

The Role of Persuasive Communication in Environmental Preservation: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of persuasive communication in forming community members' environmental awareness, attitudes, and active participation. The findings showed that clear, relatable, evidence-based, and practical communication strategies efficiently influence individuals to recognize their environmental responsibilities and participate in activities such as community cleanups, tree planting, and local environmental initiatives. Results also indicate that environmental protection is increasingly perceived as a shared responsibility rather than a duty limited only to government agencies; collective action, community partnership, and credible leadership are key to promoting meaningful change. However, barriers, including complex messaging, lack of resources, time constraints, insufficient support, and misinformation, commonly hinder the translation of awareness into steady practice. The study finds that persuasive communication serves as a vital tool beyond mere information dissemination—it promotes accountability, shifts perspectives, and encourages sustained behavioral change. To achieve lasting sustainability, environmental programs must deliver simple, relevant, and wide-ranging messages while offering the necessary support systems that enable communities to become active partners in environmental protection.

Keywords: Persuasive Communication and Environmental Preservation SDG: #4 Quality Education SDG: #13 Climate Action

INTRODUCTION

Environmental awareness campaigns have increased public knowledge; however, they often fail to inspire meaningful and lasting action because they rely more on factual information than on persuasive strategies that connect with audiences' values and emotions (Maynard et al., 2024). Moreover, environmental preservation is a critical global challenge as biodiversity and ecosystems continue to decline due to deforestation, pollution, unsustainable resource use, and climate change, resulting in ecological, social, and economic consequences (United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) Annual Report, 2023). Addressing this issue is essential because healthy ecosystems and biodiversity are interconnected with human well-being, economic stability, and environmental sustainability, making the protection of endangered species and natural habitats vital for the future (ScienceInsights, 2025).

Persuasive communication serves an important function in environmental preservation because it goes beyond simply informing people about environmental issues; it encourages them to adopt positive attitudes and engage in sustainable behaviors. Through well-crafted messages that appeal to emotions, values, and a sense of personal responsibility, persuasive communication can motivate individuals and communities to participate in environmental preservation activities such as waste reduction, recycling, conservation, and climate action. Effective environmental communication also helps bridge the gap between awareness and actual behavior by making environmental issues more relevant and actionable. Jain et al. (2023) demonstrate that persuasive communication strategies using engaging, relatable messages can significantly influence people's willingness to adopt sustainable behaviors, highlighting the importance of effective communication in achieving environmental preservation goals.

Improper waste disposal and deforestation are human activities that severely damage the environment. Jerie et al. (2024) demonstrate that improper waste disposal causes severe pollution of land, water, and air, making natural resources toxic and unfit for life. Cutting down trees leads to soil erosion and loss of wildlife habitats, and disruption of the water cycle, thereby altering the natural state. These practices clearly contradict preservation, as they destroy the purity and balance of the environment that should be maintained.

However, the effective implementation of preservation policies is crucial. As stated by Ibbett et al. (2024), having laws and regulations alone is not enough to ensure people follow them. In many cases, inadequate monitoring systems, insufficient personnel, and difficulties in enforcing rules allow damaging activities to continue unchecked. This situation makes it extremely difficult to enforce the strict protection needed to keep areas free from human exploitation and disturbance.

Environmental preservation is fundamental as it focuses on maintaining nature in its original, pure, and undisturbed state. Khuc et al. (2024) demonstrate that its main goal is to protect natural areas, resources, and ecosystems from damage, thereby ensuring their continued functionality and health. Moreover, safeguarding the environment in its natural state is necessary to prevent permanent damage and degradation, thereby ensuring a stable, healthy, and sustainable world not just for the people living today, but especially for the welfare and survival of future generations.

Despite increasing awareness of environmental issues, a significant problem persists: a disconnect between public awareness and meaningful action. A previous study showed that, despite widespread concern about climate change, progress on climate action is hindered by the awareness-action gap, in which individuals' concerns do not translate into supportive behaviors or policies (Hochachka et al., 2024). Recognizing this problem is crucial for making effective environmental participation and policy strategies. It indicates an insufficient understanding of complex environmental problems, a sense of distance from these issues, and overwhelming discouragement that hinders active involvement.

As discussed in barriers to environmental action, Tang and Chooi et al. (2022) explained that disconnection from environmental action is characterized by a lack of deep understanding of complex environmental issues, a perceived distance from environmental problems, and a sense of overwhelm that hinders proactive engagement. The awareness-action gap in environmental issues refers to the phenomenon in which individuals are concerned about climate change but fail to take meaningful action due to limited understanding, perceived distance from the problem, emotional overwhelm, and societal or cultural barriers.

