pro-environmental behavior, while the mediation of the new ecological paradigm between instructional practice and pro-environmental behavior was not supported. The student's political ideology and the perceived political tendency of the government with a greater orientation to environmental protection moderated several routes in the structural model. It is suggested to strengthen university education by integrating the pillars of sustainable development in environmental, social and economic matters as a driving force towards pro-environmental behavior of students.

Keywords: education for sustainable development; sustainability consciousness; pro-environmental behavior

1. Introduction

Currently, global problems have become increasingly complex, especially environmental ones; we are experiencing an unprecedented socio-environmental crisis in the context of uncertainty. To address this situation, university education must be aligned with sustainability (Perozo, 2020), adapting its teaching and learning models to promote sustainability curricula that ensure the development of knowledge and skills linked to sustainable education and the promotion of critical thinking among future graduates (Martínez et al., 2023). Precisely, education for SD is a dynamic concept whose effort is based on forming a society with a sustainable mindset (Lin & Li, 2024), as researchers have stated that university experiences can support the psychosocial, emotional, and motivational development of students, which in turn leads to the development of various skills and sustainable literacy (Zhao et al., 2020). From this perspective, it becomes interesting to investigate progress in higher education from a broader view of sustainability, considering the university curricular experience as a factor in a classroom context (Lattuca et al., 2017). A curricular experience that, from a sustainability point of view, can be studied through curricular emphasis and teaching practice, whose dimensions could affect the learning outcomes of students.

While environmental education played an important role among social groups and individuals in raising awareness of the environment and related issues (Kang & Hong, 2021), education, specifically higher education, has undergone a crucial evolution as a catalyst in promoting

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knowledge, skills, and values toward global sustainable development (SD) challenges, contributing to environmental, social, and economic sustainability (Al Husban, 2025). Thus, some researchers argue that there have been significant problems in meeting global SD goals, and that the pro-environmental behavior of university students is a key contributor to achieving them (Wang et al., 2022).

Pro-environmental behavior refers to a wide range of behaviors that generate environmental benefits or prevent environmental damage such as climate change and global biodiversity loss (Berger & Bregulla, 2023). Pro-environmental behavior is conduct that minimizes the negative impact of one's own behavior on the environment, emphasizing the autonomy of actors and reducing damage to the environment and even benefiting it (Tian & Liu, 2022), whose operationalization corresponds to a global measurement of pro-environmental behavior (Olivos et al., 2014) referring to more or less specific behaviors such as recycling, waste management, energy saving, and support for environmental causes (Lange & Dewitte, 2021).

Such behavior could be explained by a set of values, norms, or beliefs. The latter includes the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) (Yan & Jia, 2021), a concept coined by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) to contrast a worldview of environmental degradation with one of balance with nature. The NEP is conceived as a worldview of ecosystems, recognizing ecological limits and human life in harmony with nature (Xiao et al., 2018). This concept is operationalized through an instrument that has been positively associated with environmental identity, connection to nature, general ecological behavior, biocentric values, and inclusion with nature (Davis & Stroink, 2015). An instrument whose high scores, representative of a pro-environmental worldview, have correlated with pro-environmental personal behaviors (Dorward et al., 2024). It is even an instrument that has sometimes played a mediating role between some variables (Yan & Jia, 2021).

In this context, it is important to study the effects that a curricular experience with elements of sustainability, including environmental, social, and economic dimensions, and that plays a more comprehensive role within a higher education context, may have on pro-environmental behavior. However, little is known about this relationship, as the latter concept has been studied mainly within the field of environmental education. It is worth mentioning that environmental education has traditionally focused on changing individual knowingness, attitudes, and behaviors, but challenges remain in understanding the relationship between learning and education that incorporates broader concepts with other dimensions and disciplines (Chao, 2020). The objective of this research is to study the effect of sustainable curricular experience on pro-environmental behavior, mediating between both variables, the NEP. Additionally, the moderating variables of political tendency and the political tendency of the government perceived as providing greater environmental protection are included, since eco-social devastation has an inevitably political dimension (Lehner et al., 2025). This is to contribute to the improvement and updating of public, educational, and curricular policies aimed at regional higher education, focusing on an institution far from the nerve centers of knowledge and political decision-making. In particular, the aim is to contribute to an educational environment that has experienced the impacts of climate change, extreme weather, water shortages, and air pollution. The novelty of this study lies in the fact that the implications of the results could contribute to the understanding of the relationships between an educational experience and pro-environmental behavior, identifying and presenting new perspectives linked to the ecological worldview of university students, the political tendencies of the student body, and their perception of the political tendencies of governments that eventually support environmental protection more. This will promote reflection among all political and educational actors at the regional and national levels.

