

CONSUMERS PURCHASING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ECO FRIENDLY PRODUCTS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN QUETTA

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ABSTRACT

The global issue of widespread and unsustainable consumption has resulted in significant problems such as pollution and global warming. As a result, there is an increasing demand for greater understanding and use of Eco friendly products. This study's main goal was to investigate how university student's knowledge of Eco friendly products affected their purchasing decisions. The precise goals were to ascertain whether awareness, price, availability, value, and quality had an effect on university student's decisions to buy environmentally friendly products and to investigate how awareness, price, availability, value, and quality predict their intention to buy such products. Data from 120-student online survey was analyzed using a structural equation modeling approach. The results show that university student's purchase decisions are most significantly positively impacted by the quality of Eco friendly products. However, it was discovered that the influence of Eco friendly product awareness on their decision to buy green products was comparatively small. The study also demonstrates that elements like price, awareness, and exceptional quality are mostly responsible for the influence of green product awareness on university students buying behavior. In contrast, the perceived value of the products does not appear to be a critical factor influencing the green purchase intentions of university students. The implications of the study, along with its limitations for future research, are discussed.

Keywords: Eco-friendly Products, Consumer purchasing behavior, Youth, University Students, Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The task of protecting and preserving the environment and the resources of the world is one that businesses and consumers face more frequently nowadays. They are becoming more environmentally conscious and cognizant of the fact that their consumption and production patterns will directly affect the environment (Laroche, 2002). The serious environmental problems we face today, such as pollution, the exhaustion of natural resources, the increase in greenhouse gas emissions, and global warming, can be attributed to the unsustainable consumption habits prevailing in our society. (Ansu-Mensah, 2019). These challenges above have prompted the process of going "green," which has subsequently raised awareness of the demand for green products. The term "green" is commonly used in connection with concepts such as "green marketing," "ecologically conscious consumers," and "social responsibility." (Pagliacci & Buldureanu, 2019). In essence, three theories have established a global framework for green consumption, which are responsible consumption, ecological marketing, and ecologically conscious consumers. The adoption of eco-friendly products has become the most reliable solution for promoting environmental sustainability in numerous developed countries. The advantages associated with using green products

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significantly influence the growth and development of both individuals and the environment (Gaffney, 2014). Environmental consciousness has experienced a notable surge. This can be attributed to heightened media coverage, impactful activities by pressure groups, more significant comprehension of environmental issues, and increased consumer enthusiasm for eco-friendly products.

Consequently, the growing awareness of the environment has placed additional pressure on individuals to consider the ecological impact of their actions (Kong, 2014). Consequently, a considerable number of consumers are now intrigued by the concept of adopting environmentally friendly products. Moreover, although awareness among consumers regarding green products is increasing in developing nations, it remains relatively limited in emerging economies (Shittu, 2020). As a result, this has caused public anxiety in rising nations, prompting companies to adopt green marketing goals in order to retain their clients (Rottig, 2016).

1.1 The Background

In order to reduce waste, provide access to open spaces, improve quality of life, and maximize efficiency, not many recommendations have been taken into account over the past few years. Therefore, it is crucial for the consumers of Quetta to adjust their consumption and production patterns since the environment will suffer irreparable damage if they don't. Therefore, it is essential to have a better understanding of how products affect the environment and society if we are to find sustainable consumption solutions. However, prior to and even at the present day, Quetta's customers were unfamiliar with green items. Additionally, the author is aware of no studies of students in developing cities like Quetta who are aware of green products. Lack of knowledge about green products prevents consumers from embracing quality living, as well as lowering costs and inefficiency.

Hence, the poor methods of product consumption have brought severe problems like pollution, growing greenhouse gas emissions, global warming, and natural resource depletion. These challenges have promoted the process of going "green," which has raised awareness and demand for green products (Sreen, 2018). The study focuses on;

- 1) To determine whether student buying behavior for Eco-friendly products is influenced by quality, availability, price, awareness, and quality.
- 2) To determine how university students' behavior to buy Eco-friendly products is influenced by the quality, availability, price, awareness, and quality.

