

Article

Environmental Identity, Connectedness with Nature, and Well-Being as Predictors of Pro-Environmental Behavior, and Their Comparison between Inhabitants of Rural and Urban Areas

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Abstract: The study of factors that predict pro-environmental behavior is interesting, given the need to develop sustainable actions in urban and rural contexts. The available scientific evidence shows knowledge gaps and opportunities about the role that environmental identity, connectedness with nature, and well-being play in pro-environmental behavior. To provide evidence in this regard, this research aimed to describe and identify possible significant differences between these variables to establish whether they predict pro-environmental behavior, considering the rural-urban provenance. The methodology was cross-sectional, with descriptive and correlational analysis. The sample was 1705 people (M age = 31.36 years, 57.4% female) belonging to two departments in southern Colombia (66.7% from the rural sector), and questionnaires were applied to collect the information. The results show that people of rural origin showed higher levels of environmental identity with significant differences (p -value > 0.01) compared to the urban sample. The indicators of psychological health, connectedness with nature, and identity better explain the levels of pro-environmental behavior of the urban population ($R = 0.81$, p -value < 0.01) compared to the rural population ($R = 0.64$, p -value < 0.01). This study concludes that the variables predict pro-environmental behavior, providing better explanatory evidence in urban than rural inhabitants. The limitations and new study prospects in the area are discussed.

Keywords: environmental identity; connectedness with nature; pro-environmental behavior; eudaimonic well-being; hedonic well-being



Citation: Sierra-Barón, W.; Olivos-Jara, P.; Gómez-Acosta, A.; Navarro, O. Environmental Identity, Connectedness with Nature, and Well-Being as Predictors of Pro-Environmental Behavior, and Their Comparison between Inhabitants of Rural and Urban Areas. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 4525. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15054525>

Academic Editor: Adolfo Carballo-Penela

Received: 30 December 2022

Revised: 21 February 2023

Accepted: 1 March 2023

Published: 3 March 2023



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1. Introduction

The study of the influence of climate change on human well-being accounts for how geographical disparities affect the magnitude of these effects in communities, mainly affecting population groups that depend on adequate climatic conditions for their subsistence [1,2]. In this sense, climate risk affects the economic income, housing, livelihoods, and forms of production of the poorest communities [3], increasing the inequality gaps. This situation has led to the identification of highly vulnerable places to climate impacts where human security may be at risk of droughts or floods [4,5], segregating communities and sharpening their limitations in the access to resources to the development of adaptation strategies to deal with these phenomena [3].

This process of differential human vulnerability results in social, economic, historical, political, and health problems, which operate at multiple levels of affectation on these communities [6,7]. The long-term impacts of climate change include increases in famine, displacement, and forced migration, which represents increased global health risks in rural

and urban settings, especially in developing countries [8]. In public health, the increase in vector-borne diseases and respiratory diseases at pandemic levels (such as COVID-19) is included, as well as those of increasing recognition as such as risks and impacts on mental health [9,10].

On the other hand, various exposures to climate-related factors such as excessive heat, high humidity, prolonged droughts, forest fires, and floods are associated with feelings of psychological distress, worsening mental health, and increased mortality in people with pre-existing problems, increased psychiatric hospitalizations and suicide rates [11,12].

There is growing clinical and research interest in better understanding the range of negative emotional responses people feel concerning climate change, including ecodispleasure (sadness or hopelessness), solastalgia (loss and pain from perceived changes in the environment), and climate anxiety (worry, fear or anguish) [13–16]. In particular, climatic anxiety can have an adaptive or maladaptive character. In the first case, it can motivate climate activism and pro-environmental behaviors such as those referred to with reducing the carbon footprint; in the second case, this can take the form of anxious passivity, evidencing an inability to address the problem, triggering anxiety exacerbated by stressful climatic factors [16].

Consequently, some authors [17–20] point out that mental health, well-being, environmental identity, and connection with nature can predict actions to reduce climate change, highlighting a vulnerability in rural communities, which present differences (compared to urban communities) in the way they refer concern and behaviors towards the environment, which could be related to the circumstances of the context, their child socialization processes in rural areas, as well as the scarcity of resources and services.

