

Abstract

'The role of specialized media messages in the development of environmental awareness: An applied study on Birzeit University students.'

This study is a summary of an experiment that lasted for six months inside Birzeit University. The experiment is aimed at investigating the level of influence of mass media messages on environmental issues on the levels of students' awareness. This study also explores how these messages can be applied in order to affect their behavior regarding the classification of garbage into: paper, metal, glass, organic material and plastic into 95 containers distributed for that purpose.

The research, divided into two stages, contained an evaluation of the students' awareness before and after being exposed to environmental media messages. It also reviewed the level of change in behavior, and gave the results of a number of media types that the researcher designed and tried to measure.

The study presented some contributions that criticized the absence of environmental concerns from mass media. Moreover, the study tries to hypothesize the potential change in behavior should the Palestinian media play a more engaged and fair role in environmental issues.

Furthermore, the researcher designed environmental media forms that are printed, audio-visual, interactive, and electronic. Then, it measured their effects on behavior, importance and gaps in efficacy. It also contained a questionnaire given to 400 male and female students. Added to this, there was a 'test group' that comprised 75 students which lasted three months. The researcher recognized many of those students' thoughts, comments and suggestions about the experiment. The researcher also designed an interactive web page through the social media site (Facebook), providing an opportunity to discuss some environmental issues that are based on practical ideas regularly for the first time at the university. The researcher also conducted four recognized media campaigns at the campus with the help of 15 volunteers that he had trained in order to reach the largest number of students through a bilateral and interactive media. The 15 volunteers were also trained to recognize reactions, comments, and the level of their influence of the experiment and of its different messages. Trainings included seminars and screening of environmental movies. In addition to this there were special trainings and distribution for environmentally friendly materials which were printed on recycled paper. Materials included examples such as a guide called "*Family as a friend of the*

environment” in addition to pens, cloth bags, posters, and environmental suggestions. Results were analyzed through the content of specialized media messages as well as notes, observations, interactive comments symbols, mottos, advertisements, facebook site, and utterances used in media rounds. Results showed that there is an absence of concern about the environmental issues from mass media popular with students. Not only did the students talk about this absence, but they also criticized the media for it.

The study gave students the chance to discuss things that are neither a part of their daily lives nor being presented to them through mass media. Such issues were also not discussed in their students’ groups or in their studies.

In its first stage, the experiment indicated that there is a gap in the students’ environmental awareness due to lack of exposure to environmental messages inside and outside the campus. 67.5 % of the sample individuals clarified that they were influenced by the media messages that they watched at the university. However, 32.8% assured that mass media cares about environment issues. Pearson correlation factor was (0.520) which means that there is a positive statistical relation

between two domains: the environmental awareness and awareness achieved by the media messages.

According to the research results, the paper waste forms the largest percentage of all kinds of waste inside the campus followed by plastic, glass, metal and organic materials.

The faculties that were most committed in classifying waste during the two stages of the experiments were: Science (particularly containers available at Biology Department), Engineering, Nursing and Higher Studies. The least committed were faculties of Economics and Administrative Sciences, and the central cafeteria. There was no difference in classification of waste between highly-dense gatherings of students and places with fewer numbers of students. During the four campaigns that the researcher launched to convey the ideas of his message, it was found that female students were more committed and more willing to volunteer than male students. 39.8% of the sample individuals said that they were influenced by the messages that appeared on (Ritaj) web gate for the university. Others assured that did not look at the gate's material that were not associated with their academic issues.

Finally, though the experiment highlighted the environmental issues, it faced many obstacles such as the university laws that do not have interest environment issues.

The study clearly influenced the university administration. Its president decided to form a committee for environment and health in which the researcher worked as an observer. Moreover, the Public Services Department began to discuss to investigate the possibility of recycling more garbage. It also encouraged the Department of Voluntary Work to direct students to environmental issues.

The results of a similar study, which was carried out in three schools in Jenin for two weeks, show that the students were more committed with the classification of solid waste than the students of university.