

BEHAVIOUR, PRACTICES, ATTITUDES AND MOTIVES SURROUNDING DOMESTIC WASTE RECYCLING - SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS.

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Abstract

This research investigates the behaviour, practices, attitudes and motives surrounding domestic waste recycling in the South Dublin County Council catchment area of South West Dublin. The investigation takes into consideration social, environmental and economic factors. The research was carried out using qualitative methods and thematic analysis. Seven semi-structured interviews revealed influences on recycling habits and a waning of interest in separating food waste and a general dissatisfaction with the waste collection service. The main conclusions drawn were that attitudes and practices could benefit more from a positive campaign by Government and waste collection service providers.

Introduction

Debates and conflicts about environmental issues can be said to be one of the key social forces of our time. Previous studies provide insight into behaviour, practices, attitudes and motives surrounding domestic waste recycling in Malaysia, Northern Ireland, Sweden, the USA, the UK and Ireland. These studies have led this researcher to narrow the field one step further by investigating influences affecting recycling practices of householders in the South West area of Dublin. The objective is to uncover householders' attitudes and explore their opinions on and motives for recycling in this specific demographic area, focusing on environmental, social and economic considerations, from the cost of recycling to the householder, to the general attitude towards environmental issues, waste, landfills, global warming and climate change. The reason for this research is to identify any problems that may exist in the attitude-action relationship which can be addressed to encourage a higher level of recycling activity.

Method

The research was carried out using qualitative research methods together with thematic analysis. The apparatus used was a handheld Dictaphone to record each interview session. The software package used to analyse the data collected in the interviews was Nvivo 9. The total number of participants in this research study was eight. The majority of participants were female, with only one male participating. The age group of participants ranged from the mid twenties to early sixties. All participants reside within the South Dublin County Council catchment area. The ethical considerations adhered to were appropriate to a study of a subject matter such as domestic waste recycling and consideration was limited to; an assurance of the confidentiality and anonymity of participants; the participants' right to withdraw from the study; regard for the privacy of participants and a guarantee that confidential information would not be shared without each participant's informed consent.



Results

Interviewees generally feel that people are engaging in recycling activities in some form or another however they express doubt around what levels of recycling activity are taking place and whether it is being done properly. Those interviewees who reside in terraced houses generally experience feelings of dissatisfaction at having to store bins at the front of their property in full view. The results illustrate a general feeling of negativity associated with South Dublin County Council's service. Overall most interviewees noted a general decline in the use of brown bins for recycling garden and food waste. Routine, obligation and cost were the most common motivational factors to recycle. The most common theme which emerges is that recycling practices and attitudes are being passed on to the next generation.

Discussion

The research pinpointed areas with scope for improvement in particular; a dissatisfaction with the service provider and a decline in use of the brown bin for food and garden waste disposal. It also identified a core area of opportunity to encourage householders to increase their levels of recycling by expansion of the influence of familial recycling habits within the home. The results of this research can therefore be used for future research into waste management policies in Ireland.

References

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