Some research hypotheses are presented below.

H1: Curricular emphasis has a positive and significant effect on the pro-environmental behavior of higher education students.

H2: Instructional practice has a positive and significant effect on the pro-environmental behavior of higher education students.

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H3: The NEP mediates the relationships between curricular emphasis and the pro-environmental behavior of higher education students.

H4: The NEP mediates the relationship between instructional practice and the pro-environmental behavior of higher education students.

H5: Political ideology significantly moderates the relationships between curricular experiences, the NEP, and the pro-environmental behavior of higher education students.

H6: The political orientation of the government perceived as providing greater environmental protection significantly moderates the relationships between curricular experiences, NEP, and the pro-environmental behavior of higher education students.

The hypothesized research model is presented in Figure 1.

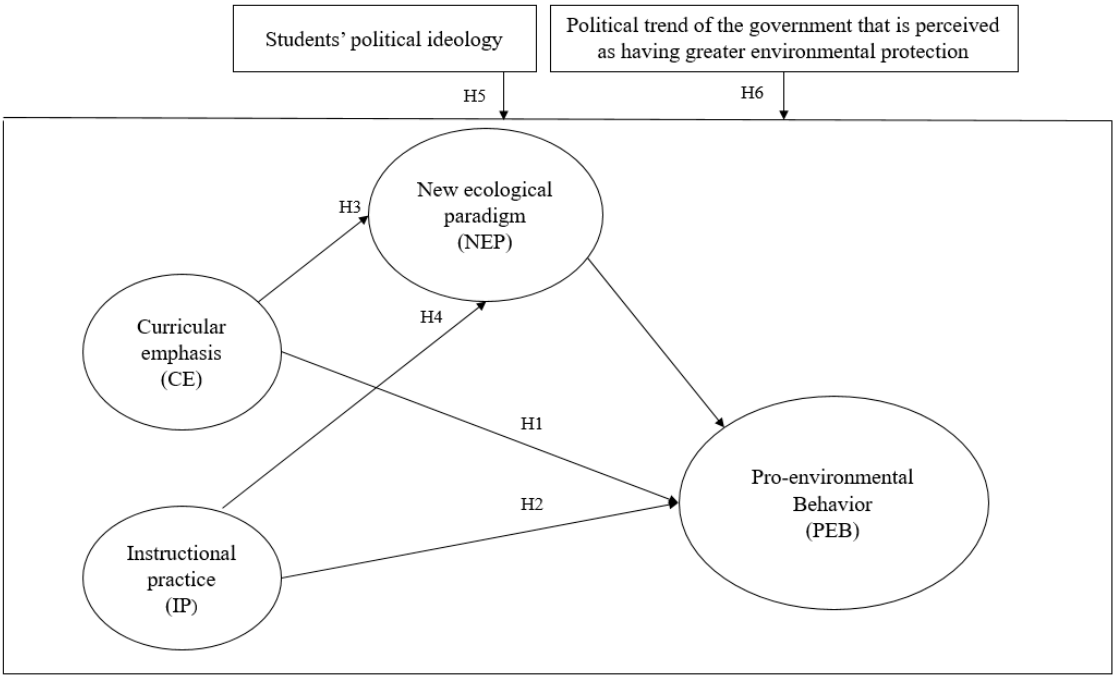

Figure 1. Hypothetical research model.

