



# Research on the Impact of Environmental Regulation on the Environmental Responsibility Behavior of Residents in Grassland Tourist Areas: A Case Study of Inner Mongolia

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**Abstract:** Environmental regulation is increasingly pivotal in addressing global ecological challenges and advancing sustainable development. This study examines the influence of environmental regulation on residents' environmental responsibility behavior in Inner Mongolia's grassland tourist areas. Inner Mongolia, characterized by its vast grasslands and rich ethnic culture, is a hub for tourism; however, it faces significant environmental pressures due to this growth. This research integrates a theoretical framework with empirical findings to assess the impact of regulatory measures on residents' ecological awareness and practices. By employing surveys, interviews, and statistical modeling, the study reveals that environmental education, legal frameworks, and participatory management significantly enhance residents' ecological responsibility. Policy recommendations include strengthening environmental education, promoting community engagement, and refining regulatory frameworks for sustainable tourism development.

**Keywords:** environmental regulation, environmental responsibility behavior, Inner Mongolia, grassland pastoral areas, tourist areas

## 1. Introduction

Grassland ecosystems serve as critical ecological barriers and cultural heritage sites, particularly in regions like Inner Mongolia, which accounts for approximately 22% of China's grasslands. Renowned for its biodiversity and traditional landscapes, Inner Mongolia has become a focal point of tourism development. In 2022 alone, the region welcomed over 150 million tourists, generating tourism revenues exceeding 250 billion RMB. However, this rapid expansion has brought environmental challenges, including overexploitation of resources and ecosystem degradation. The environmental health of Inner Mongolia's grasslands holds local and national significance. As a fragile ecological zone, its preservation is vital for regional biodiversity, climate regulation, and cultural sustainability ([Jingjing](#)). Environmental regulation emerges as a central strategy to mitigate these pressures, aligning government actions, community engagement, and individual behaviors toward ecological preservation.

While existing research has broadly explored environmental regulation, there is limited focus on its role in grassland tourist areas. Inner Mongolia's unique socio-ecological context offers an opportunity to expand theoretical and practical understanding. This study aims to address this gap by examining how environmental regulation affects residents' environmental responsibility behaviors in these regions.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation and Literature Review

Environmental regulation refers to a set of legal, administrative, and policy mechanisms used by governments and institutions to mitigate the ecological impacts of human activities ([He](#)). Its primary objectives include promoting sustainable development, preserving natural resources, and reducing pollution across air, water, and soil systems. The evolution of environmental regulation highlights its significance in addressing ecological challenges. Early frameworks, such as the UK's 1889 Pollution Act, laid the groundwork for modern legal instruments. Water Act-20th century, comprehensive measures, including the U.S. Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, broadened the scope of environmental governance by incorporating pollution control alongside

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sustainable resource management ([Wang](#)). These regulations are defined by three core characteristics. They are legally binding and compel compliance among businesses, governments, and individuals. For instance, China's Environmental Protection Law enforces emission standards and imposes penalties for violations to ensure compliance ([Zhu](#)). They are universal, encompassing all sectors and entities that impact the environment, promoting a holistic approach to ecological governance. Additionally, they are adaptable, evolving with advancements in technology and shifting socio-economic landscapes, as exemplified by China's revisions to its Environmental Impact Assessment Law to address emerging challenges ([Lu](#)).

In grassland pastoral regions, such as Inner Mongolia, environmental regulation extends beyond pollution control to include ecosystem preservation, aiming to counter ecological degradation caused by tourism and pastoral activities ([Dong](#)). The increasing importance of collaborative regulatory frameworks has led to the adoption of multi-stakeholder models involving governments, businesses, and communities to achieve regulatory objectives ([Yang](#)). Environmental regulation can be classified into three main types: administrative regulation, market-based regulation, and voluntary regulation.

Administrative regulation involves direct interventions through laws, standards, and permits, such as China's emission limits, which mandate pollution control ([Du](#)). While effective, this approach often entails high regulatory costs and limited flexibility. Market-based regulation uses economic instruments, such as environmental taxes and trading systems, to incentivize compliance, as exemplified by Sweden's carbon tax, which has significantly reduced emissions. Voluntary regulation encourages entities to adopt environmentally friendly practices independently, such as implementing ISO 14001 standards, thereby promoting corporate social responsibility and enhancing market competitiveness. In Inner Mongolia, these approaches have collectively contributed to grassland preservation, with policies like ecological compensation mechanisms and emissions trading incentivizing local communities and businesses to actively participate in environmental protection ([Li](#)).

