



BUILDING COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS WASTE IN YOUTH COMMUNITIES

CASE STUDIES FROM KENYA, JAMAICA, AND MALAWI



KENYA

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Kenya



National partner:

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Environmental Law and Policy, University of
Nairobi

National team:

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Case study:

The study investigated the knowledge and attitudes towards plastic pollution among the youths in Nairobi City, Kenya.

Research questions:

- 1. How much do young people know about what the types and sources of single-use plastic waste (SUP) are?***
- 2. How does knowledge of the environmental and health impacts of SUP waste relate to attitude and practice in waste management?***
- 3. What policy measures could be applied to minimise SUP pollution?***

Method summary

Three youth groups took part in the study.

A questionnaire survey of 271 young people was used to assess knowledge of:

- types and sources of single use plastics,
- impacts on environment and human health, sustainable waste management (i.e. waste recovery, re-use, recycling, alternatives); and
- attitudes in terms of willingness to take action to minimise SUP waste were assessed via a questionnaire survey of 271 young people.

Additional information was obtained through focus group discussions.



Method:

A mixed method approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Primary data was collected through a household survey and focus group discussions. A survey of 271 youths was undertaken using semi-structured questionnaires while interview schedules were used in focus group discussions.

The target population were youth groups in three purposely selected settlements in Nairobi: Kayole, Njiru and Dandora.

Knowledge of SUPs was assessed using 4 measures and a 5-point Likert scale (1 not at all serious, 2 slightly serious, 3 somewhat serious, 4 serious and 5 very serious).

Attitude towards SUPs was assessed as willingness to:

- switch to alternatives to plastics,
- pay more for the alternatives,
- return SUPs to designated points of collection, and;
- participate in the efforts to promote recovery and recycling of SUP waste.

The respondents were asked to provide Yes/No answers.

Their existing practices in plastic waste management to reduce SUP pollution was assessed via five measures:

- (i) voluntary participation in environmental clean-up exercises,
- (ii) voluntary donation for an environmental cause,
- (iii) disposal of plastic wastes in dustbin,
- (iv) recovery of plastic wastes, and;
- (v) doing nothing.

Results summary:

The results show that youths perceive single-use plastics as a serious environmental and health issue.

Plastic impact on human health had the highest rating for seriousness, followed by plastics in oceans and terrestrial environments.

95% of participants expressed willingness to switch to reusable alternatives with cloth bags and reusable water bottles being seen as better alternatives.

Additionally, the results showed stronger support for enhanced awareness campaigns, better plastic recycling infrastructure, a total ban on single-use plastics and monetary incentives to promote the use of alternatives.

Respondents favoured the use of multiple communication channels to disseminate plastic pollution messages, with social media as the most preferred.

The main barriers to the adoption of innovative plastic waste management practices were listed as:

- inadequate recycling infrastructure,
- irrational choice of media channels for messages, and
- limited support from the public

Results in focus - 1

Participants were asked to rate how serious a threat single use plastics were to:

- marine environments,
- terrestrial environments,
- human health
- local economy

The threat rated as most serious was that to human health, which 83% considered “serious” or “very serious” (see figure 1). The threats to terrestrial and marine environments were rated “serious” or “very serious” by 75% of participants and 72% of participants respectively. 65% said it posed either a “serious” or “very serious” threat to the local economy.

The percentage of participants who said they didn’t know how big a threat plastic pollution presented was similar across all four types of threat (between 13% and 15%). This suggests that segments of society remain that education and information campaigns have yet to reach.

Across the four items only between 0.4% and 3.4% of participants considered any of the threats “not at all serious.”