Thus, present studies provide rich significance as there hasn't been much research on the awareness of green products in developing nations, especially in Pakistan. Likewise, as per our best knowledge, no research has been done on university students' understanding of green products in a developing country like Pakistan.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Eco-friendly products and green marketing

Green products are also called eco-friendly products or sustainable products. Eco-friendly refers to being kind to the environment or not damaging it. It frequently refers to items that support resources like water and energy. Additionally, environmentally friendly products reduce their impact on air, water, and land pollution. By being more mindful of how they utilize resources, everyone can practice eco-friendly practices. Eco-friendly product is well defined by Fabien (Fabien, Caroline, & Charles, 2010) within the frameworks of the academic, industrial, and consumer views. The study demonstrates that the concept of a "green product" is ambiguous and multifaceted; the phrase has additional meanings that depend on the context. The consumer's perspective, however, is far more important than the other two perspectives. Due to the skepticism surrounding the environmental claims of products, consumers desire manufacturers to certify their items. Within the business realm, green marketing has gained considerable significance. All marketing operations, including packaging, product modifications, and manufacturing techniques, that are carried out sustainably while yet satisfying customer demands are included in green marketing (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017).

Green marketing is the process of introducing environmentally friendly items to the market. In a nutshell, green marketing refers to a scenario in which items are promoted in an eco-friendly way. It seems

sensible that environmental consciousness and product utility are the main factors influencing consumers' propensity to make green purchases (Pagliacci & Buldureanu, 2019). Marketing initiatives that are intended at assisting businesses to enhance their product sales by appealing to environmentally sensitive customers are known as "greenwashing," and it occurs when corporations name their items as "eco-friendly" or "environmentally friendly" when they are not actually (Vernekar & Preeti, 2011). One of the primary challenges for green marketing is the lack of public consensus on what qualifies to be green (Reddy, 2017).

2.2 Eco-Friendly products awareness

Products classified as "green" often display characteristics such as being healthy, recyclable, low-emission, and energy-efficient (Bhatia, 2013). The market has seen an increase in the number of green products in recent years across all sectors, including the food, hotel, energy, automotive, and construction industries (Chung, 2020). Consumer attitudes regarding green products are mostly influenced by consumer, environmental awareness (Laureti, 2018). A "green product" is one that protects the environment without consuming resources or doing harm to it. Customers should be aware that there are green products available before making a purchase. Information on green products, thus has an impact on customer purchase decisions. Labeling, packaging, and promotion, however, might increase consumer awareness of green products (Ritter, 2015). If consumers are aware of how well green products work, they can more readily achieve their own environmental impact goals. This shows that customer awareness of green products may affect consumer decision-making, which may assist the market in resuming a more upbeat mindset (Ogiemwonyi, 2020). The environment is positively impacted by green products, and the environment is impacted by human activity. Green products purposefully cut down on waste and costs (Ritter, 2015). Consumers are re-aware of the existence of green items as they get more familiar with them, which may change their intentions to make green purchases and subsequent actions. Thus, awareness of green items can positively influence one's intention to buy.

2.3 Eco-friendly product price

In conventional economics, price has been merely defined as cost, but recent research have acknowledged that pricing can also function to tell consumers about the worth of a commodity or service. Price is a non-product aspect of brand associations that can have a significant impact on how consumers perceive a brand, especially in terms of value and desirability (Batey, 2008). Price is also a criterion by which consumers frequently segment their understanding of a market or category. The primary barrier to purchasing green items is typically price, and green customers will only pay more for a product if they realize that its features, designs, and functions will benefit them, their families, and future generations (Kong, 2014). Among the components of the green marketing mix, price is considered to have a substantial impact. A significant number of customers are willing to pay a higher price when they perceive added value in the product they are purchasing. This value can manifest in various forms, such as superior taste, innovative design, enhanced performance, appealing aesthetics, or useful features (Sharma, 2011). Concerned about the environment, green-minded consumers are not deterred by the perceived expenses associated with eco-friendly products. They actively support and are willing to pay a premium for green items. Consequently, the cost of green products does not significantly impact the purchasing intentions of environmentally conscious buyers (Chekima, Azizi, & Wafa, 2015). Moreover, the perceived value and purchase intentions of consumers are positively influenced by the fair pricing of eco-friendly products. For example, Chinese consumers exhibit a particular concern for environmental quality and are willing to pay a higher price for green products (Suki, 2015).