In another sense, some researchers [21–23] highlighted the relationship between humans and nature through empathy, attributing rights to non-human living beings in extreme situations. Most have stressed the importance of empathic feelings in enhancing positive attitudes towards the environment (biospheric concerns) and pro-environmental behaviors, especially in favor of animals visualized in a problematic situation. In addition to the above, it is interesting to understand how human beings build positive and lasting identities within the framework of sociocultural integration, which requires elements of the environment, particularly other people who stand as referents, thus linking the identity to the results of social interaction and the roles performed or assumed by the person. Thus, identity and behavior are closely linked [24–26]. Here, identity would be situated on the axis of kinship [27], where the relationship of otherness is placed in nature as a function of the phylogenetic sense of belonging or continuity [28], although it may also obey, as mentioned above, a sociocultural scheme of protective relationship that encloses a certain pragmatism [29].

Susan Clayton and Susan Opatow [30–32] proposed specific concepts and operational procedures to measure this relationship between nature and identity. On the one hand, the concept of connectedness with nature emerged, which was approached from two methods with different epistemological roots. Schultz [33] adapted a version of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) called IAT-Nature, with the intention of proposing an indirect measure of connectivity to explain the link between self and nature, defined as the degree to which a person believes that they are part of the natural environment and bases their environmental concerns and motivations to act. It was also proposed to measure connectivity with more traditional procedures. Such was the case of the “Connectedness to Nature Scale” (CNS) by Mayer and Frantz [34], who added an emotional nuance to Schultz’s definition of connectedness, arguing that it is an individual affective experience of connection with nature.

On the other hand, Clayton and Opatow [35], after carefully reviewing a series of meanings proposed to describe this identity phenomenon (e.g., ecological identity, sense of self-in-place, ecological self, emotional affinity towards nature, among others), concluded that while some researchers prefer the term ecological identity, which better describes the sense of self as part of an ecosystem and avoids the confusion caused by the fact

that environment can include the built and even the social environment, others prefer environmental identity, because it has a more intuitive meaning for people in general, being more understandable.

Thus, Clayton [36] proposed a definition of environmental identity significantly related to values, attitudes, and behaviors, and the environment being an important source of self-relevant beliefs that enable a personal self-definition.

“An environmental identity is a part of the way in which a person forms his or her self-concept: a sense of connection to some part of the non-human natural environment, based on history, emotional attachment, and/or the likeness, that affects the ways in which we perceive and act in the world; a belief that the environment is important to us and an important part of who we are. An environmental identity can be similar to another collective identity (such as national or ethnic identity) by providing us with a sense of connectedness, of being part of a whole, and with the recognition of similarity between ourselves and others. Thus, like a group identity, an environmental identity may vary in definition and importance among individuals”. (pp. 45–46)

Environmental identity, thus defined, combines an idea of personal identity based on the importance of the environment to the individual, and a process of identification, in the style of the personal and social, or egoistic and ethical, distinctions recognized in the identification process by Hogg [37] and Tugendhat [38], respectively. With this definition, Clayton [36] offered an opportunity to measure environmental identity through a unidimensional operational version composed of 24 items. Other studies also highlighted the positive effects on the health and well-being of contact with certain natural environments [39]. Thus, it was observed that the connection with nature has a mediating effect on the increase in positive emotional states as a consequence of these experiences [40].

The identity construction process, as has been seen, brings together information, feelings, and beliefs about oneself, configured through interaction. The environment allows us to communicate and manage that sense of identity. A sense of personal and autonomous identity is maintained when defending oneself and positioning oneself with respect to the sociophysical world, guaranteeing self-assessment thanks to controlled communication between personal settings and public and social spaces. Thus, in the process of subjectivization of the other, the environment is also internalized and forms a very important part of the construction of the self [41–45].