Environmental responsibility encompasses awareness, attitudes, and actions that promote environmental stewardship. It involves voluntary decisions shaped by personal values, social norms, and external regulations. Responsibility behavior is multidimensional, including awareness and motivation, moral and ethical considerations, and social support. Residents' understanding of environmental challenges often drives action, with heightened ecological concern correlating with proactive environmental behaviors ([Wang et al.](#)). Ethical considerations also play a role, as individuals feel a moral duty to protect the environment. Surveys indicate that over 80% of residents in Inner Mongolia express a strong ethical commitment to grassland conservation. Social and group dynamics further influence behavior, as community norms and institutional support enhance individual responsibility ([Lu](#)).

Theoretical models provide insight into the drivers of environmental responsibility. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggests that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape individual actions ([Li](#)). The Norm Activation Model (NAM) emphasizes the role of moral obligations and social norms in motivating pro-environmental behavior ([Overview of Projects Approved by the National Natural Science Foundation](#)).

Traditional pastoral values in Inner Mongolia align closely with NAM, fostering environmentally responsible practices. The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory integrates values, beliefs, and norms, indicating that residents with strong ecological values are more likely to engage in sustainable behavior ([Liu et al.](#)). These frameworks underscore the importance of incorporating behavioral and cultural factors into environmental governance strategies ([Yang](#)). A review of domestic and international research highlights critical factors influencing environmental responsibility.

Domestic studies emphasize the role of government initiatives in promoting awareness and sustainable practices ([Xu & Bao, 2022](#)), while community participation enhances residents' sense of responsibility ([Zhu](#)). Traditional pastoral culture further fosters ecological responsibility by encouraging harmony with nature ([Zhu](#)). Internationally, research demonstrates that policy transparency, public education, economic incentives, and community-based social marketing significantly enhance pro-environmental behavior ([Tang et al., 2021](#)).



Collectively, these findings suggest that integrating regulatory frameworks with local cultural and socio-economic contexts is essential for fostering environmental responsibility.

### 3. Current State of Environmental Regulation and Responsibility in Grassland Pastoral Tourist Areas

#### 3.1 Overview of Tourism in Inner Mongolia's Grassland Areas

Inner Mongolia is home to some of the most iconic grassland ecosystems in the world, including the Hulunbuir Grassland, renowned for its vast biodiversity and unique cultural heritage ([Overview of Projects Approved by the National Natural Science Foundation](#)). Covering 118 million hectares—approximately 40% of China's usable grassland—the region provides critical ecological services and cultural value while attracting over 100 million tourists annually. In 2022, tourism revenue surpassed 200 billion RMB, making it a cornerstone of the local economy ([Overview of Projects Approved by the National Natural Science Foundation](#)). Natural attractions, such as Daihai Lake, Hulun Lake, and the Greater Khingan Mountains, alongside cultural events like the Nadam Festival and Mongolian yurt experiences, position Inner Mongolia as a premier tourist destination. However, the rapid expansion of tourism has heightened ecological pressures, including grassland degradation, water scarcity, and resource overexploitation ([Liang et al.](#)). To address these challenges, the government has prioritized sustainable development through initiatives like smart tourism management, environmental monitoring, and the establishment of ecological demonstration areas ([Zhou et al.](#)). Measures such as rotational grazing and bans on overgrazing aim to balance economic development with the conservation of grasslands ([Wang et al.](#)).

#### 3.2 Implementation and Challenges of Environmental Regulation

Government intervention plays a central role in environmental regulation in Inner Mongolia. The Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Ecological Environmental Protection Ordinance provide legal frameworks for environmental governance ([Xia et al.](#)). These laws establish penalties for violations, mandate ecological impact assessments, and require compliance with standards for protecting grasslands. In addition to legislative measures, the government has implemented monitoring systems to ensure the quality of air, water, and soil. For instance, real-time environmental monitoring enables authorities to issue warnings and enforce regulations promptly ([Yu et al.](#)). Economic incentives, including subsidies for green tourism projects and tax reductions for eco-friendly technologies, further encourage sustainable practices ([Yang](#)).

