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THE EFFECT OF SPIRITUALITY IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR AMONG STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

¹Norhasliza Hassan, ²Siti Norezam Othman, & ³Noorulsadiqin Azbiya Yaacob

¹²³School of Technology Management and Logistics, Universiti Utara Malaysia

Corresponding author: ainulmardhiah87@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine the predictors that influencing sustainable behaviour among students in public universities in Malaysia. For this reason, this paper seeks to address the research problem about the issue of the sustainability development due to the behaviour problems regarding the environmental issues. In the current globalization arena, government of each countries facing challenges and keep on finding the better ways to manage environmental problems that occurred in Malaysia and enhance sustainable behaviour among societies. For that governments in each countries including Malaysia have been spent huge amount of money for the development and program that increase awareness and knowledge among them. At this vein, investigation on factors that sustainable behaviour is important. Previous studies show little evidence about the relationship between sustainable behaviour and spirituality. Thus, this study found that spirituality plays effective role in influencing sustainable behaviour among students. Therefore, this study is the conceptual paper that addressing the effect of spirituality and knowledge in influencing sustainable behaviour among students.

Keywords: Sustainable behaviour, spirituality, knowledge

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of environmental research started in the 1960s and mainly focused on pollution and energy conservation, which is a source of competitive advantage in business and politics over environmental issues (Straughan & Roberts, 1999). This evolution has expanded the issues within the domain of environmental responsibility. In fact, different approaches have been established to encourage environmental behaviour in the past of 30 years (Osman, 2012). The instability of the environment is currently obvious to level the most casual viewer. The global environment is shifting speedily and more intensely than ever predictable. Climate has become impulsive with The United Kingdom (UK) and The United State of America (USA) undergoing the coolest season in a hundred years during their last winter season in 1997, and this has far reaching effects on people across the world. Increased industrialisation, improper utilisation of resources and population growth have damagingly impacted on the ecosystem.

This has effected in a disturbed natural cycle of global resources and have destabilized environmental sustainability (Andries, Plessis, & Al-shamaa, 2012). Furthermore, the earlier periods have witnessed to the fast economic growth through increasing customers' consumption in global. This situation will be effect environmental decline through exploitation of natural resources and over-consumption. Thus, the effects of degradation in environmental are desertification, acid rain, noise and light pollution, pollution of sea and rivers, reduction of stratospheric ozone layer, and global warming (Chen, & Chai, 2010). Similarly in Malaysia, the quick development of Malaysia's economy has expanded the urban population rapidly. This has created more job opportunities, education and also increased the demand for a good quality of life. However, at the same time it also increases the risk of degradation of environmental quality based on human activities. As one of the developing countries progressing within Southeast Asia, Malaysia has stated in her vision 2020 to be a developed country and projected to be a fully industrialized country. It should be noted that industrialization is often associated with direct and indirect threats posed by air, noise and water pollution, water shortages and contamination, bad transport system and traffic jam, and waste management system. Therefore, as an industrialized and developed nation, it will face those environmental challenges (Cordano, Welcomer, Scherer, Pradenas, & Parada, 2010).

Nowadays, there are many environmental problems in Malaysia which are tremendous solid domestic waste, air pollution and water pollution. One of the most serious problems in the Malaysia is solid domestic waste, especially in urban areas. Solid waste was defined as the unused from products bought by the general public for domestic usage, for example sludge, garbage trash, and other rejected solid resources (Latif, Omar, Bidin, & Awang, 2013). For the Malaysian government, solid waste is previously a substantial problem faced by them. According to Ministry of Housing and Local Government (2008), every single day, there are 1.5 kg solid waste have been produced by each resident in the Klang Valley. For a better understanding, it can show that, at least 80% of the 230 accessible removal places will be occupied up within 2 years at this rate (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2008). Even though Malaysia has been grown up well in economic and industrial development, unfortunately the level of waste management in Malaysia is still left behind. Improved management system and effective solutions are not enough, but this serious matter needs to be settled from the root cause.

Furthermore, problems associated to air pollution in Malaysia also are getting very complex and ambiguous. Humans, regardless of their awareness, have imposed more difficulties by polluting the air through operating of motor vehicles, open burning, industrial activities and others. It is expected that the environment will experience more severe influences as this matter becomes more serious (Md Razak, Ahmad, Bujang, Talib, & Ibrahim, 2013). Besides, the other environmental problem in Malaysia is the water pollution and in directly, it was contributed a hostile effect on the sustainability of water resources, and there are not merely effect on that water resources, nevertheless also affected living organism and plants, the health of population, and the economy. The observation of the quality of river water was conducted by The Department of Environment (DOE) continuously to define the level of water quality of the river and to identify every fluctuations in water quality of the river. From the observation, the status of water quality showed that 52% of the river were found to be clean, 39% of the river water were slightly contaminated and 9% of remaining were fully contaminated (Afroz, & Rahman, 2017). These activities are increasingly causing more damage and are due to the human actions which cause irreversible harm on the environmental condition. It has been almost 40 years since the first Earth Day and the birth of the environmental movement, but despite widespread support for the environmental cause and increased awareness of the problems, human behaviour has hardly changed even with the information about the consequences of human actions, such as climate change, pollution, or diminishing natural resources (Sawitri, Hadiyanto, & Hadi, 2015).