Governments and organizations alone cannot achieve sustainability goals without the active involvement of individuals and communities. As Rinda (2025) confirms, social media serves as a vital tool for raising awareness and fostering public participation in environmental issues. By democratizing access to information, fostering connected environmental communities, and accelerating collective responses, it helps translate awareness into concrete action. The study also finds that greater engagement with environmental content on these platforms directly correlates with higher levels of public commitment and pro-environmental behavior, making these digital spaces essential tools for building the widespread support and behavioral change needed for effective environmental protection.

While Sarabi, Shahryar et al. (2025) demonstrated Turning we-mode: a systematic review on joint action principles for promoting collective proenvironmental engagement, the aim is to examine how coordinated joint action by groups can promote collective pro-environmental behavior. It thoroughly examines current studies to understand how collaborative efforts promote cooperation, shared responsibility, and group participation and considers how these findings can be applied to enhance broader participation in environmental sustainability efforts. Therefore, bridging the gap between awareness and action is crucial for fostering a society that prioritizes environmental stewardship.

Persuasive communication is a vital catalyst for transforming awareness into action. It encompasses strategic efforts to influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward environmental preservation. Poorly framed messages can trigger backlash, misinformation, or a sense of insufficiency. Almufassir et al. (2026) demonstrate that the

credibility of communicators in persuasive information depends on their communication skills, knowledge of religious values, and ability to build trust.

By employing techniques such as framing environmental issues to resonate with diverse audiences, leveraging storytelling to build emotional connections, and tailoring messages to specific community needs, persuasive communication can empower individuals to become active agents of change. The study by Shahreza, Mirza, et al. (2025) identifies and analyzes the communication strategies used by environmental activists in awareness-raising and campaigns and examines how these strategies influence public awareness and participation in environmental sustainability efforts. This study discusses strategies for effective environmental communication.

These issues are best explained through frameworks such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which shows that message effectiveness depends on the audience's motivation and the complexity of processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). These empirical findings and theoretical perspectives highlight the need for adaptive, participatory, and context-sensitive persuasive strategies in fostering sustainable environmental practices.

Persuasive communication not only advances theoretical understanding of behavior change but also provides information for practical interventions that foster genuine and inclusive environmental action amid misinformation, polarization, and ecological crisis. Therefore, the current study is needed to add more context-sensitive, participatory, and dynamic communication strategies that not only convince but also enable communities to take an active role in environmental preservation.

Persuasive communication and participatory engagement in Environmental preservation is crucial for fostering ecological sustainability. This study integrates strategic communication and inclusive participation to cultivate a sense of responsibility and proactive involvement in protecting the environment. This study explores the core elements, philosophical concepts, communication strategies, and participatory principles that define this paradigm, focusing on both global perspectives and local initiatives.

Ajzen et al. (2011) proposed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), wherein one's intentions best predict the individual's behavior; intentions are, in turn, predicted by attitudes about the behavior and subjective norms (a person's perception of important others' beliefs that they should or should not perform the behavior). The behavioral intention describes the motivational factors that influence behavior; it indicates how hard people are willing to try and how much effort they plan to exert to perform the behavior.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Petty and Cacioppo (1986), argues that persuasion works through two routes: the central route, where people carefully evaluate arguments (leading to stronger, long-term attitude change), and the peripheral route, where people depend on simple indicators such as authority, credibility, or emotional appeal (leading to more temporary change). In environmental communication, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) helps explain why data-driven campaigns may succeed with highly motivated audiences, while visual storytelling and emotional appeals may be more effective with less engaged audiences.

Inoculation theory suggests that individuals may encounter misinformation when they are presented with weakened false claims along with their refutations. This process, like a medical vaccine, can be applied to environmental communication to help audiences counter climate misinformation, build confidence in the scientific consensus, and maintain long-term pro-environmental attitudes. This theory can be used to design a communication strategy that persuades, influences individuals to remain committed, promotes science-based approaches, and encourages greater participation in collaborative environmental action (Van Der Linden et al., 2017).

Further research is also needed to examine the effectiveness of communication tools in specific cultural and social contexts, as barriers and perceptions may vary across regions and countries (Gonella et al., 2024). This will help develop contextually relevant strategies that resonate with local communities and actors. While many communication strategies have succeeded in raising awareness and participation, major challenges remain, including limited funding when programs must cover a wide, diverse area, low community participation, and resistance to change.

To address this gap, studies must be conducted to gather comprehensive qualitative data from the residents of Barangay San Francisco, Panabo City. By interviewing them, we can examine environmental preservation issues and address these concerns with greater attention. Additionally, research is needed to determine the effectiveness of various communication methods and outreach approaches for reaching out to people who are not involved in or uninterested in environmental issues. This body of work not only raises awareness but also proposes practical solutions. A more focused approach, along with programs that address the issues faced by nonparticipating residents in Barangay San Francisco, Panabo City, can increase participation in environmental preservation efforts.