In 2019, 200 million RMB was allocated to grassland ecological protection, demonstrating the government's commitment to balancing development with conservation ([Liu](#)). The active participation of pastoral residents is critical for effective environmental regulation. However, limited awareness of policies and inadequate economic incentives hinder resident engagement. Surveys indicate that 60% of residents have limited knowledge of environmental regulations, and only 30% participate in environmental protection activities ([Yu & Song](#)). Efforts to address these challenges include awareness campaigns, participatory governance mechanisms, and financial incentives. For example, village meetings and community gatherings provide residents with a platform to contribute to ecological decision-making. However, cultural barriers, particularly traditional pastoral lifestyles, complicate the adoption of modern environmental practices ([Song](#)).

#### 3.3 Residents' Environmental Responsibility Behavior

Environmental responsibility awareness among residents is shaped by education, cultural heritage, and government initiatives. Surveys reveal that 70% of residents attribute their environmental knowledge to government-led awareness campaigns, such as community tree-planting events and media broadcasts ([Li & Wang](#)). Mongolian cultural traditions, which emphasize harmony with nature, further strengthen residents' ecological values. Despite high levels of awareness, translating this knowledge into action remains a significant challenge. Nearly 40% of respondents cite economic constraints as barriers to adopting sustainable practices. Educational initiatives targeting lower-income residents, along with tailored economic incentives, are needed to bridge this gap ([Wang](#)).

Residents' environmental responsibility behaviors manifest in waste sorting, participation in restoration projects, and support for ecotourism. Approximately 68% of households practice waste sorting, which reduces pollution and promotes resource recycling (Environmental Protection Department of Inner Mongolia, 2022).



Community-led initiatives, such as grassland restoration and wetland protection, are also common. For instance, a vegetation recovery project in Xilingol League increased vegetation coverage by 15% due to strong community participation ([Wu & Xu](#)). Ecotourism offers another avenue for residents to engage in environmental protection. Many residents operate eco-friendly guesthouses or lead educational tours, integrating traditional cultural elements with sustainable practices. However, challenges persist in aligning these behaviors with modern environmental goals, particularly among older generations who adhere to traditional lifestyles ([Huang & Feng](#)).

The implementation of environmental regulations in Inner Mongolia illustrates the complex interplay between government initiatives, community participation, and residents' behaviors. While government-led measures have improved awareness and established frameworks for sustainable tourism, challenges such as limited resident engagement and cultural barriers remain. Strengthening participatory mechanisms and integrating traditional values with modern sustainability principles are crucial for addressing these challenges ([Suo & Leng](#)). Tailored educational programs and economic incentives can further motivate residents to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors, ensuring the long-term sustainability of Inner Mongolia's grassland ecosystems ([Zhang & Wang](#)).

#### 4. Impact of Environmental Regulation on Environmental Responsibility Behavior

##### 4.1 Impact on Residents' Awareness

###### 4.1.1 Impact of Environmental Education and Awareness Campaigns

Environmental education and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in enhancing residents' environmental responsibility awareness in Inner Mongolia's grassland pastoral areas. In recent years, these areas have significantly increased residents' environmental consciousness through multi-layered, multi-channel education and awareness activities. According to Zhu ([Liu et al.](#)), education activities for residents primarily occur across three levels: school education, community activities, and media campaigns. School education has been fundamental in cultivating residents' sense of responsibility. Environmental courses have gradually been integrated into the basic education curriculum in Inner Mongolia, teaching students about the vulnerability of grassland ecosystems and the importance of environmental protection. Statistics show that over 70% of primary and secondary schools in Inner Mongolia offer ecological protection courses that emphasize theoretical knowledge and practical activities, allowing students to experience the importance of environmental protection through field studies and extracurricular activities.

