“Trash leads to more trash”

-An Experiment

Hypothesis

A public space with more trash will increase the chances of passer byers leaving trash behind than, the space that is always maintained and kept clean.

Subjects / apparatus

Experimenter

Stop watch

Random collection of trash (several kg, depending on the size of the area)

Location

A public space where there exist both possibilities- that trash could be left or put in the trash can (such as a school cafeteria, park eating area).

Method

1. In a public space, the boundary is specifically confirmed. For example, in the case of an outside eating area, the number of tables that will take part in the experiment is counted.

2. To first observe the effect of a clean environment, all trash is cleaned away so that the entire area within the experiment boundary is trash free.

3. During lunch time, when it is most likely that the area will be used most, hence the time with the highest chances of trash disposal (left on the table or into the trash), count the amount of trash left on the table for a set period of time, such as 20 minutes. Each individual piece of rubbish, despite size or type can be considered as 1 rubbish piece.

4. To observe the contrary effect; a trash filled environment, cover 50% of the tables with few trash pieces, making sure that the amount of trash left on each of the tables is constant.

5. Count the rubbish pieces left on the tables (excluding the initial number of rubbish) for the same amount of time.

6. Repeat the process every day for more than 2 weeks to find the average amount and to get the most reliable results. (Different activities could be occurring on a daily basis in a public area, Monday to Sunday, hence 2 weeks would ensure at least 1 repetition of every day of the week)

Variables

Constant variables:

- The boundary line
- Time period (20 minutes)
- Cleanliness
- The Amount of trash set up on the tables

Dependent variables:

- The amount of fresh trash left on the tables

Control

1. Count the amount of rubbish left on the tables within the boundary area for a set period of time (20 minutes).
2. Repeat the process every day for more than 2 weeks to find the average amount and to get the most reliable results. (Different activities could be occurring on a daily basis in a public area, Monday to Sunday, hence 2 weeks would ensure at least 1 repetition of every day of the week)

Results

People often behave depending on the surrounding environment pressures. For example, in a space where the elements implies of wealth, sophistication and grandeur, the users of the space are undoubtedly affected, either subconsciously or knowingly, which pressures them to act accordingly to such ambiance.

In the experiment hence, a clean area is more likely to encourage cleanly usage of the

space while a messy trash ridden environment would accordingly, invite others to act in the same manner

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Limitations

Limitations are inevitable in any experiment however the error of results can be reduced with several precautionary methods.

- Each day of the week could hold different types of activities in the public area, such as sports activities on Wednesdays. Hence, this would attract different types of people to the area on a daily basis and impact the way in which the designated area is used. Thus, an average amount of rubbish left behind within the set time would need to be found.
- Even if the designated area is cleaned, the surrounding areas outside the boundary could still be unclean (or in general, the surrounding neighborhood even). This could impact the users' opinion of whether they think that they are in a clean area or an unkept area. Thus, the experiment could be repeated in a range of different areas/ neighborhoods, potentially with differences in social class (This is based on the assumption that the higher the social class, the more likely the surrounding areas/ environment are to be kept clean or maintained)