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The Influence of Ecological Worldview and Attitudes on Park Visitors' Pro-Environmental Behavioural Intention: A Case Study of Alberta Parks' Campers

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The Influence of Ecological Worldview and Attitudes on Park Visitors' Pro-Environmental Behavioural Intention: A Case Study of Alberta Parks' Campers

People's ecological worldview and its influence on their pro-environmental behaviour have been of environmental psychologists' interest over the last few decades. New ecological paradigm (NEP; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Emmet Jones, 2000) is known as one of the best tools to investigate individuals' ecological worldview and has been tested and validated in numerous research studies (Amburgey & Thoman, 2012). NEP "focused on beliefs about humanity's ability to upset the balance of nature, the existence of limits to growth for human societies, and humanity's right to rule over the rest of nature" (Dunlap et al., 2000, p. 427). Although NEP has been considered as a tool to understand people general environmental attitude, researchers suggest that NEP reflects people's values and beliefs toward the environment (Klößner, 2013; Stern, 2000) that is antecedent to attitudes (Ajzen, 1991; Klößner, 2013).

In social psychology, attitudes have been known as major determinants of people's behaviours or their behavioural intentions (Cushman & McPhee, 2013). For instance, the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) introduced attitudes as one of the three major predictors of people's behavioural intention that is responsible for a considerable proportion of variations in individuals' behavioural intentions (i.e., attitude, subjective norms, & perceived behavioural control; Ajzen, 2011). Driven by salient behavioural beliefs and outcome evaluations (French, Sutton, & Hennings, 2005), attitudes are defined as the degree to which people positively or negatively value an action (Ajzen, "attitude," n.d.). Two different components of attitudes influence people's participation in activities: affective components that refer to "emotions and drives engendered by the prospect of performing a behaviour" and cognitive components that reflect the instrumental aspects of the behaviour and its advantages (French et al., 2005, p. 1825). The purpose of this study was to investigate the association among people's ecological worldview, their affective and cognitive attitudes toward pro-environmental behaviours, and their intention to participate in pro-environmental camping. It was hypothesized that cognitive attitudes, affective attitudes, and ecological worldview directly and positively influence people's intention. Ecological worldview also indirectly influences people's pro-environmental behavioural intention through affective and cognitive attitudes.

Methods

As part of a larger study, Alberta parks campers' ecological worldview (15 items; $\alpha = .84$), their attitudes toward pro-environmental behaviour during camping (4 items; $\alpha = .86$), and their intention to practice pro-environmental camping (4 item; $\alpha = .87$) were investigated. Data were collected via an on-site self-administrated questionnaire during August and September 2014. Participants were campers staying in the major front-country campgrounds in Alberta's provincial parks (i.e., Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Long Lake and Cross Provincial Park, Gregoire Lake Provincial Park, and Kananaskis Country). As predicting people's pro-environmental behavioural intention was the main goal of this study, tent and RV campers who intended to stay for at least one night after the survey time were studied. 1,009 completed questionnaires were analyzed for the purpose of this study. Structural equation modeling was the main data analysis technique.

Results

All the hypothesized paths in the proposed structural model were significant and data showed good fit with the model (RMR = .023; NFI = .967; CFI = .976; GFI = .969; IFI = .976; RMSEA = .050). Affective attitudes strongly influenced people's pro-environmental behavioural intention ($\beta = .46$, p -value < .001). Cognitive attitudes did not show a great influence on intention ($\beta = .09$,

p-value < .1). Ecological worldview significantly influenced intention both directly ($\beta = .21$, p-value < .001) and indirectly through affective ($\beta = .27$, p-value < .001) and cognitive ($\beta = .25$, p-value < .001) attitudes. The model predicted 38% of variation in intention ($R^2 = .38$). Figure 1 demonstrates these results and Table 1 shows direct and indirect associations.

