

EXAMINING MODEL OF PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOR IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: THE CASE OF CLEAN UP THE WORLD CAMPAIGN IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Based on the model of pro-environmental behavior developed by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), this study examines what led to the Clean Up The World 2015 environmental communication project in Ho Chi Minh City being a success. During the project, a survey was conducted using a questionnaire then interviews held among 179 volunteers (representing 35.8% of the total number of volunteers present on the day of action). The results showed that: (1) most students were able to communicate the insights, goals, content and meaning of the program to the local people. Also, 93.9% students said they liked and had been satisfied with the program, 96.5% said they would continue to act in an environmentally friendly manner, and 96.6% of interviewees said they wished to pass on their knowledge on environmental issues to friends, relatives and colleagues, (2) that good environmental knowledge, feelings and values enforce the environmentally friendly actions of young people at university, and finally (3), that those people interviewed had no internal barriers to pro-environmental behavior, but said they wished to extend the geographical area, objectives, content and time of the project's activities, as well as give more space for volunteers to make contributory actions.

Keywords: *environmental communications, pro-environmental behavior, Clean Up The World, driving forces and barriers to pro-environmental behavior*

INTRODUCTION

The core purpose of any environmental communication is to establish a good level of pro-environmental behavior among target groups. There are several theories and models related to the behavioral changes brought-about by changes in knowledge, values, beliefs, attitudes, norms and identities; however, the results given here show that symbolic actions tended to be the main concepts driving the success of the study program.

The Clean Up The World 2015 program held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam was selected for this study, to examine what factors are important in driving young people to act in an environmentally friendly manner. This program is seen as having been one of the more successful environmental programs to have taken place in Ho Chi Minh City. The program started in Australia in 1990 based on the so-called Clean up Australia Day. Then, in 1993, a Clean Up the World program was launched, and this was able to mobilize 35 million people across 130

countries, with the support of the United Nations Environment Program, in turn becoming one of the largest community-based environmental campaigns in the world. In Ho Chi Minh City, the program has run since 1995 and has become an annual environmental event. In 2015, more than 500 university students joined in with a series of activities in Ho Chi Minh City aimed at raising awareness of environmental protection issues. These activities had two main targets: (1) to train and pass on environmental skills and knowledge to the volunteer groups; to allow them to become trainers by participating in a course before the action day itself, and (2) to clean a dirty canal and train local people about the environment.



Figure 1: Volunteers clean up a yard next to the Hiep Binh Center for the Disabled in HCMC

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

According to Cox (2013), environmental communication represents a pragmatic and constitutive vehicle to be used to facilitate people’s understanding and actions on environment issues. It is conducted based on issues related to specific subjects, then educates people and persuades them to resolve particular problems basing on their perceptions. The Clean Up The World program is one such example of knowledge provision, training people during tailored courses about specialized topics each year, then acting in the public sphere, so that volunteers can interact with local people to promote the program (see figure 2).

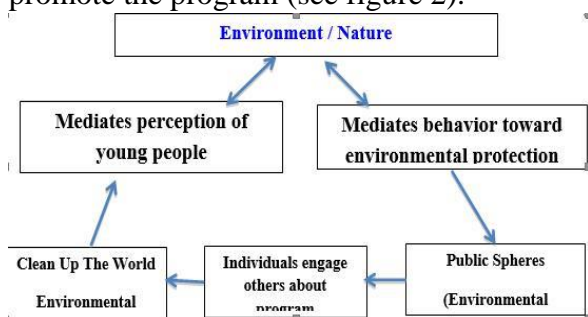


Figure 2: Environmental communication model (Source: Adopted from Cox, 2013)

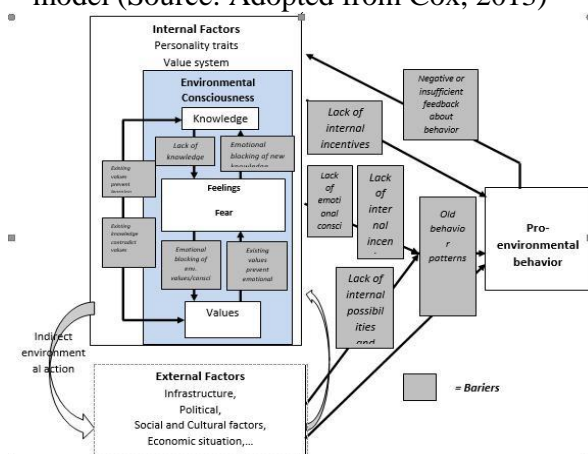


Figure 3: Model of pro-environmental behavior

Based on the model of pro-environmental behavior, Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) used the Clean Up The World Program 2015 to examine the driving forces behind and forces acting against environmental actions. They concluded that the driving forces behind environmental action include internal factors such as knowledge, values attitudes, feelings, fear, and the emotional environment, and external factors such as infrastructure, political, social and cultural

factors, and the economic situation. They also concluded that the barriers to pro-environmental behavior can be broken down into internal factors such as lack of knowledge, an emotional block to new knowledge, existing values preventing emotional interrelations, the emotional blocking of environmental values/consciousness, existing knowledge contradicting values, and existing values preventing learning. External factors leading to barriers include negative or insufficient feedback about behavior, one or more of a lack of internal incentives, emotional consciousness, internal incentives and internal possibilities, and old behavior patterns (see figure 3).

