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The contribution of environmental education to the shaping of environmental awareness: A case study in Western Thessaly, Greece

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Abstract
In this era of globalization and climate change, particular importance is given to developing individual responsibility for protecting the environment. Environmental education plays a special role in achieving this goal. In recent years, environmental education courses have been developed in Greece at all levels of education. To achieve this goal, a survey was conducted among 208 residents in the region of Western Thessaly. This is a region which has been mostly affected by the climate change in recent years. The main research question is whether environmental education can contribute to individual responsibility among citizens. This type of information is also crucial for communication among scientists and the public. The main findings of the study were that environmental education should be an integral part of lifelong learning. The Greek population lacks environmental sensitivity and culture as shown in the more complex questions even though they understand the environmental crisis. The results are very significant and they can contribute to the development of environmental education.

Keywords: Climate change, communication, ecological footprint, environmental awareness, environmental education, sustainability

1. Introduction
Climate change and the environment are discussed increasingly as they are deteriorating. Among the general public it can become a very controversial topic. A survey was conducted using Google Forms to assess the opinions of the population of Western Thessaly regarding these issues. Thessaly is a region in Greece that has experienced a great many natural disasters and tragedies in recent years, many of which deriving from climate change. The region, also, has an extensive history on the primary sector of agriculture continuing in present days thus creating a society with knowledge on the management of the environment. Eight questions about habits, education and awareness from the survey are analysed and presented in this article with the tool IBM SPSS. It is important for authorities to understand the perspective and habits of the citizens so as to make significant changes and to ultimately create a society resilient to climate change. Resilience should be the primary intent of municipalities. However, so far it has fallen outside the scope of the targets of the Greek society. This type of information is also crucial for communication among scientists and the public. Through our survey a clear pattern of people willing to protect the environment was clearly, but not educated enough to do it.

1.2 Conceptual definitions
The environment affects all individuals, as the elements that compose it and their relationships create all the circumstances, parameters and surroundings. The natural environment includes all natural resources, but also the environment is the one created by humans (EEA) [1].
Education is the first step to achieve an environmentally conscious population. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [2], environmental education specifically, is a process of learning about the environment while developing sensitivity and skills to make better decisions and changes for its well-being. One of the most important skills people need is sustainability.

As defined by the United Nations (SDGs) [3], sustainability is the ability to meet individuals' present needs without compromising the ability for future generations to do the same. Sustainability rests on three interconnected pillars: The environment, society, and the economy (The Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA) [4]. Furthermore, the UN has set some goals for the planet. Those are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are interdependent targets for the year 2030 that the UN adopted in 2015. It is a global call for action to spread peace and prosperity to the world. It includes environmental protection, social equality, clean water and food for everyone and many more.

To help individuals and organizations understand the impact their habits have on the planet, the ecological footprint has gained a lot of popularity. It was first developed by Mathis Wackernagel (Mathis Wackernagel, 2024) [5] and William Rees (Post Carbon Institute) [6], Professors at the University of British Columbia, in the early 1990s. Ecological or otherwise known as environmental footprint is the amount of natural resources used and harmful gases emitted by a person/company/country, etc. Ultimately, it is the effect that they have on the environment and the quantification of humanity's demand on nature (Global Footprint Network) [7].

All this information is vital to be correctly communicated to society. With reference to the Britannica encyclopaedia, communication is the action of exchanging information and ideas while involving understanding and expression (Britannica) [8]. During our research an appropriate interaction to present and share our survey with the people of Western Thessaly was attempted thereby achieving a large number of participants because of that.

Thessaly is found in the central-eastern mainland of Greece, also including Sporades islands in the western Aegean Sea. Altogether, this land is 14,036 square kilometres composed of the 5 regional units of Larissa, Trikala, Karditsa, Magnesia and Sporades. Larissa is the largest city and capital of Thessaly, located in the eastern part, with a population exceeding 200,000 (according to the webpage of Region of Thessaly).

