

Behavioural Factors That Influence Open Defaecation among Pre-secondary School Pupils in the Eastern and Volta Regions of Ghana

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Abstract

Open defaecation has become a major threat to public health and the environment and the influence of human behaviour on this phenomenon has attracted global concern in recent times.

Objective: The study explored the behavioural factors influencing open defaecation among pre-secondary school pupils in the Eastern and Volta regions of Ghana and assessed pupils knowledge and perception on health and environmental risks of open defaecation. Theory of planned behaviour model was used as theoretical framework

Methods: Self-reported data were collected from 400 pupils aged between 9-18 years using structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interview. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square test and structural equation modeling path analysis. Thematic concept analysis was employed to examine the qualitative data.

Results: These showed high level of open defaecation (64.3%) among pupils and found attitudes to be strong determinant of open defaecation intention ($r = 0.708$, $p < 0.05$). Interaction of subjective norms and perceived behavioural control was equally significant predictor ($r = 0.608$, $p < 0.05$) of open defaecation. Pupils' knowledge of risks of open defaecation was high (89.8%), but knowledge of health risks was, however, low.

Conclusion: The study found pupils attitudes to be strong determinant of open defaecation but limited knowledge of health risks of the practice among them. **Recommendations:** The study recommends health education to help increase pupils' awareness of health risks of open defaecation practices. Ministry of Local Government must provide pre-secondary schools with decent toilet facilities whose quality resonates with the benefits pupils attach to open defaecation.