

Littering behaviour and steps to intervention at the university of zambia

[Environment](#)



Introduction

The world as we know it today has come a long way from the time of the industrial revolution. It has evolved in many ways but unfortunately this evolution has brought with it tremendous setbacks some of which are the growing amounts of litter all around the world. It has been argued to say litter is not the only the most ignored but also the most visible form of environmental degradation (Finnie, 1973). Littering is said to be one of the first signs of social decay and what this implies is that we are less likely to care about environmental issues that have a negative impact on our lives, communities and society is we do not care about the litter on our streets (Wanjohi, 2013). Often the phrase ' cleanliness is next to Godliness' (Watchtower, 2002) is heard, unfortunately it seems to only apply to when people are referring to their own personal hygiene and homes but neglects the aspect of the environment. So the question is, does anyone really care? This has been a problem that has plagued the students of the University of Zambia as well as all those who reside within its confines.

Waste products that have been disposed of improperly and at inappropriate locations are what are referred to as litter (Keep Britain Tidy, 2017), While littering is defined as an individual's intentional or unintentional act of throwing away litter on the ground (Ojedokun & Balogun, 2011). The people who litter are referred to as litterbugs. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a litterbug is " one who throws or leaves trash/waste in a public place" (Wanjohi, 2013, p. 16). Littering is done in different ways. Some of

these include the act of motorists throwing their litter onto the highways and of pedestrians throwing their garbage into their surroundings.

Background

The presence and accumulation of litter in public spaces is a widely recognized environmental issue in different countries because of its impact on different areas. It is gradually turning into a global crisis as litter is found literally anywhere and everywhere. The effects of litter are numerous but an area that is directly affected by litter is the environment. Misplaced litter such as plastic, paper and glass thrown carelessly may lead to a number of harmful environmental consequences when they accumulate (Schultz et al. 2013). Some of the effects are the contamination of soil as some materials are non-biodegradable. Brazil it was seen to have led to surface and ground water pollution and also became a threat on biodiversity and aesthetic impact (Wanjohi, 2013). The problem of plastic bags was a big problem in Kenya and was earlier studied by Njeru (2006) who found that plastic bags were linked to many environmental problems. The finding revealed that plastic bags cause serious water problems as they block gutters and drains and that ingestion by livestock leads to their death. This is also the situation in Zambia as litter that gets thrown in drainages and when the rain comes, it all gets carried which leads to them being blocked.

Litter also contributes to social problems in that it may become a safety hazard and a fire hazard. Evidence is demonstrated in a Keep America Beautiful (2009) report that stated that there are 500-1000 vehicle accidents related to litter and about 12 houses get damaged or destroyed by fire starting with litter. It is also a hazard to human health in that bacteria and <https://assignbuster.com/littering-behaviour-and-steps-to-intervention-at-the-university-of-zambia/>

vermin are attracted to litter (Schultz et al. 2013). In Zimbabwe, this was the case and it led to diseases because litter acts as a breeding ground for bacteria. The cholera and typhoid outbreak in that Harare between the years 2011 and 2012 were as a result of uncontrolled littering (Itai, 2015).

Litter also has an impact on the economy of a community and it increases anti-social behavior and is predictive of changing crime rates in a community. The link to anti-social behavior is available in experimental evidence showing how the presence of litter results in an increase in other social transgressions like theft (Keizer et al., 2008). Littering also impacts the economy indirectly as occurrence of litter decreases property values which may consequently lead to loss in the tourism sector.

Earlier studies by Finnie (1973) noted that Keep America beautiful was the only study at the time that had conducted studies on who littered and why they do it. The studies concluded that littering is more common among males, younger adults and individuals living in rural areas (Schultz et al. 2013). The explanation given by Liberty and Hongjuan (2010) for males having a higher frequency of littering behavior is that women are more environmentally responsible than men. Women are also more likely than men to express more concern about environmental issues. Another place that is plagued by the litter problem in the United States of America is the roadways. In this case the most of the motorist are the ones who do the act. In a report by Keep America Beautiful, (2017), it was observed that while litter accumulates in all areas of the country, roadways are a particular focal point.

In Mexico's case, it actually ranks tenth in litter generation at world level, and 25% of this waste is found in public areas. The nation's capital which is Mexico City produces more than 12, 000 tons of litter daily, 14% of which is found in public spaces and is responsible for 50% of the floods occurring annually in this city. In 2011, the city government spent about 1, 741 million pesos on programs and efforts to remove the 2, 400 tons of litter that is generated each month in the city (Munoz-Cadena et al., 2012).

Australia has also been struggling with this problem and so ' Clean up Australia' put up a cleaning campaign but their focus was mostly on cigarette butts and their impact on the environment. According to their report, 4. 5 trillion cigarette butts are littered every year and this reduces the aesthetic quality of the environment (Wanjohi, 2013).

Litter has also been plaguing the oceans as there has been an increase in the amount of litter that slips in to the oceans and marine life is affected. According to Keep Britain Tidy, (2017) it affects marine organisms by disrupting the organisms' digestive systems.

