



ATTITUDE REORIENTATION TOWARDS THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND VALUES EDUCATION

Obiajulu-Anyia Esther UCHE

Delta State College of Education, Mosogar, Nigeria, ORCID: 0009-0008-1509-9265

Abstract

In the face of a deteriorating and decomposing environment, Nigerians are faced with the challenge of ensuring a clean and sustainable environment. However, it has been discovered that the attitude of Nigerians towards the environment needs to be revisited; therefore, this study investigated how environmental values and values education implementation could bring about an attitude reorientation in young people like upper basic students. The research design used for the investigation was a descriptive survey, while the population is 80,234 upper basic 7-9 school students in Delta State, Nigeria. The sample size of students used as the respondents is 840; this sample was derived through a purposive sampling technique used to select 20 schools and a random sampling technique to select 42 students from each school. The data collection technique/instrument was a questionnaire carefully designed and structured by the researcher. The homogeneity test was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. The findings reported from the study predicated that environmental values and values education can be effective strategies for developing an attitude reorientation in young students. Secondly, they can also become necessary tools for instilling positive attitudes towards the environment in students. Therefore, the study recommended the teaching of environmental values, using values education as a medium for attitude reorientation towards the environment.

Keywords: Attitude, reorientation; environment; values education; environmental values and social studies students

Introduction

The present scenario in Nigeria, where people abuse and relegate the physical environment, is a problem that should be addressed. Looking at the state of the physical environment around us, there seems to be an urgent need for people to be educated on environmental values and attitudinal reorientation. As has been observed, environmental sustainability and development in every society have become major areas of concern among national and global communities (Omenma & Onuoha, 2021). This accounts for the reason why different countries around the world have committed a huge part of their fiscal budget to managing the environment in order to prevent environmental disasters. The actualization of good health and well-being; support for animals and plant; and environmental sustainability are some of the things many countries haven't been able to achieve due to environmental mismanagement caused by human factors (Zawadzki et al. 2021).

Issues on the environment have continued to take center stage and be priorities today due to the high trend in environmental disasters caused by man and nature (Iwunna et al. 2021). Environmental issues have become topical issues of discussion because a healthy environment supports healthy life/living and good health and guarantees a healthy body for man and healthy plants and animals. It is against these backgrounds that these researcher think that there is the need to equip younger generations with attitude reorientation using environmental values and education that are required for the achievement of a clean, healthy, and good environment.

Attitudes and values are somehow synonymous; however, they are not the same. While values are less specific, attitudes are more specific and born from the values of an individual. Attitudes are the assessment of opinions and behaviors, and they originate largely from the family, inherited traits, school, and the immediate surroundings of an individual. Attitudes are manifested in practical experiences, behaviors, and dispositions to the environment, as in this case. The quality of one's attitude is judged by observable behavior and responses towards people,

events, and the environment. Consequently, one's attitude towards the environment can be determined mainly by people's behavior towards the environment, based on their inherent environmental values.

Values are convictions, standards, and ideals for which we stand, while attitudes are the outcome of values. Furthermore, Roth (2013) and Obiajulu-Anyia (2023) view values as references, guidelines, and principles that direct and dictate the actions of individuals in deciding what is wrong or right. Turkkohraman (2013) grouped values into many dimensions; they include environmental, morals, humanistic, cultural, religious, political, and economic dimensions. Values may be defined as beliefs, standards, and ideals about what is desirable or good and what is undesirable or a bad behavior (Atubi, 2021). Values help people to decide and judge those things that are important in their lives (Bayero, 2021). Khashchenko, et al. (2020) opined that values are crucial in explaining environmental, social, and personal development; values are reflected in people's choices, attitudes, judgments, and decisions.

Environmental values, which are a major variable in this research, were conceptualized by Egater (2022) as beliefs and principles that direct how people interact with the environment. However, attitude reorientation through environmental values and values education is not being taken seriously today, irrespective of the mirage of environmental and economic problems faced by people around the globe (Nwaubani, 2021). Gregori & Holzmann (2020) and Babar et al. (2023) supported the assertion that reorientation through environmental values is necessary for actualizing a green environment and embedding values education using digital technologies.