2. Materials and Methods

To verify the hypotheses proposed, a quantitative study was adapted, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design.

Sample

The sample consisted of 750 students from a university in northern Chile, located in a region characterized by extreme weather conditions, water shortages, air pollution, and the effects of climate change. This was done using a probabilistic sampling method, with 353 (47.07%) identifying as male, 385 (51.33%) as female, and 12 (1.60%) as "other." The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 33, with an average age of 21.

Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of three instruments, which were as follows:

Curricular experience: A scale with a total of eight items was used (Zhao et al., 2020). The instrument consists of the dimensions of curricular emphasis (CE) and instructional practice (IP), with four items each. For curricular emphasis, each item responded to the question: In general, to what extent have the courses you have taken in your study program emphasized each of the following aspects...? Respondents were asked to respond on a Likert scale from 1 (little emphasis) to

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7 (very strong emphasis). For instructional practice, each item responded to the question: In your degree courses, how often did your instructors...? Respondents were asked to answer on a Likert scale from 1 (never) to 7 (always).

Pro-environmental behavior (PEB): A one-dimensional scale with 11 items was used (Olivos et al., 2014). Respondents were asked to answer on a Likert scale, where 1 = (Never) and 7 = (Always).

Ecocentric dimension of the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP). The Spanish version of the scale (Moyano & Palomo 2014) with a total of 15 items was considered, but here only the ecocentric dimension of 8 items was used, which are answered on a Likert scale where 1 = (Strongly disagree) and 7 = (Strongly agree).

Procedures

The procedure for this study involved submitting and obtaining approval for the research from the Scientific Ethics Committee of the university involved. The data was collected via email between October and November 2024, including digital reading and approval of the informed consent form and then completion of the respective questionnaire.

Data analysis tools included descriptive statistics, internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) (Kline, 2016), using coefficients of (χ^2), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) with values greater than .90, standardized residual mean square root (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) less than .08 (Hair et al., 2019). Likewise, the statistical formalization of the mediating variable NEP and moderating variables political tendency and political tendency of the government perceived as providing greater environmental protection was carried out, as has been done in other studies (Zhao et al., 2020).

3. Results

The results of the statistical analysis are presented below using descriptive statistics, internal consistency, CFA, and structural equation modeling analysis, including mediation analysis using Bootstrap and multigroup SEM analysis for moderating variables.

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive results are shown below, broken down by faculty or area: Engineering 375 (50.00%), Health Sciences 90 (12.00%), Legal and Social Sciences 72 (9.60%), Humanities and Education 126 (16.80%), Medicine 32 (4.27%), and Technology 55 (7.33%). Political leanings were divided among the following: right 89 (11.87%), center-right 66 (8.80%), no ideology 434 (57.87%), center-left 88 (11.73%), left 73 (9.73%). Regarding the political orientation of the government perceived as providing greater environmental protection, the distribution was as follows: right 96 (12.80%), center-right 75 (10.00%), center 283 (37.73%), center-left 163 (21.73%), and left 133 (17.73%).

In terms of internal consistency, the α coefficients for the latent variables were as follows: curricular emphasis (CE) = .80, instructional practice (IP) = .92, new ecological paradigm (NEP) = .78, and pro-environmental behavior (PEB) = .71.

Measurement model

The initial CFA procedure using the maximum likelihood method, whose instruments included all items from the complete instruments, had some indices that did not fit ($\chi2$ = 1066.518 *df* (318), $p <$ .001), RMSEA = .056 (90% CI = .052 - .060, CFI = .90, TLI = .89, SRMR = .069. For this reason, it was decided to review and eliminate the items that weakened the fit indices (nep7, nep8, peb1, peb2, peb3, peb4, peb5, peb9). Although the chi-square value was not as expected, the new measurement model that was accepted as provisional was as follows: ($\chi2$ = 472.837 *df* (146), $p <$ .001), RMSEA = .055 (90% CI = 0.049 - 0.060, CFI = .95, TLI = .94, SRMR = .058. Figure 1 shows the CFA results.