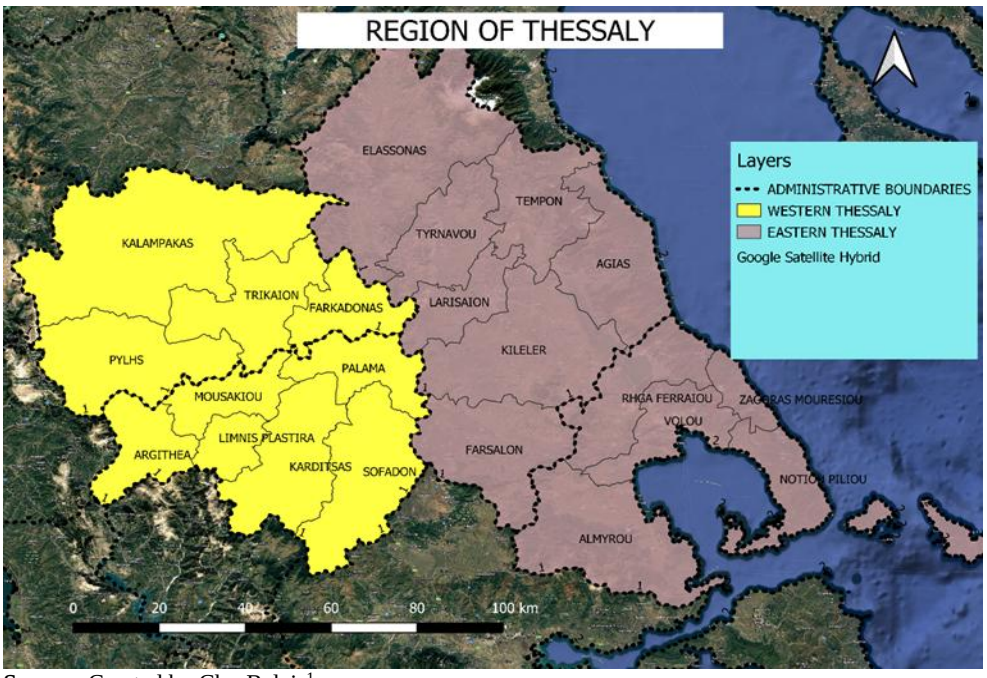
Thessaly is rich in mountainous areas including part of the Olympus and the mountain range of Pindos, while at the same time it contains the Thessaly plain, the second largest plain land in Greece. Along with that, the region also has lakes, rivers, including the Pineios, which is the third biggest of the country and many beaches of the Aegean Sea that waters the land from the East.

Specifically, Western Thessaly, where the survey was conducted, includes the two main cities Trikala and Karditsa. This region also includes smaller towns and many villages like Mouzaki and Kalampaka being some of the more well-known and visited. Western Thessaly is not an official administrative. It is composed of the two regional units of Karditsa and Trikala with a combined population of approximately 230.000. In this region agricultural activities are very common and vital for the Greek economy focusing on the production of grain, fruits, nuts, cattle and sheep (meat and dairy products) (according to the webpage of Region of Thessaly).

Table 1: Geographical data of the region of Thessaly

Land	**14.036km^2**
Regional units	5 (Larissa, Karditsa, Magnesia, Trikala, Sporades Islands)
Climate	Mediterranean, Continental and Highland
Population	688.255 habitants (2021)

Source: https://www.greece.ru/en/region/thessaly



Source: Created by Chr. Balais[1]

Map 1: Map of Thessaly, Greece

[1]We would like to thank Balais, Chr., MSc, for the permission to use the map.

2. Research Methodology

The questionnaire is one of the most widely used and useful research tools in the social sciences, education, psychology, health, marketing and many other fields. Its purpose is to collect data from a group of individuals (sample) in order to draw conclusions about a phenomenon, attitude or behavior. Main advantages of the questionnaire are the fast and economical data collection, the ability to analyze a large sample, the easy statistical processing and reduced researchers' bias. Main disadvantages are the limited depth of responses (especially in closed-ended questions), the risk of dishonest or incomplete responses, the difficulty in understanding some questions by participants and the low response rate in online surveys (Bryman, 2016 [10]; Creswell, 2014 [11]; Punch, 2014 [12]; Saunders M, Lewis P & Thornhill, A., 2019 [13].

The research began with the conduction of a survey. The survey contained 20 questions with an average completion time of approximately 5 minutes. 208 samples were collected using the platform Google Forms beginning on March 18, 2025 until May 7, 2025. The questionnaire was accessed through an online link and was distributed to the target population, which was the citizens of the Western Thessaly. On top of that, on May 6, 2025, university students and classmates of the conductors of the survey, using their mobile phones, gathered samples at the city centre of Karditsa and Trikala to achieve the minimal goal of 200 samples. The use of Google Forms was deemed the most low-cost and user-friendly method of gathering data. Also, αν immediate access to the data at all times and statistics was accomplished, while at the same time a satisfying coverage of a larger demographic area was managed.

The first part of the survey consisted of 14 questions about environmental awareness, everyday habits and education in the form of scale answers, 1 meaning strong disagreement and 5, strong agreement. Following, there were 5 demographic close-ended questions, with the ability to add answers in order to gather information on the participants gender, age, education level, occupation and residence. Consent and the agreement of being over the age of 18 was given at the beginning of the survey before any other question.

