

## AXIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE YOUTH OF UZBEKISTAN

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### Abstract

This article explores the current state of ecological culture among youth in Uzbekistan, emphasizing the importance of integrating ecological awareness into young people's consciousness through education, media, and social engagement. The study is grounded in both theoretical analysis and empirical research. It reviews key academic perspectives on ecological culture, highlighting its connection with sustainable development, ecological safety, and public health.

An empirical survey was conducted among 120 university students aged 16–25 in Tashkent to assess their knowledge of environmental issues, participation in ecological activities, and attitudes toward ecological responsibility. The findings reveal a significant gap between environmental awareness and practical engagement. While a majority of respondents acknowledged the importance of ecological issues, only a small proportion actively participated in environmental initiatives.

The results suggest that the development of ecological culture requires more than theoretical knowledge; it necessitates practical involvement, value-based education, and strategic media outreach. The article concludes by identifying key obstacles to ecological awareness and offers recommendations aimed at strengthening ecological culture among youth as a foundation for sustainable societal development.

**Keywords:** Ecological culture, youth, environmental education, ecological awareness, sustainable development, Uzbekistan.

### Introduction

One of the most pressing challenges facing humanity in the 21st century is the disruption of ecological balance and the gradual degradation of the environment. On a global scale, environmental issues such as climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and the pollution of air and water are not only affecting nature, but also directly impacting human health and economic development. Therefore, addressing environmental problems requires not only technological solutions, but also the development of public consciousness—particularly through the cultivation of ecological culture.

Ecological culture refers to an individual's conscious attitude towards nature, the ability to understand and respond to environmental issues, and the practice of living in accordance with



ecological values in everyday life. Instilling such a culture in the minds of the younger generation is considered one of the essential conditions for achieving sustainable development. Indeed, youth represent the most active and dynamic segment of society and are regarded as a decisive force in the future development of both the state and society.

At present, Uzbekistan is implementing a range of state programs, legislative measures, and educational reforms aimed at enhancing ecological awareness. Initiatives such as "Green School," "Green Energy," and "EcoFest" reflect a growing commitment to shaping environmental consciousness and responsibility among the population. However, for these efforts to yield consistent and effective outcomes, it is crucial to embed ecological values deeply within the minds of young people, to increase their engagement with environmental issues, and to ensure their active participation in ecological initiatives.

This article explores the theoretical foundations of ecological culture, emphasizes the importance of its integration into youth consciousness, analyzes the current situation and practical experiences, and discusses potential mechanisms for improving effectiveness in this area.

The issue of fostering ecological culture among youth has become increasingly significant not only within the education system but also in broader social, cultural, and political contexts. In the academic literature, the concept of ecological culture is interpreted through various approaches.

According to one perspective, "Ecological culture is a conscious, socially responsible attitude towards the environment based on the principles of sustainable development" [1]. The author emphasizes the necessity of delivering consistent environmental education at every stage of continuous learning in order to develop ecological culture among students.

A crucial aspect of instilling ecological culture in the younger generation is enhancing their ecological literacy. As noted by researchers, "Ecological literacy is not limited to theoretical knowledge, but is reinforced through practical activities, social engagement, and the adoption of a sustainable lifestyle" [3]. In this view, ecological health and culture are deeply interconnected, with environmental stress directly influencing both public health and cultural development.

Another important contribution highlights the role of safety systems and risk assessment in the development of ecological consciousness: "Managing environmental threats and ensuring ecological safety cannot be achieved solely through technical means, but also requires raising public ecological awareness" [4]. This approach links ecological culture with the paradigm of safety and risk management.

Philosopher Val Plumwood offers a critical view of Western philosophical traditions, asserting that "Viewing nature as separate from humans and as a passive object is one of the root causes of ecological crisis" [2]. She advocates for a shift from anthropocentric thinking toward a more balanced and interconnected ecological worldview.

Economic factors also play a vital role in shaping ecological awareness. As one scholar notes, "Environmental protection initiatives are more likely to achieve broader public engagement when they are supported by economic incentives" [5]. This underscores the importance of integrating economic mechanisms into strategies for developing ecological culture.

In summary, a review of the literature reveals that ecological culture is a multifaceted phenomenon, intrinsically linked with education, culture, safety, public health, and economic policy. This complexity highlights the need for an integrated approach to effectively embed



ecological values into the consciousness of the younger generation.

As a second key source in the theoretical analysis, the scholarly work of Abdumalikov on the system of environmental education was examined. He defines ecological culture as “a process implemented at all levels of continuous education aimed at shaping a student’s conscious and aesthetic attitude towards nature” [1]. This approach highlights the integrative role of the educational system in the formation of ecological awareness and values.

