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### OPINIONS OF ENGLISH STUDENTS ON THE TERM "ECOLOGICAL VIOLENCE"

*The aim of the study was to learn of student perception for the term "ecological violence". Data was collected in 2019 from Year 1 undergraduate students at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK. A questionnaire survey was used with students following a module concerned with issues in sustainability. Results presented indicate that most students were unsure of the concept but were able to choose a suitable definition. Students were also able to suggest examples that constitute ecological violence, their causes and who is responsible.*

*The results of this work may help to indicate directions of activities necessary in education for sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** ecological violence, education, sustainable development,

#### I. INTRODUCTION

In higher education, there is a general feeling that most students should have an awareness of sustainability, either embedded into modules that comprise the building blocks of a degree programme, or through delivery of specifically focussed modules [Butt 2009]. Both approaches are used at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), but within a specific sustainability-related module, students who had already completed a module on ecology, were canvassed for their understanding of, and opinions on, subjects allied to sustainability. Specifically, they were asked about the term "ecological violence" as described by Kostecka et al. [2019].

The aim of the study was therefore to learn if English students of Geography and Environmental Management, could accept the term "ecological violence". Specific objectives set out to determine student's thoughts on a definition, provision of examples, legal considerations, level of education, responsible individuals/groups and tools for social rehabilitation.

#### II. MATERIAL AND RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted in 2019 among students at UCLan, Preston in the Faculty of Science and Technology. Level 4 (first year BSc (Hons)) students who were following

a module on “Issues in Sustainability” were given the questionnaire immediately after a lecture on “Ecology and Sustainability”.

The questionnaire, comprising 24 questions, included 14 closed questions to verify the research assumptions, to which the surveyed students anonymously provided their answers. The collected material was analysed and described. The open questions, shown in Table 1, had responses collated and categorised to allow for discussion. Results to the closed questions, alongside the questions themselves, are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

**Table 1 – Tabela 1**

Open Questions used in the questionnaire (numbers indicate the sequence in which they appeared alongside the closed questions) / *Pytania otwarte użyte w kwestionariuszu (liczby wskazują kolejność, w jakiej pojawiły się obok pytań zamkniętych)*

6. Which form(s) of violence do you think may be the most common? / <i>Którą formę przemocy uważasz za najczęstszą?</i>
9. In your opinion, what constitutes ecological violence? Supply as many examples as you can / <i>Co Twoim zdaniem stanowi przemoc ekologiczną? Podaj jak najwięcej przykładów</i>
17. What may cause a society / citizen to commit ecological violence? / <i>Co może spowodować, że społeczeństwo / obywatel popełnia przemoc ekologiczną?</i>
18. Which phenomena carry environmental threats on a large (global) scale? / <i>Jakie zjawiska niosą zagrożenia środowiskowe w dużej (globalnej) skali?</i>
19. Which form of "ecological violence" is the most common? / <i>Która forma „przemocy ekologicznej” jest najczęstsza?</i>
20. Have you ever thrown litter (paper etc.) into the streets because there was no litter bin in sight? / <i>Czy kiedykolwiek wyrzucałeś śmieci (papier itp.) Na ulice, ponieważ nie było pojemnika na śmieci?</i>
21. Do you think that “Violence on the natural environment” is a better term than “ecological violence”? / <i>Czy kiedykolwiek wyrzucałeś śmieci (papier itp.) Na ulice, ponieważ nie było pojemnika na śmieci?</i>
22. What is the most effective tool in the social rehabilitation of society? / <i>Jakie jest najskuteczniejsze narzędzie w resocjalizacji społeczeństwa?</i>
23. Who is most responsible for the state of the environment? / <i>Kto jest najbardziej odpowiedzialny za stan środowiska?</i>
24. Do you believe that your answers to some of the questions might have differed, if you had been given this questionnaire before the lecture on “Ecology and Sustainability”? / <i>Czy uważasz, że twoje odpowiedzi na niektóre pytania mogłyby się różnić, gdybyś otrzymał ten kwestionariusz przed wykładem „Ekologia i zrównoważony rozwój”?</i>

### III. RESULTS

The results (table 2) from the early questions indicate that teaching of sustainability at UCLan is successful, as around 90% of students were aware of the basic terms; sustainable development, environmental protection and biodiversity. The same students, when asked of violence in the environment (Q4) had a range of experiences and the majority (Q5) were unsure of how violent offenders should be treated.