The significance of this study lies in examining how persuasive communication encourages participants to engage in environmental preservation, helping bridge the gap between environmental awareness and meaningful action. The findings will provide valuable insight to the community, environmental organizations, and institutions in developing effective communication strategies that promote environmental responsibility and collective action. This can also contribute to stronger community involvement, improved environmental programs, and sustainable practices.

This study will benefit the communities, organizations, and institutions by actively involving them in environmental preservation. Educational institutions can use the results to develop more effective environmental education and communication plans for public, private, and university settings.

Policymakers and government organizations, such as local government units (LGUs), stand to gain by applying evidence-based insights to develop more compelling, culturally relevant environmental campaigns and policies.

To achieve these objectives, the researchers formulated some research questions and synthesized the relevant studies to answer them through interviews. These questions are: (1) How does persuasive communication influence individuals' perception of environmental preservation? (2) What challenges do individuals encounter in translating a persuasive message into actual environmental action? (3) What type of persuasive communication strategies do participants perceive as the most effective in encouraging environmental preservation?

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were residents of Barangay San Francisco, Panabo City. The researchers of this study selected nine (9) participants. This study has inclusion, exclusion, and withdrawal criteria. The following are the inclusion criteria for participants in this study: (1) aged 20 to 60 years old, (2) residing in Barangay San Francisco, Panabo City, for 3 to 5 years. This is to ensure that they can provide and meet the information required for this study. The exclusion criteria for this study are as follows: (1) age younger than 20 and older than 60 years old, (2) and anyone who is not a resident of Barangay San Francisco for 3 to 5 years. The following are the withdrawal criteria for this study: (1) a resident of Barangay San Francisco who does not wish to participate in the study, (2) participants are free to decide not to participate without penalty or explanation, and (3) any information from a participant who withdraws will not be included in this study. Purposive sampling was employed to select the informants, a non-probability sampling technique that selects individuals based on the characteristics of the population and the objectives of the study, and is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling (Crossman, 2020). Additionally, the said informants could withdraw their information if they wished to provide all the statements they had given to the researchers.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTS

Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numeric data to understand the complexities of human behavior and experiences. The researchers used a qualitative approach to collect data through focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual in-depth interviews (IDIs). Rustlin et al. (2022) explained that this technique balances pre-formulated questions with the freedom to explore deeper insights. The interviews aim to gather data on how persuasive communication affects people's perceptions of

environmental preservation, the difficulties in translating persuasive messages into concrete environmental actions, and the persuasive communication strategies considered highly effective in motivating environmental preservation.

The questions underwent verification before the study was conducted, in accordance with established guidelines. Audio recording devices and transcription tools were used to ensure accuracy, reliability, and contextual depth. Jaber (2024) demonstrated that modern technologies, such as audio recording devices, offered convenience in gathering information from students within an educational context. The researchers also used field notes to document the information provided by the participants clearly.

The thematic analysis framework was used to analyze the gathered data. O'Callaghan et al. (2024) explain that this framework is rooted in grounded theory, which serves as a foundation for generating theory. Khokar et al. (2020) add that it helps analyze existing theories and draw conclusions aligned with the study's objective. By identifying themes, the researchers were able to develop theories, models, and frameworks that give meaning to those themes.

Design and Procedure

In this study, the researchers employed a generic qualitative research design, a flexible and pragmatic approach that enables exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives. Kahlke (2014) demonstrates that a generic qualitative design enables researchers to select qualitative methods that best address the research question while maintaining methodological rigor through transparency and coherence. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' views and experiences. The researchers used open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to collect rich, detailed information from the participants. This approach encouraged participants to express their thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences in their own words, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Qualitative research can clarify human behaviors, patterns, and processes that may be hard to quantify. Experiences, attitudes, and behaviors, which are often difficult to measure, can be described through such phenomena. Phenomenal-like experiences, attitudes, and behaviors can be challenging to capture accurately and analytically. The qualitative approach allows individuals to articulate their feelings, thoughts, and experiences at a particular moment or during an exciting event (Tenny et al., 2022).

A qualitative design, which is particularly appropriate for analyzing complex social problems such as persuasive communication in environmental preservation. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and narratives, which cannot be fully understood through quantitative measures alone. This design prioritizes quality over quantity, focusing on the meaning-making processes individuals use when interacting with environmental communication and the strategies they employ to overcome barriers.

This study used a thematic analysis as its primary qualitative approach, which is particularly appropriate for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning in participants' narratives. Thematic analysis, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2022), provides a flexible yet systematic framework for coding data and constructing themes that directly address the research questions. By applying systematic coding techniques, the study revealed the challenges encountered in persuasive communication, the strategies participants have used to overcome these barriers, and the messages they wish to convey to others to support effective environmental action.