1.1. Links between Connection with Nature and Pro-Environmental Behavior

An emotional connection to nature is an important predictor of nature-protective behavior [46]. One study found that children who perceive themselves as more connected to nature tend to adopt more sustainable behaviors. Thus, the more pro-ecological, frugal, altruistic, and equitable children are, the greater their perceived happiness [47]. A growing body of evidence suggests a relationship between nature connectedness and pro-environmental behaviors: people with a higher nature connectedness score tend to engage in more pro-environmental behaviors more frequently than people with a lower connectedness score [48]. Similarly, neighborhood vegetation level and participation in tree planting activities have explained variations in pro-environmental behaviors with connection to nature, use of nature for psychological restoration, and environmental attitudes mediating these relationships [49]. A meta-analysis (n = 13,237) demonstrated a positive and significant association between connection to nature and pro-environmental behaviors, such that people who are more connected to nature have indicated greater engagement in pro-environmental behaviors [50].

1.2. Well-Being Implications

A broad understanding of well-being that associates this construct with problems such as inequality and climate change defines it as a type of positive psychological experience oriented by the connection of people with themselves, their community, and their environ-

ment, which is influenced by contextual factors that are not necessarily under the control of individuals [51]. In this sense, phenomena such as climate change increase the risks that affect the well-being and mental health of communities, including their socioeconomy, environment, culture, labor conditions, and, in general, their lifestyles [52]. The effect of rising temperatures and the frequency of extreme weather events trigger stressors that add to those already existing in communities, leaving, as a consequence, harmful effects on mental health, especially in those with high social inequities [52,53].

Evidence frequently circulates in the scientific literature showing the affectations that phenomena such as climate change leave on mental health and well-being, indicating possible vulnerability in rural communities, which present differences (compared to urban communities) in the way they refer to concern and behaviors towards the environment, whose cause could be related to the circumstances of the context, their childhood socialization processes in the rural area, as well as the scarcity of resources and services [18–20].

Some studies show the role that well-being plays when analyzing it with pro-environmental behavior and connectedness with nature. Ibáñez-Rueda et al. [54] found that connectedness with nature is a potential factor that moderates the relationship between pro-environmental behavior and well-being in Spanish university students. On the other hand, Liu et al. [55] found that connectedness with nature predicts well-being in urban dwellers in Guangzhou (China).

There is no doubt that an approach that analyzes well-being in an interrelated way, from its determinants, with a multifactorial perspective that includes a broad multilevel definition that links individual, community, and environmental factors oriented towards the promotion of health is currently necessary [56,57]. This perspective could contribute to the need to face, among other challenges, those that derive from the consequences between human beings and the natural and built environment [56–58].

However, in the Colombian population, there is evidence showing that urban dwellers present higher scores in self-reported sustainable and pro-ecological behavior than the rural and indigenous populations evaluated [59]; additionally, the role of variables such as environmental identity, connectedness with nature, and well-being are predictors of pro-environmental behaviors, which, according to empirical evidence, show that they are associated [17,18,54,55].

In this context, it is appropriate to investigate the role of environmental identity, connectedness with nature, and well-being on pro-environmental behavior in urban and rural inhabitants, to provide evidence that deepens the scope derived from the relationship between the human being and the natural and built environment, specifically in inhabitants of southern Colombia. This represents a differential factor in the lines of research developed in this context to date, which are still under development. These have been oriented towards the study of environmental beliefs and sustainable behavior in rural communities [59], the beliefs towards green compartments in employees [60], the relationship between knowledge and pro-environmental behavior in university students [61], and connectedness with nature in university students [62]. The inclusion of variables such as environmental identity, connectedness with nature, and well-being in the analysis of pro-environmental behavior will provide evidence that will broaden the explanatory scope of their interaction, as well as the relationships and possible factors that contribute to the behavioral change in people towards the development of consistent pro-environmental actions in the Colombian context.

Based on the above, it arises as a hypothesis is whether the fact of defining oneself as being of rural origin (rural environmental identity) implies a higher level of connection with nature than those who identify themselves as being of urban origin (urban environmental identity); in turn, whether the fact of identifying oneself as being of rural origin (rural environmental identity) predicts the connection with nature, pro-environmental behavior, and well-being, in a group of urban and rural inhabitants located in southern Colombia.

The objectives of this research were: (a) to describe and identify possible significant differences in terms of levels of well-being, environmental identity, connectedness with nature, and pro-environmental behavior according to the origin (rural-urban) of the respon-

dents; (b) to establish whether well-being, environmental identity, and connectedness with nature predict pro-environmental behavior in a group of rural and urban inhabitants.