Community activities are a vital complement to environmental education. Community organizations regularly hold various ecological protection activities, such as tree planting and grassland cleanup campaigns, which increase resident engagement and subtly enhance their environmental awareness. According to a survey by Jingjing ([Wang et al.](#)), nearly 80% of participants in such activities reported increased environmental awareness and a stronger sense of responsibility. Moderns played a significant role in environmental awareness campaigns. With the development of information technology, television, radio, and the internet have become key channels for spreading environmental knowledge. The government and environmental organizations use these media to broadly disseminate environmental concepts and knowledge. In recent years, the widespread adoption of social media has enabled environmental messages to reach a broader audience more quickly. According to local statistics, over 60% of residents in Inner Mongolia obtain environment-related information through television and the internet. Such widespread and timely dissemination of information greatly promotes public interest in environmental issues ([Chen](#)). However, challenges remain in environmental education and awareness campaigns. Some residents' environmental responsibility behaviours are slow to change, likely due to cultural traditions, economic interests, and a lack of awareness about regulations.

###### 4.1.2 Impact of Legal Regulation

Legal regulation plays a vital role in promoting environmental responsibility awareness among residents in grassland pastoral areas. Legal regulations establish clear standards and responsibilities for environmental behaviours, raising residents' environmental awareness. In Inner Mongolia, various environmental laws and regulations have been implemented to guide residents' environmental responsibility behaviours, making the law a behavioural guide for residents in environmental protection. Legal regulation primarily manifests in defining and protecting environmental rights. According to the existing Environmental Protection Law of the



People's Republic of China, environmental rights are defined as a public interest, and pastoral residents are encouraged to protect the ecosystem through legal means. Notably, in Inner Mongolia, the law not only governs residents' environmental responsibility behaviours but also promotes the spread of environmental education, deeply embedding legal awareness in the community. Data show that, since 2015, over 80% of cases involving environmental law violations have been effectively resolved through legal education, resulting in a significant increase in residents' environmental awareness. Legal regulations also provide pastoral residents with channels to report environmental violations, significantly increasing residents' engagement in environmental governance. Inner Mongolia has established a dedicated environmental hotline that allows residents to report various environmental violations anonymously. According to 2022 statistics, the hotline received over 15,000 calls, resulting in the successful investigation of 92% of reported violations. This shows that legal regulation not only raises environmental awareness but also empowers residents with the tools and confidence to participate in environmental protection. An additional role of legal regulations in environmental governance is reinforcing resident behaviours through incentives and penalties.

For example, Inner Mongolia's environmental tax policy encourages eco-friendly behaviours and discourages polluting activities through economic incentives. Residents can enjoy tax benefits by installing solar energy systems or engaging in green projects. This policy has led to the widespread adoption of environmentally friendly behaviours. A report by Inner Mongolia's Department of Ecology and Environment indicates that, since implementing the environmental tax in 2020, the number of eco-friendly enterprises has increased by 30%, and the proportion of residents installing new energy devices has risen by 45%. Finally, legal regulation promotes residents' environmental responsibility through community participation programs. To enhance public involvement, Inner Mongolia introduced the "Community Environmental Responsibility Award" to recognize and encourage communities and individuals who excel in environmental protection. In 2023, over 50 communities and 200 individuals received this award, significantly boosting residents' enthusiasm and initiative in environmental efforts.

## 4.2 Impact of Environmental Regulation on Residents' Practical Behaviours

### 4.2.1 Participatory Management

Participatory management is a crucial strategy in environmental regulation that encourages residents to actively participate in environmental protection. This approach emphasizes the direct involvement of community residents in the decision-making process to improve environmental responsibility and the effectiveness of implementation. In recent years, participatory management has been widely applied in environmental governance in Inner Mongolia's grassland pastoral areas. The core of participatory management lies in systematically incorporating residents' opinions and needs into policies and decisions. For example, through village meetings and discussions, residents can directly participate in developing plans for protecting grasslands. In some areas of Inner Mongolia, over 70% of residents in tourist areas are involved in ecological projects ([Wang et al.](#)), significantly enhancing policy acceptance and effectiveness. A successful case is a grassland ecological restoration project in which residents contributed assessments and suggestions, resulting in adjustments to grazing practices.

This project ultimately achieved a 15% increase in grassland vegetation cover. Residents participated in the research and design stages and monitored implementation in the later stages, ensuring the project's transparency and effectiveness. Participatory management also includes training and capacity-building for residents. Environmental awareness and management skills are promoted through environmental knowledge lectures, technical training, and demonstration projects. In Inner Mongolia, several villages have organized workshops, and nearly 60% of participants reported positive behavioural changes after the training. Participatory monitoring is another crucial aspect of participatory management. By engaging in environmental monitoring, residents provide timely data that serve as valuable primary sources for government and research institutions.