A letter of request to conduct the study was prepared. The researchers developed open-ended questionnaires, approved by the validators, and then distributed them. The researchers conducted the study in San Francisco and Panabo City through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, as these are the most effective ways to gather data. The researchers explained to the participants the importance of their responses to the study. The researchers asked the respondents to answer honestly. After the participants answered the questionnaire, the researchers collected and analyzed the data for interpretation. The researchers asked their data analyst to help

determine the appropriate data analysis to interpret the data. Based on the data, the researchers formulated conclusions and recommendations for this study.

In qualitative research, trustworthiness focuses on items like credibility, dealing with the extent of the accuracy of the findings; transferability, the aspect of generalizability; dependability, which deals with the reliability and stability of the results; and confirmability, which concerns the neutrality of the results, that is, the extent to which the results can be replicated (Huang et al., 2024). This study raised some ethical issues in the data-gathering process. The researchers complied with the university's protocol by completing standard forms, including the informed consent form and the study protocol information form. This demonstrates that the researchers obtained data only from authorized and willing individuals and did not manipulate it. Participants for the interview, IDI, and FGD, as well as the record, were personally oriented to the study's significance. Moreover, they were asked to sign the

Informed Consent Form, stating their voluntary participation in the study. Furthermore, participants were informed that their confidentiality would be protected. Thus, the data collected were used only for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 The Role of Persuasive Communication in Environmental Preservation

ESSENTIAL THEMES	CLUSTER THEME
Credibility and Clarity of the Messenger Build Trust and Acceptance	● Source credibility shapes receptivity. ● Clear, relatable explanations increase understanding. ● Encouragement through seminars, programs, and community activity. ● Broadening of environmental knowledge and awareness.
Reframing Responsibility from Government-Only to shared Community Duty	● Shift from a government-centric mindset to collective responsibility. ● Residents acknowledge their role and agency. ● Change in people's perspective toward environmental responsibility. ● Development of self-discipline and responsibility.
Collective Efficacy and Leadership Encouragement Drive Participation	● Belief that "working together" solves problems. ● Persuasive leadership and modeling increase willingness. ● Increased participation in the clean-up drive and tree planting. ● Motivation to educate children and family members.

Credibility and Clarity of the messenger build trust and acceptance. The first theme that emerged from the study is that participants believed that reliable, knowledgeable, and credible speakers are more convincing and easier to trust. Based on the participants' responses, it appears that source credibility influences how people perceive and trust information. This means that people are more receptive to messages when the source demonstrates expertise and provides clear insights. Zhang & Lim (2022) explained that credible communicators increase audience trust and acceptance of information.

Clear and relatable explanations increase understanding. Participants emphasized that explaining ideas simply and using real-life examples helps individuals better connect with the message and recognize their role in the effort. This demonstrates that effective communication is not only about providing instructions but also about ensuring that people fully comprehend the purpose and significance of the information. Zhang and Lim (2022) demonstrated that clear and audience-centered communication enhances comprehension, engagement, and participation among individuals.

Encouragement through seminars, programs, and community activity. Participants reported that seminars, programs, and direct communication activities significantly increased residents' environmental participation. It stated that persuasive communication encouraged them to participate in environmental activities. This supports the findings of Ward et al. (2022), who emphasized that community engagement activities increase residents' environmental participation.

Broadening of environmental knowledge and awareness. Participants shared that persuasive communication developed a sense of responsibility and discipline toward the environment. They became mindful of their actions. The findings imply that persuasive communication plays an important role in shaping individuals' environmental awareness, responsibility, and participation. Sulistyaningsih (2022) emphasized that community participation and environmental awareness are essential in improving environmental protection and sustainable living.

Reframing Responsibility from Government-Only to Shared Community Duty. The second theme that emerged from the study is the participants' perspective, from viewing environmental care solely as the government's responsibility to recognizing it as a shared responsibility of the whole community. Participants realized that while the government provides programs and initiatives, environmental problems cannot be solved without the cooperation and participation of individuals and communities.

Shift from a government-centric mindset to collective responsibility. This reflects the importance of collective action and public involvement in achieving sustainable environmental efforts. Subban et al. (2022) demonstrated that community participation and shared responsibility are essential to effectively address environmental and social issues.

Residents acknowledge their role and agency. Participants emphasized that individuals should not rely solely on authorities but should also take initiative and do their part, even if it is a small action. This reflects a growing sense of responsibility, participation, and empowerment among residents, showing that collective change begins with individual action. Hennel et al. (2022) explained that personal agency and active participation encourage individuals to contribute positively to community goals and social change.