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The factors loadings of the items are presented in Table 1. Here, we also present the re-examination of Cronbach's alpha coefficients by dimension. This is to verify their reliability after removing some items in the CFA process, with only one dimension (PEB) having a value very close to the recommended threshold.

Table 1. Dimensions with standardized factor loadings per item and their respective reliability coefficients.

	Code	Standardized factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
Curricular emphasis	ce1	.81	.80
	ce2	.48	
	ce3	.83	
	ce4	.71	
Instructional practice	ip5	.77	.92
	ip6	.89	
	ip7	.91	
	ip8	.86	
New ecological paradigm	nep1	.59	.87
	nep2	.76	
	nep3	.84	
	nep4	.75	
	nep5	.77	
	nep6	.72	
Pro-environmental behavior	peb6	.50	.68
	peb7	.40	
	peb8	.77	
	peb10	.63	
	peb11	.48	

Structural model

The post-CFA analysis allowed us to determine the structural model. Here, the fit indices are adequate ($\chi2$ = 479.968 *df* (146), $p < .001$), RMSEA = .055 (90% CI = 0.049 - 0.060), CFI = .95, TLI = .94, SRMR = .057. Here, CE had a positive and significant effect on PEB and NEP ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .15$, $p < .001$), respectively. In contrast, IP was not significant for either PEB or NEP ($\beta = .05$, $p > .05$; $\beta = -.04$, $p > .05$). On the other hand, NEP had a positive and significant effect on PEB ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$). These results support hypothesis 1, but hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Strict mediation analysis

The formalization of the mediating role of NEP between the CE and IP variables on PEB was carried out using a statistical process called bootstrap with 95% confidence intervals. The results of the direct and indirect effects between the relationships of the variables involved are shown in Table 2. Here, the direct and indirect effect of CE on PEB was significant, which partially supports the mediating role of NEP between these relationships. On the contrary, the direct and indirect effect of IP on PEB in both cases was not significant, with no mediation of NEP between these variables. Thus, hypothesis 3 is partially supported, while hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Table 2. Bootstrap analysis results.

Paths	Effect	Bootstrap standard error	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	p value
CE => PEB	.15	.05	.07	.24	.000
CE => NEP	.15	.03	.08	.22	.000
IP => PEB	.06	.04	-.03	.14	.192
IP => NEP	-.04	.03	-.10	.01	.132

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NEP => PEB	.39	.08	.23	.55	.000
CE => NEP => PEB	.06	.02	.03	.09	.000
IP => NEP => PEB	-.02	.01	-.04	.01	.143

Moderation analysis

In the process of formalizing the moderation of students' political ideology, in which we wish to analyze the coefficients of the groups among the significant relationships of the latent variables at 95%, the chi-square results of the restricted model were higher ($\chi2 = 1272.72$ *df* (564), $p < .001$) than those of the unrestricted model ($\chi2 = 961.67$ *df* (502), $p < .001$). This would support a moderating effect of the political ideology variable, due to the higher $\chi2$ value of the restricted model with a difference of 311.05 (62). In this case, the sample was organized into three groups: right and center-right (RCR), no ideology (NI), and left and center-left (LCL).

Table 3 shows that the effect of CE on NEP was only significant in the group without ideology (NI) ($\beta = .18$, $p < .000$). The CE coefficient on PEB was higher in the RCR group ($\beta = .30$, $p < .05$) than in the NI group ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$). Meanwhile, the effect of NEP on PEB was stronger in the NI group ($\beta = .46$, $p < .000$) than in the RCR group ($\beta = .28$, $p < .05$). Up to two (RCR) and three (NI) of the five routes were significantly moderated by the students' political ideology, which partially supports hypothesis 5.

Table 3. Multigroup SEM analysis of political ideology.