The positive outcomes produced by the Clean Up The World program 2015 were the result of the strong driving forces and lack of barriers to action that existed.

Methods

At the start of the program, Ho Chi Minh City Environmental Protection Agency (HEPA) called for about 500 volunteers to join the project from across four universities across the urban area. In the end, 52% of the volunteers participated in the pre-training program and 100% in the action day itself. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire, after which the data obtained was processed and analyzed using SPSS software.

In total, 179 volunteers (35.8%) answered the questionnaire having finished their activities. These volunteers were randomly selected from the 500 volunteers who took part in the action day and came from a range of academic institutions, these being: the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (46%), Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education (49.4%), Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (2.8%) and Ton Duc Thang University (1.8%). In all, 64.4% of the volunteer interviewers were women and 35.6% were men, plus 90.1% of the students were temporarily resident in Ho Chi Minh City. Most of the student participants were in their third year at university (45.3%), followed by those in their fourth year and second year (see table 1).

Although the students said they were studying a diverse range of topics, they were also participating in a number of voluntary activities; 44.4% of students were learning about the environment, 24.3% were studying subjects related to environment studies and 31.4% were learning subjects not relevant to environment studies (See table 2).

Year	Frequency	Percent
1	5	2.8
2	46	25.7
3	81	45.3
Year 4	47	26.2
Total	179	100.0

Table 1: Student participation by academic year

Table 2: Student participation by field of study

Study fields	Frequency	Percent
Environment Studies Related to	75	44.4
Environment Studies Not related	41	24.3
Environment Studies	53	31.4
Total	169	100.0

their lives, and felt happy. As a result, 96.5% said they would continue to act in an environmentally friendly manner, and 96.6% of the interviewees said they wanted to continue communicating their environmental knowledge to friends, relatives and colleagues.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	168	93.9
No	2	1.1
Total	170	95.0
Missing System	9	5.0
Total	179	100.0

Table 3: Students' views of the program

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Yes	173	96.6
Missing System	6	3.4
Total	179	100.0

Table 4: Level of commitment among students to communicate with friends, relatives and colleagues over environmental issues

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION *The knowledge, feelings, values and attitudes needed to enforce environmental actions*

Clean Up The World Program 2015 as successful environmental communication campaign

Clean up The World is considered a successful environmental communication tool for university students, as it gives students, as well as local people and volunteers, an insight into its goals, content and meaning. After the action day had finished, the survey results show that 93.9% students said they had enjoyed and been satisfied with the program (table 3). They said that the program had provided them with an opportunity to experience issues related to environmental protection, making them more

The Clean Up The World 2015 program had a high standard of inputs in terms of the level of education, with 68.7% of student participants coming from the environmental studies and relations field. Moreover, 80% of participants attended the training program before the action day. Over 98% of interviewees said they would continue to act in an environmentally friendly manner, plus pass on their knowledge to friends, relatives and colleagues.

One interesting piece of information about the volunteer group is the number of times

concerned about the environment, improving their knowledge of the environment and the program, and helping them to acquire environmental communication skills and life skills, reducing their sense of loneliness, and making them want to protect the environment, because they were given an understanding of the negative effects of pollution, felt the value of their actions and

the students said they had participated in voluntary activities, with the highest number being 20 times. In total, 90.3% of students said they had participated more than twice in a range of voluntary activities, while 72.2% said they had participated more than twice in environmental protection projects. They said that they feel such work was meaningful as it contributed toward protecting the environment, said they loved the

environment, that such work enhanced their level of self-understanding and environmental knowledge, plus gave them a greater understanding of the status of the environment. It also helped them to pass on environmental knowledge to the local communities, helped them learn and practice team working skills, helped them make friends and obtain social credits from their university. Their universities are also able to promote these activities, and their studies add value to the universities.

To sum up, a good level of environmental knowledge, feelings, values and attitudes enforces the positive environmental actions of young, active university students.

Barriers to pro-environmental behavior among young people

The model developed by Kollmuss & Agyeman identifies some barriers to pro-environmental behavior, and these include both internal and external factors. For the volunteers who participated in the Clean Up The World 2015 program, no internal barriers existed to their pro-environmental behavior such as a lack of knowledge, an emotional block on developing new knowledge, their existing values preventing emotional interrelations, an emotional block on environmental values/consciousness, their existing knowledge contradicting such values, or their existing values preventing learning.

However, certain external factors need to be improved upon in order to make future action days more beneficial for local people and

more satisfying for the volunteers. The interviewees suggest that the program should increase the size of the location covered, expand its objectives and content, increase the time spent and diversify the activities included. The actions days should also be carried out more frequently; once a year. This will give volunteers more opportunity to work on the program and more time working with local community members. The activities undertaken by the action day should focus on the environmental needs of the relevant locations and make a significant contribution to the destinations chosen. Finally, the program should seek the participation of students from other universities.

CONCLUSION

The Clean Up The World 2015 program held in Ho Chi Minh city was successful in passing on knowledge and encouraging pro-environmental behavior among students from four universities. The main reason for this success was the special characteristics of those who volunteered from the program; they had good environmental awareness and were willing and able to take action to promote environmental protection. The program could be considered a space able to facilitate environmental protection and action. However, the volunteers said the action day needs to be improved in both quantitative and qualitative terms, in order to promote greater pro-environmental behavior.

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