

Factors Influencing Attitudes and Practices towards Solid Waste Management in Lebanon

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1. Introduction – Solid waste management (SWM) is undoubtedly a major challenge that is faced by cities worldwide. In Lebanon, municipal SWM has been a chronic problem and in a perpetual state of emergency for a long time. Despite the unsustainability of Lebanon's SWM structure becoming more publicly apparent during the July 2015 crisis, practices such as open dumping and burning have always been common in the country, especially in rural areas. In the face of growing public recognition concerning the impacts of solid waste related environmental complications, policy-makers are affronted with unprecedented public pressure regarding the need to address the environmental considerations associated with a SWM strategy. Ensuring proper waste management practices, requires the involvement of community members in the decision making process. People are more likely to engage in the process of waste management when they understand the connection between their behaviors and practices and environmental impacts. Therefore, it is imperative to assess people's knowledge, attitude and practices to ensure sustained engagement.

2. Research Methodology - This study is mainly a cross sectional one that falls into the broad area of descriptive quantitative studies where the research survey approach is adopted. Therefore, the primary data collection focuses on a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) questionnaire. The study comprises three service areas in Lebanon based on their variation in population size and solid waste production. Random sampling was carried out, where people were selected randomly on the streets, shops and local businesses to be interviewed in each of the three study areas. Significant predictors that influence behavioral practices were explored.

3. Results and Discussion – Respondents from all three service areas are generally highly aware of the impacts of improper SWM on the environment, human health and the economy which may be attributed to the fact that the waste crisis of 2015 exposed the adverse environmental impacts associated with poor management. Yet, this knowledge did not prove to be greatly associated with good or improved SWM practices. Lack of transparency is a major influencer affecting attitudes towards SWM practices. The lack of accountability was also one of the contributors as to why respondents have such negative attitudes towards their municipalities. On the other hand, attitudes towards the 3Rs were highly positive in all three service areas showing the communities strong intentions to reuse, reduce and recycle.

4. Conclusions – Noticeably, the fundamentals of the waste hierarchy have been violated by both the government and Lebanese citizens, which highlights the need for greater public awareness. Subsequent solid waste masterplans should be developed from the bottom-up and ought to adopt a precautionary approach to management.

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