## Game-based education promotes practices supporting sustainable water use

Ennio Bilancini <sup>1</sup> Leonardo Boncinelli <sup>2</sup> Roberto Di Paolo <sup>1 2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca

<sup>2</sup>Università degli Studi di Firenze

Behavioral Ecological Economics 2023 - Firenze



**Idea**: Analyse the role of game-based learning program in promoting prosocial behaviour regarding the use of water among children.

**Idea**: Analyse the role of game-based learning program in promoting prosocial behaviour regarding the use of water among children.

• **Sustainable water consumption** is relevant for the general sustainability of current and future societies

**Idea**: Analyse the role of game-based learning program in promoting prosocial behaviour regarding the use of water among children.

- **Sustainable water consumption** is relevant for the general sustainability of current and future societies
- Sustainable water consumption is, in many cases, an instance of prosocial behaviour in a social dilemma (Hardin, 1968): a situation in which a conflict exists between maximizing one's individual benefits and maximizing the benefits of the present and future generations

**Idea**: Analyse the role of game-based learning program in promoting prosocial behaviour regarding the use of water among children.

- **Sustainable water consumption** is relevant for the general sustainability of current and future societies
- Sustainable water consumption is, in many cases, an instance of
  prosocial behaviour in a social dilemma (Hardin, 1968): a situation
  in which a conflict exists between maximizing one's individual benefits
  and maximizing the benefits of the present and future generations
- Game-based learning: the process of entertaining people while teaching them something
- Early childhood education is the natural starting point for a life-long learning

The Municipality of Lucca, together with Lucca Crea and GEAL, has launched an innovative educational program in several primary schools

The Municipality of Lucca, together with Lucca Crea and GEAL, has launched an innovative educational program in several primary schools

 The Blutube project uses a board/urban game with the aim of teaching children how the water cycle works, in order to induce them to save water

The Municipality of Lucca, together with Lucca Crea and GEAL, has launched an innovative educational program in several primary schools

 The Blutube project uses a board/urban game with the aim of teaching children how the water cycle works, in order to induce them to save water

We nested our research activity on this program, collecting data to assess its impact on self-reported measures of sustainable water consumption

**Quasi-experiment methodology** (Campbell and Stanley, 2015): we had no possibility to intervene directly on the organization of the program, but we were able to:

**Quasi-experiment methodology** (Campbell and Stanley, 2015): we had no possibility to intervene directly on the organization of the program, but we were able to:

implement a simple two-group design (treatment and control);

**Quasi-experiment methodology** (Campbell and Stanley, 2015): we had no possibility to intervene directly on the organization of the program, but we were able to:

- implement a simple two-group design (treatment and control);
- collect three distinct measurements of target outcome variables over a period of eleven months.

**Quasi-experiment methodology** (Campbell and Stanley, 2015): we had no possibility to intervene directly on the organization of the program, but we were able to:

- implement a simple two-group design (treatment and control);
- collect three distinct measurements of target outcome variables over a period of eleven months.

#### In particular:

 we elicited the students' awareness and their behaviors about water consumption with three waves of surveys administered, respectively, immediately before the program started, some days after the main activities were over, and after six further months;

Our main finding is that the program had a **positive impact on the** awareness of water usage.

Our main finding is that the program had a **positive impact on the** awareness of water usage.

 this effect is primarily driven by an increase in the frequency of self-reported virtuous behaviors regarding water consumption and discussions with parents about water;

Our main finding is that the program had a **positive impact on the** awareness of water usage.

- this effect is primarily driven by an increase in the frequency of self-reported virtuous behaviors regarding water consumption and discussions with parents about water;
- such positive effect appears to be persistent: six months after the end
  of the main activities of the program the effect is still positive and of
  appreciable size.

Our main finding is that the program had a **positive impact on the** awareness of water usage.

- this effect is primarily driven by an increase in the frequency of self-reported virtuous behaviors regarding water consumption and discussions with parents about water;
- such positive effect appears to be persistent: six months after the end
  of the main activities of the program the effect is still positive and of
  appreciable size.

Our findings suggest that game-based educational programs can be an effective instrument to promote sustainable water consumption behaviors in children.

The program involves students between 6-9 years old.

The program involves students between 6-9 years old.

During 6 weeks, pupils have the opportunity to accumulate points in different ways:

The program involves students between 6-9 years old.

During 6 weeks, pupils have the opportunity to accumulate points in different ways:

playing the game at school or at home (participation)

The program involves students between 6-9 years old.

