HNUE JOURNAL OF SCIENCE
Educational Sciences 2025, Volume 70, Issue 7, pp. 120-130
This paper is available online at https://hnuejs.edu.vn/es
DOI: 10.18173/2354-1075.2025-0136

SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE OF EDUCATION STUDENTS IN VIET NAM: CURRENT STATE OF AWARENESS AND PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL MEASURES FOR LEARNERS

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Received June 6, 2025. Revised July 18, 2025. Accepted November 12, 2025.

Abstract. Based on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), the article surveyed the perceptions of 813 education students. The research results indicate that for students today, there is still a certain gap between awareness and action in practicing sustainable lifestyles. Therefore, the main purpose of the article is to suggest some educational measures to promote sustainable lifestyles for education students in three main aspects related to the internal activities of the school, measures that can educate lifestyles from production and business models and finally, students' self-awareness of positive changes.

Keywords: sustainable lifestyle, sustainable lifestyle education, education students, higher education.

1. Introduction

Although a sustainable lifestyle is considered one of the pathways to express humanistic values and ecological ethics, aimed at improving the quality of life for both current and future generations in a more harmonious relationship with nature, its implementation remains a significant challenge for many people [1]. A sustainable lifestyle stands in stark contrast to long-standing material consumption habits, where people often prioritize convenience, rapid satisfaction of material needs, cost efficiency, and immediate effectiveness [2]. This mindset is, in many ways, directly opposed to the long-term goals of sustainable development that people may recognize and desire but find difficult to act upon. Therefore, in academic debates, sustainable living is often framed within the tension between ethical awareness, time efficiency, economic benefits, and social development when individuals make consumption choices and engage in social interactions [3], [2], [4]. Sustainable lifestyle education measures are, therefore, proposed to emphasize the role of teaching programs and the role of schools in influencing awareness to change the lifestyle of the young generation as they are the force of a sustainable society in the future. Numerous studies have affirmed that education plays a critical role in fostering learners' awareness and social responsibility toward sustainability [5], [6], [7]. For example, to promote sustainable lifestyle education, a study has shown that integrating education for sustainable development knowledge with sustainable consumption practices among students reduces the gap between students' awareness and action in different regions [6]. This is one of the suggested paths for Vietnam in promoting sustainable lifestyle education through practical

experiences for learners, allowing learners to acquire knowledge proactively in a way that is easy to remember, easy to feel and easy to understand.

Therefore, our research hopes to contribute to promoting sustainable lifestyle education for students more effectively. Especially for education students, who in the future will promote sustainable values in the community. The central novelty and core value of this research lies in addressing this specific issue. We have selected pre-service teachers in Vietnam as the research subject because, to date, both domestic and international studies on sustainable lifestyles have not adequately explored the role and position of pre-service teachers in relation to education for sustainable development. We believe that this group represents the future educators of society. They must be equipped with knowledge of sustainable development and embody a sense of responsibility in integrating sustainability into their teaching. Therefore, emphasizing and prioritizing educational strategies for promoting sustainable lifestyles among pre-service teachers in Vietnam will not only significantly benefit the students themselves but also positively impact the wider community. This is because the majority of pre-service teachers will serve as volunteers, educators, and advocates for sustainable living both in the immediate present and in the long-term future, especially in relation to the mission of education for sustainable development. To achieve the stated research objectives, this article aims to address the following key research questions: *(1) What theoretical framework should be selected to assess students' sustainable lifestyles? (2) What components constitute a sustainable lifestyle among students? (3) What findings demonstrate the level of awareness and the degree of sustainable lifestyle practices among pre-service teachers in the current context in Vietnam? (4) What educational strategies can be proposed to promote the practice of sustainable lifestyles among pre-service teachers in the near future?*