In the beginning, some basic statistical information was collected from the Google Forms platform after closing the survey to the public. As mentioned before, only 8 of the 14 main questions and the 5 demographic questions were further analysed through descriptive statistical techniques. The program used for this was the IBM SPSS Statistics, version 29.0.2. (Field, A., 2024) [14]. At the level of each item and across the dimension of the survey, core descriptive measures were calculated such as minimum and maximum values, mean scores and standard deviations. Furthermore, graphical illustrations were created for the purposes of visualizing results. Finally, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for statistical reliability and internal consistency of the results.

As previous research has shown, the expected results were the ones that were found (Zerva, A., *et al*, 2019, pp 457–480) [15]. The mistrust of the people in authorities has made them question even the reality of climate change. Environmental protection has yet to be incorporated in modern, Greek, everyday culture and so, actions of the public are minimal. The questions that rise as well are if the background of the individual affects their opinion regarding the environment. There are a lot of preconceptions about people based on their gender, age, education, etc..However, in the results of this research there were no indications of this kind.

3. Results

3.1 Demographics

Total sample, as previously stated, was 208. Below are the charts to show the demographic results of the survey

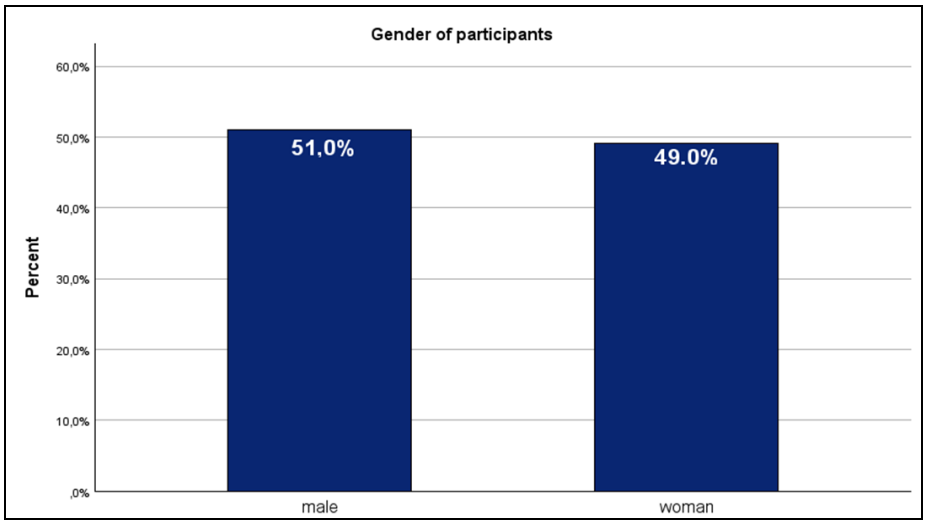


Fig 1: The gender of the participants

Table 2: The gender of the participants

Gender of participants					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	106	51,0	51,0	51,0
	woman	102	49,0	49,0	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Our participants were both men and women, split relatively equally with men being slightly more with a participation percentage of 51% and women 49%