Environmental values could significantly impact the outcome of decisions and practice on human-environmental interactions. Strong environmental values are very likely to make people engage in environmentally friendly behavior (Chan, 2019). Chan et al. (2024) opined that environmental values should be inculcated through school subjects such as social studies, biology, and civic education; books; the family; religious organizations; and others, which could bring about great potential in environmental sustainability. Thus environmental values could be promising for sustainable attitude reorientation for people by protecting nature and ecological biodiversity. The need for people to live in a clean environment with all the advantages inherent in it and make them frown at anything that can cause environmental degradation or devaluation necessitated this investigation on environmental values.

Values education, on the other hand, is a functional term that describes the transmission of values through formal education; it mainly concerned with the inculcation of values into learners (Atubi, 2019). Values education encompasses a wide range of moral, social, ethical, academic, and, of course environmental values. This form of education is supported by the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, which clearly states that all levels of education in Nigeria should be directed towards the acquisition of values (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Omenma & Onuoha, (2021) advocated for value education for national development through using it to achieve transformation and reorientation in the attitude of young Nigerians towards the environment. Values education is required to educate people on the need for an environment that is in harmony with nature, values education that has to do with values orientation that involves protection of the natural environment, and protection of the ecosystem and features to maintain the biological diversity (Khashchenko et al. 2020).

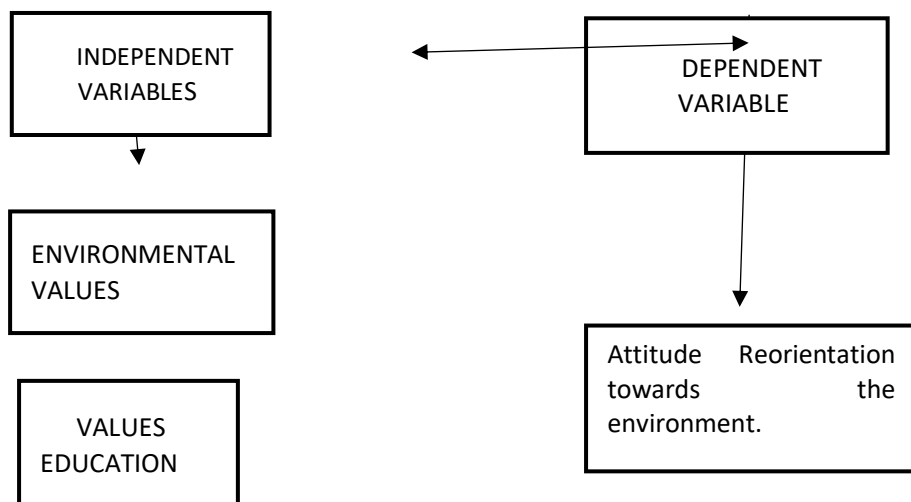


Figure 1: Conceptual Model for the Study

Theoretical Framework

The study is hinged on environmental possibilism theory, put forward by the French Geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache between the 1920s and 30s. The popular idea of this theory is that “nature sets limits, but humans set possibilities for human settlement; the way man reacts and adjusts to these conditions depends on his own innovative ways of life; in this case, environmental values and values education (Ellen, 2001). The theory argues that the physical environment provided humans with opportunities and choices to constrain the environment to their whims and caprices. Thus the theory places man at a higher level than the environment. Hence, the theory does not totally agree with the assertion that the environment dictates man’s way of life, which is environmental determinism.

Environmental possibilism posited that development and technology offer various possible options through which man can influence his environment, such as environmental values and values education. For instance, harsh climatic conditions have been controlled with air conditioners and cold climatic conditions with air heaters. Possibilism places man at a higher level than the environment as an agent of change; the principle of the theory claims that man chooses the opportunities provided by the environment and makes them possible. The exponents consider man as an active agent of change in the man-environment relationship. No wonder Davis (2020) opined that man has been able to modify his ways of life and take almost total control of his surroundings, as reflected in the nature of settlements and crops that are now grown in places where they didn’t use to grow due to innovative methods and agricultural technology. However, the possibilism theory does not totally disregard the limits that the environmental conditions have set for man but at the same time emphasizes man’s capabilities to alter the natural environment rather than its limitations.

The implication of the possibilism theory for this study explains how man’s possibility of making the physical condition of the environment conducive through proper application of environmental values and value education. This involves respecting the sanctity of the environment through positive attitudes and behavior towards the environment, such as proper solid waste disposal, responsible production and consumption patterns, conservation of environmental resources, environmental impact assessment of man’s activities, and more. Against this background, this study examines how environmental values and values education can contribute to social studies students’ attitude reorientation towards the environment. As such, a trend could lead to an integrated and sustainable development of the environment. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: Can environmental values cause an attitude reorientation towards the environment?