2. Content

2.1. Theoretical framework

2.1.1. Conceptualization of sustainable lifestyles

According to published studies, scholars have indicated that a green lifestyle primarily refers to a way of living that integrates attitudes, consumption behaviors, and the capacity to make environmentally conscious choices in daily activities with the aim of minimizing negative impacts on the planet. It guides individuals' behaviors toward sustainable values [8], [9]. As such, a green lifestyle is not merely a recent trend confined to resource conservation, but rather a comprehensive way of living that harmonizes with nature and fosters a deeper connection between humans and the natural environment within the broader context of sustainable development [10]. Similarly, "Ecological lifestyle is defined as a way of life in which daily human activities are friendly, close to nature, minimizing natural resources consumption and negative effects on the environment" [11]. Therefore, within the scope of this study, we posit that terms related to green lifestyles, environmentally friendly behaviors, or ethical expressions of ecological living all reflect various dimensions of a sustainable lifestyle. These concepts are closely interrelated and, for the purposes of this research, can be considered as conceptually equivalent.

In the context of sustainable living, the term can be understood as "Sustainable lifestyles are patterns of action and consumption, used by people to affiliate and differentiate themselves from others, which: meet basic needs, provide a better quality of life, minimize the use of natural resources and emissions of waste and pollutants over the lifecycle, and do not jeopardize the needs of future generations" [12]. Furthermore, the concept of sustainable lifestyles first emerged within the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 4 (Education) and Goal 12 (Consumption and Production), emphasizing the promotion of lifestyles that are sustainable and in harmony with nature. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (n.d.), Sustainable Lifestyles are considered as ways of living, social behaviors and choices, that

minimize environmental degradation (use of natural resources, CO_2 emissions, waste and pollution) while supporting equitable socio-economic development and better quality of life for all" [13].

Generally, a sustainable lifestyle represents a mode of production and consumption that harmonizes with the human ecological environment. Its purpose is to maintain life in a way that satisfies material and spiritual needs derived from labor, production, and daily activities in the present, without compromising the material and spiritual well-being of future generations. Consequently, sustainable living emphasizes rational and economical choices, actions, and consumption, conserving natural resources and encouraging the use of environmentally friendly materials to meet personal needs, while avoiding negative impacts on the natural environment in both the short and long term. Therefore, a sustainable lifestyle for students can be defined as the entirety of their environmentally friendly behaviors that contribute to the sustainable development of society when they participate in socio-economic activities such as learning, working, living, and engaging in leisure.

2.1.2. Theoretical basis for developing research measurement scales

Based on the previous literature review on sustainable lifestyles, the authors have selected Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as the theoretical framework for assessing the sustainable lifestyle of pre-service teachers. SCT emphasizes that human behavior is the result of reciprocal interactions among three core elements: Personal Factors (cognition, beliefs, expectations, etc.), Environmental Factors (social context, influence of others, etc.), and Behavior (actual behaviors and capabilities) [14], [15]. These three factors form a dynamic triadic reciprocal model in which no single factor dominates; instead, they influence each other continuously and interactively.

The rationale for choosing SCT lies in its relevance to the research context, as it captures how individual lifestyles are shaped through interactions between personal elements (knowledge, behavior, social pressure) and social environments. Bandura's theory postulates that human habits and experiences are outcomes of the mutual interaction among personal, environmental, and behavioral components [16], [17], which over time form habits and ultimately a structured lifestyle within each individual. Therefore, the sustainable lifestyle of pre-service teachers should be considered within their specific social relationships. SCT thus provides the foundation for developing measurement scales to examine pre-service teachers' awareness of the reciprocal influences among personal identity, social environment, and actual behavior in shaping their sustainable lifestyle. Specifically, the three measurement scales in this study are developed as follows:

(1) Scale for Personal Factors: This includes indicators related to awareness, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of pre-service teachers regarding the practice of sustainable lifestyles. The survey will focus on students' knowledge and understanding of sustainable living, their confidence in supporting it, and their belief in the positive outcomes of their sustainable practices on both social and natural environments.

(2) Scale for Environmental Factors: This encompasses external social elements influencing pre-service teachers' awareness and behavior, particularly the influence of people around them (family, friends, community), social norms, and environmental legal frameworks. The survey will focus on social influences from family, school, peers, and colleagues in places where students study, work, and live (e.g., home, dormitory, rented accommodation), as well as their interactions with others through social media platforms.