Ecological violence was not a familiar term to the same students, with less than 10% being aware of it. Nevertheless, when given a choice of definitions (table 3), more than 90% chose “Action carried out by people violating the laws of nature causing gradual, irreversible damage to the environment”, an accepted definition proposed by Kostecka et al. [2019].

Table 4 indicates that the respondents see a need for responsible activity in the environment. All students of Geography and Environmental Management were aware that each of us has to be responsible for the state of the environment.

**Table 2 – Tabela 2**

Initial closed questions from the questionnaire (figures indicate % of answers for the given category) / Wstępne pytania zamknięte z kwestionariusza (liczby wskazują % odpowiedzi dla danej kategorii)

Questions / Pytania	Definitely yes / Zdecydowanie tak	Maybe yes / Może tak	Not sure / Nie jestem pewny	Maybe not / Może nie	Definitely not / Zdecydowanie nie
1. Do you understand the term “Sustainable development”? / Czy rozumiesz termin “Zrównoważony rozwój”?	87	6	6	-	-
2. Do you understand the term “Environmental protection”? / Czy rozumiesz termin “Ochrona środowiska”?	93	6	-	-	-
3. Do you understand the term “Biodiversity”? / Czy rozumiesz termin “Różnorodność biologiczna”?	93	-	6	-	-
4. Have you ever encountered or experienced violence in your environment? / Czy kiedykolwiek spotkałeś lub doświadczyłeś przemocy w swoim otoczeniu?	33	12	13	26	13
5. Do we have to re-socialise people who use violence? / Czy należy resocjalizować ludzi, którzy używają przemocy?	26	47	26	-	-
7. Do you know the concept of “ecological violence”? / Czy znasz termin “Przemoc ekologiczna”?	6	6	60	13	13

**Table 3 – Tabela 3**

Choice of definition of “ecological violence” (responses in %) / Wybór definicji „przemocy ekologicznej” (odpowiedzi w %)

Question 8. From the list below, indicate which you believe to be the most appropriate definition of the term "ecological violence" (*as used by Kostecka et al. 2019) / Pytanie 8. Z poniższej listy wskaż, Twoim zdaniem, najbardziej odpowiednią definicję terminu „przemoc ekologiczna” (* za Kostecka i in. 2019)	
- Activities of a social group that criticize and deny activities of ecological fanatics / Działania grup społecznych które krytykują i zaprzeczają działaniu fanatyków ekologicznych	(6%)
- Action carried out by people violating the laws of nature causing gradual, irreversible damage to the environment* / Działania podejmowane przez osoby łamiące prawa natury powodujące stopniowe, nieodwracalne szkody dla środowiska *	(94%)
- Cruelty to Animals / Okrucieństwo wobec zwierząt	
- Deliberate destruction of Plants / Celowe niszczenie roślin	
- Painting graffiti on the walls of the buildings / Malowanie graffiti na ścianach budynków	
- Breaking benches, tipping over litter bins / Łamanie ławek, przewracanie pojemników na śmieci	

Almost 60% would not burn rubbish at home, even with a limited budget, whereas two thirds felt that product aging (built-in obsolescence) is an example of ecological violence. A very large proportion believed that ecological violence ought to be legal term (Q12) and that punishment for environmental crimes (Q14) should be more severe. With respect to education in the sphere of sustainable development, students also responded that this was urgently required (Q15) and that they felt that UCLan was sufficiently providing such

education (Q16). As a specific example for rehabilitation, students accepted that this could refer to the relationship between Man and nature (Q13).