Paths	β RCR	p value	Paths	β NI	p value	Paths	β LCL	p value
			CE => NEP	.18	.000	-	-	-
CE => PEB	.30	.05	CE => PEB	.12	.05	-	-	-
NEP => PEB	.28	.05	NEP => PEB	.46	.000	-	-	-

In the case of the variable political tendency of the government perceived as providing greater environmental protection, the chi-square result of the restricted model ($\chi2 = 1167.03$ *df* (564), $p < .001$) was higher than that of the unrestricted model ($\chi2 = 1011.39$ *df* (502), $p < .001$), establishing the moderating role of this variable with a difference of 155.64 (62).

Table 4 shows that the effect of CE on NEP is stronger in coefficients in the RCR group ($\beta = .23$, $p < .000$) than in CEN ($\beta = .19$, $p < .000$) and LCL ($\beta = .10$, $p < .01$). The coefficients of CE on PEB were higher in the CEN group ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$) than in the LCL group ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$). On the other hand, the effect of NEP on PEB was stronger in the RCR group ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$) than in the CEN ($\beta = .40$, $p < .000$) and LCL ($\beta = .32$, $p < .01$) groups. Up to two (RCR), three (CEN), and three (LCL) of the five routes in the model were significantly moderated by the variable of the government's political tendency perceived as providing greater environmental protection. This partially supports hypothesis 6.

Table 4. Multigroup SEM analysis of the government's political trend perceived as providing greater environmental protection.

Paths	β RCR	p value	Paths	β CEN	p value	Paths	β LCL	p value
CE => NEP	.23	.000	CE => NEP	.19	.000	CE => NEP	.10	.01
			CE => PEB	.21	.05	CE => PEB	.12	.05
NEP => PEB	.41	.01	NEP => PEB	.40	.000	NEP => PEB	.32	.01

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4. Discussion

Higher education institutions play a transformative role in societies under pressure from environmental, social, and economic changes. In this role, educational institutions have embraced the incorporation of elements of ESD education into their teaching processes (e.g., curriculum, instructional practice), research, outreach, and management, which are essential processes for achieving a real effect or result in the pro-environmental behavior of students. With this interest in mind, the objective of this research was to study the effect of sustainable curricular experience on pro-environmental behavior, mediating between both variables, the NEP. This is considering that, although researchers have provided evidence for decades about the role that environmental education has played in achieving pro-environmental behaviors through different pedagogies (Kalsoom et al., 2022), it has become increasingly relevant to implement education with a broader perspective (education for SD) with educational practices that include environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Ferguson et al., 2021). Thus, this study responds to the interest in understanding the effect of education for SD on the pro-environmental behavior of students.

The statistical coefficients were adequate in all reliability, CFA, and SEM analyses. In this way, we sought to ensure a rigorous and transparent analysis of the data, responding to the challenge of integrating knowledge, instruments, and technologies into social science research (Pedersen, 2016). In this context, the curricular emphasis on sustainability elements had a significant effect on pro-environmental behavior, supporting hypothesis 1 and the idea of narrowing the gap between knowledge acquisition and pro-environmental behavior. Thus, other researchers have argued for the need to create pedagogical alternatives to ensure sustainability (Zárate et al., 2023), understanding that ESD education is a space where people and their environment can grow and foster awareness and a deep understanding of environmentally friendly behaviors (Vasudevan et al., 2024). Likewise, previous studies suggest that environmental worldviews underpin pro-environmental behavior, highlighting the influence of educational initiatives and policy formulation (Kunchamboo et al., 2021). However, the results are not encouraging regarding the effect of instructional practice on pro-environmental behavior, as hypothesis 2 was not supported. This result is particularly noteworthy because, when viewed critically, teaching practice within the curricular experience plays a crucial role in ensuring the continued success of sustainability programs (Hill & Wang, 2018), whose formal education positions teachers as critical agents in delivering SD content and facilitating action skills and competencies to achieve these goals (Ferguson et al., 2021). Although the results are unexpected, the development of teaching materials and teacher training in the teaching and integration of environmental education in different subject areas is suggested as part of continuous improvement (Marpa, 2020).