Many African countries are also struggling with the littering problem and how to manage their waste and their governments are working on litter reduction strategies, studies and programs (Torky, 2017). In Nigeria, local authorities have been searching for cost-effective and efficient methods of managing urban solid waste and keeping the streets clean (Nkwaocha, 2009), but unfortunately, there has been little or no public involvement in waste management leaving these authorities to continue trying to keep their streets clean on their own.

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With Kenya, they have also been grappling with poor waste management and litter as an important aspect of it as it has been largely ignored. The government in Kenya has tried to find the solution by increasing manpower, purchasing trucks and street cleaning equipment. Unfortunately, however, these solutions have not been effective as they lack community participation (Wanjohi, 2013).

In Zambia this has been a major problem especially in Lusaka and it is evident and can be seen in most townships and even residential areas. Finnie (1973) says that research on litter is rare, and this has also been the case in Zambia where most research is centered around waste management but not on littering itself. However, as several world governments have been embracing a number of strategies and programs to combat this issue, Zambia has not been left out. The ministry of local government has been making many attempts and one of the ways is through the keep Zambia clean campaign. The ministry through local authorities continues to enforce the statutory instrument No. 100 of 2011 which compels residents and institutions to take responsibility for policy and the waste they produce (Mwale, 2017).

The Zambian government has also through the ministry of education integrated environmental issues into its policy and curriculum. However they are just mentioned in with less emphasis in some subjects, but that's not all. Following the outbreak of Cholera in the month of March, Lusaka province minister Bowman Lusambo has announced that state and central police officers would start to arrest those found littering in the city in an effort to

maintain the clean standards that were assumed following the massive clean by the defense forces (Lusaka Times, 2018). The University of Zambia also hasn't been left out of this loop as the school of education had embarked on a campaign to keep the university clean. Members of staff and student are all encouraged to maintain a clean environment by not throwing litter anywhere (University of Zambia, 2013).

However, despite all the efforts that government and other institutions have been putting forward, the problem still persists as citizens do not take the problem seriously. It is strange how people prefer cleaner environments but will not make any necessary steps to move in that direction. In a press briefing, Lusaka province minister Bowman Lusambo expressed this when he explained how he gets shocked at how some Zambian people will travel to cleaner cities in neighboring countries and feel proud but when they get back, they are the first ones to throw litter (Lusaka Times, 2018). This just goes to show how the saying 'charity begins at home' is not applied. This research seeks to explore the behaviors that university students have towards littering at the University of Zambia and to find ways in which these behaviors can be changed.

Statement of the problem

The city of Lusaka is one that from the time of getting the title of capital city, has been growing at a steady pace. Of course this growth led to the rise of a number of factors such as the increase in the number of industries and also growth of the population. And as the city grew so did its facilities. The university of Zambia which is one of the highest learning institutions in the country was established in the 1960's and from its inception it has been

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growing steadily and has produced some of the sharpest minds in society and now has a population of more than 30, 000 students. From all those happenings it is clear to see that the university has come a long way.

Unfortunately, there are always two sides to every coin. As the universities' population continues to increase, the task of dealing with waste became more challenging and so this leads to the disorderly way of disposing litter. Many parts of the university are filled littered with uncollected garbage and the situation doesn't seem to be getting any better as people are constantly throwing their litter anywhere every day and from what can be seen, it seems that people don't care or maybe they just don't mind. The campus grounds are littered with plastics bags, bottles, papers and as cigarettes, napkins, tissue, take-away food packages and snack wrappers seriously damage the environment as some are not degradable. What all these do is make our conditions of living uncomfortable. The problem is that students are continuously littering and his is evident when one walks around the Goma fields and also the area near the Goma lakes they will find that they have become dumping grounds and the fact that these places are not supervised and monitored it leaves them vulnerable to litter bugs. Local authorities in Lusaka urban had been educating residents about waste management (Environmental council of Zambia, 2000) but despite the education which has been conducted, there was still huge heaps of solid waste in many parts of the city including schools and higher institutions of learning.

One of the impacts that litter has brought to the university campus is that it has brought a reduction to the aesthetic quality of the university. Another impact is that the continuous accumulation of litter in is a health hazard to humanity because it attracts vermin and may lead to the spread of diseases through flies. The impact was felt by the university when the cholera pandemic brock out as this led to the closure that lasted about 3 months. The reason for this was because authorities had to step in to do a clean sweep so that the institution would be safe for the students. However, even after this pandemic passed, it can still be seen that students still continue to litter.

Significance of the study

Littering behavior is a phenomenon that is increasing more and more as time goes on and even as it is the case all over the world is the case with the people of Zambia and more specifically the students of the University of Zambia. The amount of litter in an area is affected by the behaviors of people around it and so intervention is important because if it goes on then people will continue to live their lives being ignorant of their environment and will eventually accept living with the dirt which is not supposed to be the case. It is therefore imperative to conduct this study as it will bring an understanding of the student's behavior towards littering. Once the behaviors are understood it and will lead to the unearthing of effective and long-lasting solutions against the problem. Most of the research that has already been done in Zambia places most of its focus on solid waste management problems but few place their focus on the littering problem much less on understanding the behaviors behind it. This research will bring

about student awareness of these behaviors and will bring an understanding that will help achieve behavioral change towards waste management. This research seeks to propel the institution into taking on stricter rules on the issue of littering and also taking on preventive measures and intervention strategies such as emphasizing recycling.