During 6 weeks, pupils have the opportunity to accumulate points in different ways:

- playing the game at school or at home (participation)
- visiting the hidden water places in Lucca

The program involves students between 6-9 years old.

During 6 weeks, pupils have the opportunity to accumulate points in different ways:

- playing the game at school or at home (participation)
- visiting the hidden water places in Lucca
- doing a photo using a prosocial behaviour on the use of the water (refill the bottle from the fountain instead to buy a plastic bottle)

Blutube program

The program involves students between 6-9 years old.

During 6 weeks, pupils have the opportunity to accumulate points in different ways:

- playing the game at school or at home (participation)
- visiting the hidden water places in Lucca
- doing a photo using a prosocial behaviour on the use of the water (refill the bottle from the fountain instead to buy a plastic bottle)

Blutube program

Each week an on-line public rank is updated Online rank



## Quasi-Experimental Design



We collected data from 28 schools

Table: Sample composition

	Classes Stude			nts		
	Assignment	Pre Program	Post Program	Post 6 Months	Total	
Treatment	52	869	895	908	2601	
Control	53	869	860	872	2672	
Total	105	1738	1755	1780	5273	

## Translated Survey

We construct the 7 questions with the purpose to measure (1-5 Likert scale) the particular habits involved in the urban and board game:

- How much time do you keep the faucet turned on when you brush your teeth?
- Are you having more often a bath or a shower?
- Do you drink more from the plastic bottles or from the fountain/faucet?
- Are you eating fruit or vegetables during your meals?
- When you wash your hands, do you turn the faucet off while you soap your hands?
- Do you talk with your parents on how the water gets to your house?
- Do you talk with your parents on how not to waste water?

## Summary statistics

Table: Mean difference of independent samples in the pre-program sample

Variable	Control	Treatment	Min.	Max.	p-value
Grade	3.14	2.94	2	4	<.001
Students	17.08	17.33	9	25	.051
Cognitive skills	0.50	0.56	0	1	.031
Aggregate reported behavior	22.04	22.32	9	34	.193
Teeth	4.49	4.60	1	5	.002
Shower	3.91	3.86	1	5	.849
Fountain	2.41	2.36	1	5	.397
Vegetables	3.17	3.21	1	5	.488
Hands	3.46	3.65	1	5	.018
Parents	1.99	2.13	1	5	.023
Waste	2.61	2.51	1	5	.091

## Quasi-Experimental Results

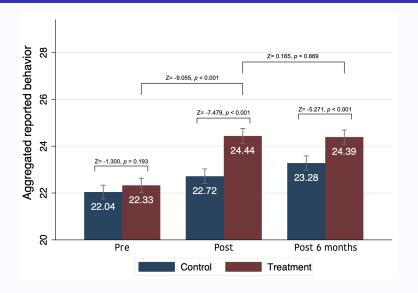


Figure: Average of the aggregated reported behavior by conditions and waves.

## Regression Analysis

Table: Linear Fixed Effect Regression

	Model 1	Model 2
Treatment	0.435 (0.374)	0.767 (0.525)
Post	0.682*** (0.199)	0.701*** (0.198)
Post 6	1.245*** (0.223)	1.226*** (0.221)
Treatment X Post	1.418*** (0.293)	1.415*** (0.293)
Treatment X Post 6	0.812* (0.309)	0.801* (0.308)
Constant	21.966*** (0.264)	19.965*** (0.604)
Controls N	No 5182	Yes 5182

## Limitations

 Self-reported behavior and not directly observe relevant behaviors → reliable source of information on children's perspectives and perceptions (Bevans et al., 2020; Danielson and Phelps, 2003).

## Limitations

- Self-reported behavior and not directly observe relevant behaviors → reliable source of information on children's perspectives and perceptions (Bevans et al., 2020; Danielson and Phelps, 2003).
- A standard limitation of quasi-experiment is that the randomization protocol cannot be managed directly ⇒ one cannot conclude about the causal effect of the treatment

## Limitations

- Self-reported behavior and not directly observe relevant behaviors → reliable source of information on children's perspectives and perceptions (Bevans et al., 2020; Danielson and Phelps, 2003).
- A standard limitation of quasi-experiment is that the randomization protocol cannot be managed directly ⇒ one cannot conclude about the causal effect of the treatment
  - control for systematic differences in the characteristics of control and treatment groups
  - resample the treatment and control groups to ensure that they are well-balanced Robustness Check

## Conclusion

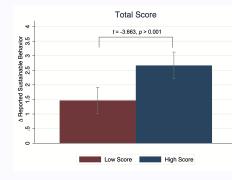
**Results**: empirical evidence shows that the *BLUTUBE* project has an impact on *reported prosocial behavior* 

## Conclusion

**Results**: empirical evidence shows that the *BLUTUBE* project has an impact on *reported prosocial behavior* 

**Futher results**: Gamification and Sustainable Water Use: The Case of the BLUTUBE Educational Program. (joint with V. Pizziol, published on Simulation Gaming)

 We examine the association between the increase in the self-reported behavior and active participation.