In other words, the root causes of environmental problems are related to human activities and the irresponsible human behaviour (Said, Azura, & Fakhru'l-Razi, 2011). Based on the above environmental problems that we discussed, enhancement of the sustainable behaviour is very essentials to solve these environmental problems. Sustainable Behaviour (SB) is a great challenge for all mankind to guarantee a viable future and it can be defined as a series of actions intended at protecting both the physical and the social environment (Leeuw et al., 2014). Many of previous research have addressed only the aspects of pro-environmental behaviour (natural environment) (Asmuni, Mhd. Khalili, & Mohd. Zain, 2012; Kumar, 2012; Niaura, 2013; Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010), however very little research has been done on sustainable behaviour (natural and human environment) (Latif, Omar, Bidin, & Awang, 2013; Leeuw, Valois, & Seixas, 2014). Therefore, studies on sustainable behaviour need to be explored and extended. In this study, the evidence why choose sustainable behaviour because it deliberate (purposive) and effective (problem-solving). It also anticipatory (future oriented): consider of need of future generations with the satisfaction of present needs.

Due to current widespread ecological degradation and a lack of ethical considerations in a world where resources are unequally distributed, Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) worldwide are beginning to include sustainable behaviour concepts in their activities. Efforts in education for sustainable behaviour may be traced back several decades (Najera, 2010). Presently, teaching and research on ethical, social and environmental issues do not occur in business schools and universities (Cordano, Welcomer, Scherer, Pradenas, & Parada, 2010). Therefore, business students seem to hold a weak pro-environmental orientation. In addition, previous research has addressed sustainable behaviour of public and consumer (Kumar, 2012; Li-ming & Wai, 2013; Onwezen, Antonides, & Bartels, 2013), while more studies need to be focusing on university students. The emphasis on university students is relevant as they will grow and develop to become future leaders who are responsible for 'environmental stewardship and sustainability'.

Furthermore, the development of stance, obligation and ability to sustain and look after the environment starts at an early age (Aini et al., 2003). Therefore, future studies need to be extended of sustainable behaviour among university students (Alias, Hashim, Farzana, & Mariam, 2015; Syed Idros, 2014). Previous research has addressed several aspects of attitude influences sustainable behaviour (Abd-Ella, Soma, & Mohammed Ebad-Allah, 2012; Tan, Nasreen-Khan, Hong, & Lam, 2015), subjective norm (Alias et al., 2015; Han, 2015), perceived behaviour control (Busse & Menzel, 2014; de Leeuw, Valois, & Seixas, 2014) and knowledge (Haron, Paim, & Yahaya, 2006; Syed Idros, 2014). However, in addition, spirituality encompasses several unexplored dimensions that lately have attracted research attention in other disciplines (Brant, 2010; Csutora & Zsóka, 2012; Rai, Srivastava, & Shukla, 2014). Some of these unexplored spirituality appear to be important and worthy for investigation in the context of sustainable behaviour. An investigation of these issues is important because the spirituality can serve as the inspiration for students to critically examine their existing environmental attitudes, question their assumption and beliefs, and through reflection and discourse, transform their view of their place, responsibility, and importance in the natural world (Crowe, 2013). Furthermore, previous empirical research has focused primarily on knowledge and elements of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) namely attitude, subjective norm and perceived behaviour control. Very little research has been done on spirituality (Crowe, 2013; Csutora & Zsóka, 2012; Rai et al., 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Behaviour

Previous studies have implemented fragmented models of sustainable behaviour from simple to complex (Alias et al., 2015; Asmuni et al., 2012; Bratt, 1999; Crowe, 2013a; Derahim, Hashim, Ali, Abdul, & Aziz, 2012; Fielding, McDonald, & Louis, 2008; Kumar, 2012; Li-ming & Wai, 2013; Matthies, Selge, & Klöckner, 2012; Niaura, 2013; Onwezen et al., 2013; Pedro & Pedro, 2010; A. M. Said, Ahmadun, & Paim, Laily Hj. and Masud, 2003; Syed Idros, 2014; Zuraidah, Nor Hashima, Wan Yahya, & Mohamad, 2012). The studies were fragmented because of the size of predictors in addition to the absence of agreement on the direct and indirect predictors of sustainability models developed. Based on above review, it can be seen that the direct predictors of sustainable behaviour models are rather fragmented and diverse. Because of such fragmentation, it is envisaged that a conceptual sustainable behaviour model needs further empirical examination.