2.4 Eco-friendly products availability

It is thought that awareness grows before a product is made available. Research indicates that there are more consumers aware of green products than there are green products on the market. It is emphasized that customer's decisions to buy green products are influenced by the availability of those products (Sharaf, 2018). Even when consumers are motivated to purchase a product because it has sustainability qualities, the product's unavailability occasionally functions as a barrier in their way. This problem resulted from the fact that there are less local grocery stores and farmers' markets, which frequently leads to a lack of regularity and a rise in consumer desire for convenience. Additionally, green products are typically scarce and occasionally improperly placed in marketplaces and stores (Pelsmacker, 2003). The lack of supply and poor marketing of green products are two major factors in why consumers still exhibit pre-environmental

behavior in terms of environmental awareness. Researchers also concur that, in addition to having more environmentally and socially responsible corporations, making green products accessible to customers is a key strategy for converting them to environmentally friendly consumers (Kaufmann, 2012). It was impossible to eliminate factors like availability from those influencing customers to buy green products. In order to choose between name brand and green products, availability is crucial. No availability means no purchase (Paul, 2012).

2.5 Eco-friendly products value

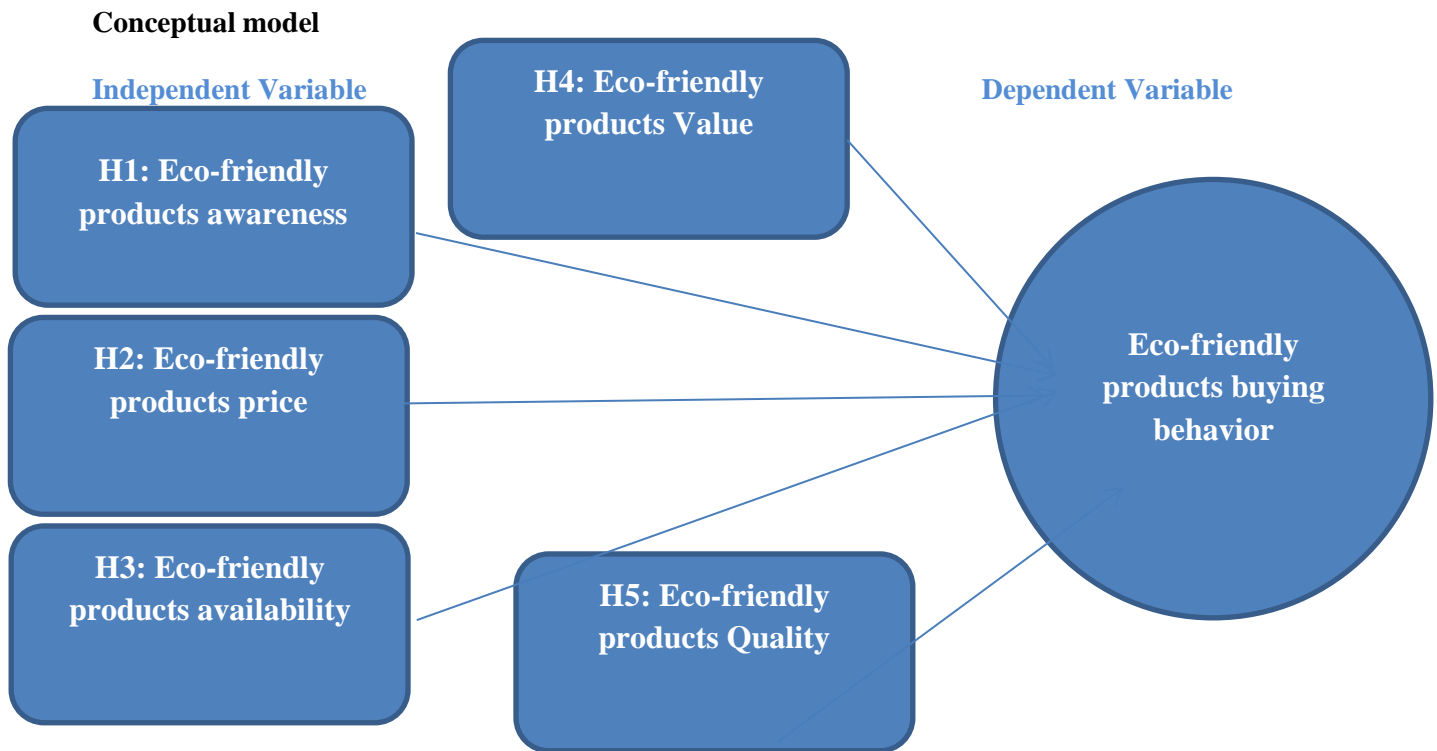
Product's value refers to products overall performance, characteristics and benefits in consumer thought processes. Value is gaining importance, and businesses can increase consumer purchase intentions by offering higher product value. Perceived value is thought to play a crucial influence in influencing purchase intentions in addition to being a key part of long-term customer relationships (Zhuang, 2010). Value is the consumer's perception of the cumulative advantages from using a green product. Recently, value has become increasingly important and has been shown to improve a product's marketing and environmental performance as well as its likelihood of being purchased (Hur, 2013). To cultivate enduring customer relationships, businesses are emphasizing the value of their products and augmenting the intent of customers to purchase green products. There exists a positive correlation between the perceived value of a product and the inclination to make environmentally conscious purchases. This perceived value is influenced by factors related to understanding the worth of the goods, which, in turn, can contribute to an elevation in purchase intentions (Akbar, 2014). When people understand that a product's value is higher, they are expected to purchase it. Again, the creation of a valuable product will lead to an increase in consumer purchase intentions (Hasbullah, 2019).

