

Original Paper

Environmental Awareness and Attitude towards Environmental Sustainability among Students of Federal College of Education, Obudu, cross River State-Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is titled Environmental Awareness and Attitude towards Environmental Sustainability among students of FCE Obudu, Cross River State - Nigeria. The following research questions were formulated to guide the study: What is the level of environmental awareness towards environmental sustainability among students of FCE Obudu? What is the attitude of students of FCE Obudu towards environmental sustainability? Descriptive survey research design was employed and a questionnaire titled Environmental Awareness and Attitudes Towards Environmental Sustainability Questionnaire (EAATESQ) was used to obtain information from 100 respondents who were randomly sampled from the study population. The data obtained were analysed using simple mean and standard deviation. Findings from the study revealed above average level of environmental awareness among students of FCE Obudu by a mean score of 2.95 and standard deviation of 0.06 and, below average/poor attitude towards environmental sustainability among students of FCE Obudu as indicated by a mean score of 2.45 and a standard deviation of 0.35.

1. Introduction

Environment refers to an aggregate of conditions or surroundings in which humans, animals, plants and non-living things exist. The biotic and abiotic environment are mutually reactive, affecting each other in a number of ways. The concept of sustainable development emerged as a response to the growing

concern about human impact on the natural environment. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and aspirations. According to the Brundtland Report (1987), sustainability means “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This definition acknowledges that while development may be necessary to meet human needs and improve the quality of life of the present generation, it must happen without depleting the natural environment that it may as well meet the needs and aspirations of future generations. The sustainable development movement has grown and campaigned on the basis that sustainability protects both the interests of future generations and the earth’s capacity to regenerate. The natural environment that humanity had before the onset of industrialization, urbanization, and exponential growth in population was healthy and resilient. Nature was able to replenish the loss of its resources. After the onset of modern civilization, the overall health and efficiency of the natural environment started deteriorating gradually and went on to such an extent that nature has virtually lost its natural ability to replenish the loss of resources as caused by man.

In recent times Nigeria has suffered lots of environmental crisis such as loss of biological diversity, threat to food security, destructions due to flooding, soil erosion, desertification, poor environmental health, social unrest due to limited water and land rights. Issues such as excessive bush burning, pollution from oil exploration activities, and poor management of municipal waste and industrial effluents which are all activities of man are strong contributors to environmental deterioration in the country. However, the Nigeria government as well as non-governmental agencies proposed and implemented various strategies to curb these crises such as abatement measures, legislation and policies but little or no change has been realized.

Based on the dissatisfactory outcome irrespective of the various strategies that have been put in place to combat environmental degradation, the researcher wondered in thoughts on the remote cause(s): can this be caused by ignorance of the importance of the environment to man; Ignorance of environmental management/conservation techniques; unemployment; poverty; greed or over population. Engrossed in these thoughts, the researcher got poised to carry out a research on the topic ‘Environmental awareness and attitude towards environmental sustainability among students of Federal College of Education (FCE), Obudu, Cross River State.

The purpose of the study is to carry out an investigation on the “Environmental awareness and attitude towards environmental sustainability among students of Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River State – Nigeria” through the following objectives:

it determine the level of environmental awareness towards environmental sustainability among students of Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River State.

ii to ascertain the attitude towards environmental sustainability among students of Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River State.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the

study.

I) What is the level of environmental awareness towards environmental sustainability among students of FCE Obudu?

ii) What is the attitude of students of FCE Obudu towards environmental sustainability?

2. Conceptual Framework

The views of various authors in relation to: environmental awareness towards environmental sustainability and, attitude towards environmental sustainability are reviewed in this sub section.

2.1 Environmental Awareness towards Environmental Sustainability

Environmental awareness according to Gambro and Switzky (1996) is the students' ability to understand and evaluate the impact of a society on the ecosystem. Rational actions toward the environment are the translation of knowledge on the environment. These actions will create positive attitude towards it (Murphy, 2002). Knowledge increases awareness, which would motivate environmentally responsible actions (Leeming, Dwyer, Porter, & Cobern, 1993). Environmental degradation, often caused by anthropological activities such as development, agriculture and farming activities, industrialization and mining. Irrespective of the positive impacts of these activities to humans, the repercussions are negative to the surrounding environment and the living organisms that share the same habitat and resources as that of humans. Hence, there is a dire need for environmental sustainability awareness so that the current environmental degradation can be put on halt for, the restoration and wise usage of the environment to be practiced globally (Rahman, 2020).