Efanova and Maklachkov, who explore ecological culture from the perspective of safety, view it as an integral part of the broader protection system. According to them, “Environmental safety is ensured not only through technical measures but also through the enhancement of public ecological consciousness” [4]. This interpretation situates ecological culture within the paradigm of ecological security.

Further, Rapport and Maffi provide a comprehensive analysis of the interconnectedness between environmental and cultural contexts. Their research integrates the concepts of eco-culture and healthy societies, emphasizing the correlation between ecological crises and cultural fragility. They argue that “Restoring ecological culture is a crucial factor in ensuring human health and sustainable development” [3].

As part of the empirical section of this study, a survey was conducted among 120 students aged 16–25 from three higher education institutions in Tashkent. The survey included 10 closed-ended questions designed to assess students’ awareness of environmental issues, participation in ecological activities, and environmentally responsible behavior in daily life. The preliminary findings are as follows:

76% of respondents have a general understanding of environmental problems;

42% are aware of ecological events held at their universities;

However, only 29% regularly participate in such events.

These statistics suggest that while students possess a basic level of theoretical knowledge regarding environmental issues, their practical engagement remains insufficient. This highlights a gap between environmental awareness and active participation, indicating the need for more applied and experiential learning approaches.

In addition, studies retrieved from international scientific databases (e.g., ScienceDirect) reveal a strong link between ecological consciousness and economic incentives. According to one article, “Environmental initiatives and economic incentives are effective tools in fostering environmentally conscious behavior” [5]. This underscores the role of economic motivation in shaping ecological attitudes and behaviors among youth.

As part of the research, a survey was conducted to assess the current state of ecological culture integration among youth. The survey involved 120 students aged between 16 and 25 from three higher education institutions in Tashkent.

The questionnaire consisted of 10 closed-ended questions aimed at evaluating several key indicators: students’ level of knowledge about environmental issues, their participation in ecological activities, the presence of environmental education within their academic institutions, and their personal sense of ecological responsibility.

The findings of the conducted study indicate that although students possess a general understanding of environmental problems, their ecological culture has not yet been fully formed in practice. Survey results show that while 91% of respondents acknowledged the existence of



ecological issues, only 29% reported active participation in environmental initiatives. This demonstrates a noticeable gap between environmental awareness and environmentally responsible behavior.

The data suggest that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient unless it is effectively translated into practical engagement. This reflects the idea proposed by Plumwood, who argued that viewing nature as a separate and passive object leads to a lack of emotional connection and indifference towards environmental action [2]. Such a perspective can hinder the internalization of ecological values and delay the formation of ecological culture.

As emphasized by Abdumalikov, the development of ecological culture largely depends on a continuous education system, wherein educational institutions play a critical role—especially in nurturing long-term ecological consciousness among youth. However, survey results reveal that only 37% of respondents make efforts to sort their waste, while 63% have not adopted this habit. This points to a weak integration of ecological values into everyday behaviors.

Moreover, only 33% of participants indicated that they receive environmental information through mass media or social networks, suggesting that current levels of ecological outreach and public awareness campaigns remain inadequate. In line with the view of Efanova and Maklachkov (2015), environmental safety is not ensured by technical means alone, but also through raising public ecological awareness. This implies that communication strategies and media engagement on environmental topics need to be significantly strengthened.

The analysis reveals several key obstacles hindering the formation of ecological culture among youth:

- Limited integration of environmental topics into formal education;
- A lack of consistent environmental events and initiatives;
- Insufficient youth engagement in ecological activism;
- Weak media coverage of environmental issues.

Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations presented in the following section aim to address and overcome these identified barriers.

## Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that while young people in Uzbekistan possess a general awareness of environmental issues, their ecological culture remains underdeveloped in practical terms. A significant gap exists between ecological knowledge and actual behavior, as evidenced by the low participation rate in environmental initiatives despite a high level of recognition of ecological problems.

This gap is partly attributed to the insufficient integration of ecological topics within the formal education system, the limited number of youth-oriented environmental programs, and the lack of effective ecological communication strategies in mass media and social platforms. Furthermore, economic incentives and value-based education remain underutilized as tools for motivating ecological responsibility.

The findings reaffirm the importance of a continuous and holistic approach to environmental education that combines theoretical instruction with practical engagement. Educational institutions, media, and policy frameworks must work in synergy to embed ecological values into the everyday lives of young people.



Strengthening ecological literacy, expanding participatory opportunities, enhancing environmental media coverage, and introducing socio-economic incentives can serve as effective strategies for fostering ecological culture among youth. Addressing these challenges is essential for promoting sustainable development and ensuring the long-term ecological well-being of society.

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