Gamified Activities

## Conclusion

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

The innovative playful education program: "Blutube".









About 1000 students of grades II, III and IV in the primary schools of the Municipality of Lucca (around 45% of total population)

## BLUTUBE: The Board Game





## The Ranking

Nome	Classe _	Scuola 🝦	Istituto 🛊	Gioco Casa	Gioco Scuola	L'acqua nascosta	Luoghi 🝦	Punteggio <sub>v</sub>
Clarissa G.	3B	Donatelli S. Vito	Lucca 6	2500	870	5000	2500	10870
Noemi P.	2	Montuolo	Lucca 7	730	150	5000	2500	8380
Giorgio M.	4	Nave	Lucca 7	50	770	5000	2500	8320
Elisa P.	2	Montuolo	Lucca 7	660	120	5000	2500	8280
Yara A.	2	Montuolo	Lucca 7	190	120	5000	2500	7810
Nathan F.	2B	Pascoli	Lucca 1	200	40	5000	2500	7740
Andrea P.	4	S. Maria del giudice	Lucca 2	0	800	5000	1800	7600
Gloria D.	3C	Pascoli	Lucca 1	40	280	5000	1500	6820
Agnese B.	4	Nave	Lucca 7	10	310	3400	2500	6220
Giulio N.	3	Montuolo	Lucca 7	60	50	3050	2500	5660





## Experimental Design: the Survey

NOME:	INIZIALE COGNOME:

Leggi le domande. Rispondi mettendo una crocetta con la penna sul simbolo □ che si trova vicino alla risposta che vuoi dare. Quando trovi i puntini ...... scrivi direttamente la tua risposta sui puntini.

Per quanto tempo fai scorrere l'acqua dal rubinetto quando ti lavi i denti?

TUTTO IL TEMPO 🗆

PIU' DELLA META' DEL TEMPO [

CIRCA META' DEL TEMPO

MENO DELLA META DEL TEMPO

SOLO IL TEMPO NECESSARIO

#### Fai più spesso il bagno o la doccia?

SEMPRE IL BAGNO [

PIU' VOLTE IL BAGNO CHE LA DOCCIA

BAGNO E DOCCIA UGUALMENTE SPESSO

PIU' LA DOCCIA CHE IL BAGNO

SEMPRE LA DOCCIA

#### Bevi più spesso l'acqua delle bottiglie acquistate o l'acqua presa dal rubinetto o fontana?

SEMPRE IN BOTTIGLIA

PIU' IN BOTTIGLIA CHE DAL RUBINETTO O FONTANA

IN BOTTIGLIA E DAL RUBINETTO O FONTANA UGUALMENTE SPESSO

PIU' DAL RUBINETTO O FONTANA CHE IN BOTTIGLIA II

SEMPRE DAL RUBINETTO O FONTANA

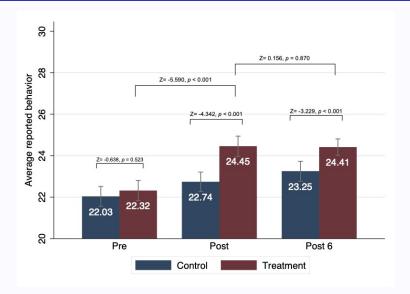
#### Mangi frutta o verdura durante i tuoi pasti?

SI', SEMPRE □

SI', IL PIU' DELLE VOLTE

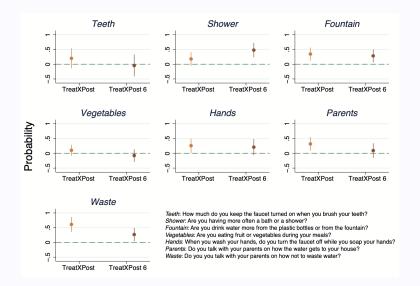
July 10, 2022

## Robustness Check





## Disaggregated Results





July 10, 2022

## Score by activities and gender