2. Method

The present research is exploratory and cross-sectional, with descriptive and correlational analysis [63].

2.1. Participants

A total of 1705 people participated in this research (57.4% female) with a mean age of 31.46 years (s.d. = 13.51) from two departments in southern Colombia (Huila = 91.60%; Caquetá = 8.40%), selected for convenience. Of the participants, 66.7% reported the rural sector as their place of origin. When asked whether they engage in nature contact activities, only 17.2% reported that they had never (see Table 1). The economic, social, and environmental conditions of the participants turn out to be quite particular. Approximately 40% of the inhabitants of the department of Huila live in rural areas (out of a total of 1,009,548 inhabitants), and 50.1% are women. The reported subjective poverty was 34.8%, and the unemployment rate was 9.2% (very close to the national average) (Figures reported before the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic). The Gross Domestic Product of this department is mostly constituted by the sectors of public administration and defense, agriculture, livestock, and fishing. The environmental conditions include a great variety of ecosystems and environmental services of great biodiversity that range from life zones with very dry tropical conditions to Andean forests. The most representative environmental problems in this region are the loss of biodiversity of strategic ecosystems and biological diversity; and the decrease in the quality and quantity of surface water resources [64]. In the Department of Caquetá, approximately 39.25% of the inhabitants live in rural areas (out of a total of 502,410 inhabitants), and 50.4% are women. The multidimensional poverty index is 33.6%. The most representative problems are associated with high greenhouse gas emissions (third at the national level) due to deforestation resulting from the expansion of the agricultural frontier; difficulties in the (i) environmental management of the territory and climate change, (ii) integrated management of water resources, (iii) inadequate management of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and (iv) low environmental management capacity; and the absence of processes to strengthen environmental management in ethnic groups [65].

Table 1. Description of the sample.

Gender	f	%	Nature Contact Activities	f	%
Female	978	57.4	Never	263	17.2
Male	727	42.6	Occasionally	970	56.9
Origin (place where you live)			Sometimes	472	27.7
Rural	1137	66.7			
Urban	568	33.3			

2.2. Scales and Instruments

Connectedness with nature scale [34]. This scale is composed of 14 items with five response options from 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Measures how people include nature as part of their cognitive representation. Olivos-Jara et al. [66] adapted the scale to the Spanish language evidencing Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 and 0.75 for the general and student populations, respectively. Authors such as Matas-Terrón and Elósegui-Bandera [67] describe that this adapted scale evidence results similar to those obtained in research with the original scale (Cronbach's alpha of 0.77).

Environmental Identity Scale [36]. This scale is composed of 24 items with five response options from 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Olivos and Aragonés [68] adapted the scale to the Spanish language showing Cronbach's Alpha

of 0.89. These authors have proposed a factorial structure underlying the scale, composed of four dimensions: “Environmental Identity” proper, which relates to a self-reflection referring to a sense of belonging to the natural world, in the same sense as connectedness with nature; “Enjoying Nature”, which refer to contact with nature, mainly in outdoor activities, and the pleasure or benefit this brings individually; “Appreciation of Nature”, which expresses the valuation of the natural environment due to the attribution to it of unique complex qualities such as beauty, spirituality, or personality; and “Environmentalism”, a form or style of behavior and commitment to the environment that appeals to a moral code, an ideological commitment, or an identification with environmentalists.

Pro-environmental Behavior Scale [69]. This scale is composed of 11 items with five response options from 1 to 5, where 1 is never, and 5 is always. By using factor analysis, three dimensions underlying the scale were identified that might reflect three different types of behaviors [23]: Ecologist (items = 8, 9, 10, and 11), which includes environmental volunteering behaviors and green consumption choices; Urban (1, 2 and 3), which includes appropriate behaviors with waste and care of parks and gardens; and Camper (4, 5, 6 and 7), which includes behaviors of protecting the environment during camping and leisure activities.