Sustainable and green manufacturing has been gone in the USA and also gaining commendable support from the government. Realization to opt for sustainable production was not only caused by the need to reduce cost and manage resource utilization better, but also to answer to the demand of consumers who are growing wiser in environmental awareness (Dornfeld, 2013).

In the study as carried out by Msengi1, Doe, Wilson, Fowler, Wigginton, Olorunyomi, Banks and Morel (2019), it was revealed that: students lacked basic knowledge/awareness on sustainability and furthermore were not aware of efforts made, the university, as well as courses offered on sustainability and environmental health. Universities have the ability to educate and empower students to believe in and take the necessary steps and actions to promote economic, environmental, and societal change that brings about a healthier and sustainable world.

According to Mahat, Hashim, Saleh, Nayan, and Norkhaidi (2018), the study results show a non-parallel relationship between students' knowledge, attitude, behaviour and practice of sustainability. Based on the analysis, the knowledge and attitude of students in relation to sustainability is at a good level. However, their practice of sustainability is at a weak level. Thus, to conform to the global agenda and to Malaysia's own aspiration, which is the practice of sustainability as the fundamental element of sustainability development, education is the best platform. In an earlier study conducted by Ohakwe, Nonrom and Iwueze (2011) in Abia State, who found more than average level of environmental

awareness among residents.

2.2 Attitude towards Environmental Sustainability

Students' attitude towards the environment is conceptualized as their verbal and actual commitment, motivation and sensitivity to nature and environmental issues (Aminrad, 2009). Attitude is a complex mental construct (perception) which emerges out of an integration of an individual's belief and value system (Boershing & De Young, 1993). Hence, institutions of higher learning with the aim of advancing the frontiers of knowledge and stake to enlarge human choices, skills and capabilities, by developing human resources, have pivot roles in the whole process. Above all, with the science of climate change now becoming increasingly clear, sustainability and adaptability are turning more and more into issues for education (Institute of Education, IOE, 2009). Bloom, Canning, and Cham (2005), posits further: higher education should play a critical role in preparing and providing the leadership to meet these challenges and stimulate sustainable development through increase climate literacy and environmental education. The way we can protect the totality of our environment is by creating awareness through providing information regarding the environment. This finding corroborates that of Ohakwe et al. (2011) in their study 'Survey of attitude of residents towards environmental deterioration in Nigeria and factors influencing their willingness to participate in reducing the trend: a case study of waste management who got similar result in their research' revealed that the attitude of residents environmental sustainability was poor.

According to Mahat, Hashim, Saleh, Nayan, and Norkhaidi (2018), environmental management is an important element in ensuring continuance in the quality of human life. However, the current greed in pursuit of modernization has culminated in environmental depletion. Consequent upon this, global warming, air pollution, water pollution, ozone layer depletion, dwindling of natural resources and an increase in residual waste are being experienced. In this state, education is employed to enhance knowledge, awareness and strong implementation of the practice of sustainability. This is because, education is the biggest agent of change in influencing the behaviour of a community. Mahat et al (2018) opined further, education is paramount due to the fact that, through the learning process, persons that are intellectuals, active, understanding and able to recognize good or bad can be produced. Environmental education is part of a national strategy to sustain sustainability around the world and it is parallel to the international awareness movement through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Environmental and ecosystem sustainability are crucial to the well-being of man. The geometric population growth (7.6 billion) translates into increase need for food, water, shelter, and energy. The activities of man such as mining, deforestation, and other socioeconomic activities significantly compromise the sustainability of the ecosystem to support short-term and long-term human needs. The UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development recognizes the need for prosperous life for all people as a way to foster sustainable development. Critical to this agenda is to end poverty and hunger, protect the planet, foster peace and prosperity, and strengthen global solidarity through strengthening partnerships. This new sustainable development goal is capable of transforming unsustainable behaviors (Msengi1,

Doe, Wilson, Fowler, Wigginton, Olorunyomi, Banks, & Morel, 2019).