Research Question 2: Can values education bring about attitude reorientation towards the environment?

Research Question 3: How can values education equip people with environmental values?

Method

The aim of the study was to investigate how environmental values and values education can cause an attitude reorientation in young people using social studies students as a case. The research design used for the investigation was a descriptive survey to obtain data from the respondents. The location of the study is Delta State, located in the south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population for the study is the 80,234 upper basic 7-9 school students in Delta State. The purposive/ judgmental sampling technique was then used to select 20 upper basic schools from the 471 schools in the state, while a random sampling technique was used to derive a sample size of 840 students, 42 from each of the 20 schools selected for the study. The data collection technique/instrument was a carefully and diligently structured questionnaire by the researcher, titled “Attitude Reorientation through Environmental Values and Values Education Questionnaire (AREVVEQ). The instrument had three sections in line with the three research questions raised in the study and contained 10 items in each section. The questionnaire was designed to provide answers to three research questions that were raised in the study. It had a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed=4, Agreed=3, Disagree=2, and Strongly Disagree=1.

The content validity of the instrument was ascertained by a measurement and evaluation expert at Delta State University (DELSU), Abraka, in Nigeria, and two social studies experts in the Department of Social Science Education (Social Studies Unit) at the same university. The reliability of the instrument was tested by a homogeneity test, which yielded a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.80. The researcher, with the help of the social studies teachers in each of the 20 schools, administered the instrument to the 840 students; the questionnaires were collected on the spot to ensure a 100% collection rate. Descriptive statistics of the mean only were used to analyze the responses from the respondents, while a criterion mean of 2.50 was applied as the decision rule. Any mean score above 2.50 was accepted as positive with the items in the questionnaire, while a mean below 2.50 was rejected and interpreted as negative with the items.

Findings**Research Question 1: Can environmental values cause an attitude reorientation towards the environment?****Table 1: Mean score on environmental values and attitude reorientation towards the environment.**

S/no	Environmental values will	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1	create awareness and help in the actualization of clean environments,	400	352	88	0	3.40	Agreed.
2	prevent the pollution of our water bodies in the environment,	354	442	44	0	3.38	Agreed.
3	reduce waste in the environment and clear our drainage systems,	508	342	0	0	3.60	Agreed.
4	prevent indiscriminate waste disposal that can promote environmental pollution,	508	178	66	88	3.33	Agreed.
5	promote people' ethical behavior towards the environment,	266	442	132	0	3.18	Agreed.
6.	accelerate environmental and sanitation attitudes by young people,	506	334	0	0	3.58	Agreed.
7.	make people see the need of providing and using sanitary facilities in every home for proper sanitation,	266	530	44	0	4.03	Agreed.
8.	promote a good attitude towards environmental resources in the society,	606	190	44	0	3.65	Agreed.
9.	result in general attitudinal change towards the environmental components around us and,	266	574	0	0	3.23	Agreed.
10.	Promote environmental conservation attitude.	376	332	132	0	3.30	Agreed.
	Aggregate mean					3.38	

Criterion mean:

2.50

Data presented in table 1 reveal that the aggregate mean of 3.38 is higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, which indicates that all of the items scored a mean above 2.50. This means that all the items are accepted; therefore, environmental values can cause an attitude reorientation towards the environment. This signifies that the respondents' opinion of environmental values and how they can bring about attitude reorientation towards the environment is positive and accepted. Therefore, the study concluded that the use of environmental values can bring about attitude reorientation in towards the environment.

Research Question 2: Can values education bring about attitude reorientation towards the environment?**Table.2: Mean score on values education and attitude reorientation towards the environment.**

S/no	Values education can:	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1	lead to the transmission of environmental values to students,	508	310	22	0	3.18	Agreed.
2	cause the inculcation of environmental values to students,	308	400	110	22	2.95	Agreed.
3	help in the transformation of people' interaction with their environment,	134	508	198	0	3.63	Agreed.
4	reorient the attitude of young people towards the environment,	552	266	22	0	3.55	Agreed.

