

Caring For The Physical Environment: Perceptions Of Secondary School Students In Botswana

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the environment to human kind cannot be disputed since people exist because of the natural environment therefore the responsibility of taking proper care of it lies with human beings of which young people are a part of. The research findings showed that students understood the importance of positive attitudes towards their environment even though they did little to care for it. Students possessed a high level of awareness of what the environment is and ways of sustaining it as well as the implications of not taking care of it. Participants and especially male ones saw the importance of cleaning their environment even though they were reluctant to engage in taking care of it while girls more than boys tended to be more concerned about both personal and environmental cleanliness. The study showed that an individual who has a positive attitude towards an object tends to act positively towards it, and in this case it is the environment, and contrariwise one whose attitude is negative towards the environment tends to be indifferent to it and may even damage it.

Key words: physical environment, secondary school, environmental awareness, perceptions, attitudes

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Though this may no longer be the case presently, throughout the history of humankind in the past and especially in Africa, the young learnt about their surrounding as a result of socialization through oral tradition provided by the elderly. As a result, the children's attitudes towards their surroundings and its sustainability were influenced by societal norms and expectations. In addition, children could explore the natural environment on their own with

minimal supervision (White, 2004; Moore, 2004; Pyle, 2002; White & Stoeklin, 1998). This has changed because children spend more time indoors either at school or at home and hence they tend to have fewer opportunities to interact freely with the natural world (Francis 1991; Herrington & Studtmann 1998; Kellert 2002; Kytta 2004; Kuo 2003; Malone & Tranter, 2003; Moore & Wong 1997; Pyle 2002; Rivkin 2000). This is unfortunate because it is the time when children develop a bond and a positive attitude towards the natural environment and it is also during this period that they would require regular interaction with nature (Eagles & Demare, 1999; Kellert, 2002; Singh, 2011). Consequently, this might have a negative effect with regard to how young people interact and react to the natural environment (Davison & Lawson, 2006) hence becoming insensitive to it (Chawla, 1998). White (2004) notes that, "children today have few opportunities for outdoor free play and regular contact with the natural world" (p. 2).

In the contemporary world, young people's lives are disconnected from the natural world, for example, their experiences are predominantly mediated in media, written language and visual images (Chawla, 1994; Pyle, 2002). To young people, nature tends to be remote and beyond their reach (Chipenuik, 1995). Due to this trend, Pyle (1993) concludes that this lifestyle breeds apathy towards environmental concerns something that Kellert (2002) observes has estranged society from what it should be enjoying because naturally human-beings depend on nature for their growth and development. Consequently, young people lose the understanding that nature exists in their own backgrounds and neighbourhoods and lack of this insight further disconnects them from knowledge, appreciation and preservation of the natural world.

Problem of the study

The attitudes of students towards their immediate physical environment seem to be a hindrance towards achieving environmental sustainability. Young people of secondary school-going age seem not to appreciate nature and this results in their lack of sensitivity towards preserving and sustaining the environment. In schools, students seem not to care much about their physical environment hence unable to sustain it. The family which is one of the most important socialising agents seems to have lost its influence in sensitising the young about the environment and this is due to social changes which were caused by urbanisation that have taken place over time. Lastly, research on adolescents' attitude towards their physical environment in the Botswana context is scarce. The key research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the secondary school students' attitudes towards their physical surrounding?
2. What interventions can be adopted to positively change students' attitudes towards the environment?

Students' attitudes towards the environment

Children are closely attached to their physical environment in which they live which also forms part of their social life (Ferguson, Cassells, MacAllister & Evans, 2013; Makhmalbaf & Do, 2007; Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983). Whatever the case is, children are part of those who should take care of their physical environment by sustaining it. Sutton (2004) defines environmental sustainability as

"the ability to maintain the qualities that are valued in the physical environment. For example, most people want to sustain (maintain) human life, the capabilities that the natural environment has to maintain the living conditions for people and other species (e.g. clean water and air, a suitable climate); the aspects of the environment that produce renewable resources such as water, timber, fish, solar energy; the functioning of society, despite non-renewable resource depletion; the quality of life for all people, the livability and beauty of the environment" (p. i).