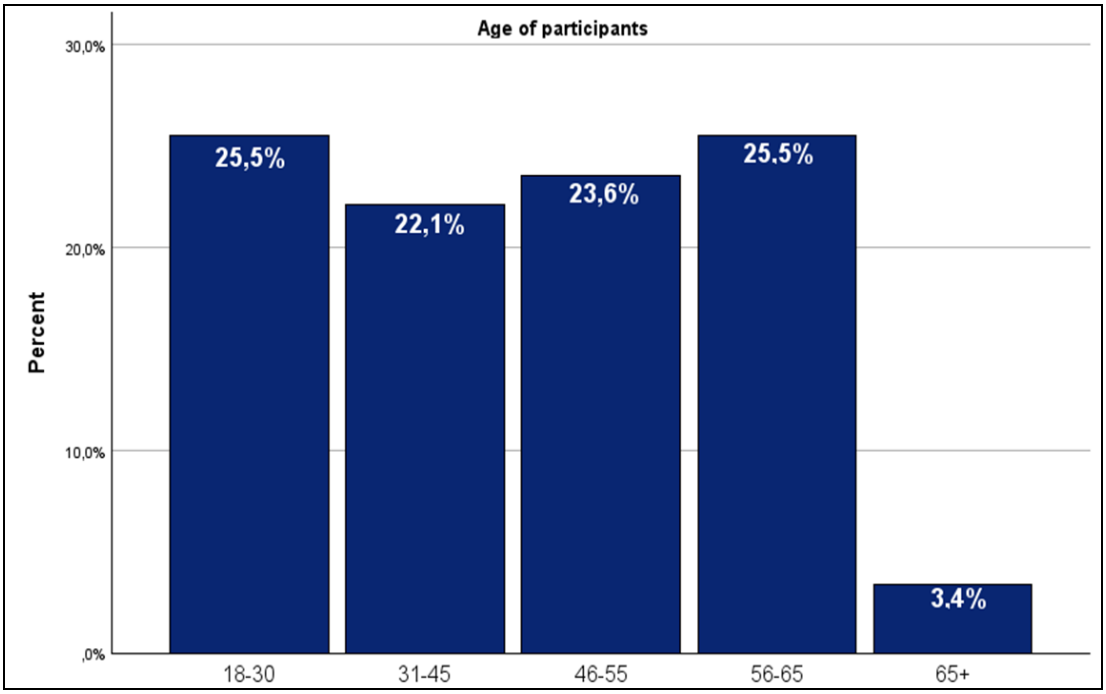


Fig 2: Age of participants

Table 3: Age of participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age of participants	208	1	5	2,59	1,212
Valid N (listwise)	208				

There is a variety of age groups participating with the most popular being 18-30 and 56-65 at 25,5%. Second is 46-55 at 23,6% and third 31-45 at 22,1%. Last and least popular group is 65+ at 3,4%.

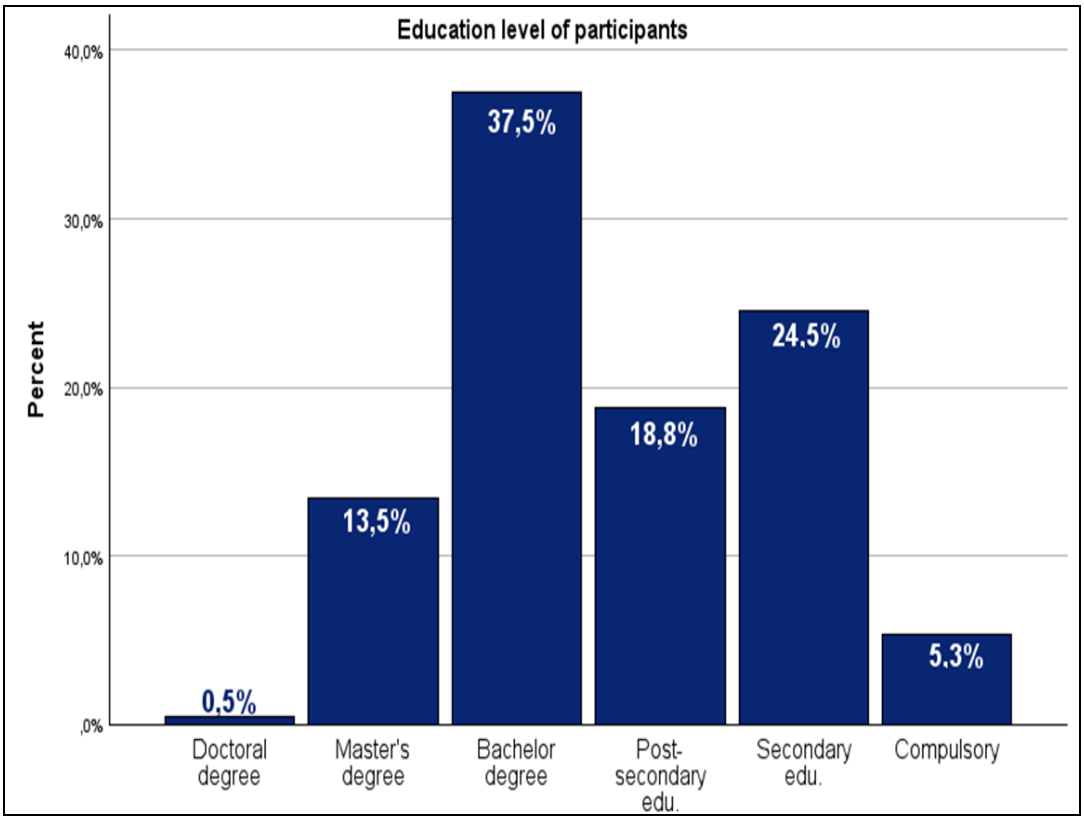


Fig 3: Education level of participants

Table 4: Education level of the participants

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Education level of participants	208	5	1	6	3,69	1,151
Valid N (listwise)	208					

Regarding the education level, there are participants from all levels. Most volunteers have a bachelor's degree, regarding 37,5% of answers, following secondary education at 24,5% and post-secondary education at 18,8%. Fourth on the list is Master's degree at 13,5%. Second to last is compulsory education at 5,3% and last is doctoral degree at 0,5% (1 person).

