

Abstract

The environmental laws of Trinidad and Tobago were created by the government to manage and protect our natural and limited resources. However, these laws were made on an Ad Hoc basis, they are unscientific, subjective, have small penalties associated with their offenses and not enforced and monitored. Consequently, there is little or no impetus for persons to follow these laws in spite of their potential to greatly improve our lives. This study is an assessment of the knowledge and practices of environmental laws of Trinidad and Tobago: a study along the East-West Corridor. Two hundred(200) persons were surveyed using a structured interview schedule to determine their knowledge and practice of three selected environmental rules namely: Litter Act 1981(ammended2010) , Water Pollution Rules 2001 and Public Health Ordinance 1979.Data were analyzed using SPSS V.17 and involved descriptive statistics such as tables, charts and graphs .Chi-square analysis was used to explore relationships.

The main findings were that: Persons have a low to fairly low overall total knowledge score on environmental laws whereby 16.5% of persons have a very good knowledge score of the Litter Act, 15% had knowledge on the Public Health Ordinance and 7% had the highest knowledge on the Water Pollution Rules of Trinidad and Tobago. Sex, religion, area of residence, type of area in which a person lives and educational level were determining factors in knowledge on environmental laws. There was a low overall practice score among citizens .However, with regards to the practice of environmental laws, area of residence and educational level were the only major indicators of environmental compliance.

The major recommendations were that citizens become empowered through education and the improvement of communication services mainly radio and newspaper .Additionally, there should be better management of these environmental laws through increased enforcement and monitoring so that awareness, knowledge and practice can all be increased.

Key words: knowledge; practice; environmental laws of Trinidad and Tobago