Change in people's perspective toward environmental responsibility. It shows a clear and meaningful change in how people understand and value environmental responsibility. This indicates that people no longer view environmental care as a trivial or optional concern, but as an essential part of their daily lives and collective well-being. Diver et al. (2024) reinforce that a true shift in attitude towards environmental responsibility takes place when individuals acknowledge that collaboration is essential for addressing environmental issues, use past experiences as a strong motivation to protect nature, consider knowledge and understanding as the fundamental basis for changing one's mindset, and regard taking action as a helpful contribution that brings benefit and involves no loss at all.

Development of self-discipline and responsibility. Participants explained that developing self-discipline and personal responsibility is fundamental to effective environmental management and care. Self-discipline and personal responsibility are recognized as essential drivers of pro-environmental behavior (Wyss et al., 2021).

Collective Efficacy and Leadership Encouragement Drive Participation. The third theme that emerged from the study is that participants emphasized that challenges can be addressed more effectively when individuals unite and support one another toward a common goal.

Belief that working together solves problems. The responses show that participants believed that cooperation and teamwork are important in solving problems. Recent studies by Jamali (2024) explained that community collaboration, collective action, and problem-solving strengthen and promote positive social outcomes.

Persuasive Leadership and Modeling Increase Willingness. Participants explained that leaders who encourage and inspire others can strengthen community involvement and cooperation. The responses suggested that persuasive leadership and positive role modeling increase people's willingness to participate in community activities. Monzani and Lucas et al. (2020) explained that effective leadership and behavioral modeling play an important role in motivating community engagement and civic participation.

Increased Participation in Clean-up Drive and Tree Planting. Participants emphasized that active engagement in clean-up drives and tree planting is largely motivated by awareness, influence, and the need for collective action. They explained that the guidance and influence of leaders or concerned groups are vital to helping people recognize the importance of these activities, particularly amid abnormal weather patterns and rising temperatures driven by climate change.

When individuals have a clear understanding of the environmental problems they face and recognize how specific actions, such as tree planting and clean-up drives, can address these issues, they are much more inclined to get involved. Ewane (2023) also highlighted the importance of communication and the role of leaders, organizations, or informed individuals in fostering this awareness, as their influence effectively encourages the community to participate collectively.

Motivation to educate children and family members. The participants explained how educating family members and children works: it raises awareness, offers solutions, spreads knowledge, and benefits not just the household but the whole community. Oyeleke and Onyike (2025) emphasized that instilling environmental consciousness and commitment begins with raising awareness, providing practical solutions, and sharing knowledge within the family and the wider community.

Table 2 Challenges in Translating a Persuasive Message into Environmental Action

ESSENTIAL THEMES	CLUSTER THEME
Personal Capacity Barriers (Time, Energy, Competing Priorities)	• Lack of time due to work and household priorities. • Low motivation, laziness, and lack of initiative. • Competing tasks reduce participation in community activities. • Applying environmental practice in daily livelihood.
Structural and Resource Constraints	• Insufficient funds and limited government support. • Materials, tools, and feasibility barriers. • Observed noncompliance undermines individual effort. • Difficulty maintaining discipline and consistency.
Message Clarity and Comprehension Gaps	• Messages are too complex or unclear. • Confusion due to misinformation and fake news. • Misalignment between guidance and lived context. • Inadequate opportunities for clarification and feedback.

Personal Capacity Barriers (Time, Energy, Competing Priorities) The first theme that emerged from the study is that participants reported a lack of time due to work and household responsibilities, which limit their participation in community activities. Participants prioritized earning income, resting after work, and managing household duties because these are necessary for supporting their families and meeting daily needs.

Lack of time due to work and household priorities. This suggests that personal and economic responsibilities can reduce people's ability to engage in community involvement. Marter-Kenyon et al. (2023) explained that work demands and family obligations are common barriers to community participation and civic engagement.

Low motivation, Laziness, and Lack of Initiative. Participants admitted that even though they understand the importance of these actions, they sometimes lack discipline and drive to participate consistently. This also suggests that people may become less engaged when they do not immediately see the positive outcomes of their efforts. Kim (2023) explained that low motivation and limited personal initiative can reduce civic participation and involvement in community programs.

Competing tasks reduce participation in community activities. Participants revealed that competing responsibilities and daily tasks reduce participation in community activities. Participants explained that work, business duties, and other important obligations often take priority, leaving little time and energy for community involvement. This suggests that busy schedules and multiple responsibilities can limit residents' ability to participate in environmental and civic programs actively. Occupational and household demands are major factors that decrease participation in community-based activities and initiatives. Chung and Van Der Lippe (2020) explained that the combined demands of work and household tasks leave individuals with no time to participate in additional programs.

