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SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN PERAK AND KEDAH, MALAYSIA

SITI MARZIAH BT. ZAKARIA

FEM 2008 1

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN PERAK AND KEDAH, MALAYSIA

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MASTER OF SCIENCE
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SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN PERAK AND KEDAH, MALAYSIA

By

SITI MARZIAH BT. ZAKARIA

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

May 2008

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master Science

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN PERAK AND KEDAH, MALAYSIA

By

SITI MARZIAH BT. ZAKARIA

May 2008

Chairman: Sharifah Azizah Haron, PhD

Faculty: Human Ecology

Human are generally responsible for the destruction of environment in Malaysia and throughout the world through their production and consumption activities. The main objective of this study was to analyze sustainable consumption practices among civil servants. The study assessed the adoption of value towards environment, attitude towards sustainable consumption practices, materialistic value orientation, and sustainable consumption practices. The factors influencing civil servants' sustainable consumption practice and the existence of value-action gap in sustainable consumption practices were also examined. This study adopted multi-stage sampling method. The data of this study originated from Intensification of Research in Priority Areas (IRPA) project conducted in 2004. For the purpose of this study, 289 respondents from Kedah and Perak were selected.

The analysis of descriptive statistics and multiple regression were conducted to measure the variables (gender, age, educational level, job category, income level, value towards environment, attitude towards sustainable consumption practices, and materialistic value orientation) and determine the predictors of sustainable consumption practices. The study found that respondents reported high level of value towards environment and attitude towards sustainable consumption practices. The results of descriptive statistics for materialistic value orientation and sustainable consumption practices showed a moderate adoption. Importantly, the analysis on the intensity of adoption revealed that only half of the respondents reported applying sustainable consumption practices (47.8%).

The analysis of multiple regression showed that the beta value (B) for value towards the environment is 0.220, attitude towards sustainable consumption practices is 0.265, and materialistic value orientation is -0.203. All psychosocial variables (value towards environment, attitude towards sustainable consumption practices, and materialistic value orientation) have proved to influence sustainable consumption practices. However, none of the socio-demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, job category, and income level) is significant in predicting sustainable consumption practices.

Multiple regression analysis revealed that value towards the environment, attitude towards sustainable consumption practices, and materialistic value orientation explained 15% of the variability of sustainable consumption practices. The R

Square value (.15) illustrates a small relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Thus, this demonstrates that there is a value-action gap as the contribution of value and attitude is not strong enough to predict sustainable consumption practices. It also implies that the aspect of practice has to be strengthened.

Some strategies involving the aspect of facilities, laws, incentives, and taxes need to be planned. The barriers which might restrain people from applying sustainable consumption practices need to be removed. The campaigns should focus more on the process of consumption and how consumption leads to environmental deterioration. Thus, civil servants in Kedah and Perak have to be awakened that they are a part of something bigger and their consumption practice will make a substantial difference to the earth.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Sarjana Sains

AMALAN PENGGUNAAN LESTARI DI KALANGAN PEKERJA SEKTOR AWAM DI PERAK DAN KEDAH, MALAYSIA

Oleh

SITI MARZIAH ZAKARIA

May 2008

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Manusia secara umumnya bertanggungjawab terhadap kemusnahan alam sekitar melalui aktiviti pengeluaran dan penggunaan samada di Malaysia atau di seluruh dunia. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menganalisis amalan penggunaan lestari dalam kalangan pekerja sektor awam. Kajian ini mengukur nilai terhadap alam sekitar, sikap terhadap amalan penggunaan lestari, orientasi nilai materialistik, dan amalan penggunaan lestari di kalangan responden. Faktor yang mempengaruhi amalan penggunaan lestari di kalangan pekerja sektor awam dan samada wujud jurang antara nilai dan amalan juga dikaji. Kajian ini menggunapakai kaedah persampelan pelbagai peringkat. Data kajian adalah diambil daripada projek *Intensification of Research in Priority Areas* (IRPA) yang telah dijalankan pada tahun 2004. Untuk tujuan penyelidikan peringkat sarjana ini, 289 orang responden daripada Kedah dan Perak telah dipilih.