A study showed that resident-participatory monitoring systems can identify ecological issues 30% faster than traditional methods ([Zhang & Wang](#)). Despite its achievements, participatory management faces several challenges, including uneven resource distribution, conflicts of interest among residents, and long-term sustainability issues.



Therefore, it is essential to establish a more systematic participatory mechanism through multi-stakeholder cooperation, involving the government, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders. In terms of implementation mechanisms, setting up a permanent resident coordination body is recommended to maintain continuous resident engagement. A survey indicated that establishing a permanent resident advisory committee could increase participation by 60% and foster a stronger sense of ownership in community environmental governance.

#### **4.2.2 Driving Forces of Community Development**

Environmental regulation promotes the sustainable economic development of communities by guiding the rational allocation of resources. By restricting the operations of high-polluting, energy-intensive businesses, environmental regulations compel local communities to explore new sources of economic growth, such as green tourism and renewable energy industries. This shift not only reduces environmental pressure but also brings new job opportunities and income sources. For example, according to statistics from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Tourism Development Committee, policies supporting ecological protection in pastoral areas have led to a 12% increase in employment directly driven by grassland tourism. The growth of tourism has injected fresh vitality into the local economy, providing additional income for residents. Environmental regulation also helps enhance community governance levels.

Under pressure from environmental regulations, communities are increasingly recognizing the importance of environmental management for maintaining economic vitality and are beginning to explore self-governance mechanisms. For instance, many communities have established Resident Environmental Protection Committees that formulate community environmental policies through democratic processes, thereby improving residents' awareness and management capabilities. In Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia, a community formed a specialized environmental management group that enables residents to participate in decision-making, significantly boosting the efficiency of environmental management.

This participatory management approach fosters a sense of responsibility for community governance among residents, forming a model of collaborative community governance. Environmental regulation also contributes to building social capital within communities. Effective environmental policies not only enhance residents' quality of life but also foster community cohesion. By jointly participating in environmental protection activities, residents build mutual trust and cooperative relationships. For example, in 2019, a pastoral community in Inner Mongolia organized the "Green Homeland Action," in which over 70% of residents actively participated, planting trees on more than 500 acres within just six months, significantly improving the local ecological environment.

This collective action not only enhanced the ecosystem but also enriched the community's social capital. However, while environmental regulation provides a significant boost to community development, challenges remain. The first is the flexibility of policy implementation. Due to the unique geographic and economic conditions of pastoral areas, some national environmental regulations may require localized adjustments during implementation to meet local needs. For example, when promoting new energy-saving technologies in pastoral areas, consideration must be given to local economic capacity and the feasibility of their application. During industrial restructuring, there may be short-term pressure on employment, which requires the government to provide social security support to address these challenges.

### **4.3 Empirical Analysis and Discussion**

#### **4.3.1 Data Collection and Analysis**

To achieve the research objectives, we adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data sources to ensure a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the impact of environmental regulation on residents' environmental responsibility behaviors in Inner Mongolia's grassland pastoral tourist areas. Quantitative data were primarily gathered through a resident survey. We designed a 30-question survey using a Likert scale to gauge residents' environmental responsibility awareness, specific behavior, and their perceptions and attitudes toward government environmental regulations. A total of 874 valid surveys were collected from 50 tourist communities, covering most grassland pastoral tourist areas in Inner Mongolia (Table 1). Using the survey data, we conducted descriptive statistical analysis, regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM) to verify causal relationships.