(3) Scale for Behavior: This includes specific behaviors and habits such as practical skills in sustainable living (saving energy, knowledge of eco-friendly product usage), frequency of sustainable practices (information seeking, using green products, proper waste disposal), and the

capacity or conditions (health, financial resources) that enable pre-service teachers to implement sustainable lifestyles in reality.

2.2. Research methods

First, a synthesis and analysis of literature related to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was utilized to evaluate the sustainable lifestyle of education students, serving as the theoretical foundation for the research problem. The references used include articles published in scientific journals and reports from various organizations in Vietnam as well as worldwide, clearly cited. This formed the basis for constructing the questionnaire to survey students according to the logic of the proposed research measurement scale.

This study employs sociological investigation methods through questionnaires, statistical analysis, and data processing using SPSS 25. The primary data utilized in this article was collected from a survey conducted with 813 students from two pedagogical universities in Vietnam: Hanoi National University of Education and Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, in April 2025. The measurement tool used in the research is a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree) to explore students' perspectives and opinions regarding each observation proposed in the study. Additionally, to assess the level of sustainable lifestyle practices among the survey participants, the questionnaire included a self-assessment question on sustainable living with five levels (1: very low; 2: low; 3: medium; 4: high; 5: very high).

2.3. Research results

2.3.1. Results of demographic statistical analysis

Table 1. Demographic Statistical Data

Demographic Profile		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	174	21,4
	Female	639	78,6
Year of Study	First Year	239	29,4
	Second Year	174	21,4
	Third Year	266	32,7
	Fourth Year	134	16,5
University	Hanoi National University of Education	503	61,9
	Ho Chi Minh City University of Education	310	38,1
Major	Teacher Training	519	63,8
	Natural Sciences	141	17,4
	Social Sciences	153	18,8
Current Living Situation	Living with family	180	22,1
	Dormitory	205	25,2
	Renting outside	428	52,7

(Source: compiled from the authors' survey data)

Table 1 shows that the majority of surveyed students are female, with 639 students (78.6%), while male students account for 174 students (21.4%). Among the 813 students, the distribution across academic years is relatively even, with first-year students at 29.4%, second-year at 21.4%, third-year at 32.7%, and fourth-year at 16.5%. The highest proportion (32.7%) is third-year students, while the lowest (16.5%) is fourth-year students. The discrepancies in the survey data primarily arise from the surveyed content regarding study locations, majors, and living situations

of education students. In terms of study location, the participants from Hanoi National University of Education comprise 503 students (61.9%), while those from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education account for 310 students (38.1%). Regarding majors, students in teacher training significantly outnumber those in natural sciences (17.4%) and social sciences (18.8%). Similarly, the survey data indicates that most students rent outside (52.6% or 428 students), while those living in dormitories account for 25.2% (205 students), and the lowest proportion (22.1%) live with family.

2.3.2. Results of student perspectives on personal identity factors affecting sustainable lifestyle

First, the current state of student perspectives on personal identity related to sustainable lifestyles is illustrated in Table 2, showing that the mean scores range from 3.73 to 4.03, indicating a general agreement among students on personal factors with low variability since the standard deviation (SD) values are all below 1 (from 0.87 to 0.93).

Table 2. Description of Personal Factors Affecting Students' Sustainable Lifestyle

Item	Mean	SD	VD	Rank
A1: I am aware of sustainable living	3.76	0.93	Agree	4
A2: I have enough knowledge to practice	3.73	0.90	Agree	6
A3: I am confident in practicing	3.75	0.90	Agree	5
A4: I know that practicing sustainable living	4.03	0.87	Agree	1
A5: I believe that practicing sustainable living	4.01	0.88	Agree	2
A6: I believe that sustainable living is a trend	4.01	0.89	Agree	2
Overall Mean	3.88	0.89	Agree	

(Source: processed data using SPSS)

The ranking of agreement from highest to lowest based on responses from the 813 students is illustrated in Table 2, with A4 receiving the highest average score of 4.03, indicating that students recognize the importance of sustainable living concerning environmental issues. This is followed by two factors: A5 and A6 both with an average score of 4.01. The factor A1 has an average score of 3.76, while A3 has a mean score of 3.75, and A2 has a mean score of 3.73.