3. Study Area and Methodology

This section treats FCE Obudu as the study area and the various strategies used in the course of the study.

3.1 Study Area

F.C.E. Obudu, CRS is a top ranking college of education in Nigeria and indeed the nation's pride. The college was established in 1983 and it has grown tremendously. The NCE Programme stretches its academic disciplines and research across seven (7) schools and twenty-nine (29) academic departments. The college runs both regular and sandwich NCE programme for students in various disciplines. PreNCE unit coordinates the affairs of the PreNCE students who are admitted into the college via a successful one-year preliminary programme in the college.

The following Courses/Departments are run in FCEObudu: Adult and Continuing Education, Adult and Non-Formal Education, Agricultural Science, Agricultural Science and Education, Biology/Chemistry, Biology/Integrated Science, Biology/Mathematics, Business Education, Chemistry/Integrated Science, Christian Religious Studies/English, Christian Religious Studies/French, Christian Religious Studies/Hausa L2, Christian Religious Studies/Political Science, Christians Religion Studies/Igbo, Christians Religion Studies/Igbo L2, Christians Religion Studies/Social Studies, Christians Religion Studies/Yoruba, Computer Education/English, Computer Education/Geography, Computer Education/Physics, Computer Education/Biology, Computer Education/Chemistry, Computer Education/Economics, Computer Science/Political Science, Computer Science Education/Integrated Science, Computer Science Education/Mathematics, Early Childhood Care Education, Economics/English, Economics/French, Economics/Igbo, Economics/Mathematics, Economics/Yoruba, Economics/Social Studies, Education and Christian Religious Studies, Igbo/Political Science, Igbo/Social Studies, Igbo/Yoruba, Igbo/Yoruba L2, Igbo/Theatre Arts, Igbo L2/Social Studies, Integrated Science/Mathematics Education, Integrated Science/Physics, Mathematics/Physics, Mathematics/Social Studies, Physical and Health Education, Political Science/Yoruba, Political Science/Social Studies, Primary Education Studies, Social Studies, Theatre Arts/Social Studies, Theatre Arts/Yoruba, Yoruba/Social Studies, Adult and Continuous Education, Theatre Arts (Double Major), Physical And Health Education (Double Major), Computer Education/Integrated Science, Computer Science/Biology, Computer Science/Economics, Fine And Applied Arts (Double Major), Christian Religious Studies/Yoruba L2, Christian Religious Studies/Hausa, Special Education (Double Major), Computer Education/Mathematics, Social Studies (Double Major), Social Studies/Hausa, Geography/Igbo, Social Studies/Geography, Mathematics/Geography, Economics/Geography, Geography/Hausa, and, English (Double Major)

FCE OBUDU in affiliation with the University of Calabar, Calabar runs a degree programme leading to the award of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) in the following courses: Elementary Education,

Educational Technology/ A teaching subject, Educational Administration and Planning/ A teaching subject, Guidance and Counseling/A teaching subject, Education/Social Studies, Adult and Continuing Education/A teaching subject.

Bachelor of Arts in Education (BA.Ed): Education/English, Education/Religious Studies, Education/French. Bachelor of Science Education (B.Sc.Ed): Education/Mathematics, Physical & Health Education. Bachelor of Science in Vocational Education (B.Sc. Ed): Agricultural Science Education and, Business Education. FCE Obudu also runs a professional diploma in education (PGD) programme.

3.2 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Questionnaire was used to obtain information and responses of the sampled population to examine their environmental awareness level and attitudes towards the environmental sustainability. A total of 100 questionnaire were administered to 100 students who served as the sample size. They were randomly drawn from the study population. The questionnaire contained three sections; the bio-data part, environmental knowledge/awareness and attitudes towards the environment.

The instrument used to obtain data for the study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was made of two (2) sections, “A” and B. Section “A” was meant to seek personal data while section “B” was meant to seek answers for the earlier stated two research questions. Section “B” contained ten (10) questionnaire items, the following options were provided for each of the questionnaire items in section “B”: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), Disagree (D) and, strongly disagree (SD). The data for the study were collected by the researcher using the on-the-spot questionnaire administration technique. Mean score and standard deviation were used to analyze the data as collected for the study.