**Table 4 – Tabela 4**

Subsequent closed questions from the questionnaire (figures indicate % of answers for the given category)  
Kolejne zamknięte pytania z kwestionariusza (dane wskazują % odpowiedzi dla danej kategorii)

Questions / Pytania	Definitely yes / Zdecy- dowanie tak	Maybe yes Może tak	Not sure Nie jestem pewny	Maybe not Może nie	Definitely not / Zdecy- dowanie nie
10. Do you think that with a limited budget, it is OK to burn rubbish at home? / Czy uważasz, że przy ograniczonym budżecie można spalać śmieci w domu?	6	26	20	26	12
11. Do you think that deliberate product aging (built-in obsolescence) is an example of ecological violence? / Czy uważasz, że celowe postarzanie produktu (wbudowywanie kodu dla jego starzenia się) jest przykładem przemocy ekologicznej?	40	26	33	-	-
12. Do you think that the term "ecological violence" should appear in English law? / Czy uważasz, że termin „przemoc ekologiczna” powinien pojawić się w prawie angielskim?	47	47	-	6	-
13. Can rehabilitation refer to the relationship between Man and nature? / Czy rehabilitacja może odnosić się do relacji między człowiekiem a naturą?	53	40	6	-	-
14. Would you like to make the punishment more severe for the devastation of the environment and living organisms? / Czy jesteś za surowszą karą za niszczenie środowiska i żywych organizmów?	73	20	6	-	-
15. Do you think that urgent education for sustainable development will contribute to the improvement of the quality of human life? / Czy uważasz, że pilna edukacja na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju przyczyni się do poprawy jakości ludzkiego życia?	93	-	6	-	-
16. Do you think that UCLan has sufficiently presented you with information on the environment and on sustainability? / Czy uważasz, że UCLan wystarczająco przedstawił Ci informacje na temat środowiska i zrównoważonego rozwoju?	67	26	-	6	-

When asked of violence in general (Q6), half of the responses from students had no bearing on the environment and were concerned with; people fighting, verbal violence, war, general assault and related to taking of territory. The other half did have some connection

with the environment and related to; resource competition, deforestation, over use of fertilizers and littering. These responses were provided before the term ecological violence had been mentioned in the questionnaire.

When asked specifically of ecological violence (Q9), students supplied numerous examples which included many that would have been expected, such as; loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction and pollution (terrestrial and marine). In addition, they mention over-hunting and over-fishing and specifically hunting of endangered species. Exploitation of minerals was also mentioned with a focus on short term gains without thought for the long term. Unsustainable practices in society were mentioned such as rubbish tipping and burning. On a larger scale, deforestation for production of cattle (meat) was mentioned as was other economical violence in general that might impact upon ecosystems.

A diverse set of responses were recorded when students were asked of causes for ecological violence (Q17). Selfishness and greed, linked with over consumption were mentioned, along with lack of resources and lack of empathy. Ignorance from a lack of education and insufficient money was highlighted by many respondents. A lack of options (last resort) was mentioned in addition to a need to survive. War and famine were also mentioned, which obviously operate on a larger scale, and have massive environmental and human consequences.

Question 18 followed from the above and asked of global threats to the environment. The students showed an understanding of climate change by suggesting this, alongside burning of fossil fuels and “global warming”. Fossil fuels were also mentioned with respect to depletion/over extraction of natural resources. They also suggested loss of biodiversity, over fishing/hunting, deforestation, habitat degradation and ocean pollution, including eutrophication, as global threats. The students also understood that a growth in the human population (global over-population) was leading to greater waste production and to greater urbanisation – which links back to habitat degradation.

Of the threats mentioned, students provided a reasonably small range of those they believed to be most common. Deforestation and over exploitation of other natural resources were uppermost in student minds (Q19). Thereafter, fossil fuel usage and pollution of water were important.

Fifty percent of students admitted to throwing litter into the streets when no litter bin was available (Q20).

The term “ecological violence” was seen to be a slightly better form of expression than the term “violence on the natural environment” although as many students were non-committal (Q21) and some even felt that violence was a term that ought not to be connected with the natural environment.

The students of Geography and Environmental Management felt that the most effective tool in the social rehabilitation of society was education (>60%) and one respondent specifically mentioned use of the Internet. In addition, some 30% of the students proposed that legal instruments had an important part to play in social rehabilitation.

The state of the environment (Q23) was attributed to society as a whole, by 40% of the students, whilst others suggested that individual or governments were responsible. Some others further mentioned groups, named as “global businesses” and “people in power”.

Of the students canvassed, there was a similar response rate to “yes”, “maybe” and “no” with respect to whether the teaching offered immediately prior to the questionnaire had assisted in development of student responses (Q24).