Applying Environmental Practice in Daily Livelihood. The participants further stated that their reasons for non-participation were a lack of interest, busy schedules, and ignorance of environmental issues. They went on to explain that it is difficult to perform well without the right governmental structure and guidance; people are

not lazy but lack help. The findings revealed the influence of personal priorities, lack of interest, and lack of knowledge on participation. It also emphasizes that sustainable practices will not work without having appropriate systems and government support (Velempini, 2025).

Structural and Resource Constraints. The second theme that emerged is that the participants also shared that the lack of financial resources, equipment, and institutional assistance makes it difficult to sustain programs and achieve desired outcomes.

Insufficient funds and limited government support. This suggests that stronger government support and adequate funding are important for improving community participation and project effectiveness. Prasannath et al. (2024) explained that limited financial resources and inadequate institutional support often hinder the success of local community initiatives and environmental programs.

Material, Fund, and Feasibility Barriers. Participants also revealed that a lack of appropriate materials, practical alternatives, and clear guidance creates barriers to participation in environmental practices. Participants explained that some recommended actions are difficult to apply in their daily lives. They also emphasized the need for clearer instructions and feasible solutions to better understand and implement environmental practices. Sacca et al. (2022) explained that unclear guidelines and limited access to practical resources can reduce compliance and participation in environmental programs.

Observed non-compliance undermines individual effort. Participants revealed that observing others' noncompliance weakens individuals' motivation to continue practicing proper environmental behaviors. Participants felt discouraged when they saw others ignore rules, litter, or damage the environment despite their own efforts to do the right thing. Negative social behavior can influence others and reduce commitment to community and environmental practices. Jansics et al. (2022) demonstrated that visible noncompliance within communities can discourage participation and weaken collective environmental responsibility.

Difficulty maintaining discipline and consistency. Participants emphasized that sustaining good practices and fulfilling responsibilities is extremely challenging, primarily because people tend to prioritize what is easy, convenient, or immediately enjoyable over long-term benefits. Sikhosana and Mashalaba (2025) pointed out that rural development and planning efforts remain weak or ineffective due to inconsistent commitment, short-term thinking, neglect of environmental needs, and low participation.

Message Clarity and Comprehension Gap. The third theme that emerged is that participants also indicated that complex, unclear messages make it difficult for people to understand and follow environmental practices. Participants preferred simple, direct, and well-explained information that they could easily apply in their daily lives.

Messages are too complex or unclear. Clear communication is important in improving understanding, participation, and compliance within the community. Bach et al. (2025) found that simplified, audience-friendly communication increases public understanding and encourages greater community engagement. They further emphasized that when information is precise, direct, and easy to interpret, it reduces confusion, minimizes misinterpretation, and significantly raises the likelihood that people will participate in and comply with program requirements.

Confusion due to misinformation and fake news. Participants reported that misinformation and unclear communication create confusion about environmental issues and appropriate actions. Participants explained that fake news, negative beliefs, and poorly organized messages can lead to misunderstandings and discourage people from participating in community efforts.

Accurate, clear, and reliable information is important in building public trust and encouraging positive environmental behavior. Choi and Lee (2021) explained that misinformation and unclear messaging can negatively affect public understanding, decision-making, and community participation. They further explained that when information is inconsistent, confusing, or unreliable, people become uncertain about what actions to take, leading to lower engagement and reduced compliance with recommended practices.

Misalignment between guidance and live context. Environmental guidance becomes difficult to follow when it does not match the realities of people's daily lives and work situations. Participants explained that some recommendations are impractical because many products and operations still depend on plastic materials.

Clearer, more realistic instructions that take their actual circumstances into account are essential for success. Community programs and initiatives become significantly more effective when policies, guidelines, and messages are carefully aligned with the lived experiences and practical needs of the target population (Day et al., 2025). When information reflects real-life conditions and needs, it becomes easier for people to understand, accept, and participate fully.

Inadequate opportunities for clarification and feedback. Participants emphasized that without feedback and adequate clarification, a person's ability to interpret and act on received information is directly hindered; it becomes impossible to resolve questions or gain a proper understanding of a message's target need. Consequently, when guidelines, particularly environmental messages, are poorly explained or absent, individuals experience severe confusion and ultimately ignore the communication due to a fundamental lack of clarity.

Verhoest et al. (2025) demonstrated that environmental media messages do not automatically convey their intended meaning. Reception depends on how well the message aligns with the audience's understanding and existing beliefs. When explanations are unclear or no feedback/clarification is provided, confusion arises, making it difficult for people to follow the message or fully grasp its purpose. This often results in misunderstanding or ignoring the message entirely.