Mental Health Continuum Short Form [70] consists of 14 items measuring eudaimonic well-being (items 4 to 14), linked to personal growth, and hedonic well-being (items 1 to 3), related to happiness and emotions experienced by the worker. In turn, eudaimonic well-being is classified into psychological (items 9 to 14) and social (items 4 to 8). The response scale for the well-being variable encompasses a score of 1 to 5 points, where 1 = never and 5 = always. This scale has been used successfully in previous studies [71], with acceptable Alpha values (general MHC between 0.797 and 0.882; Hedonic MHC between 0.730 and 0.813; Eudaimonic MHC between 0.743 and 0.851).

2.3. Procedure

The instruments were administered, in pencil and paper format, to the participants who voluntarily agreed to take part in the study after being informed of the research objectives and signing the informed consent form. Following the ethical provisions for research with humans in Colombia, this study does not represent any risk for the participants. This did not obtain financial recognition, and their particular results were communicated to whoever requested them.

2.4. Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis of frequencies, means, and standard deviation was performed, followed by a Kolmogorov–Smirnov analysis to determine whether the variables were parametrically distributed and, consequently, a comparative analysis of the variables measured against the categories of identification as rural or urban subjects was applied using the Mann–Whitney U statistic. Additionally, a bilateral Spearman’s Rho correlation was used to identify associations, and finally, linear regressions were performed to identify the best predictors of pro-environmental behavior with differentiation according to the aforementioned groups. To calculate the indicated statistics, the SPSS V.26[®] software was used.

3. Results

Medium to high levels can be observed in the psychological factors related to environmental care in the sample of participants (Table 2).

A Kolmogorov–Smirnov analysis found that none of the characteristics measured were distributed according to the assumptions of normality, which is why a Mann–Whitney U analysis and a calculation of the effect size were carried out to identify significant differences according to the belonging to the rural or urban sector declared by the participants. In general, it is evident that the rural sample presents better indicators in the factors of environmental identity, connectedness with nature, and general well-being in

contrast to the urban sample, although there were no significant differences in the levels of urban pro-environmental and ecologist behavior, nor in the levels of hedonic and eudaimonic psychological well-being between the two samples (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and differences in medians according to origin.

	Min.	Max.	Rural	S.D.	Urban	S.D.	Z	Sig.	Hedges' G
Pro-environmental behavior	3.83	15.00	10.42	2.03	10.13	2.16	−2.326	0.02	0.014
Urban Camper	1.00	5.00	3.50	0.74	3.45	0.71	−1.20	0.23	0.068
Environmentalism	1.00	5.00	3.65	0.86	3.44	0.89	−4.74	0.00	0.241
Connectedness	1.00	5.00	3.28	1.07	3.25	1.08	−0.567	0.57	0.028
Global Identity	16.00	63.00	48.39	7.60	46.11	9.79	−3.369	0.00	0.272
Identity	4.66	17.09	13.35	2.34	12.37	3.14	−5.674	0.00	0.372
Enjoyment	0.84	4.2	3.23	0.63	2.98	0.85	−5.076	0.00	0.352
Appreciation	0.86	4.31	3.40	0.64	3.12	0.82	−6.337	0.00	0.397
Environmentalism	0.84	4.2	3.31	0.64	3.09	0.84	−4.237	0.00	0.308
General Mental Health	0.88	4.39	3.42	0.63	3.18	0.83	−4.598	0.00	0.341
Hedonic Well-being	3.15	12.39	9.38	1.82	9.15	1.86	−2.535	0.01	0.125
Social Eudaimonic	0.78	3.89	2.99	0.66	2.97	0.69	−0.586	0.56	0.030
Psychological Eudaimonic	0.84	4.20	3.05	0.71	2.87	0.74	−4.972	0.00	0.250
	0.86	4.31	3.33	0.69	3.31	0.72	−0.264	0.79	0.029

A correlational analysis is presented to determine the statistical relationship between the factors measured, separating the results in Table 3 according to the place of origin (rural and urban). Significant relationships are evident in all the factors measured. Likewise, it is highlighted that the correlations of the identity and connectivity factors do not exceed 0.70 with the dependent variables (pro-environmental behavior), which is why collinearity between said variables is ruled out, and it is an aspect that supports the development of the linear regression procedures. On the other hand, there is evidence of a correlation with slightly higher magnitudes between pro-environmental behavior and factors of psychological health, connectivity, and identity when comparing those who identified themselves as originating from the rural sector with those who refer to belonging to the urban sector, highlighting that, in both groups, the magnitudes are significant (Table 3).