Knowledge

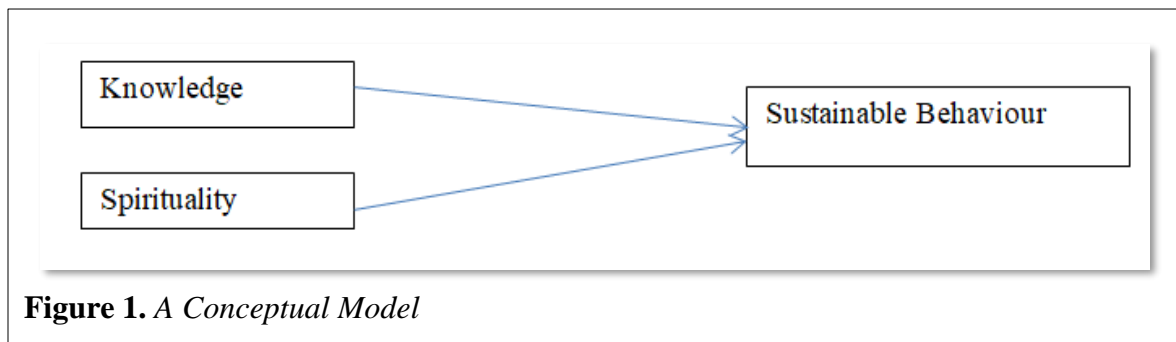
The knowledge in this study can be defined as one's ability to recognize environmental problems, the causes and consequences of such problems, including facts and concepts necessary for explanation (Haron et al., 2006). The term knowledge term encompasses the level of environmental awareness amongst the individuals, linkages between different aspects of environment and a sense of awareness to keep the environment intact for future generations (Kumar, 2012). A number of studies have empirically tested the effect of knowledge on sustainable behavior (Haron et al., 2006; Michalos, Creech, McDonald, & Kahlke, 2009; A. M. Said et al., 2003; Syed Idros, 2014). Firstly, the research conducted by Haron et al. (2006) in area

of sustainable consumption behavior to investigate the relationship between knowledge and actual behaviour. The result showed that there is significant and positive relationship between knowledge and sustainable consumption behaviour. Research by Aini Mat Said et al. (2003) found that knowledge was positively and significantly associated with sustainable development among Malaysian teachers. While, finding by Michalos et al. (2009) showed that the hierarchical regression of environmental knowledge was insignificantly associated with sustainable behaviour among students. Research by Syed Idros (2014) found that environmental knowledge have insignificant relationship between sustainable behaviour among university students.

Spirituality

The human spirit can be defined as an amalgam of energies, both mental and physical can recreate a sustainable world and reverse the path of development, which is destructive and vicious (Vaughan-Lee, 2013). Besides, Human's spiritual dimension is considered the distinctive feature from other living things. We are pleased by thinking that we are different because we respect spiritual laws, because we are conscious and have feeling to assess the world of unspeaking life, where the strongest is the best (Bran, Radulescu, & Ioan, 2013). Based on the previous studies, showed that the global environmental dilemma is a consequence of a spiritual and moral predicament resulting from a lack of connectedness to, or alienation from, 'the other than human' natural world, therefore it is necessary to build the connect between spiritual ecological consciousness and sustainable behaviour (Berry, 2009; Kinsley, 1995; Maathai, 2010; Rockefeller & Elder, 1992; Vaughan-Lee, 2013). A number of studies have empirically tested the effect of spirituality on actual sustainable behavior (Crowe, 2013a; Csutora & Zsóka, 2012; Mckenzie, 2005; Rai et al., 2014). The current research aims to study how spirituality affects student's intention to sustain environments as well as the actual behavior directly and through its effect on knowledge. The current research is targeting the Malaysian culture, which remains uncritically unexplored. Based on previous studies, finding by Rai, Srivastava, and Shukla (2014) showed that the hierarchical regression of spirituality was significantly and positively associated with sustainable behaviour among students. Research by Crowe (2013) showed that relationship between spirituality and environmental behaviour students among were significant. While, study by Csutora and Zsoka (2012) found that the spirituality was insignificantly associated with environmental behaviour among Hungarian adults.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data will be collected from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) via distributed questionnaires by hand and online (Google Docs). In this study, UUM were chosen based on the large sample of students at this university among others public universities in Malaysia. The stratified random sampling method was used in sample selection for this study. Survey questionnaires will be distributed to randomly selected students with different faculty, school or department. The unit of analysis for this study was the individual in which data will be collected from each student. A sample size of 110 students was chosen at random for this study. In this study, data will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 22 (SPSS 22.0) and the subsequent data analysis will be undertaken using statistical approach i.e. reliability analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides the significant evidence in the sustainability issues about the effective role of these determinants, namely spirituality and knowledge that have a great positive effect on sustainable behaviour among students of public universities in Malaysia. To summarize, from review of extant previous literatures, the studies proposes a direct relationships between spirituality and knowledge on sustainable behaviour among students in public universities in Malaysia. This indicates that increase of spirituality and knowledge will be increasing the sustainable behaviour among students.

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