

Environmental perception of waste and the environment

Cheiane Nascimento Soares¹, Eloysy Farias da Silva², Elaine Dasdores Pereira Alves³, Maria Eduarda Oliveira da Silva⁴, Daiza Sousa do Rosario⁵, Andreilson de Sousa Pinheiro⁶, João Victor Silva Barboza⁷.

ABSTRACT

The study carried out on Ajuruteua beach highlights the concern about the environmental impact of waste, which threatens both human health and marine and plant biodiversity. Located in Bragança, Pará, this coastal area, appreciated for its natural beauty and the frequency of visitors during the high season, faces serious problems due to the improper disposal of waste. Field research revealed that the lack of proper management results in risks for bathers, such as cuts from glass, as well as negatively affecting artisanal fishing, which is essential for local livelihoods. The main objective of the study was to explore beachgoers' perceptions of the environmental consequences of littering, seeking to understand their conceptions of the environment and promoting awareness in order to mitigate these impacts.

Keywords: Conception, Garbage, Ajuruteua, Environment.

INTRODUCTION

Garbage is one of the major environmental problems (MIRANDA, 2002) and is a worldwide concern (RÊGO et al., 2002), since when disposed of without treatment, it can contaminate the soil, air and water, cause floods, promote the proliferation of disease vectors, among other problems. Disorderly occupation is closely related to the generation of garbage, which promotes environmental degradation and compromises the quality of life (SANTOS, 2009). This study took place at Ajuruteua beach, which is considered one of the most beautiful beaches on the Atlantic Coast of Pará, located in the municipality of Bragança, in the northeast of the state. During the high season, which runs from June to August, the beach is frequented by thousands of people looking for rest and leisure, considered the *point* for its natural attractions and also for having bars, music, summer houses or inns and a certain degree of excitement.

¹ Undergraduate student in Pedagogy
Federal University of Pará

² Undergraduate student in Pedagogy
Federal University of Pará

³ Undergraduate student in Pedagogy
Federal University of Pará

⁴ Undergraduate student in Pedagogy
Federal University of Pará

⁵ Undergraduate student in Pedagogy
Federal University of Pará

⁶ Graduating in Pedagogy
Federal University of Pará

⁷ Graduating in Pedagogy
Federal University of Pará



Since the 1970s, Ajuruteua beach has been undergoing changes with increasing demographic pressure and increased real estate speculation.

However, the accumulation and irregular disposal of garbage on the beach, as analyzed in field research, has been harming the safety of bathers with occurrences of glass cuts. In addition, it threatens marine and plant life and also the main traditional local subsistence activity which is artisanal fishing, sometimes making its main product, fish, scarce.

OBJECTIVE

To raise the perception of the users of the beach of ajuruteua about what the garbage can cause, identifying the conception of their environment.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted on Ajuruteua beach, in May 2024, located in the municipality of Bragança - PA. This study takes a qualitative approach to investigate participants' perceptions. The instrument used was a questionnaire with three questions: 1) What is the environment for you? 2) What kind of problem or damage do you think the garbage on the beach can cause? 3) Have you ever had a problem with trash on the beach? Which? The survey included members of the local community and beach-goers. Participants were approached along the way, allowing for a deeper understanding of their perceptions regarding the environment and the issue of littering on site. The responses were carefully recorded for later analysis.

DEVELOPMENT

The issue of the problem of garbage reported here resulted largely from the complications to people's health and the other responses in relation to the damage to marine life. In addition, when the interviewees were asked about having faced any problem with garbage on the beach, we noticed that some reported never having been harmed (N= 40%), and these interviewees were beach residents, and they mentioned positive comments about garbage collection on the site. The interviewees who showed that they had faced problems with garbage on the beach (N=20%) were fishermen and the problems raised by them were related to the garbage found in their nets at the time of fishing, as well as having witnessed several times the disposal of garbage by bathers on the beach.

According to Chart 1, in summary, a worrying aspect that emerged from the data is the predominance of concern with oneself to the detriment of marine life (N=20%), and also, while some express concern and indignation with environmental degradation and the accumulation of solid waste on



the beach (N=10%), others highlight positive aspects, such as natural beauty and recreational experience (N=10%).

Chart 1 - Perception of garbage on the beach

QUESTIONS ANSWERS	
What kind of problem or damage do you think litter on the beach can cause?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health problems • It harms the beach, residents, and the sea • Drives away tourists • Environmental problems for marine animals • Problems for people, cuts, and others. • Diseases • Reported delayed garbage collection • Contamination, destruction of nature and marine life • Pollution • Damage to health
Have you ever had a problem with trash on the beach? Which?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. There is garbage collection in general • No. It has garbage collection • Yes. Glazing on the beach • Yes. (bringing risks to fishermen and children) • No. Only with other people • No. It has garbage collection • None. (hard to go to the beach). However, he has seen people leaving garbage on the beach. • Yes. Garbage has already hindered fishing. Beachgoers throw garbage into the water • No. Because at that time there weren't many people. • However, it gets in the way of leisure • Yes. Sewage infection, and poor sanitation

We also sought to survey the interviewees' perception of the environment, and we observed that the conception of the environment as a place to live corresponds to 40% of the answers, followed by environment as nature (N=30%), environment as problem (N=10%), environment as resources (N=10%), and 10% did not know how to answer.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Regarding the result of the conception of the environment as a place to live is present in most of the answers, and with this, we see that people's eyes are more attentive to what the environment can provide them, and consequently they do not show concern for the damage that they are capable of causing daily to the coastal environment. In addition, we also observed that in the perception of the interviewees, garbage generates complications to people's health, drives tourists away from the beach, brings damage to the coastal zone and also health problems to marine animals, finally, the data collected showed that most people have not yet had problems with garbage on the beach, while others have shown risks to their work, fishing, and that they often harmed them.



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