The regression analysis shows that pro-environmental behavior—and its dimensions—is predicted for the rural population by the factors of environmentalism, social eudaimonic and hedonic well-being, connectedness, and appreciation (assuming these last variables as independent and interacting), and only environmentalism, social-eudaimonic well-being, and enjoyment of nature are predictors for the urban population, with an R² of great magnitude and statistical significance. Of the factors that were put forward in the hypothesis as predictors, social-eudaimonic well-being is the one that best explains the orientation to carry out the ecologist and camper behavioral tendencies. On the other hand, the last type of pro-environmental behavior (camper) is best explained by the predictor variables referred to for both groups (Table 4).

Table 3. Correlation Matrix.

Factors Measured		Urban Population													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Rural Population	1. Global pro-environmental behavior		0.629 **	0.695 **	0.828 **	0.469 **	0.525 **	0.486 **	0.420 **	0.433 **	0.548 **	0.664 **	0.501 **	0.701 **	0.512 **
	2. Urban pro-environmental	0.647 **		0.289 **	0.326 **	0.308 **	0.360 **	0.318 **	0.309 **	0.351 **	0.366 **	0.331 **	0.303 **	0.290 **	0.276 **
	3. Pro-environmental camper	0.782 **	0.385 **		0.335 **	0.355 **	0.432 **	0.436 **	0.359 **	0.316 **	0.446 **	0.865 **	0.594 **	0.996 **	0.639 **
	4. Pro-environmental ecologist	0.863 **	0.401 **	0.484 **		0.422 **	0.428 **	0.390 **	0.333 **	0.367 **	0.443 **	0.361 **	0.292 **	0.347 **	0.306 **
	5. Connectedness	0.576 **	0.403 **	0.459 **	0.535 **		0.659 **	0.601 **	0.539 **	0.575 **	0.598 **	0.400 **	0.325 **	0.360 **	0.367 **
	6. Global identity	0.692 **	0.436 **	0.530 **	0.661 **	0.766 **		0.868 **	0.837 **	0.844 **	0.863 **	0.494 **	0.406 **	0.430 **	0.458 **
	7. Identity	0.666 **	0.437 **	0.530 **	0.619 **	0.706 **	0.912 **		0.640 **	0.641 **	0.712 **	0.505 **	0.426 **	0.436 **	0.459 **
	8. Enjoyment	0.624 **	0.430 **	0.492 **	0.579 **	0.695 **	0.876 **	0.756 **		0.664 **	0.667 **	0.406 **	0.333 **	0.352 **	0.403 **
	9. Appreciation	0.586 **	0.453 **	0.429 **	0.561 **	0.716 **	0.867 **	0.706 **	0.730 **		0.647 **	0.370 **	0.299 **	0.315 **	0.366 **
	10. Environmentalism	0.680 **	0.421 **	0.493 **	0.667 **	0.693 **	0.890 **	0.793 **	0.705 **	0.727 **		0.482 **	0.384 **	0.444 **	0.437 **
	11. Global mental health	0.726 **	0.423 **	0.840 **	0.492 **	0.456 **	0.568 **	0.562 **	0.548 **	0.459 **	0.524 **		0.843 **	0.869 **	0.858 **
	12. Hedonic	0.490 **	0.325 **	0.537 **	0.345 **	0.342 **	0.415 **	0.406 **	0.422 **	0.356 **	0.358 **	0.829 **		0.594 **	0.624 **
	13. Social eudaimonic	0.784 **	0.382 **	0.996 **	0.490 **	0.461 **	0.531 **	0.533 **	0.491 **	0.427 **	0.492 **	0.840 **	0.535 **		0.645 **
	14. Psychological eudaimonic	0.573 **	0.415 **	0.562 **	0.450 **	0.416 **	0.526 **	0.533 **	0.505 **	0.438 **	0.515 **	0.801 **	0.556 **	0.561 **	

Note: ** < 0.01.