2.3.3. Results of student perspectives on environmental factors affecting sustainable lifestyle

To ascertain the influence of environmental factors on students' sustainable lifestyles, the authors conducted a survey with content related to social norms and the impact of external factors, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Description of Environmental Factors Affecting Students' Sustainable Lifestyle

Item	Mean	SD	VD	Rank
B1: My sustainable lifestyle is influenced by social norms	3.85	0.86	Agree	3
B2: My sustainable lifestyle is influenced by family habits	3.81	0.95	Agree	4
B3: My sustainable lifestyle is influenced by regulations at my dormitory	3.70	1.01	Agree	5
B4: My sustainable lifestyle is influenced by information and images about sustainable living on media	3.93	0.84	Agree	2
B5: My sustainable lifestyle is influenced by encouragement from the school	3.95	0.89	Agree	1
Overall Mean	3.85	0.91	Agree	

(Source: processed data using SPSS)

The five observed variables in Table 3 indicate that students tend to adopt sustainable lifestyles positively when influenced by environmental factors, with mean scores ranging from 3.70 to 3.95, all within the agreement range. The factor B3 has a standard deviation (SD) of 1.01, indicating significant variation in opinions.

The leading environmental factor influencing students' sustainable lifestyles is the factor B5 with a mean score of 3.95 and SD of 0.89. This reflects the school's role as a key factor in shaping and reinforcing sustainable lifestyles among students. The second factor is the perception that B4 with a mean score of 3.93 and SD of 0.84. The third factor states that B1 with a mean score of 3.85 and SD of 0.86. The fourth factor is the perception that B2 with a mean score of 3.81. Finally, the lowest mean score in this survey is the factor B3 which has a value of 3.70. Based on the survey results in Table 3, it can be concluded that, generally, students at the two national key pedagogical universities have a high level of agreement regarding environmental factors.

2.3.4. Results of student perspectives on behavioral factors affecting sustainable lifestyle

Table 4 illustrates the state of behavioral factors impacting students' sustainable lifestyles, showing that students have a positive outlook on these factors, with mean scores ranging from 3.66 to 4.02. The standard deviations are primarily below 1, indicating low variability in students' evaluations. However, the factor C4 has a standard deviation of 1.00, reflecting a noticeable divergence in students' behaviors, with some consistently practicing this while others may not do so regularly.

Table 4. Description of Behavioral Factors Affecting Students' Sustainable Lifestyle

Item	Mean	SD	VD	Rank
C1: I know how to find information about environmentally friendly products	3.86	0.94	Agree	2
C2: I know how to sort waste after use	3.81	0.92	Agree	3
C3: I have skills in using public transport and green transportation	4.02	0.89	Agree	1
C4: I have a habit of carrying personal items to hold products instead of plastic bags	3.66	1.00	Agree	6
C5: I often use products that are natural, recyclable, safe for health and the environment	3.73	0.95	Agree	5
C6: I have the ability (health, time, finances) to practice sustainable living	3.79	0.96	Agree	4
Overall Mean	3.81	0.94	Agree	

(Source: processed data using SPSS)

In this measurement scale, the ascending order is as follows: the lowest score is for the factor C4 which achieved a mean of 3.66 and an SD of 1.00. Second is C5 with a mean of 3.73 and SD of 0.95. Third is the factor C6 with a mean of 3.79 and SD of 0.96. The fourth statement is C2 with a mean of 3.81. Next is C1 with a mean of 3.86. The highest score in this survey is for the factor C3 with a mean of 4.02 and SD of 0.89.

2.3.5. Results of cronbach's alpha reliability test and exploratory factor analysis (efa) for the research measurement scale

To verify the reliability of the research measurement scale and the correlation among groups of observed variables, the authors conducted reliability tests using Cronbach's Alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to supplement the research results. This helps to demonstrate that the proposed research measurement scale is practical and can be used to verify other research models on the same topic in a more complex and refined manner.