Despite these results, strict mediation tests of the NEP (bootstrap procedure) between latent variables (CE and PEB) among the direct and indirect paths of the factorial structure partially supported hypothesis 3, which was reflected in various paths with statistical significance. Here, it could be confirmed that students' intrinsic motivation significantly mediates between these activities and pro-environmental behavior (Bonhi et al., 2024). Some studies have confirmed these results, suggesting a positive impact of the delivery of environmental values on pro-environmental behaviors, where NEP has partially played a mediating role between both variables (Yan & Huang, 2022). Others suggest that ecological worldview strongly influences as a mediating variable to translate ecological concerns into actual pro-environmental behavior (Mishra et al., 2024). However, the complexity of human characteristics regarding their environmental worldview could cause variations in the perception of human intervention, the rights of nature and the eco-crisis, gender, age, and pro-environmental behavior (Berze et al., 2022). On the other hand, in the paths of the IP variables on NEP and IP on PEB, there was no path with statistical significance, suggesting that hypothesis 4 should be rejected. The results are consistent with studies indicating that although teachers express high concern for the environment, it appears that teachers' environmental worldview may be affected by their inadequate professional training (Lwo et al., 2017). Some studies reveal that teachers sometimes show little interest and limited pedagogical practices towards concrete

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sustainability action, with teaching practices that are not very action-oriented (Sinakou et al., 2022). This is even more important in HEIs, whose more strategic and pro-environmental behavior-oriented actions are crucial due to the social responsibility of universities with SD (Wider et al., 2025).

Regarding the moderation of the political ideology variable (hypothesis 5), this partially moderates the relationships between the latent variables. In this sense, statistically significant paths were mainly found in the right-wing, center-right, and ideology-free groups, with no significant paths in the left-wing group, contrary to expectations given that left-wing individuals are commonly believed to be more inclined toward environmentalist ideas and behaviors (Poškus, 2024). However, these results of the mediating role, albeit partial, of political ideology between curricular experience and pro-environmental behavior are relevant when considering that some authors argue that ideology, rather than knowledge, is a better predictor of environmental attitudes and behaviors, suggesting that we should stop investigating cognitive bias and focus on the effectiveness of emotion-based approaches (Williams, 2022). This considers that political ideology is a deeply rooted conviction in many people, which affects their behavior and, in an organizational environment, could lead to a series of undesirable consequences (Johnson & Roberto, 2018).

The results show the partial mediating role of the variable political tendency of the government perceived as providing greater environmental protection, where the strongest statistically significant paths were found in the right-wing, center-right, and center groups (hypothesis 6), confirming studies that indicate that, contrary to expectations, left-wing governments have not successfully incorporated their perceived environmentalist ideology with strict environmental policies (Tawiah, 2022). These results are contrary to other researchers who indicate that conservative ideology is closely associated with less environmental concern, a lack of priority for environmental issues, and engagement in less environmentally friendly activities (Jung, 2023) or that conservative people are less supportive of environmental taxes and financial sacrifices (Park & Chang, 2024). However, the findings derived from these moderating variables contribute to the understanding of the ideological trends of today's youth in guiding the development of specific policies regarding curricular experience and pro-environmental behavior.

The theoretical implications of this study refer to the contribution of understanding the effect that a curricular experience with a broad view of sustainability could have on specific pro-environmental behavior, including in the analysis the personal political ideologies of the students and their perception of the ideology of the governments they considered to be more pro-environmental. This is particularly relevant at a time when there is a search for SD for individuals, societies, and nations, with a global emphasis on achieving a harmonious balance between social, economic, and environmental imperatives (Ferguson et al., 2021). The variables analyzed in this context naturally generate a reflection that goes beyond a single discipline, suggesting a cross-disciplinary approach that can combine a sustainable curricular experience with pro-environmental behavior.