2.6 Eco-friendly products quality

Quality is one of the key deciding elements that influence the purchase of green products (Sharma S. ., 2013). Customer evaluation of a product's overall environmental excellence or superiority is used to define quality. It involves comparing the product to other possibilities based on the customer's individual experience. Between exterior indicators and the customer's impression of value, product quality serves as a mediator (Dodds, 2009). The subjective assessment of the customer and ecological viewpoints continue to have an impact on quality. There is always a chance that customers' awareness of the perceived quality of green products may boost their intention to purchase when it comes to the environment (SI, 2014). In order to satisfy the consumer while also having some impact on the ecosystem, the products' quality, utility, and pricing should be determined first. Then, the superiority of the products should be developed. As a result, one of the key factors influencing consumers' intents to buy green is their expectation of high-quality green products. Additionally, green products undoubtedly deliver higher quality and value, improving health and raising living standards in their wake (SI, 2014). Green purchasing intentions are favorably correlated with the quality of green products. Additionally, the quality of green products is far higher than that of non-green ones (Gao, 2019).

2.7 Eco-friendly products buying behavior

It should be remembered that marketing methods heavily rely on consumers' intentions. Whatever buyers consider and intend to buy is referred to as their purchasing intention. Customers' behavioral intention is defined as the probable behaviors that influence consumer's decisions to purchase a particular product (Agyapong, 2018). Due to individual marketing behavior, consumers are able to evaluate the price, quality, availability and value of competing items. It is necessary to raise knowledge of green products and utilize them, which will encourage consumers to switch from conventional to green products, in order to improve living a more environmentally friendly lifestyle (Amegbe, 2017). In summary, when consumers possess awareness regarding the green attributes, enhanced value, high quality, functional features, environmental considerations, and performance of green products, they are more willing and likely to pay a premium for them. Therefore, it becomes crucial to enhance consumer awareness of green products in order to promote successful adoption of environmentally friendly consumption (Ritter, 2015)



Hypothesis:

- H1: Eco-friendly products awareness is affected favorably by university students Eco friendly products buying behavior.
- H2: Eco-friendly products price is affected favorably by university students Eco friendly products buying behavior.
- H3: Eco-friendly products availability is affected favorably by university students Eco friendly products buying behavior.
- H4: Eco-friendly products value is affected favorably by university students Eco friendly products buying behavior.
- H5: Eco friendly products quality is affected favorably by university students Eco friendly products buying behavior.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Method

The study is quantitative and casual in nature. The link between the significant factors in this study was examined using a quantitative research methodology. Given that this study is causal in nature and we are looking for the impacts of one variable on another.