Table 4. Regression Analysis.

Dependent and Independent Variables by Regression	Rural Population			Urban Population		
	Beta (p Value)	CI Beta (95%)	R ² (p Value)	Beta (p Value)	CI Beta (95%)	R ² (p Value)
Global environmental behavior			0.64 (0.00)			0.81 (0.00)
Connectedness	0.026 (0.001)	0.011–0.042		-	-	
Appreciation	0.290 (0.00)	0.100–0.480		-	-	
Hedonic	0.173 (0.01)	0.033–0.313		-	-	
Environmentalism	0.686 (0.00)	0.473–0.899		0.270 (0.01)	0.657–1.092	
Social eudaimonic	1.41 (0.00)	1.273–1.545		0.875 (0.00)	1.425–1.680	
Enjoyment	-	-		0.270 (0.01)	0.065–0.475	
Urban			0.25 (0.00)			0.43 (0.00)
Hedonic	0.149 (0.00)	0.086–0.213		-	-	
Appreciation	0.223 (0.00)	0.127–0.319		0.154 (0.01)	0.036–0.271	
Environmentalism	0.300 (0.00)	0.199–0.401		0.165 (0.01)	0.042–0.289	
Psychological eudaimonic	-	-		0.188 (0.00)	0.106–0.270	
Connectivity	-	-		0.012 (0.01)	0.002–0.021	
Camper			0.99 (0.00)			0.99 (0.00)
Connectedness	0.001 (0.02)	−0.001–0.00		-	-	
Enjoyment	0.015 (0.00)	0.008–0.022		-	-	
Social eudaimonic	1.207 (0.00)	1.201–1.213		1.207 (0.00)	1.200–1.214	
Psychological eudaimonic	−0.012 (0.00)	−0.018– 0.006		−0.014 (0.00)	−0.023– 0.006	
Appreciation	-	-		0.012 (0.00)	0.006–0.018	
Ecologist			0.26 (0.00)			0.50 (0.00)
Connectedness	0.023 (0.00)	0.012–0.035		-	-	
Environmentalism	0.494 (0.00)	0.317–0.670		0.640 (0.00)	0.485–0.795	
Social eudaimonic	0.208 (0.00)	0.118–0.298		0.230 (0.00)	0.125–0.335	
Identity	-	-		0.170 (0.03)	0.014–0.326	

4. Discussion

Consistent with previous evidence, it was found that people who related a rural background manifest higher levels of environmental identity in all its dimensions, with significant differences compared to the urban population, which can be explained because the first group of people had a greater number of experiences of contact with the environment that, in turn, may influence a greater tendency to identify with nature [72]. These contact relationships between the environment and rural inhabitants suggest an empathic orientation that has facilitated this identity construction as sociocultural integration that recognizes the importance of conserving natural resources [21,22,35,73].

It is also important to note that there are no differences between the groups compared in terms of urban pro-environmental and environmentalist behavioral styles, but they are observed in the camping style, a situation due to the lesser familiarity that people from urban contexts would have with the pro-environmental practices typical of rural areas. This matter is of special interest since differences were expected in the group of rural inhabitants due to the link between the referred identity and the trend of expected behaviors [24–26]. However, it would be necessary to carry out new studies to ratify the above results and explain the reasons why there are no differences specifically between these two styles.

On the other hand, there are significant differences in the indicators of social eudaimonic well-being (being higher in those who identify themselves as coming from rural areas), but the levels of hedonic well-being (more related to feelings and emotions of satisfaction with their life in the here and now) and psychological eudaimonic well-being (more related to self-fulfillment and postponement of immediate pleasure) are similar in both populations. This could be associated, in the long run, with the presence of two protective factors of desirable practices [46]. This finding implies that participants of urban and rural

origin were found to have similar orientations to having positive psychological experiences focused on connections to their community and environment [74]. However, it would be worthwhile to evaluate whether there are variations according to criteria such as sex [75,76], age [49], or gender [77] that, in turn, constitute covariates that affect the predisposition to perform pro-environmental behaviors consistently.