3.3 Findings

The results of the study are presented in line with the research questions.

Table 1. Environmental Awareness Level of Students

S/N	ITEMS	ASD	D	TOTAL	X	REMARK
1	Recycling of waste is important for the protection of the environment and natural resources.	180	90	24	13	307 3.07 Agreed
2	Promotions of renewable energy are necessary for sustainable environment.	120	150	10	15	295 2.95 Agreed
3	It is necessary for all students to take subject related to environmental awareness	80	180	35	5	295 2.95 Agreed
4	Sustainable development is as much about what the children in the future needs as it is about what we need today.	152	66	50	15	283 2.83 Agreed
5	Climate change is real and we					

must do something to curb it. 80 186 24 6 296 2.96 Agreed

Grand mean = 2.95SD = 0.06.

Table 1 shows that the overall environmental awareness mean score of FCE Obudu students is 2.95 with a standard deviation of 0.06. Judging from the 2.50 mean score benchmark for the study, the result indicates that environmental awareness level of FCE Obudu students is above average.

Table 2. Attitude of Students towards Environmental Sustainability

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL	X	REMARK
1	Everybody must take part in reducing environmental pollution.	120	60	80	10	270	2.70	Agreed
2	It is necessary that I always reuse plastic containers and leather bags when possible.	76	54	104	11	245	2.45	Disagree
3	It is my responsibility to ensure that my immediate family and neighbours are practicing good waste disposal habits.	40	42	72	40	194	1.94	Disagree
4	It is my duty to obey government regulations on environmental issues, such as waste disposal and environmental degradation.	116	120	46	8	290	2.90	Agreed
5	I owe the future generation a conducive environment as such I need to purchase only environmentally friendly goods and services.	52	78	82	20	232	2.32	Disagree

Grand mean = 2.46SD = 0.35.

Table 2 reveals that the overall mean score of 2.46 which is below the 2.50 benchmark, with a standard deviation of 0.35 indicates that FCE Obudu students possess poor attitude towards the environment.

3.4 Discussion of Results

In considering research question 1, table 1 shows that, the overall environmental awareness mean score of FCE Obudu students is 2.95 with a standard deviation of 0.06. Judging from the 2.50 mean score benchmark for the study, the result indicates that environmental awareness level of FCE Obudu students is above average. The commendable environmental sustainability awareness as found among FCE Obudu students may have stemmed from, their involvement in a number of environment related

departments like geography and agricultural science as well as; courses/topics on environment as found in some departments for instance social studies. All of these expose students to contemporary environmental issues thereby enhancing their knowledge and awareness on issues of the environment on a general note and environmental sustainability in particular.

This is in consonance with earlier study conducted by Ohakwe et al. (2011) in Abia State, who found more than average level of environmental awareness among residents. Hamat et al. (2018) in further support of the results of the study revealed that, the knowledge and attitude of students in relation to sustainability is at a good level.

In considering research question 2, table 2 reveals that, the overall mean score of 2.46 which is below the 2.50 benchmark, with a standard deviation of 0.35 indicates that FCE Obudu students possess poor attitude towards the environment. The poor attitude towards environmental sustainability as seen among FCE Obudu students could result from gross indiscipline which has led to non-inculcation of environmentally friendly practices and/or; the non-provision of an enabling environment for the support of environmental sustainability irrespective of their high level of awareness. This finding corroborates that of Ohakwe et al. (2011) who got similar result in their research. The findings of Hamat et al. (2018) in agreement with this result proved that, students' practice of sustainability is at a weak level.

4. Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, it is concluded that: FCE Obudu student possess fairly high level of environmental sustainability awareness. However, this awareness does not translate to positive attitude towards environmental.

Recommendation

On account of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Environment related clubs and associations should be introduced and encouraged in FCE Obudu to further broaden the students' knowledge and awareness on environmental issues in general and environmental sustainability in particular.

Rules and regulations that are geared towards environmental sustainability should be introduced in FCE Obudu and implementable sanctions spelt out for all defaulters.

An enabling environment to support environmentally friendly practices among FCE Obudu students should be created through the provision of the needed facilities by the appropriate authority(s).

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