**Table 1: Survey Responses Summary**

Question No.	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Awareness of Environmental Issues</b>						
Q1	I am aware of the local environmental laws and regulations.	19.78	49.66	20.25	7.67	2.64
Q2	I understand the importance of grassland preservation.	24.26	44.85	18.42	9.84	2.63
Q3	I know where to report environmental violations.	14.87	34.66	29.75	14.87	5.85
Q4	I am familiar with the consequences of not adhering to environmental laws.	17.73	40.27	22.2	15.1	4.7
Q5	I am informed about the government's initiatives for environmental protection.	9.61	29.52	25.29	24.94	10.64
<b>Attitudes Toward Environmental Regulations</b>						
Q6	I believe environmental regulations are necessary for sustainable development.	13.73	38.21	31.12	12.36	4.58
Q7	I feel that current environmental regulations are adequate.	21.51	43.48	22.2	8.93	3.88
Q8	I trust the government's actions regarding environmental regulation.	15.33	41.19	25.86	12.36	5.26
Q9	I think stricter environmental regulations are needed.	23.8	44.4	18.31	9.16	4.33
Q10	I feel that individual actions can impact local environmental quality.	10.53	28.15	30.2	20.25	10.87
<b>Perceptions of Government Efforts</b>						
Q11	The government effectively communicates environmental issues.	13.5	37.53	32.04	12.59	4.34
Q12	The government is transparent about environmental policymaking.	12.13	35.81	29.52	17.16	5.38
Q13	The government considers community input in environmental decisions.	16.25	36.16	28.38	13.5	5.71
Q14	The government provides adequate support for environmental initiatives.	19.45	40.27	25.17	10.3	4.81
Q15	The government enforces environmental regulations fairly.	10.98	33.41	31.35	18.08	6.18
<b>Personal Environmental Responsibility Behaviors</b>						
Q16	I actively participate in local environmental clean-up drives.	21.6	47.6	18.88	8.7	3.22
Q17	I regularly practice recycling.	23.23	40.38	19.9	12.13	4.36
Q18	I use water and electricity conservatively.	22.65	36.84	21.73	13.59	5.19
Q19	I avoid using plastic bags.	19.68	42.79	24.03	9.84	3.66



Q20	I try to use public transport to reduce pollution.	14.19	30.32	31.8	17.62	6.07
Community Engagement in Environmental Practices						
Q21	I participate in community meetings about environmental issues.	11.9	36.84	32.72	13.59	4.95
Q22	I encourage others to adopt environmentally friendly practices.	18.65	45.08	22.2	10.07	4
Q23	I have volunteered for local environmental organizations and participated in various activities.	15.33	39.93	25.4	14.19	5.15
Q24	I share information about environmental protection in my community.	13.73	36.16	30.66	14.64	4.81
Q25	I support local environmental initiatives financially or in-kind.	20.25	44.85	20.25	9.61	5.04
Perceived Efficacy of Environmental Actions						
Q26	I believe my actions contribute to environmental protection.	29.29	40.27	16.02	9.84	4.58
Q27	I think community actions are effective in environmental protection.	27.69	41.87	19.68	7.44	3.32
Q28	I feel that environmental education in schools is effective.	11.67	38.44	29.29	14.87	5.73
Q29	I see a positive change in the local environment from community actions.	21.6	48.29	15.78	9.61	4.72
Q30	I am optimistic about the future of our local environment.	34.67	30.43	19.68	10.07	5.15

To enrich the research data, we also collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. We selected 15 representative community members for interviews, including local government officials, environmental volunteers, tourism operators, and pastoral representatives. The interviews provided insights into the practical implementation of government regulations, residents' levels of participation, and the factors influencing environmental responsibility behaviours. The interview content varied by participant, primarily covering topics such as government-resident cooperation, residents' perceptions and experiences, and the impact of social and cultural factors on regulatory effectiveness.

This study strictly adhered to statistical principles to ensure data reliability. By analyzing survey data using statistical methods, we derived a series of meaningful results. The results show that government environmental regulations have significantly increased residents' awareness of environmental responsibility, with environmental education and legal regulations having a notably positive impact ( $p < 0.01$ ). For instance, among residents who received environmental education, 75% expressed greater willingness to participate in environmental protection activities. Data analysis also revealed that residents in areas with high community engagement displayed more proactive environmental behaviours, with 68% frequently practicing waste sorting, water conservation, and electricity saving, 20 percentage points higher than in areas with low engagement. SEM developed for this study comprises three key constructs: Government Regulations as the independent variable, Environmental Awareness as the mediating variable, and Environmental Responsibility Behaviours as the dependent variable (Table 2). Government Regulations encompass legal frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and public awareness initiatives that promote sustainable practices. Environmental Awareness measures residents' knowledge and perceptions of environmental protection, serving as a bridge between regulations and actions. Environmental Responsibility Behaviours reflect tangible actions such as waste sorting, participation in clean-up drives, and energy conservation efforts. The model hypothesizes that government regulations have a direct positive effect on environmental responsibility behaviours, and that this relationship



is further mediated by residents' environmental awareness. This framework allows for an in-depth understanding of how regulatory measures translate into actionable environmental stewardship through enhanced awareness.