5	educate people on the need for an environment that is in harmony with nature,	464	376	0	0	3.68	Agreed.
6	lead to responsible consumption of environmental resources,	408	410	22	0	3.45	Agreed.
7	lead to responsible production patterns,	354	464	22	0	3.40	Agreed.
8	bring orientation that involves protection of the natural environment,	332	464	44	0	3.35	Agreed.
9	ensure the protection and preservation of ecosystems and	310	408	122	0	3.23	Agreed.
10	Bring about a responsible relationship with the environment.	452	322	22	44	3.40	Agreed.
	Aggregate mean					3.40	

Criterion mean:

2.50

Results presented in table 2, show that the aggregate mean of 3.40 is higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, all items scored a mean above 2.50 implying that they were accepted as important for values education and attitude reorientation of the respondents. This signified that the more value education an individual gets, the more orientation the individual will have on environmental attitude and values.

Research Question 3: How can values education equip people with environmental values?

Table 3: Mean score on how values education can equip people with environmental values.

S/no	Values education can equip people with environmental values in the following ways:	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1	influencing interaction between people and the environment,	464	332	44	0	3.33	Agreed.
2	equipping people with environmental values in the school,	408	300	132	0	3.28	Agreed.
3	acting as nourishments for environmental values,	310	442	88	0	3.45	Agreed.
4	acting as a catalyst for a decent environment,	420	408	12	0	3.45	Agreed.
5	giving people a balanced personality in dealing with environmental issues,	376	464	0	0	3.25	Agreed.
6	creating environmental awareness among young people,	464	376	0	0	3.55	Agreed.
7	acting as an avenue for environmental capital development,	234	606	0	0	3.30	Agreed.
8	character development for the environment, which is a requisite for environmental sustainability,	462	376	22	0	3.50	Agreed.
9	building a relationship with achieving a decent work environment and economic growth and	408	420	12	0	3.45	Agreed.
10	Helping to propel a decent living environment in cities and communities.	464	332	44	0	3.50	Agreed.
	Aggregate mean					3.36	

In table 3, the aggregate mean of 3.46 is higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, which implies that all the stated items scored a mean that is above 2.50, portending that value education could equip people with environmental values. This presupposes that for people's environmental attitude towards the environment to change, there is a need for value education. Therefore, responses of respondents established that there is a link between values education and environmental values.

Discussion

The results from the study indicated that there is compelling evidence that environmental values and values education have significant input in the attitude reorientation of people towards the environment. These findings suggest that environmental values and values education are important and very significant when considering providing young people with a reorientation of attitudes and behavior towards their physical environment. Since observations have shown that the negative attitude of people towards the environment can spell doom for it. With regard to the enormous dangers posed by abuse and poor interactions with the environment, such as an increase in flooding,

Findings from this research also pre-suppose that values education can significantly be deployed as a strategy for influencing interactions between people and their environment nourishing environmental values, and acting as a catalyst for propelling a decent environment and developing people's character towards the environment. This portends well for environmental sustainability and well-being. This knowledge is important because if people are not educated on values, they cannot have a responsible attitude towards their environment, and there will be no sustainable environment left for future generations to inherit. These positives can help in ensuring the sustainability, and development of our environment.

These results obtained are in congruence with the findings and results of similar studies that have been carried out using the same variables; environmental values and values education. The theory of environmental possibilism; Nwaubani, 2021; Iwunna et al., 2021; Atubi, 2021; and Obiajulu-Anyia, 2023. These studies established a link between values, values education, and environmental sustainability of the environment. Nwaubani substantiated the correlation between values and sustainable development of the environment. While Iwunna et al. advocated the need to take care of our environment as a means of preventing the outbreak of diseases, just as in the case of COVID-19 pandemic. This can only be achieved if strategies such as education on environmental values and values education are put in place. Obiajulu-Anyia (2023) emphasized the use of values education for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, this study submitted that environmental values and values education are a remedy for attitude orientation towards the environment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concluded that environmental values and values education have compelling evidence that they can be adopted for the re-orientation of students' towards their environment. As a clean and decent environment is becoming a requirement for achieving environmental development and sustainability.

Based on the findings from the results obtained in this study, the researcher made the following recommendations; environmental values and values education should be adequately integrated into the curriculum of school subjects such as social Studies, civic education, geography, biology and the like. In a similar vein there should be school campaigns and seminars on environmental values and values reorientation geared towards changing the attitude of people towards the environment in a positive dimension.

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