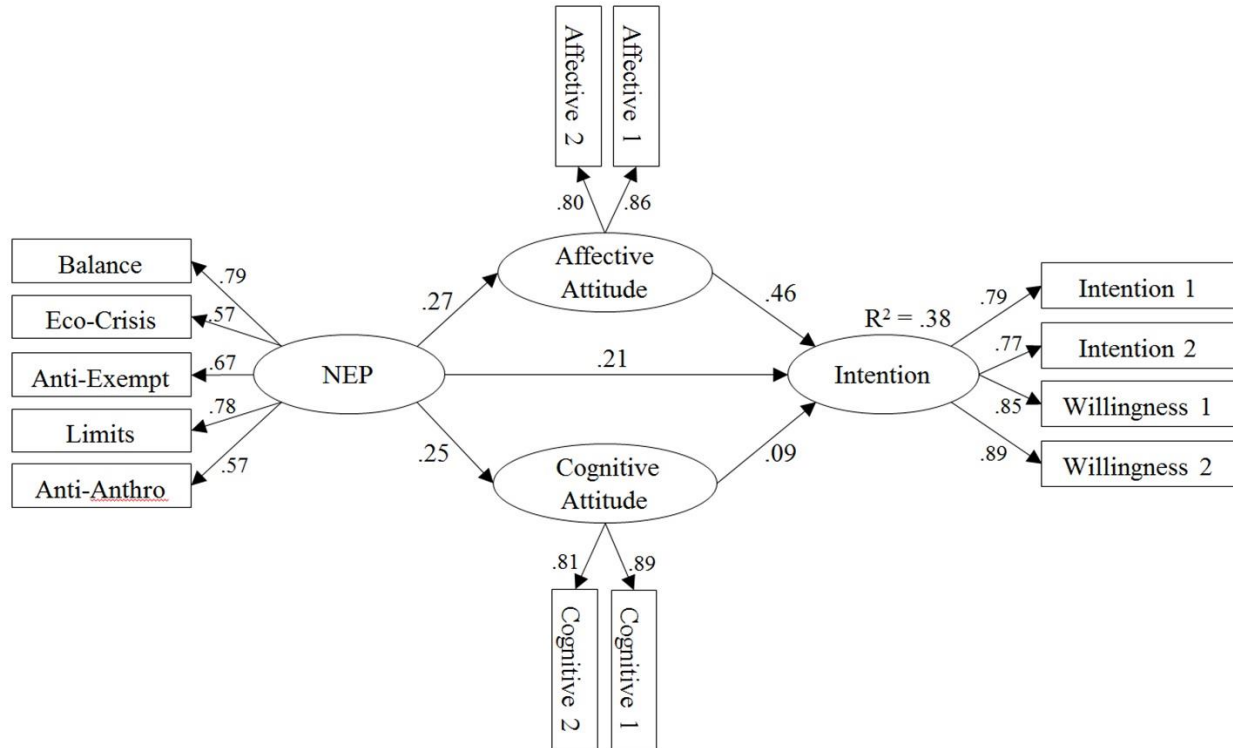


Figure 1. Structural model of the study

Table 1
SEM Results for Direct and Indirect Association

Predictor	Dependent Variable	β	P-value	Indirect Effect
Affective attitude	Intention	.46	< .001	–
Cognitive attitude	Intention	.09	< .1	–
NEP	Intention	.21	< .001	.36
NEP	Affective attitude	.27	< .001	–
NEP	Cognitive attitude	.25	< .001	–

$R^2_{\text{Intention}} = .38$

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of affective and cognitive attitudes and ecological worldview on people's pro-environmental intention. Results confirmed the strong influence of people's affective attitudes on their pro-environmental behavioural intention. Cognitive attitudes, however, did not show a strong association with intention. This is congruent with previous research findings that emphasized the importance of affect and emotional bond with the environment on people's pro-environmental behaviour (Cheng & Wu, 2015). Results also confirmed the direct and indirect influence of individuals' ecological worldview on their attitude and pro-environmental behavioural intention. Practical implication of the results will be discussed.

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