Environmental sustainability is key to securing decent living conditions for future generation where every person and every institution is encouraged to make a contribution towards sustainable development (UNESCO, 1997). Most people want to keep up human life, the capabilities that the natural environment has to maintain the living conditions for people and other species (Sutton, 2004). Even though the physical environment is important to human beings, Singh (2011) alludes that research on adolescent attitudes towards the environment is scarce. Despite scarce research on adolescents' attitude towards their environment, attitudes are formed by many influences over a long period of time (Eagles & Demare, 1999). That is why teachers need to create a culture that ensures that students understand the importance of their environment and why it is important for them to take care of it (Kwan & Lidstone, 1998; Rickinson, 2001).

Enhancing the students' environmental knowledge leads to a possible development of a positive attitude towards their surrounding and caring for it. In addition, young people need to be exposed to lessons in school that stress care of the environment so that they are aware of its importance. Sahin and Erkal (2010) contend that life experiences can be a more efficient means of forming environmental attitudes than participation in specific courses. As such, that is why individuals who have negative attitudes towards the environment may be insensitive to environmental problems and may even adopt behaviours that may damage the environment (Sahin & Erkal, 2010). The curriculum, therefore, has to place more emphasis on encouraging schools to become advocates in relation to positively changing and moulding students' behaviour towards the environment (Ajiboye & Silo, 2008). In view of this, schools have the responsibility of developing social and moral values towards their environment.

It is well known that environmental education does not always affect environmental attitudes in a positive direction nor does it have an effect on the individuals' growing responsibility towards the environment (Hungerford & Volk, 1990). In order to convert individually obtained knowledge and experiences from family and school into positive individual attitudes, individuals should be mature in terms of self-control mechanism and positive behaviours towards the environment (Halpenny, 2010). A conclusion can be drawn that long term media and family influences enhance students' awareness on environmental issues hence they may develop positive behaviours towards the environment by avoiding environmental and air pollutions (Barraza & Cuarón, 2004).

Despite the diverse geographical, cultural and social contexts, adults including parents and teachers still act as exemplars regarding how children should view their physical environment (Kwan & Lidstone, 1998; Rickinson, 2001). There are several ways in which young people and especially students get to know or interact with their surroundings, and it is through talking about it at home, learning about it at school, reading or watching environmental programmes on televisions which are possible key factors to influencing their environmental attitudes (Kwan, 1998; Rickinson, 2001). Dresner (1994) observes that presently film, written media, nature television channels and children's magazines influence how young people view their environment. In addition, students get to know and learn about their surroundings through a curriculum that integrates environmental education. The knowledge attained equips them with essential skills to possibly and positively contribute and sustain their environment (Biriwasha, 2012).

In their study Morris and Schagen (1996) observe that young people aged between 15-16 years were more worried about global environmental issues such as the ozone layer depletion and rainforest destruction, than about local issues such as air and water pollution and loss of habitats of which they experience first-hand and which are immediate to them. This could be

due to the curriculum that removes young people's immediate realities while emphasising what tends to be global environmental issues instead. As a result, children fail to realise that what is considered to be global issues could have emanated from issues that were initially local. For students to appreciate and protect their environment young people need first to understand the environment in their own backyard (Christopher, 1988) and it is also through engagement and active involvement close to home that students learn that they have a voice and that they too can have an impact.

Involving students on issues of environmental sustainability

It is important to develop positive individual behaviours towards the environment and issues related to it and convert these attitudes into self-control mechanisms (Hungerford & Volk, 1990; Peyton & Miller, 1980). It has been realized that educating students about environmental issues result in more pro-environmental behaviour. Furthermore, the positive attitude towards the environment is said to be based on a linear progression of environmental knowledge leading to environmental awareness and concern even though changing a person's behaviour is often very difficult (Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Schultz (2002) suggests that a sense of inclusion with nature is associated with understanding how individuals identify themselves in relation to nature or the value that they place on nature, and the impact of that value. By identifying with nature, individuals develop connectedness to nature that leads to possible caring and protection of the environment.

Conversely, if an individual experiences exclusion from nature, they will naturally protect themselves instead of nature. That is why at times nature is recklessly used and forgetting that there has to be a balance. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) propound that when individuals have knowledge about environmental issues they tend to appreciate environmental problems due to their familiarity with it. That is why educating young people about the environment is highly likely to make them realise their responsibility of taking care of it (Thuen & Bru, 2009) and this could potentially have an impact on the whole earth. According to Bonnet (2006) one way in which schools may convey messages about the environment is to gain some insight into children's existing attitudes and conceptual schema in terms of how they understand nature and the environment. It is only on this basis that it is possible for one to begin to understand what will count as a 'message' and how it is likely to be interpreted. Provided young people are exposed to the importance of environmental awareness and sustainability, they would usually express a high emotional disposition and concern towards the environment (Yousuf & Bhutta, 2012).