From the perspective of practical implications, this study yields interesting results when considering that the young people surveyed belong to an area with extreme weather that has suffered the effects of climatic situations attributable to climate change. This information is relevant given that previous studies have observed that people exposed to natural disasters, air pollution, and climate change are more likely to be environmentally conscious (Tarinc et al., 2023). This provides key background information for political decision making. Likewise, in the implementation of ESD education that contemplates the achievement of educational competencies that, apart from the environmental dimension, also include economic and social dimensions, so that there is a comprehensive shift towards pro-environmental behavior (Zárate et al., 2023) and where there are community processes rooted in the local area with repertoires of action based on environmental education and the promotion of agro-ecological practices (Nova et al., 2025), but also on the reinforcement of a comprehensive education that takes into account environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Danageuzian et al., 2025), as there could be no pro-environmental behavior without the desire for social equity, well-being, and commitment from society.

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Despite efforts to fill a gap in research on curricular experience and pro-environmental behavior, this research has some limitations. In this regard, some of them refer to the fact that the curricular experience only considered two dimensions, leaving out other alternatives such as activities outside the classroom, extra-curricular activities, or the hidden curriculum. Also, it is estimated that although NEP was considered as a mediating variable, it could be insufficient to understand the views of today's youth, inviting further scrutiny in the future with other variables such as values, culture, agency, spirituality, among others. And like many non-experimental design studies, this research has a social desirability bias, which, as it is a self-reported questionnaire, makes it impossible to visualize the sincere participation of the student. However, this study reflects the opinion of a student body that has experienced extreme weather conditions due to the desert climate, with flooding caused by untimely rains (2015, 2017, and 2019), poor air quality due to the region's mining industry, and a constant concern about water shortages. It is understood that the results are not generalizable, but they represent the reality of a Chilean university in northern Chile. This could prompt other researchers to continue investigating their own realities in other regions or countries, leaving open the possibility of developing longitudinal studies that may yield longer-term results.

5. Conclusions

The challenges involved in moving from environmental education, which focused solely on environmental issues, to education for sustainable development have not been easy. This study is in line with the suggestions of some researchers, academics, and authorities who have promoted the idea that environmental problems cannot be solved on their own, but rather through social and economic aspects that interact dynamically and influence each other. It is hoped that through educational experiences, people will come to understand that caring for the environment affects their health and well-being, and that social equity contributes to reducing the distribution of environmental impacts. Likewise, an economic balance is sought in which people make efficient use of resources, future costs are prevented, and a transition to a green economy is made.

But what is the goal of this? The goal is for people to truly achieve pro-environmental behavior. Concrete action that goes beyond simply acquiring knowledge. This study is valuable in that it examined how an educational experience with elements of sustainability would affect pro-environmental behavior. However, it remains a challenge for future research to investigate the effect of curricular emphasis, but not instructional practice. In other words, progress has been made in the knowledge and skills related to sustainability that are emphasized in the courses, but relevant tasks related to sustainability remain pending in teaching practice. Such teaching practices should be a priority in educational policies, as it is commonly teachers who are the role models for students, who actively participate in the teaching and learning process and have a direct intergenerational impact.

Despite sustainability education being an indisputable variable, this study contributes in a novel way to the understanding of students' ecological vision, acting as a mediator between curricular experience and pro-environmental behavior. This hypothesis was partially supported in the case of curricular emphasis and rejected in instructional practice. However, it has been an opportunity to learn about the mainly ecocentric vision of young university students, who will be the professionals of the future and who will make decisions from their disciplines.

Consequently, the moderating role of the political leanings of the student body has been relevant, as these results could provide indications of how aligned young people are with environmental justice, social equity, and economic balance. In addition, these data allow us to anticipate scenarios in the professional lives of potential professionals who will occupy positions in government, business, or universities. They could even contribute to the development of pedagogical strategies tailored to the interests and motivations of young people. Likewise, it could influence perceptions regarding the political tendencies of governments that eventually support environmental protection more, as these results could serve to understand young people's trust in institutions, their perceptions of certain political discourse and action, and perhaps their future civic and political

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participation influenced by the identity of those who truly represent their interests in terms of sustainability and pro-environmental behavior.

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