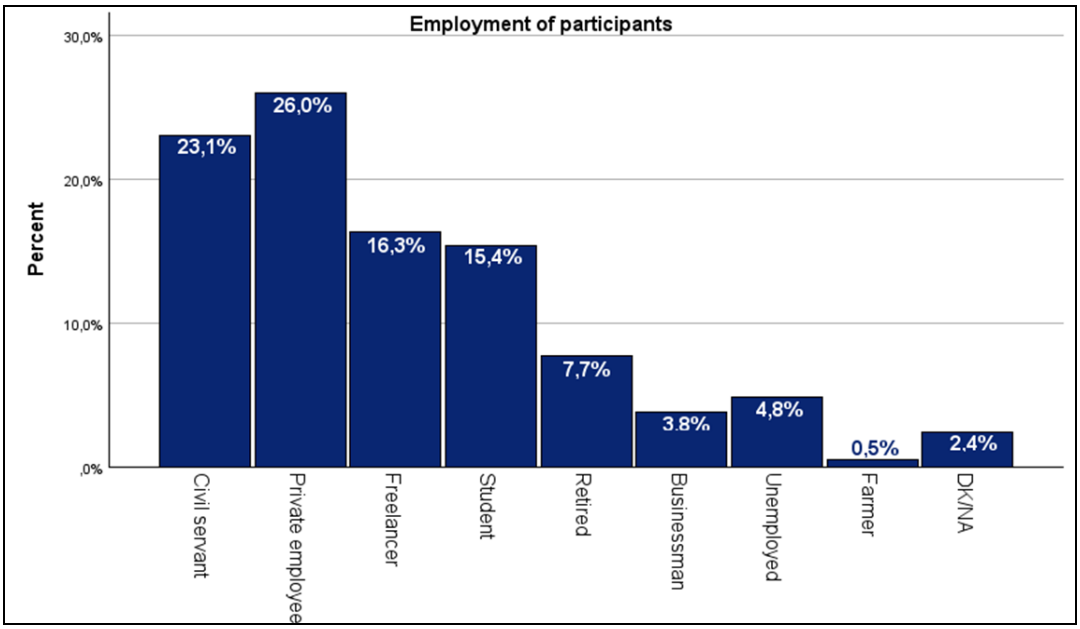


Fig 4: Employment of the participants

26% of the respondents are private employees, whereas the second most common occupation is civil servant at 23,1% and third is freelancer (including the primary sector of farming and livestock) at 16,3%. After that, students make up 15,4% of the participants followed by retired individuals at 7,7%. Unemployed are 4,8% of people and 3,8% are businessman. Lastly, 2,4% did not want to answer and only 0,5%, meaning 1 person identified himself/herself as a farmer, which was not one of the given answers, but was added by the participant.

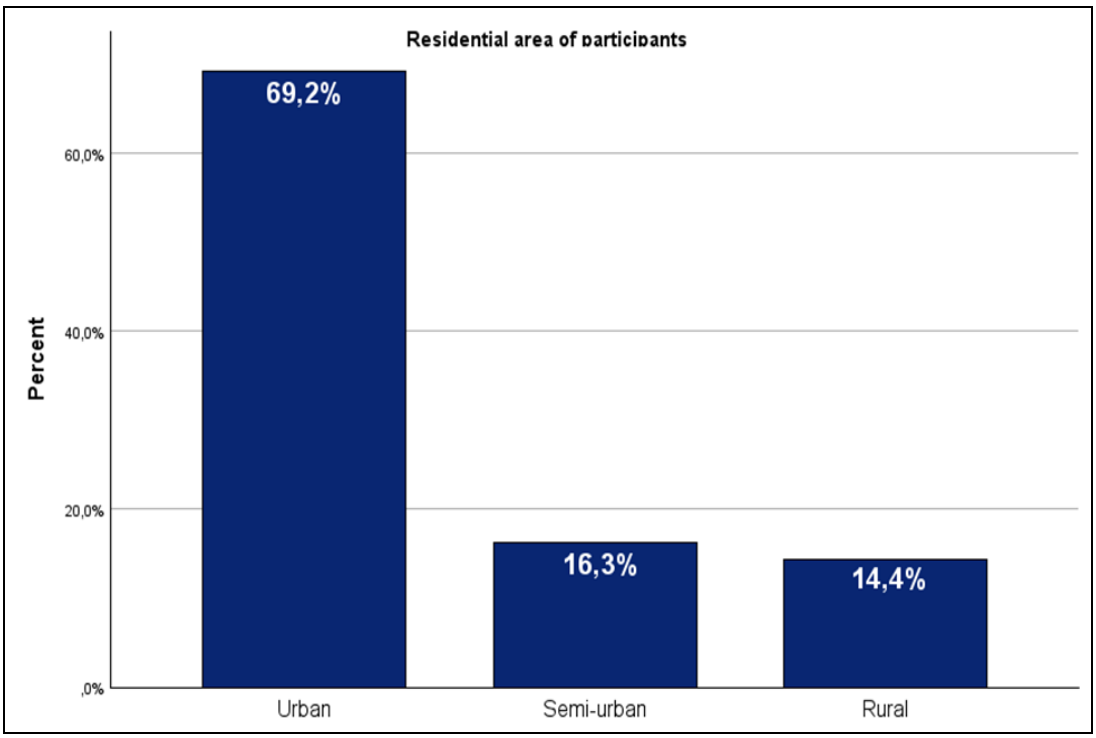


Fig 5: Residential area of the participants

Table 6: Residential area of the participants

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Residential area of participants	208	2	1	3	1,45	,734
Valid N (listwise)	208					

