

Perceptions of Community Members in Lephalale Area, Limpopo Province, Towards Water Conservation: Development of a Psychological Model

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Abstract : Despite interventions by various governments to regulate water demand and address water scarcity, literature shows that billions of people across the world continue to struggle with access because not everyone contributes equally to conservation efforts. Behavioral factors such as individual and collective aspects of cognition and commitment have been found to play an important role in water conservation. The aim of the present study was to explore the perceptions of community members in the Lephalale area, Limpopo province, towards water conservation with a view to developing an explanatory psychological model on water conservation. Twenty (20) participants who relied on communal taps to access water in Lephalale Local Municipality, Limpopo province, were selected through purposeful sampling. In-depth, semi-structured, individual face-to-face interviews were used to gather data and were analyzed utilizing thematic content analysis (TCA). The research findings revealed that there are various psychological effects of water scarcity on communities, such as emotional distress, interpersonal conflicts and disruptions of daily activities of living. Additionally, the study results showed that the coping strategies developed by participants to deal with water scarcity included adopting alternative water use behaviors as well as adjusting current behaviors and lifestyles. Derived from the study findings, a psychological model of water conservation was developed. The model incorporates some ideas from the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory and the Afrocentric theory. The model suggests that people's worldviews, including their values, beliefs and culture, are significant determinants of their pro-environmental behaviors. The study concludes by recommending that authorities and policymakers should consider psychological factors when developing water management programs, strategies and interventions with the consultation of psychology experts.

Keywords : water conservation, psychological model, pro-environmental behaviour, conservation psychology, water-use behaviour

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