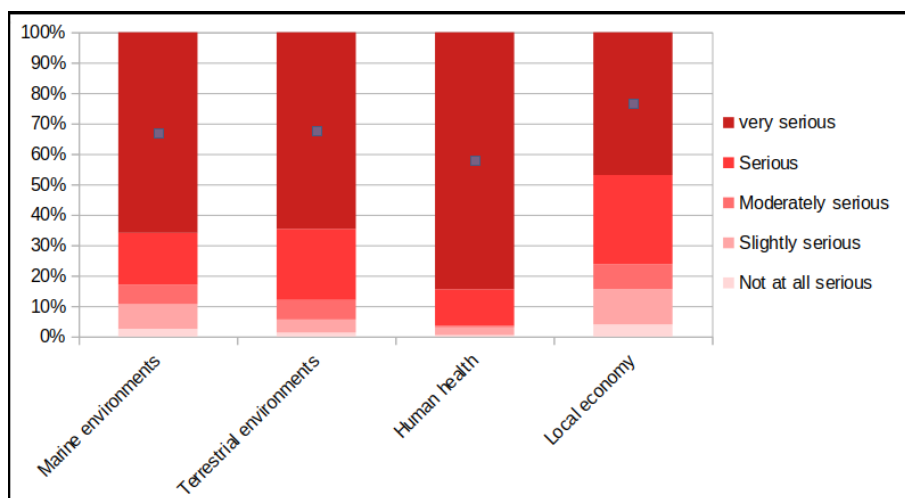


Fig 1. Seriousness of threats posed by plastic pollution

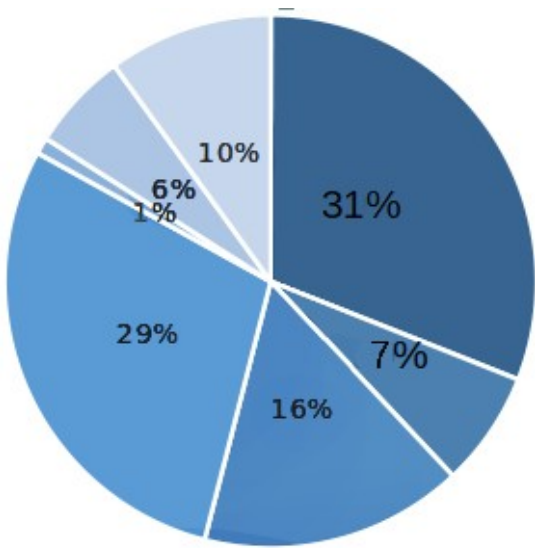




Results in focus - 1

Participants were also asked about the communications channels by which they learned about plastic pollution. From a selection including social media, TV and radio, social media was overwhelmingly their preferred medium. WhatsApp (31%) and YouTube (29%) were the most preferred social media platforms for disseminating plastic pollution messages, as illustrated in figure 2.

This suggests that careful selection of media channels is required to reach specific social groups when attempting to spread information about the challenge of plastic waste.



■ WhatsApp ■ Twitter ■ Instagram ■ Youtube
 ■ LinkedIn ■ TikTok ■ Facebook

Figure 2. Preferred social media channels for disseminating plastic pollution messages.



Research outputs:

The current research outputs are an academic article, conference/workshop presentations and a plastic pollution intervention tool.

The academic article has already been submitted to a special issue of the Journal Social Sciences on the Governance of Plastics and is currently under review.

Three plastic pollution intervention tools (audio-visual materials) were developed by the youth groups to build a collective awareness and motivate action to minimise single-use plastics.

Additionally, a paper was presented at a workshop funded by the Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Surrey in June 2021:

<https://www.ias.surrey.ac.uk/event/use-and-governance-of-plastics/>

Additional presentations will be prepared for submission to other relevant workshops and conferences.



Directions for future research:

Further studies on knowledge, attitude and practice in single-use plastic waste should expand the scope of this research by:

- exploring the knowledge and behaviour of institutions/organizations that contribute large amounts of plastic waste such as hospitals, hotels and restaurants, and educational institutions;
- comparing knowledge and behaviour toward single-use plastics among the youths across different urban areas;
- examining rural-urban differences in attitude and behaviour toward single use plastics;
- examining conditions under which youth groups / organizations can effectively support uptake of innovative practices in plastic waste management.



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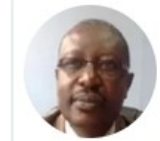
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