Urban residential area is the most common with 69,2%, second is semi-urban at 16,3% and last is rural at 14,4%. The results show a variety of volunteers, therefore a representative sample. The only feature that highlights a significant difference is the place of residency, where almost 2 thirds of the results are urban residence. Also, most of the participants are either in the process of getting a higher education (bachelor's degree) or already have. Lastly, a variety of occupations are noticed, but all in all most volunteers do work or study.

3.2 Environmental questions: The 8 questions that the participants were asked to state if they agree or disagree with them are presented below. The answers were in the form of scale from 1 through 5. If they strongly disagree with the statement, they chose 1, 2,which show disagreement, 3 is for neither agreement nor disagreement and 4 is for agreement with the 5 accounting for strong agreement.

Table 7: Main results

Questions	Percentage of minimum (1)	Percentage of maximum (5)	Most answered	Mean answer
Do you agree with the statement "Extreme weather events and natural disasters are a result of climate change and will occur more frequently if (climate change) is not mitigated"?	6,7%	57,2%	5 = 57,2%	4,17
You are aware of your environmental footprint	11,1%	23,1%	3 = 30,8%	3,38
As a consumer, your choices are influenced by your environmental footprint	8,2%	22,6%	3 = 31,7%	3,50
You know about the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals which have also been adopted by Greece	34,1%	17,3%	1 = 34,1%	2,62
You believe that the state provides adequate environmental education and information to citizens	40,4%	1,9%	1 = 40,4%	1,91
You believe that environmental education for students is adequate at school	31,7%	3,8%	2 = 34,1%	2,15
You consider your local community to be environmentally aware	27,9%	2,9%	2 = 34,6%	2,25
You have unanswered questions about the environment and you don't know where and/or how to find reliable and understandable information	13%	18,8%	3 = 32,2%	3,12

Most participants agree that extreme weather events are linked to climate change and that they will increase if the necessary measures are not taken soon. Awareness of environmental footprints is moderate, while only a few are aware of the 17 SDGs. When it comes to environmental education and awareness, the responses show strong dissatisfaction. The citizens of Western Thessaly believe that the state does not provide sufficient information and that education in schools is inadequate. In addition, a large percentage believe that the local community is not sufficiently aware and faces difficulties in finding reliable information.

3.3 Correlations

Correlation between the demographic data of gender, age and education as well as the answers to the 8 statements tried to be found. Correlation can be either positive or negative. Positive means that when one grows or gets smaller, the other one does the same. For example, when the age of the participants is older, they will response more positively to the question, as the bigger number suggests agreement. Negative correlation shows inversely proportional data. At the same time correlations among the survey questions are presented in the tables. For this analysis Pearson correlation was conducted. It takes values from -1 to 1 ($-1 \leq r \leq 1$) and is used in quantitative variables.

- -1 to -0.5 we consider it to be a high negative correlation coefficient
- -0.5 to -0.2: we consider it to be a low negative correlation coefficient
- -0.2 to 0.2: we consider the correlation coefficient to be zero
- 0.2 to 0.5: we consider it to be a low positive correlation coefficient
- 0.5 to 1: we consider it to be a high positive correlation coefficient

In addition, the statistical significance and the corresponding level of each correlation are interpreted. One star (*), correlation is significant at the 0,05 level meaning that the relationship shown of the variables has less than 5% chance to be due to random circumstances, making it reliable information. Two stars (**) signify the same circumstance, but for even smaller chance of randomness at a 1% level (Field, 2024). The following charts from the analyses with the help of SPSS show the results. For all variables the correlation coefficient is zero. No value is outside the limits of -0,2-0,2.