3.2 Data Collection

The target demographic for this study was undergraduate students from four departments of faculty of management sciences, business and IT in University Of Balochistan, Quetta. These four departments are institute of management sciences, commerce, library and management sciences and computer science.

The ages of the students were from 18 to 26 plus. We collected primary data by survey and with the help of online questioner which were sent to the students by Email and Whatsapp.

The questioner is adapted from earlier research and is based on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 denoting strong disagreement and 5 denoting strong agreement. There were a total of 30 questions, 5 for each variable.

3.3 Sampling

Target population were all the undergraduate students of these four departments which are approximately 1200 and for better results we took sample of 10% which were 120 students. The non-probability method in which convenience technique was used to collect the data through the survey (questionnaire) from the participants.

3.4 Data analyzing tool

The data collected was analyzed by using SPSS v 26 and Smart PLS 4.

4. RESULTS

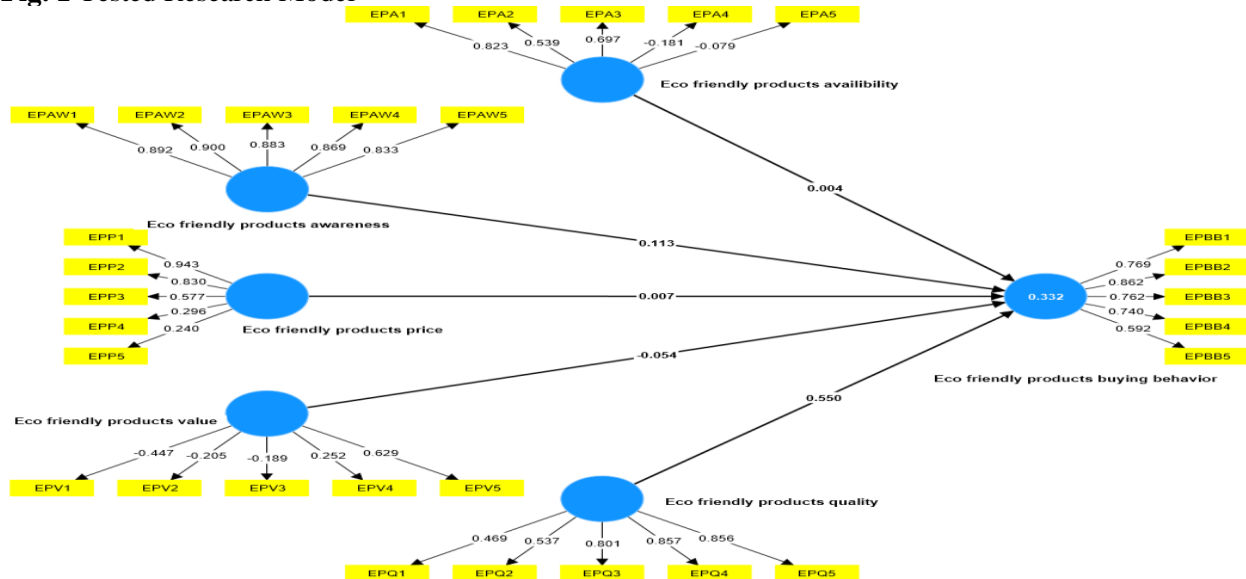
Table 1 Respondents Demographics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Age		
18	5	4.16
19	4	3.33
20	3	2.5
21	35	29.16
22	25	20.83
23	24	20
24	14	11.66
25	9	7.5
Gender		
Male	81	67.5
Female	39	32.5
Qualification		
BS	120	100

4.1 Respondents Demographics

The ages of the respondents were from 18 to 25. The respondents of age 18 were 5 which represents 4.16%, age 19 represents 3.33% (4), age 20 represents 2.5% (3), age 21 represents 29.16% (35), age 22 represents 20.83% (25), age 23 represents 20% (24), age 24 represents 11.66% (14) and age 25 represents 7.5% (9). There were 81 (67.5%) male and 39 (32.5%) female students from different departments. All the students were of same qualification (BS) Students in University Of Balochistan.

Fig. 1 Tested Research Model



4.2 Measurement Model

The SmartPLS-SEM is quite reliable, which is why it was used in this study to more thoroughly examine the hypotheses, uphold their integrity, and contribute to the literature being studied on Eco friendly products consumption and Eco friendly product awareness. It is essential to evaluate the constructs' reliability and validity in order to obtain accurate and trustworthy results from the SEM.