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Rockström et al. [2009] identified nine necessary global processes with set boundaries for safe human activities on Earth. Such boundaries have already been exceeded in three of these processes (climate change, nitrogen cycle imbalance and biodiversity loss). We must now develop various methods to support our planet's balance [Kostecka 2013]. Sustainable development requires constant monitoring of knowledge and culture in the everyday life of each citizen, something we set out here to achieve. Our results suggest that the given English students had a firm grasp of basic terminology associated with sustainable development, environmental protection and biodiversity. This was very similar to the understanding shown by Polish students of Environmental Protection provided with a similar questionnaire at the University of Rzeszow [Kostecka et al. 2019].

By far the majority (>90%), of English and Polish students, when offered a range of definitions, chose "*Action carried out by people violating the laws of nature causing gradual, irreversible damage to the environment*" to define ecological violence, even though most were previously unfamiliar with the term.

That 50% of responses on violence in general, related specifically to the environment, meant that English Geography and Environmental Management students were thinking of such things, even before mention of "ecological violence" in the questionnaire. In addition, the English students were able to provide a relatively long list of actions that they considered to constitute ecological violence, as previously shown. Some of these were very broad in nature, such as "unsustainable practices" but the students may have missed specific elements such as threats to the soil, via pollution and through loss and degradation. In addition, they did not mention potential dangers associated with water contamination and loss that might affect the availability of drinking water.

The English students felt that responsible actions were necessary for all. They were able to recognise the part that they themselves could play as individuals and how society as a whole needed to be involved. Environmental students from Poland felt that individuals were the major players with responsibility for the state of the environment with governments and organisations having a much smaller role [Kostecka et al. 2019]. It was of some interest to see that students from both England and Poland thought that bringing ecological violence into a legal framework was required and that punishments associated with such legislation should be severe.

Overall, the English respondents showed a good grasp of understanding to global ecological violent actions, but again did not emphasise the soil. This may seem unimportant, but as food production relies so heavily on a soil substrate, mankind would be without sustenance if this basic resource was completely depleted or drastically violated.

English students thought that the major responsibility for the state of the environment lay with society, whereas Polish students put the emphasis on individuals (the second ranked group mentioned by the English). Some surprising suggestions related to "people in power" with some ambiguity here, as to whether this meant high ranking government officials, or the richer classes of people. In the future, should resources (such as food and drinking water) become restricted, perhaps money will become (or perhaps already is) vital for survival.

More than 30 years have passed since publication of the United Nations' Brundtland report "Our common future" [Brundtland et al. 1987]. The concept of sustainable development as defined; "a development that meets the present needs without depriving future generations of the possibility of satisfying their needs", still holds good today. Although difficult, sustainable development is now a desirable paradigm of development in

a global concept, as evidenced for example by Agenda 2030 adopted in 2015 and the United Nations' 17 goals for sustainable development (Transforming our world). This has been picked up by many nations, as can be illustrated by the UK government programme "A Green future: Our 25 year plan to improve the environment" [2018]. It can only be hoped that current and future generations take heed of such documents and seek to live sustainably and avoid ecological violence.

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#### OPINIE ANGIELSKICH STUDENTÓW NA TEMAT TERMINU „PRZEMOC EKOLOGICZNA”

##### Summary

*Celem badania było poznanie percepcji studentów w zakresie terminu „przemoc ekologiczna”. Dane zebrano w 2019 roku od studentów pierwszego roku studiów licencjackich na Uniwersytecie Central Lancashire, Preston, Wielka Brytania. Przeprowadzono ankietę ze studentami modułu obejmującego zagadnienia zrównoważonego rozwoju. Przedstawione wyniki wskazują, że większość studentów nie była pewna koncepcji „przemoc ekologiczna”, ale była w stanie wybrać odpowiednią definicję tego terminu. Studenci byli też w stanie sugerować przykłady, które stanowią przemoc ekologiczną, ich przyczyny i wskazywali kto jest za nie odpowiedzialny. Wyniki pracy mogą być pomocne w określaniu kierunków działań niezbędnych w edukacji dla zrównoważonego rozwoju.*

**Słowa kluczowe:** przemoc ekologiczna, edukacja, zrównoważony rozwój