Teachers are well placed to foster environmental sustainability awareness among students since they can promote student self-responsibility and adjustment by engaging them in the planning and management of educational tasks. Wang and Zollers (1990) state that the encouragement of students to set their own goals contributes to engagement and more time spent on learning environmental activities. Cheng and Monroe (2012) underscore the point that, children's connection to nature influences their intention to participate in nature-based activities in the future. That is why understanding young people's environmental attitudes is important because over time they will face environmental problems and will need to have the skills and disposition to tackle these challenges (Bradley, Waliczek & Zajicek, 1999). This connection to nature is a strong predictor of children's interests in environmentally friendly contexts, which Mayer and Frantz (2004) posit as a significant predictor of ecological behaviours. When spending more time in nature, it helps children develop a stronger connection to nature and in that way, children may take care of their environment. That is why Chen and Monroe (2012) infer that, providing hands-on environmental education to children

may be a unique opportunity to enhance children's affective attitudes toward nature and their interest in protecting it.

Cheng and Monroe (2012) suggest that spending time outdoors may help children develop positive values about nature. Interaction with the natural environment may increase the likelihood that young people will engage in responsible environmental behaviours (Chawla, 2007). As a way of taking care of their environment, children may engage in tasks such as clean up campaigns, tree planting, participating in wild nature activities like hiking, camping, hunting and domestic nature activities like tending flowers and gardening (Thuen & Bru, 2009). These activities could help in increasing the knowledge of young people about the environment and its associated problems, thus making them aware of possible problems to the environment if it is not taken care of (Chawla, 2007). Drissner, Haase, Rinderknecht and Hille (2013) further emphasise, that "hands on experiential learning should be through direct contact with their environment, involvement of emotions and the aim to shape children's values in a holistic approach" (p.1).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative paradigm due to its effectiveness in obtaining specific information about the attitudes and behaviours of participants and in this case the Botswana secondary school students' attitudes towards their environment. The qualitative methodology was chosen because it provides a deeper understanding and insight of the attitudes of secondary school students towards their physical environment in relation to environmental sustainability. This methodology also helped provide a detailed knowledge in relation to the phenomenon under investigation since it naturally gave the possibility of a deeper understanding and rich descriptions of human actions, attitudes and feelings (Banfield & Cayago-Gicain, 2006). Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to ask the "how" and then "why" questions and in so doing allowing the researcher to acquire more personal information and deeper responses from the participants (Jones, 2010; Donalek & Soldwisch, 2004)). In addition, it deals with how participants interact with their natural environment (Jones, 2010) and their social situation (Babbie, 1986). This methodology assisted us to identify and examine gaps in educational practice as well as provide a voice for the students in relation to how they sustain and care for the environment. This paradigm helped to address the identified gaps in educational theory and practice by exploring the attitudes and behaviours of the students and looking at their inner feelings with regard to their attitudes towards the physical environment.

A case study research design was adopted in order to obtain insights and detailed feedback on students' perceptions regarding their physical environment and purposive sampling was employed in this research because it has a potential of providing rich information as indicated by Patton (2002). The participants provided detailed information needed by the researchers. A sample of eighty (80) students was selected from both Manor Junior Secondary School and Tebura Junior School in Botswana and each school provided forty (40) participants. The study employed focus group interviews that lasted for about 25 minutes with a group of ten (10) participants as well as field observations in terms of what was taking place around the research sites. The two schools were selected because the students who were admitted in these institutions were from various social and economic backgrounds. We opted for different locations of the schools, one in a high income location and the other in a low income area. Manor Junior Secondary School is located in a high income area whereas Tebura Junior Secondary School is located in a low income location.

Various research instruments were used to ascertain the trustworthiness of the data as Bell (1987) notes that the procedure and instrument used for collecting data need to be examined in order to assess the extent to which it can be said to collect the data it is aimed at gathering while doing so in a credible manner. Interviews used consisted of semi-structured questions to allow for probes and in-depth responses about the participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002) about the phenomenon under investigation. This also allowed flexibility in re-phrasing questions that could have been left partly answered or unanswered. We also engaged in observing the surroundings of the schools during lunch and break time as well as during general cleaning time. Patton (2002) notes that observations enrich qualitative data gathering in terms of descriptions of activities, behaviours, actions, conversations, interpersonal interactions, or any other aspect of observable human experiences. During the interviews the students responded by displaying their own natural and personal behaviour through gestures which showed attitudes, emotions and behaviours towards the issue under investigation.