Firstly, the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha was performed. According to Hair et al. (2010), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is considered acceptable [18]. The reliability test results through the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient indicated that all research measurement scales had coefficients greater than 0.7, specifically A=0.951, B=0.926, and C=0.948. Cristobal et al. (2007) stated that a Corrected Item-Total Correlation of 0.3 or higher is sufficient to improve the reliability of the scale [19]. The survey results showed that the observed variables in all three measurement scales had Corrected Item-Total Correlation values greater than 0.3, specifically for the A scale ranging from 0.832 to 0.873, for the B scale from 0.777 to 0.857, and for the C scale from 0.778 to 0.882. After data processing, all observed variables met the requirements. Thus, 17 observed variables can be retained for factor analysis EFA to verify the discriminant validity among groups of observed variables that are highly correlated with each other.

Secondly, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the discriminant and convergent validity. After passing the reliability test with Cronbach's Alpha, the analysis continued with Principal Components analysis and Varimax rotation. The results showed that the Approx. Chi-Square in Bartlett's Test of Sphericity achieved a value of 16264.422 with a significance level of Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, and a KMO value of 0.948, indicating that the observed variables correlate with each other across the overall scope. Furthermore, based on the calculations from the survey sample, these three independent variable groups explained 81.721% > 50% of the variance in the dataset when stopping at the third round, thus meeting the requirements. Consequently, the rotated factor matrix from the EFA is divided into three factor groups, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix

Item	**Component**		
	1	**2**	**3**
A5	0,786		
A4	0,784		
A6	0,752		
A1	0,729		
A2	0,695		
A3	0,681		
C4		0,883	
C5		0,875	
C6		0,807	
C2		0,740	
C1		0,715	
C3		0,611	
B3			0,888
B2			0,852
B1			0,797
B5			0,650
B4			0,601

(Source: processed data using SPSS)

Thus, according to Table 5, several conclusions can be drawn: in the personal factors group, variable A5 has the highest factor loading of 0.786, indicating that this independent variable has the greatest influence on this factor group. In the behavioral factors group, variable C4 has the highest factor loading of 0.883, indicating that this independent variable has the most influence on the behavioral factors. For the environmental factors group, variable B3 has the highest factor loading of 0.888 compared to other independent variables in the group.

2.4. Discussion of research findings and proposed solutions for promoting sustainable lifestyle for education students

Regarding the first research question, in order to determine an appropriate theoretical framework for analyzing and evaluating sustainable lifestyles among education students in Vietnam and thereby identifying suitable educational solutions, this study conducted a literature review to identify key factors influencing sustainable living. These factors include personal aspects (such as perceived behavioral control, environmental knowledge, and attitude toward behavior) and social pressures (such as policies, social norms, and recommendations from family and friends). Additionally, information dissemination and social interactions are also critical in shaping sustainable behavior. Based on these analyses, we selected the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as the analytical framework. SCT is understood as an integration of three key pillars: personal factors (perception, attitude, belief) and environmental factors (social interactions including laws, local customs, and influence from dormitories, families, and peers) that collectively affect the intention to practice a sustainable lifestyle.

Regarding the second research question, in this study, based on SCT and a review of previous research, we proposed 17 observed variables corresponding to 3 research scales. The results of Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) demonstrated that the sustainable lifestyles of education students in this study can be structured by 3 factors corresponding to the 3 research scales: individual awareness (understanding, knowledge, attitude, and beliefs towards implementation), sustainable practice behavior (personal habits, skills in practicing thrift, information seeking, product use, and ability to perform behavior), and environmental influences (social environment on and off campus).

Regarding the third research question, to explore the awareness of education students about sustainable lifestyles, our results indicate that students have a positive perception of implementing sustainable lifestyles due to their adequate knowledge and ability to practice sustainability. However, in self-assessing their level of practice, only 33% (269 out of 813 students) rated themselves as practicing at a high to very high level, while 67% (544 students) rated themselves as practicing at a low to medium level. This finding aligns with previous studies, which suggest that there is often a significant gap between awareness and the implementation of sustainable behaviors and lifestyles [20], [21], [22]. Therefore, educational measures to promote sustainable lifestyles among students are a necessary requirement for educational institutions and social organizations.

