



M.Sc. Degree in Environmental Sciences  
(By examination and dissertation)

**A STUDY OF STAKEHOLDER  
ATTITUDES  
ON CORAL REEF DEGRADATION  
AT HIKKADUWA NATIONAL PARK:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

The degradation of coral reefs in Sri Lanka has increased substantially over the last decades. This study was an attempt to assess stakeholders' behaviors and attitudes towards the degradation of the Coral Reef at Hikkaduwa National Park, considering three stakeholder groups as hoteliers, boat operators and visitors who engage in various activities at the Hikkaduwa National Park. A survey was conducted to gather primary data that gave knowledge about behaviors and attitudes of the stakeholder groups. Non-random, purposive sample technique was utilized to select the sample of the population. The sample size of the study was determined according to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and 64 Questionnaires were distributed to the sample chosen for the study. A piloted and validated questionnaire was used in gathering information from the sample population considered. The formal, self-designed questionnaire that contained items on socio-economic data of the three types of stakeholders and their attitudes on present and future status of Hikkaduwa coral reef was used as the main survey instrument. Secondary data relevant to this study was collected from the Wildlife Office at the Hikkaduwa National Park. The collected data were entered into a database and relevant coding systems for analysis using SPSS PC Ver. 21 (2010). According to the responses received to the study questions, it is evident that almost all the participants are aware of the coral reef degradation at Hikkaduwa National Park. Majority of the participants held the belief that it is the responsibility of the Government to protect the Coral Reef at Hikkaduwa. The study shows that although there is a direct impact to coral damage from human behavior, people involved are not prepared to believe and accept their contribution towards coral destruction at Hikkaduwa National Park. As they hold such attitudes, we cannot expect their behavior would be changed positively in order to protect the existing coral reef or that they would take precautionary actions by themselves to use the coral reef in a sustainable manner. As such, the government may need to strictly enforce laws to limit the use of Hikkaduwa National Park with the view of protecting the existing coral reef. This study supports previous findings of a similar study done in 2001 questioning peoples' beliefs on consuming natural resources in USA. That research on pro-environmental consumers concluded that despite the large number of people who expressed concerns about environmental problems, only a few were willing to accept their involvement and make sacrifices in their personal lifestyles (Fairweather, Maslin and Simmons 2005; Lubbert, 2001). The results indicate that people do believe that the coral reef at Hikkaduwa will further degrade in the future and the damage will be harmful to the environment as well. Using these results, the Department of Wildlife can continue the interactive dialogue with communities and responsible authorities to change the behavior of the individuals who use the National Park and hopefully continue to make a beneficial involvement in saving the existing reef at Hikkaduwa for the future generations.

**Keywords:** Environmental attitudes; Coral reef; stakeholders; Environmental behaviour.

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