

# Intergenerational Differences in the Environmental Concerns: Insights from Chinese Plastic Waste Business Owners

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Most surveyed populations share concerns about safeguarding the environment [1]. While studies have explored general and specific environmental behaviors [2], little attention has been given to how different generations relate to environmental concerns.

In a recent study published in *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* (Nature Portfolio), Wang and Wu [3] focus on exploring intergenerational disparities of plastic waste business owners in environmental concerns, specifically ecological worldview and concerns of local environmental issues. The research involved 102 plastic waste business owners spanning two generations in Wuzhen Town, China, who took part in a paired-sample survey. By integrating insights from Mindsponge Theory and utilizing the advantages of Bayesian analysis [4,5], the study also delved into the roles of post-materialistic values, environmental knowledge, exposure to environmental risks through new media, and community ties in mediating the links between intergenerational difference and environmental concern.



**Illustration.** Generated by Imagine AI.

The study's findings uncovered a multifaceted landscape regarding the connection between generation and environmental concerns. Specifically, the path analyses of maximum likelihood estimation and Bayesian estimation revealed significant intergenerational disparities in ecological worldview but insignificant in concerns of local environmental issues. While non-daily environmental knowledge and environmental risk exposure through new media substantially and positively mediated the relationship between intergenerational difference and ecological worldview, community connection significantly and negatively mediated the relationship between intergenerational difference and local environmental issue concerns [3].

The study suggests that fostering environmental awareness among plastic waste business owners is a pivotal step in addressing the urgent issue of plastic pollution [3]. To boost this awareness, it is essential to provide environmental education, both formally and informally, to businesses and foster stronger connections between them and their communities [6]. Additionally, mass media, especially new media, can play a vital role in shaping general environmental awareness and concerns, especially among younger generations [7].

In the end, the study also advocates a transition from an environmentally detrimental mindset to an environmentally sustainable approach among businesses (e.g., eco-surplus culture) [8,9]. The transition can lead to both environmental and economic advantages at the same time.

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