Table 3 Effective Persuasive Communication Strategies for Environmental Preservation

ESSENTIAL THEMES	CLUSTER THEMES
Evidence and Impact-Oriented Messaging Builds Conviction	● Show factual data and concrete evidence. ● Use vivid pictures and clear demonstrations of consequences. ● Keep content simple, focused, and concrete in daily life. ● Clear objectives and practical instructions.
Empathy, Credibility, and Sincere Motivation Increase Receptivity	● Empathize and understand diverse views. ● Messenger credibility matters. ● Actionable guidance from capable leaders. ● Motivation, encouragement toward participants.
Personal, Face-to-Face Outreach Enhances Understanding and Engagement	● House-to-house, personal conversations. ● Two-way involvement and coplanning. ● Tailoring to audience needs and inclusivity. ● Utilization of social media and public announcements.

Evidence and Impact-Oriented Messaging Builds Connection. The first theme that emerged in the study is that participants suggested that people are more convinced when factual data and concrete evidence support messages.

Show factual data and concrete evidence. It emphasized that information supported by factual data and visible proof of environmental problems helps strengthen credibility and encourages greater awareness and action. Evidence-based communication and the presentation of verifiable facts improve public trust, reduce confusion, and significantly increase engagement and participation in environmental initiatives (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Use vivid pictures and clear demonstrations of consequences. Participants believed that showing them visual presentations and clear demonstrations of consequences helps people better understand environmental issues and motivates them to act. Showing realistic images and clearly explaining the actions to take can reduce confusion and encourage participation. Chen et al. (2022) demonstrated that clear, transparent, and concrete presentation in video content reduces audience confusion, improves understanding, and drives greater engagement and positive behavioral responses.

Keep content simple, focused, and concrete in daily life. Participants revealed that simple, relatable, and focused messages are easier for people to understand and apply in their daily lives. The responses revealed that simple, relatable, and focused messages are easier for people to understand and apply in their daily lives. Participants preferred communication that avoids overly complicated rules and instead focuses on practical ideas grounded in everyday experiences. Nur & Sabur (2025) found that simple and relatable communication strategies improve comprehension and community engagement.

Clear objectives and practical instructions. Participants emphasized that clarity of objectives and simplicity of instructions are the most critical factors for effective collaboration, shared understanding, and error-free execution of work. Clarity of objectives and practical instructions is fundamental to effective collaboration and successful outcomes. This is strongly supported by the Evaluation Framework for Subregional Approaches and Their Roadmaps, which establishes structured principles and standardized methods to ensure clear direction, ease of understanding, and accurate implementation among all involved (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe [WHO/Europe], 2026).

Empathy, Credibility, and Sincere Motivation Increase Receptivity. The second theme that emerged from the study is that participants highlighted the need to build personal connections, recognize individual beliefs, and offer encouragement, especially to those who are hesitant or shy.

Empathize and understand diverse views. The responses showed that empathy and understanding of different perspectives are important in persuading and motivating people. Empathetic communication strengthens trust, participation, and cooperation within communities (Waghid, 2023).

Messenger credibility matters. Participants emphasized that the source of the message influences whether people believe in and support community initiatives. The responses showed that people are more likely to follow messages delivered by credible, sincere, and trustworthy individuals. Rydberg et al. (2023) explained that communicator credibility plays a significant role in shaping public trust and participation.

Actionable guidance from capable leaders. Participants emphasized the importance of capable leaders who can clearly articulate the necessary actions and guide individuals in participating effectively. The responses showed that people prefer programs with clear objectives and specific instructions to avoid confusion. Janorkar (2022) explained that clear leadership communication improves understanding, coordination, and community.

Motivation, encouragement toward participants. Participation intention depends not only on awareness or attitude, but also on whether people feel the activity is feasible, accessible, and beneficial to them. Maleknia and Namdari (2024) explained that positive intention to join tree-planting initiatives requires participants to view the activity as worthwhile and within their means. Participants further clarified that when livelihood conditions are challenging, receiving tangible rewards such as rice or tokens provides a practical benefit that makes participation more meaningful and sustainable.

Personal Face-to-Face Outreach Enhances Understanding and Engagement. The third theme that emerged from the study is that participants appreciated face-to-face conversations because they allow for immediate clarification of questions and create stronger connections within the community.

House-to-house, personal conversations. The responses suggested that personal and direct communication, such as a house-to-house visit, is an effective way to inform and engage people. Saxton (2022) explained that interpersonal communication strengthens trust and increases community participation.

Two-way involvement and co-planning. Participants believed that allowing residents to contribute ideas and participate actively promotes teamwork and stronger The responses revealed that involving community members in planning and decision-making encourages cooperation and shared responsibility. Becchetti et al. (2023) explained that collaborative planning and community involvement improve participation and program effectiveness.