Table 2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variables	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Eco friendly products availability	0.030	0.299
Eco friendly products awareness	0.952	0.767
Eco friendly products buying behavior	0.863	0.563
Eco friendly products price	0.752	0.411
Eco friendly products quality	0.991	0.523
Eco friendly products value	0.833	0.147

4.3.1 Reliability analysis

The values shown in table 2, represent the composite reliability coefficients for different constructs related to eco-friendly products. The degree to which a group of items (or indicators) measures a latent construct or variable is shown by the composite reliability measure of internal consistency reliability. Higher numbers denote more reliability, and the scale runs from 0 to 1. In this case, the composite reliability coefficients for the constructs related to eco-friendly products are:

Based on these values, the constructs related to eco-friendly products awareness, buying behavior, quality, and value have relatively high composite reliability coefficients, indicating good internal consistency. The construct related to eco-friendly products availability has a very low composite reliability coefficient, which may indicate that the items used to measure this construct are not very consistent in their measurement of the construct. The construct related to eco-friendly products price has a moderate composite reliability coefficient.

4.3.2 Validity Analysis

The average variance extracted (AVE) is a gauge of a research study's constructs' convergence validity. It evaluates the percentage of the indicator variables' variance that can be accounted for by each construct. To determine whether the AVE values provided are acceptable, we need to compare them to a commonly accepted threshold. A commonly used threshold is 0.5, which suggests that at least 50% of the variance in the indicators should be explained by their respective constructs.

Based on the AVE values, the construct with the highest AVE is "Eco friendly products awareness" with a value of 0.767, which is above the threshold of 0.5. The constructs "Eco friendly products buying behavior", "Eco friendly products quality", and "Eco friendly products price" also have acceptable AVE values of 0.563, 0.523, and 0.411 respectively.

However, the constructs "Eco friendly products availability" and "Eco friendly products value" have AVE values of 0.299 and 0.147 respectively, which are below the commonly used threshold of 0.5. These constructs may have weak convergent validity.

Tables 3 R square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Eco friendly products buying behavior	0.332	0.302

R-squared (R²) is a statistical metric that indicates the extent to which the independent variable(s) in a regression model explain the variability in the dependent variable, specifically in the context of eco-friendly product purchasing behavior. R² ranges from 0 to 1, with a higher value indicating a greater proportion of the variance in the dependent variable being accounted for by the independent variable(s). In this instance, the regression model for predicting eco-friendly product buying behavior has an R² value of 0.332, indicating that the included independent variable(s) explain approximately 33.2% of the variance in the dependent variable. The adjusted R-squared value, on the other hand, corrects for the amount of independent variables in the model and penalizes the R-squared value for include variables that do not

significantly improve the predictive power of the model. In this case, the adjusted R-squared value is 0.302, which is a little lower than the R-squared value and indicates that some of the independent variables may not have much of an impact on the model's overall predictive ability.

Table 4 F Square

Variables	F Square
Eco friendly products availability	0.000
Eco friendly products awareness	0.014
Eco friendly products price	0.000
Eco friendly products quality	0.397
Eco friendly products value	0.004

It seems that consumers are not very aware of the availability of eco-friendly products (score of 0.000) and the price of such products (score of 0.000) may also be a factor that affects buying behavior. However, the quality of eco-friendly products appears to be a significant factor (score of 0.397), suggesting that consumers prioritize purchasing products that are both eco-friendly and of good quality. The value of eco-friendly products also appears to have some importance (score of 0.004), although to a lesser extent than quality.