The participants were briefed about the nature and scope of the research before they could give assent. Informed consent was granted by both the school authorities and parents. It was further explained to participants that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time they so wished. Such steps on ethical issues were followed to ensure that participants were clear about their participation (Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011). Participants were also informed about the confidentiality of their participation when reporting the results since; pseudonyms were to be used instead of their true names in order to conceal their true identities and those of their schools. Since the research was carried out in a school setup, it was necessary and ethical to seek access into the research site from various gatekeepers (Daymon & Holloway, 2002) and in this case it was the regional director and school heads.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

There were several issues that arose from the findings and these were; the results of mixing boys and girls in cleaning their school environment; punishing students for not taking care of their environment; how individual personality impacts on environmental sustainability; the negative attitude of boys towards cleaning their environment and how both the family and the school culture influence students' attitude towards their environment.

Boys can also learn how to sweep

In the case of cleaning, teachers ensured that duties were allocated evenly across members of a class. Boys and girls were mixed in their sweeping rota so that they could share their duties and responsibilities equally. During the interviews, students were asked if mixing boys and girls promote fairness in cleaning their environment. The responses from the interviewees especially girls showed that more often than not, boys and girls do not clean equally because girls do more work than boys. Students gave various responses when it came to having boys and girls in the cleaning rota. Julia said: "*It leads to shared responsibilities*". Michael, a form one male student said: "*Mixing boys and girls in the cleaning rota shows that we are equal in terms of opportunities*", a point supported by Hakuna, another male student.

In the interviews that were conducted we picked up that boys are more reluctant to clean their environment than girls. Students pointed out that they appreciated what teachers were doing by mixing boys and girls, which is a practice that led to shared responsibilities, collaboration, cooperation and a sense of equality amongst them.

Janet a female student commented that:

When boys and girls clean together, boys can assist girls by moving furniture while girls teach boys how to sweep. Boys at times do not even know how to hold a broom. Girls usually help boys learn new skills of sweeping.

From our interviews it emerged that girls were used to cleaning their environment especially sweeping while most boys were not, and those who could not learnt at school from girls how to do it. Boys also lifted and moved chairs and desks something that girls too appreciated since it showed the importance of sharing tasks while taking care of their own environment. Rose was of the view that when they are mixed during the exercise they also equally shared ideas, responsibilities and developed a sense of cooperation. Some students prefer the mixing of boys and girls in the cleaning rota as it avoids a situation where some would not clean while others did the manual work. Brian a male student stated that: *“Mixing up students in cleaning shows that both boys and girls can do the cleaning together regardless of gender. This exercise helps us to know each other better”*.

Even though mixing boys and girls in cleaning their classrooms was largely preferred, some students especially girls, felt that boys did less work than girls and that the girls were afraid to report the truant boys to their class-teachers because they were scared of being bullied. For example, boys who were reluctant to clean were of the view that cleaning of the classroom environment was a chore meant for girls. Wago was more direct when he said: *“Sweeping is a girls’ role, boys should be called in only to move chairs and tables”*. On the one hand, according to Wago, gender roles are defined physically where sweeping is regarded as a lighter chore compared to the male task of moving of chairs and tables. On the other hand, Reuben, a male student made this observation:

Boys sometimes dodge cleaning their classrooms because they think that girls are the ones who are supposed to do it. Boys are lazy and prefer playing instead of cleaning their classrooms.

Sharon also noted that one of the reasons why boys refuse to clean is that they believe it is girls’ duty to clean. Jane with a concerned voice said: *“Boys have a negative attitude towards cleaning and we girls end up doing most of the cleaning”*. Jackie too stressed Jane’s concern by highlighting that: *“Boys tend to be stubborn when it comes to the cleaning of the classroom. They give us a hard time during cleaning time”*.

It is evident that socialisation of boys and girls at home breeds the negative attitude among boys towards cleaning their own environment at school because they tend to believe that they have been groomed to do other roles and duties other than cleaning. However, there was no indication that the school encouraged the preparation of traditionally defined gender roles.