Table 8: Correlation Gender-Question 7-14

Variables	Gender of participants (numeric)	Answers to question 7	Answers to question 8	Answers to question 9	Answers to question 10	Answers to question 11	Answers to question 12	Answers to question 13	Answers to question 14
Gender of participants (numeric)	Pearson Correlation	1	.168*	-.013	.091	.033	-.152*	-.162*	.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015	.848	.192	.631	.029	.019	.896

	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 7	Pearson Correlation	.168*	1	.246**	.282**	.084	.105	.022	.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015		<.001	<.001	.226	.132	.758	.057
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 8	Pearson Correlation	-.013	.246**	1	.529**	.302**	.143*	.091	.138*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.848	<.001		<.001	<.001	.040	.192	.047
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 9	Pearson Correlation	.091	.282**	.529**	1	.217**	.133	.004	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.192	<.001	<.001		.002	.055	.955	.412
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 10	Pearson Correlation	.033	.084	.302**	.217**	1	.183**	.129	.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.631	.226	<.001	.002		.008	.063	.165
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 11	Pearson Correlation	-.152*	.105	.143*	.133	.183**	1	.513**	.479**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.132	.040	.055	.008		<.001	<.001
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 12	Pearson Correlation	-.162*	.022	.091	.004	.129	.513**	1	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.758	.192	.955	.063	<.001		<.001
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 13	Pearson Correlation	.009	.132	.138*	.057	.097	.479**	.499**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.896	.057	.047	.412	.165	<.001	<.001	
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 14	Pearson Correlation	.066	.053	-.080	.054	.009	.048	.065	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.343	.446	.251	.442	.896	.493	.348	.411
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208

Notes:
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Correlation Age-Questions 7-14

Variables	**Age of participants**	**Answers to question 7**	**Answers to question 8**	**Answers to question 9**	**Answers to question 10**	**Answers to question 11**	**Answers to question 12**	**Answers to question 13**	**Answers to question 14**
Age of participants	Pearson Correlation	1	.048	.033	.032	-.137*	-.014	.137*	-.088
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.495	.640	.642	.049	.842	.049	.207
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 7	Pearson Correlation	.048	1	.246**	.282**	.084	.105	.022	.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.495		<.001	<.001	.226	.132	.758	.057
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 8	Pearson Correlation	.033	.246**	1	.529**	.302**	.143*	.091	.138*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.640	<.001		<.001	<.001	.040	.192	.047
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 9	Pearson Correlation	.032	.282**	.529**	1	.217**	.133	.004	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.642	<.001	<.001		.002	.055	.955	.412
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 10	Pearson Correlation	-.137*	.084	.302**	.217**	1	.183**	.129	.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	.226	<.001	.002		.008	.063	.165
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 11	Pearson Correlation	-.014	.105	.143*	.133	.183**	1	.513**	.479**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.842	.132	.040	.055	.008		<.001	<.001
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 12	Pearson Correlation	.137*	.022	.091	.004	.129	.513**	1	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	.758	.192	.955	.063	<.001		<.001
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 13	Pearson Correlation	-.088	.132	.138*	.057	.097	.479**	.499**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.207	.057	.047	.412	.165	<.001	<.001	
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 14	Pearson Correlation	.166*	.053	-.080	.054	.009	.048	.065	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.446	.251	.442	.896	.493	.348	.411
	N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208

Notes:
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 10: Correlation Education-Question 7-14

	Education level of participants	Answers to question 7	Answers to question 8	Answers to question 9	Answers to question 10	Answers to question 11	Answers to question 12	Answers to question 13	Answers to question 14
Education level of participants	1	-.071	.041	-.018	-.127	-.124	-.068	-.061	.147*
Sig. (2-tailed)		.309	.556	.797	.067	.074	.326	.380	.034
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 7	-.071	1	.246**	.282**	.084	.105	.022	.132	.053
Sig. (2-tailed)	.309		<.001	<.001	.226	.132	.758	.057	.446
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 8	.041	.246**	1	.529**	.302**	.143*	.091	.138*	-.080
Sig. (2-tailed)	.556	<.001		<.001	<.001	.040	.192	.047	.251
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 9	-.018	.282**	.529**	1	.217**	.133	.004	.057	.054
Sig. (2-tailed)	.797	<.001	<.001		.002	.055	.955	.412	.442
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 10	-.127	.084	.302**	.217**	1	.183**	.129	.097	.009
Sig. (2-tailed)	.067	.226	<.001	.002		.008	.063	.165	.896
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 11	-.124	.105	.143*	.133	.183**	1	.513**	.479**	.048
Sig. (2-tailed)	.074	.132	.040	.055	.008		<.001	<.001	.493
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 12	-.068	.022	.091	.004	.129	.513**	1	.499**	.065
Sig. (2-tailed)	.326	.758	.192	.955	.063	<.001		<.001	.348
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 13	-.061	.132	.138*	.057	.097	.479**	.499**	1	.057
Sig. (2-tailed)	.380	.057	.047	.412	.165	<.001	<.001		.411
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208
Answers to question 14	.147*	.053	-.080	.054	.009	.048	.065	.057	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.446	.251	.442	.896	.493	.348	.411	
N	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208

Notes: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

3.4 Cronbach's Alpha reliability test

To ensure and provide proof that the results of the survey are reliable with internal consistency as well as reliability a test was conducted. The results of Cronbach's alpha statistic are acceptable, since it is very close to 0,6 or above when based on standardised items. Even though 0,7 or above are usually the lowest accepted rates, 0,6 can be allowed for exploratory research such as a survey is (Howard, 2016) [16].