Table 5 Hypothesis Testing Summary

	Path coefficients	T-Statistics
H3: Eco friendly products availability → Eco friendly products buying behavior	0.004	2.455
H1: Eco friendly products awareness → Eco friendly products buying behavior	0.113	3.742
H2: Eco friendly products price → Eco friendly products buying behavior	0.007	2.914
H5: Eco friendly products quality → Eco friendly products buying behavior	0.550	7.548
H4: Eco friendly products value → Eco friendly products buying behavior	-0.054	1.542

According to the findings in Table 6 and Fig. 1, the path coefficient between the quality of eco-friendly products and consumer's buying behavior is the one with the strongest correlation (EPQ->EPBB, H5, $\beta=0.550$). Following is the path Eco friendly products awareness to Eco friendly products buying behavior (EPAW->EPBB, H1, $\beta=0.113$). The remaining path relationships are listed below: Eco friendly products price to Eco friendly products Buying Behavior (EPP->EPBB, H2, $\beta=0.007$), Eco friendly products availability to Eco friendly products buying behavior (EPA->EPBB, H3, $\beta=0.004$), and finally Eco friendly Products value to Eco friendly products buying behavior (EPV->EPBB, H4, $\beta=-0.054$). T statistic below 1.96 is understood to suggest that a certain hypothesis is not statistically significant. Table 6 makes it clear that H4's T value (1.542) is less than 1.96. Thus, it can be inferred that H4 is not supported because it is not statistically significant. In contrast, because their T values are more than 1.96, the outcomes for H1, H2, H3, and H5 are all statistically significant.

5. DISCUSSION

According to the study's findings, the quality of eco-friendly products ($\beta =0.550$) has the most beneficial influence on university students' inclinations to make green purchases. In other words, EPQ has the biggest impact on consumers' purchasing decisions regarding environmentally friendly items. This means that when they recognize that the quality of green items is exceptional when compared to traditional products, pupils are ready to buy them.

Eco-friendly product awareness is the second best indicator of university students' propensity to purchase Eco friendly products ($\beta = 0.113$). This result demonstrates the positive significance of the link between EPAW and EPBB. Awareness about green products plays a crucial role in making informed buying decisions. When consumers are aware of the environmental benefits and sustainability features associated

with green products, they can consciously evaluate their choices and prioritize products that align with their values. By understanding the positive impact of green products on the environment, such as reduced carbon emissions, resource conservation, and use of renewable materials, consumers can make choices that contribute to a more sustainable future. Additionally, being aware of the health and safety advantages of green products, including the absence of toxic substances, empowers consumers to prioritize their well-being and that of their families. By considering the long-term cost savings and energy efficiency of green products, consumers can recognize the economic benefits they offer. Ultimately, awareness about green products equips consumers with the knowledge and understanding necessary to make conscious buying decisions that promote environmental sustainability, support ethical business practices, and create a positive impact on both a personal and global scale.

Additionally, there were favorable route correlations between Eco-friendly products price to Eco friendly products buying behavior (H2: EPP—> EPBB, 0.007) and Eco friendly products availability to Eco-friendly products buying behavior (H3: EPA- > EPBB ($\beta = 0.004$)). Green product availability and cost are significant determinants of consumer purchasing behavior. Although green products are frequently seen to have favorable effects on the environment and society, they may have greater prices than comparable conventional products. The initial cost of green products can be a barrier for some consumers, especially if they have limited budgets or are accustomed to cheaper options. Availability is another important aspect that influences buying decisions. Consumers may find it challenging to access a wide range of green products, especially in regions or markets where they are not readily available. Limited availability can restrict choices and make it harder for consumers to opt for sustainable alternatives.

Contrarily, the results revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between the value of eco-friendly products and the purchasing behavior of eco-friendly products (H4: EPV—> EPBB, $=-0.054$ while, at the same time, EPV was not positively associated to students' purchasing behavior of eco-friendly products). The consequence is that when it comes to university student's intentions to make green purchases and subsequent actions, value is not a significant influencing factor.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study looked at the impact of one dependent variable—eco-friendly product buying behavior—and five independent variables, including eco-friendly product availability, eco-friendly product price, eco-friendly product awareness, eco-friendly product quality, and eco-friendly product value. The main objectives of the study were (1) To ascertain whether student purchasing intentions for environmentally friendly products are influenced by awareness, price, availability, value, and quality (2) To ascertain the effects of awareness, price, availability, value, and quality on university student's intentions to purchase Eco friendly products.

The findings of the study indicate that the quality of eco-friendly products has the strongest positive impact on the purchasing behavior of university students. Additionally, eco-friendly product awareness emerges as the second most influential predictor of their buying behavior. However, the results reveal a negative correlation between the perceived value of eco-friendly products and the actual buying behavior of university students.

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