The correlations between the variables present higher magnitudes in those who define themselves as coming from the rural sector in contrast to the participants from the city; however, in both cases, the values present statistical significance. This corroborated the previous evidence referring to the mutually configural relationship existing between environmental identity (individual and collective) with pro-environmental behavior [24–26], connection with nature [78], and perceived well-being [79], as well as their multiple interactions with each other [80,81].

An observation resulting from the regression analysis in which pro-environmental behavior was taken as a dependent variable and as predictors the indicators of psychological health, connectedness with nature, and identity as predictors, is that it is evident that the latter better explains the levels of pro-environmental behavior of the urban population (compared to the rural population) in its three dimensions (urban, camper and environmentalist), contrary to the hypothesis in which those who come from less urban environments could manifest higher predictive indicators [17–20]. An explanation of this matter could be based on the circumstances of the Colombian rural context, located in areas with geographical disparities that are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change [1–5], exposed not only to inequality gaps and differential human vulnerability [6,7] but also to the effects of sociocultural disadvantages. These disadvantages can generate individual and collective apathy, which is evidenced in the absence of actions, lack of awareness, and difficulties in communication with governments and communities when exposed to environmental problems [82–84]. The fact that the variables in question better explain the levels of pro-environmental behavior of the urban population suggests that the context could offer a stronger scope for those who identify as coming from built environments, which represents a focus of interest for future research in these contexts.

The evidence provided by this research coincides with the report by Ibáñez-Rueda et al. [54] on connectedness with nature and pro-environmental behavior in Spanish university students and, in turn, contributes to the knowledge of the factors that explain the pro-environmental behavior of Colombian rural communities [59], employees [60], and university students [61,62], establishing a framework of evidence for a better understanding of the factors to be taken into account in programs aimed at strengthening of sustainability in urban and rural communities.

It is also notable that social eudaimonic well-being is the best predictor of camping behavior (in both groups), while environmentalism is the best predictor of ecologist behavior in the urban population and urban pro-environmental behavior in the rural population. This issue is relevant given the need to analyze well-being in interaction with its determinants from a multifactorial perspective, focusing particularly on community and environmental factors as a strategy for comprehensive health promotion [56]. However, environmentalism does not serve as a predictor of camping behavior in either group, evidence that contrasts with the findings of Olivos-Jara [69]. This warrants the development of complementary studies that confirm or refute the proposed structure for classifying pro-environmental behavior and that analyze specific types of pro-environmental behavior, such as water saving, energy saving, or solid waste management.

The research presents a series of limitations, which are related below: although the research sampling presents a large number of participants, it was at convenience (snowball); this, together with the intake of information through self-report, may condition responses to ease of evocation/recall of information, an adequate understanding of instructions, and social desirability. Therefore, a new application under controlled conditions is suggested, particularly for the objective measurement of overt behaviors, the control of social desirability, and the incorporation of a representative probabilistic random sampling that provide

greater rigor in the collection and quality of the data [85,86]. Another topic of interest that should be included in future research is related to the importance of new technologies in reducing the urban–rural digital divide for sustainability, given the implications that this has for approaches focused on behavioral change [87]; the influence of intergenerational differences [88]; the implications of community practices [89]; and socioeconomic, educational level, and gender [90].

Nevertheless, this study provides empirical evidence in favor of the influence of environmental identity and connectedness with nature on well-being and pro-environmental behavior in rural dwellers, which allows expanding the understanding of these processes in this South American region. In turn, these findings provide evidence that can help the development of community programs aimed at strengthening pro-environmental behaviors, considering particular characteristics of the urban and rural sectors. At the same time, it can guide the development and implementation of public policies on sustainability based on behaviors.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, P.O.-J., W.S.-B. and O.N.; methodology, O.N., A.G.-A. and W.S.-B.; formal analysis, P.O.-J., A.G.-A. and O.N.; writing—original draft preparation, P.O.-J. and O.N.; writing—review and editing, P.O.-J., W.S.-B., A.G.-A. and O.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This research was carried out in accordance with the Colombian ethical standards set forth in Law 1090 of 2006 and Resolution 8430 of 1993.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all individual adult participants included in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data sharing not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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