Table 11: Reliability Statistics for the 8 questions of the survey

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,591	,611	8

4. Discussion

Correlations among the demographic data and the answers to the questions tried to be found through statistical analysis. The results do not show a significant correlation coefficient between those and therefore it becomes evident that gender, age and education are not very important to be environmentally aware. On the other hand, correlation was found among the answers.

Answers to questions 7,11 and 12 have zero correlation coefficient with gender at a statistical significance of 0,05. Although no correlation value is important, the appearance of both positive and negative values can be noted. When it comes to environmental awareness and education, age is not a variable that affects the answers of the participants is this questionnaire. There can also be observed that there are more correlations with high and low coefficient among the answers that have statistical significance either at 0,05 or 0,01 level. For example, answers 8 and 9 have a high coefficient correlation with significance of 0,01 level. This is an expected result because question 9 was a result of question 8 asking the volunteers if they put in action their education. Among age and all the answers of the 8 questions, the correlation coefficient is zero, but only for 10, 12 and 14 the correlation is significant at the 0,05 level. Correlation data among the answers are the same in this table as the previous one. Again, the same as with gender, the results show that age is not a variable that affects the answers regarding environmental education and awareness. Among education and all the answers to the 8 questions the correlation coefficient is zero. The only correlation that is significant is with the answers to question 14 at a level of 0,05. Correlation data among the answers are the same in this table as the previous one.

In conclusion, education is not a variable that affects the answers regarding environmental education and awareness. Environmental education and information are the cornerstones for shaping active, responsible, and aware citizens. However, this research highlights the major problem of trust and effectiveness of the existing mechanisms that are tasked with fulfilling this role. Citizens do not feel sufficiently informed and have not been educated to consider the environment a major issue. They seem to feel a distance between themselves and the institutions that manage environmental education. The vast majority of respondents consider state provision, school teaching and social participation to be inadequate or ineffective.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this research do not indicate that gender, age and level of education contribute to the level of environmental awareness of the people. Although the volunteers did have a basic level of understanding of environmental problems, they require more education and information as adults and children. The Greek population

lacks environmental sensitivity and culture as shown in the more complex questions even though they understand the environmental crisis. They want to be more educated and informed by their municipalities and schools, but do not show a change in everyday habits to be more ecologically conscious.

Part of the problem with the lack of environmental culture lies with the authorities of the country. The environment and its protection are not a primal goal of any administration so far. It is an afterthought and becomes important only when resources become limited, like water and electricity. At this point the citizens are sceptical of any actions taken for clean energy and sustainability, as many times corruption is taking advantage of opportunities that can help local communities. This untrustworthy environment is not new in Greece, since it has been around through the years especially after the big economic crisis in 2008. Especially, when environmental initiatives are taken by governmental bodies, citizens become way more reserved and suspicious of their underline intentions (Zerva *et al*., 2019) [16].

Most participants agree that extreme weather events are linked to climate change and that they will increase if the necessary measures are not taken soon. Awareness of environmental footprints is moderate, while only a few are aware of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The transition to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future requires informed and empowered citizens. To achieve this, it is crucial to develop targeted strategies that improve environmental literacy, strengthen trust in institutions and facilitate access to understandable and reliable information.

We understand that there is no environmental culture in Greece and even the few citizens, who are interested, do not know where to turn for reliable information or how to assess the validity of sources. This leads, as mentioned above, to difficulties that reinforce feelings of isolation and ignorance, even among people who may be interested in environmental issues. Addressing these problems is not simply a matter of political will, but also of rethinking the way we communicate scientific knowledge, shape attitudes and provide access to information. It is essential to activate the local community through actions, campaigns and collective interventions as well as direct communication through social networks. Teachers and executives need to be trained in modern methods of environmental awareness. The sustainability of the planet cannot wait. Active citizens who are aware in the coming years, eager for the best socially and environmentally, with the right guidelines from the state and scientific personnel. Environmental education must become more accessible, more reliable and closer to people. This is the challenge we are called upon to meet. With as many actions and as much cooperation as possible from all stakeholders, we can strengthen environmental awareness and promote practices that will help protect our planet.

The results of the study can be generalized to similar mountainous regions in Greece. It is recommended that a nationwide study be conducted on this topic. Finally, the main limitation of the study was the relatively small sample size and the inability to complete more face-to-face questionnaires.

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