Nicole, a female student indicated that boys tend to be stubborn when expected to clean their classrooms and surroundings. Just like Jackie and Jane she lamented how children are socialised in the traditional Botswana culture. Boys have a belief that cleaning one’s environment and especially sweeping, is a female chore and that the role of the mother is to teach the “girl-child” home tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and so on while the role of the father is to teach the “boy-child” duties mostly done outside the home setup such as heading cattle, ploughing and so on. As such, when boys and girls go to school, they carry along with them those beliefs that are based on the traditional understanding of roles that their parents passed on to them at home. On this point Dorcas said:

Some boys say that if girls are in their group, there is no need for them to clean because that is what their culture dictates. Boys say that cleaning is a woman’s role.

Dorcas further postulated that such a belief brings a dilemma into the mind-set of boys and girls when they are allocated duties of cleaning at school because they tend to believe that their teachers are in a way contradicting how they were brought up at home.

Contrary to the view expressed by some of the students, Tefo, a male student, attributed boys' refusal to clean their environment especially the classrooms to peer influence. He said that refusing to clean and being stubborn was viewed by most male peers as 'manly'. He narrated what he once did as a way of showing that he was 'manly':

When I was in Form Two, I once became a hero in front of my peers telling them how I proved to be a man by refusing to sweep the classroom and threatening the girls that were in my group not to report me to the class teacher, and that if they did I would beat them up. I told them that they are females, so they have to clean the classroom.

However, he reported that he did that because of peer influence and confessed that it was morally wrong to display such behaviour and he did that only to impress his male peers as well as earn himself respect and loyalty from them. Most male student interviewees acknowledged that they do not clean their environment at their homes either because they have helpers or believe it is a task that should be handled better when it is done by females. For those who say it is done better by females, it is either they have female helpers, relatives, sisters or mothers doing the task. When students were asked how they encouraged those who refused to carry out their responsibilities, they indicated that talking to them sometimes helps as they are made aware of the importance of cleaning their environment. One student indicated that they usually had motivational talks on the importance of cleaning their environment yet it does not help because boys continue refusing to sweep the classrooms. Becky pointed out that those who clean are usually given a word of encouragement during assembly by teachers and fellow students so that they could continue doing what is desirable. Mark complained:

Those who refuse to clean are given lighter tasks and that encourages them to continue with their negative attitude towards cleaning our environment. We who are always ready to clean are given heavier tasks that also take a longer time to finish.

According to him, giving minor tasks to those who refuse to clean can further encourage negative attitudes towards cleaning their environment. We also observed that students appear to be more likely to engage in littering especially after having their meals since it seemed they did not see anything wrong with that. Despite their reluctance to clean, all students said that they preferred a clean environment especially their classrooms.

Punishing students for not cleaning their environment

Students tended to believe that their classmates prefer being coerced in order to carry out their responsibilities. When asked how the male classmates were motivated to clean their environment including the classroom, Ruth said that *"Teachers usually apply corporal punishment as a way of disciplining boys who refuse to clean or those who dodge doing the assigned task. This bears little fruit since it does not easily change their attitude"*.

Miriam indicated that, they always reported to the class teacher those who did not comply and they would then be punished. She noted that despite the punishment meted on to them, boys would still be reluctant to engage in the cleaning of the classroom and its surroundings. During general cleaning students only did the cleaning when they were urged by others or when supervised by the teacher. Most students especially males were reluctant to do the cleaning on their own, for example, we observed that during general cleaning the male students did not care much as to where they disposed of rubbish even though there was a designated dumping point.

Clean environment enhances a sense of dignity

There is a notion that one's personality is reflected in the surrounding within which she or he lives in and similarly the environment within which one lives in is a reflection of one's personality. Julia, a female student at Manor Junior Secondary School remarked that the environment in which one lives says a lot about them. The environment would therefore reflect the innate character of the individual who lives within it. Mogotsi, a form male student from the same school indicated that a clean environment resembles the good character of an individual while a dirty environment gives a negative picture of an individual. Kabo a female student from Tebura Junior Secondary School shared the same view with her counterparts as she said that "*A clean environment portrays who you are*". This belief was reiterated by some students when they were asked if they thought it important to clean their surrounding and if they had a message to share with fellow students regarding the importance of living in a clean environment.

Melissa, a female student indicated that a clean environment is a reflection of one's attitude towards others. Palesa, another female student also remarked about the importance of keeping one's surroundings clean when she said:

When visitors see that we keep our school surrounding clean they would certainly know that we too are clean. A clean environment indeed brings a sense of dignity to us as a school and as individuals. Also, if organisations are aware of our cleanliness as a school, they are likely to assist us with resources and may also sponsor us for further studies.