Tailoring to audience needs and inclusivity. Participants emphasized that programs should not only focus on youth but also consider older individuals and people from diverse social backgrounds. This suggests that

relatable and inclusive approaches help encourage wider participation within the community. Mulcahy et al. (2023) explained that inclusive and audience-centered strategies improve community participation by addressing the diverse needs and experiences of individuals.

Utilization of social media and public announcements. Participants explained that social media and public announcements are essential tools for raising awareness of current events, activities, and environmental issues. Alkadash et al. (2021) found that social public announcements primarily shape cognitive attitudes by enhancing understanding and awareness, laying the foundation for subsequent affective and behavioral responses.

Implication And Concluding Remarks

Implications of the Study

This study demonstrates the significant role of persuasive communication in shaping community members' environmental awareness, attitudes, and participation. The findings suggest that clear, relatable, and evidence-based communication strategies can influence individuals to become more conscious of their environmental responsibilities. Participants demonstrated that when environmental messages are delivered effectively, they become more willing to participate in activities such as clean-up drives, tree planting, and community-based environmental initiatives. This implies that communication should not merely focus on informing people but also on encouraging meaningful behavioral change.

The findings further imply that environmental preservation should be viewed as a shared responsibility rather than a responsibility limited to government institutions. Participants expressed a noticeable shift in perspective, recognizing that individual actions and community cooperation are essential in addressing environmental concerns. This suggests that local government units, environmental organizations, and community leaders should strengthen initiatives that promote collective participation and empower residents to become active contributors to environmental protection. Sustainable environmental outcomes are more likely to occur when communities are directly involved in planning and implementation.

Another implication of the study is the importance of designing environmental communication strategies that are practical, audience-centered, and aligned with the realities of daily life. Participants reported that complex messages, lack of clarification, and unrealistic expectations hindered their ability to implement environmental practices. This indicates the need for communication approaches that simplify information, provide practical examples, and allow opportunities for feedback and discussion. Environmental messages become more effective when people can clearly understand and connect them to their everyday experiences and responsibilities.

The study also emphasizes the importance of leadership, credibility, and social influence in increasing environmental engagement. Participants showed stronger willingness to participate when trusted individuals delivered messages and when they observed leaders and fellow community members actively practicing environmental behaviors. This implies that community leaders should serve not only as organizers but also as role models who demonstrate environmental responsibility. Establishing trust and encouraging visible participation may strengthen motivation and increase long-term community involvement.

Lastly, the findings provide implications for educational institutions and future environmental programs. Schools, universities, and community learning initiatives may incorporate persuasive communication techniques into environmental education to strengthen awareness and encourage action among learners and residents. Integrating environmental values with practical activities, family involvement, and community engagement may create stronger environmental consciousness. Future environmental campaigns may also focus on developing communication approaches that are inclusive, culturally appropriate, and capable of transforming environmental knowledge into sustained environmental practices.

Concluding Remarks

This study concludes that persuasive communication plays an essential role in influencing environmental preservation and promoting active community participation. Through participants' lived experiences and

perceptions, the findings revealed that communication extends beyond mere information transfer and becomes an important tool for shaping attitudes, awareness, and behavioral change. Effective environmental messages encouraged individuals to recognize their responsibility and become more involved in environmental activities and community initiatives.

The study further concludes that persuasive communication contributes to the development of environmental awareness and a stronger sense of accountability among residents. Participants demonstrated increased understanding of environmental issues and acknowledged that protecting the environment requires conscious effort and responsible decision-making. The findings showed that environmental concern develops when individuals are exposed to communication that is meaningful, understandable, and connected to real-life situations and experiences.

Moreover, the study revealed that environmental action becomes more effective when supported by collective responsibility and active community involvement. Participants recognized that environmental problems cannot be addressed solely through government intervention and that every individual has a role to fulfill. Cooperation, leadership encouragement, and shared participation emerged as important factors that motivate people to contribute toward common environmental goals and strengthen community engagement.

Despite these positive outcomes, the findings also conclude that several barriers continue to limit the translation of environmental awareness into actual practice. Personal responsibilities, lack of time, insufficient government support, limited resources, unclear messages, and misinformation remain significant challenges. These barriers demonstrate that successful environmental communication requires not only awareness-building but also practical support systems, accessible guidance, and opportunities for continuous engagement and participation.

Overall, this study concludes that persuasive communication is a powerful approach for strengthening environmental preservation efforts and encouraging sustainable behavioral change. Environmental protection becomes more attainable when communication is credible, simple, practical, and responsive to the community's needs and realities. By promoting collaboration, improving understanding, and encouraging individual and collective action, persuasive communication can help build environmentally responsible communities and support long-term sustainability.

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