Therefore, to address the situation drawn from the third research question and to address the problem of the fourth research question, our research will suggest three groups of solutions focusing on education through experience and practice, as follows, to contribute to promoting the lifestyles of education students in the future:

Firstly, educational solutions within the university campus aimed at promoting sustainable lifestyles among students include upgrading infrastructure, improving waste classification systems at source, creating environmentally friendly learning spaces, and developing clear and specific sustainability strategies. Faculty members should integrate sustainable lifestyle education into relevant courses and organize practical activities such as experiential learning to help students develop green skills. In the social sciences, it is essential to incorporate content related to students'

responsibility for sustainable development, while in natural sciences and engineering disciplines, project-based learning should be encouraged to produce environmentally friendly products. In addition, the university should strengthen cooperation with student organizations such as the Student Union and Youth Union to regularly organize practical activities, including energy-saving initiatives, competitions, and communication campaigns on green consumption. These efforts aim to spread sustainable living practices throughout the university and the broader community through various formats such as contests, community-based activities, clubs, thematic seminars, and experiential workshops.

Secondly, educational solutions outside the university campus aimed at promoting sustainable lifestyles among students are mainly organized by businesses, individual entrepreneurs, and other social actors, focusing on real-life experiences and motivating students to adopt green practices. Typical approaches include encouraging the use of personal items during consumption in exchange for discounts to reduce plastic waste; organizing communication campaigns and promoting eco-friendly products with student participation as volunteers or influencers on social media. Enterprises can also collaborate with universities to train human resources for sustainable development and green jobs. Furthermore, attention should be paid to researching and producing affordable green products to encourage student consumption, thereby enabling students – especially those in teacher training – to become proactive ambassadors for sustainable living within the community.

Thirdly, solutions targeting pre-service teachers themselves. Practicing a sustainable lifestyle is not only an inevitable demand of the times but also a demonstration of responsibility toward the environment and society. First and foremost, students should actively enhance their awareness of the importance of sustainable living by regularly seeking out and updating information related to eco-friendly products, methods of waste separation in daily life, and the harmful effects of environmentally damaging behaviors. Learning through experience also requires students to actively participate in educational activities, professional activities, and specialized topics in school through forms such as seminars and developing environmental clubs. At the same time, students need to develop responsible consumption habits by minimizing resource waste and prioritizing the use of recycled and reusable products to reduce environmental pollution. Moreover, as a dynamic and influential group in the community, students should actively participate in green campaigns, encourage their families and peers to adopt sustainable practices, and boldly speak out against environmentally irresponsible behaviors such as littering, and the use of plastic bags or single-use items. One of the fastest and most engaging means of promoting sustainability is through students' personal social media platforms, where each individual can become a cultural ambassador for sustainable living.

3. Conclusions

Our study used SCT to explore education students' perceptions of sustainable lifestyles and students' self-assessment of practicing sustainable lifestyles in the context of this research survey. With this study, we found that a certain gap exists between students awareness of the need to practice sustainable lifestyles based on the influencing factors of individuals, the social environment, and the ability to perform behaviors, and the practice of sustainable lifestyles in reality. Awareness is in agreement with practicing sustainable lifestyles, but practical behaviors have not yet reached a high and frequent level. Therefore, suggesting solutions to educate students about sustainable lifestyles is necessary. The research suggests that educational measures within schools and by socio-political organizations, businesses, manufacturers, and business stores will be extremely effective solutions to promote students' practice of sustainable lifestyles. However, this study also has some limitations as we have only limited the scope of research to two key teacher training schools in Vietnam to draw conclusions and suggest solutions for all education

students in Vietnam. The research scales that we have proposed have only stopped at exploring awareness and have not yet built a model to study the sustainable lifestyles of education students, and have not clarified what barriers exist in the gap between awareness of the 3 individual, environmental, and behavioral factors and the sustainable lifestyles of education students. These limitations in this study may suggest further research directions for quantitative analysis studies with a larger, more representative survey scale and a more complex sustainable lifestyle model in the future.

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