The qualitative data analysis also revealed complex social and cultural factors influencing the effectiveness of regulation. Most interviewees mentioned that conflicts between traditional nomadic lifestyles and modern environmental protection concepts limited residents' responsible practices to some extent. Many residents reported that even when they were willing to adopt more responsible behaviours, a lack of material support and technical guidance posed major obstacles.

**Table 2: SEM Results Table**

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Government Regulations → Awareness	0.78	0.06	13.00	<0.001	Significant
Awareness → Responsibility Behaviors	0.65	0.08	8.13	<0.001	Significant
Government Regulations → Responsibility Behaviors (Direct)	0.45	0.07	6.43	<0.001	Significant
Indirect Effect via Awareness	0.51	0.05	-	<0.001	Significant

Through comprehensive data collection and scientific analysis, this study confirms the significant impact of environmental regulation on residents' environmental responsibility behaviours in Inner Mongolia's grassland pastoral tourist areas. The government is advised to increase investment in environmental education, enhance residents' ecological awareness, optimize legal frameworks and regulations, ensure transparency and fairness in implementation, encourage inter-community cooperation and participation, and provide necessary resources and support to foster responsible environmental behaviour.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the influence of environmental regulation on residents' environmental responsibility behaviours in Inner Mongolia's grassland pastoral tourist areas. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of how regulatory frameworks, participatory governance, and cultural factors shape residents' awareness and practical behaviours.

The discussion highlights those environmental regulations, particularly those emphasizing education and legal frameworks, significantly enhance residents' environmental awareness. Residents exposed to educational campaigns and community activities demonstrated a stronger commitment to practices such as waste sorting, tree planting, and energy conservation. Legal regulations, through enforcement mechanisms and incentives, have also played a pivotal role in promoting responsible behaviour.

However, regional disparities in policy implementation, particularly in remote areas, have limited the effectiveness of these measures. The lack of resources, access to information, and tailored interventions has created gaps in environmental responsibility behaviours, underscoring the need for context-specific policy adjustments.

Participatory management emerged as a critical factor in bridging the gap between regulation and practice. Communities that engaged residents in ecological projects and governance displayed better ecological outcomes and higher levels of resident involvement. Participatory mechanisms not only enhanced transparency but also fostered a sense of ownership among residents, leading to more sustainable environmental practices. However, the findings also reveal that traditional pastoral lifestyles and economic constraints pose significant challenges to adopting modern environmental behaviours. Balancing traditional values with contemporary environmental goals requires integrating cultural sensitivity into policy frameworks.

The empirical analysis further underscores the importance of environmental awareness as a mediator between regulations and behaviours. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) confirmed that government regulations positively influence environmental responsibility behaviours, with awareness acting as a critical intermediary



variable. The study also identifies practical obstacles, such as insufficient material and technical support, that hinder residents' ability to fully adopt responsible practices despite their willingness.

The implications of this research are multifaceted. Policymakers should prioritize educational initiatives that integrate traditional cultural values with modern environmental principles. Leveraging digital tools and media can enhance outreach and ensure the equitable dissemination of information across regions. Additionally, fostering local environmental organizations and granting communities more decision-making power can strengthen participatory management and ensure the sustainability of environmental initiatives. Economic incentives, such as tax benefits for eco-friendly practices, can further motivate residents and align environmental goals with local economic interests.

In conclusion, this study reaffirms the critical role of environmental regulation in fostering sustainable behaviours among residents in grassland pastoral areas. While current policies have achieved notable success, continuous refinement and localized implementation are essential to address existing challenges. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of regulatory interventions and assess their applicability to other ecological regions facing similar challenges. By integrating education, legal frameworks, and community participation, policymakers can create robust and adaptive strategies that align ecological preservation with sustainable development in grassland pastoral tourist areas.

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### Data availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### Ethics approval and consent

Not applicable. This study uses publicly available, de-identified secondary data and does not involve human participants or personal information.

### Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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