Another female student Attie, agreed with Palesa's observation, when she philosophised that:

"Cleanliness soothes one's mind, body and soul. A dirty environment distracts the soul and mind and de-energizes the body hence disturbing the mind-set of such an individual".

It is clear that girls more than boys tended to be more concerned about both personal and environmental cleanliness. In both schools, we realised that more often than not, students did cleaning alone without supervision by their teachers hence students were less likely to be serious about the chore especially the reluctant ones. On several occasions we found some students playing while others were busy cleaning. We also noticed especially at tea and lunch breaks that when students went out of their classrooms, they did not pick up some papers around their classrooms and on their way to the feeding point. In one of our observation visits, we saw a student picking up a paper, reading it and then dropping it again. Other students who were cleaning their utensils after lunch left water running until the next student reached the tap to stop it.

Most students during break and lunch breaks frequented the tuck shop which is also visited by the school staff to buy edible items. We also noticed that just like the students the school staff while at the tuck-shop did not dispose of litter properly a behaviour that students would naturally emulate as they looked up to them. In our observation, it seemed that the management and staff did not emphasise the importance of cleanliness hence students did not take cleaning of their surrounding seriously including their classrooms and as a result it became the culture of some of the students to litter and neglect their environment.

A clean environment is usually healthy

When students were asked what they would share with their fellow colleagues regarding the importance of the environment, a number of responses they gave were mainly related to health benefits that are brought about by keeping their surrounding clean. The students attributed a

healthy lifestyle to their surroundings that are properly taken care of and they associate a dirty environment with ill health and a clean environment with a good and healthy lifestyle. Magdeline said: *"I encourage my fellow students to take care of the environment to avoid contracting diseases."*

Sarah said:

I want to encourage my schoolmates to clean their surrounding because if one lives in a dirty environment it is a clear indication that they do not take care of themselves and this means that they may contract diseases.

The responses that were given by the students showed a high level of awareness of what the environment is and ways of sustaining it as well as the implications of not taking care of it. Some cited depletion of certain animals and plant species as some of the negative consequences that could be brought about by careless use of the environment, though they chose to ignore the importance of taking care of the environment by littering or not picking up litter in their surroundings. They were aware that the environment should be taken care of because if it is not, everything in it could be extinct hence the future generation will have nothing to use for their survival.

The general picture is that students only take care of the environment for fear of ill health or the devastation that may be brought about by an uncared for environment. Even though it is not part of their school culture, students felt better if they were in a clean environment such as being in clean classrooms and sitting on clean desks and surroundings. Ruth reiterated this when she said that: *"Cleaning one's surrounding can protect people from diseases. For us to live longer and healthy it is important to clean our surrounding"*.

The classroom is the most important area of a school because it is where students and teachers spend most of their time and where the teaching and learning exercise takes place. The cleanliness of the school premises is also an important aspect of school environment. Clean school environment not only lowers health risks, but it also conveys a message that students and teachers are clean, caring and responsible people.

We exist because of a healthy and clean environment

Students also showed understanding on the importance of a reciprocal relationship between people and the environment. They observed that people, benefitted a lot from the environment than it does from people and as a result, the environment is to be treated with respect and care.

Ben said:

The environment has to be kept clean because it helps us in many ways; we depend on it; we exist because of the environment; we get food and other essential needs from our surroundings. I encourage my classmates to take care of their environment because lots of things come from the natural environment. If we do not take care of it, who should then take care of it? I will also remind them that we have to live in a clean environment.

From the views advanced by students, the importance of the environment to human kind cannot be disputed since people exist because of the natural environment therefore the responsibility of taking proper care of it lies with human beings of which young people are a part of.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, students showed an understanding of the importance of the environment by expressing especially the significance of the natural environment in people's lives. The

research findings showed that students understood the importance of positive attitudes towards their environment even though they did little to care for it. They indicated that the environment should be taken care of because it plays a significant role on people's lives. Individuals who have negative attitudes towards the environment might be insensitive to environmental problems and may even adopt behaviours that damage the environment. Students and especially male ones saw the importance of cleaning their environment even though they were reluctant to engage in taking care of it. The study showed that an individual who has a positive attitude towards an object tends to act positively towards it, and in this case it is the environment, and contrariwise one whose attitude is negative towards the environment tends to be indifferent to it and may even damage it

When young people are educated on their environment, it is likely that they may realize the negative effects of not taking care of it, and that these effects could potentially harm not only their immediate surrounding but the earth at large.

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