Analisis statistik deskriptif dan regresi berganda digunakan untuk mengukur pembolehubah dan menentukan peramal bagi amalan penggunaan lestari. Kajian mendapati responden melaporkan nilai terhadap alam sekitar dan sikap terhadap amalan penggunaan lestari pada tahap yang tinggi. Dapatan statistik deskriptif bagi orientasi nilai materialistik dan amalan penggunaan lestari menunjukkan bahawa responden mempunyai pengamalan pada tahap yang sederhana. Yang pentingnya, analisis ke atas kekuatan pengamalan mendedahkan bahawa hanya separuh daripada pekerja sektor awam di Perak dan Kedah mengamalkan penggunaan lestari (47.8%).

Analisis regresi berganda menunjukkan nilai beta (B) bagi nilai terhadap alam sekitar adalah 0.220, sikap terhadap amalan penggunaan lestari adalah 0.265, dan -0.203 dicatatkan bagi orientasi nilai materialistik. Semua varibel psiko-sosial (nilai terhadap alam sekitar, orientasi nilai materialistik, dan sikap terhadap amalan penggunaan lestari) terbukti mempengaruhi amalan penggunaan lestari. Walau bagaimanapun, tiada variabel sosio-demografi (jantina, umur, tahap pendidikan, kategori jawatan, dan tahap pendapatan) signifikan dalam meramalkan amalan penggunaan lestari.

Analisis regresi berganda mendedahkan bahawa nilai terhadap alam sekitar, sikap terhadap amalan penggunaan lestari, dan orientasi nilai materialistik menerangkan 15% daripada varians amalan penggunaan lestari. Nilai R-Square

(0.15) menggambarkan satu hubungan yang rendah antara variabel bebas dan variabel bersandar. Justeru, ini menunjukkan bahawa wujud satu jurang nilai-amalan kerana sumbangan nilai dan sikap adalah tidak begitu kuat untuk meramalkan amalan penggunaan lestari. Ia juga mengimplikasikan bahawa aspek amalan perlu diperkuatkan lagi.

Beberapa strategi melibatkan aspek kemudahan, undang-undang, insentif, dan cukai perlu dirancang. Kekangan-kekangan yang boleh menghalang seseorang daripada mengamalkan penggunaan lestari perlu disingkirkan. Kempen-kempen perlu lebih fokus kepada proses penggunaan dan bagaimana penggunaan boleh membawa kemerosotan alam sekitar. Oleh itu, pekerja sektor awam hendaklah disedarkan bahawa mereka adalah sebahagian daripada entiti yang lebih besar dan amalan penggunaan mereka mampu membuat perubahan besar kepada bumi.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on **5 May 2008** to conduct the final examination of **Siti Marziah Zakaria** on her Master thesis entitled **"Sustainable Consumption Practices among Civil Servants in Kedah and Perak"** in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the students be awarded the Master Science in Human Development.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

_____

SITI MARZIAH BT. ZAKARIA

Date: 1 June 2008

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

VE	:	Value towards the environment
MVO	:	Materialistic value orientation
ASCP	:	Attitude towards sustainable consumption practices
SCP	:	Sustainable consumption practices

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The survival of all living things, including man depends on the integrity of the complex biological process, which includes the earth's ecosystems. However, what man is currently doing on the earth violates this basic requirement of human existence. Human involvement in industrial and development activities, the usage of motor vehicles, power generation, open burning, and everyday routines (e.g. the usage of refrigerator, air-conditioner, chemicals used in gardens and houses, and toxic waste) suppress the environment. Realizing the worldwide phenomenon of environmental deterioration, on 18th November 1992 in Rio De Jeneiro, 1700 scientists voice up their worries about the future of earth, which are being manipulated and oppressed everyday (Md. Hamdan, 2003).

The Agenda 21, an action plan for sustainable development adopted at the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development in Rio De Jeneiro (UNCED) concluded that the environmental degradation is an outcome of the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, especially in industrialized countries (Stakeholder Forum, 2003). Sustainable development signifies "the development that ensures it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Susheila, 2006, p.8). This concept was originated in the Brundtland Report in 1987, which implies that

development, whether social or economic development, have to be carried out within the carrying capacity of the environment.

Thus, agenda 21 is a blueprint for action for global sustainable development into the 21st century. It consists of forty chapters in four sections. It is a detailed programme of action for all sectors. It touches the issues regarding the environment and integrates many initiatives as well as visions for sustainable development. It highlights the environmental problems facing by the world and prepares the world for the challenges of the next century (Susheila, 2006). Importantly, the successful implementation of Agenda 21 is the responsibility of all of society, including the governments. The governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, corporate sectors, general public, and others need to understand the concept of Agenda 21 and translate it into national and local policies as well as individual's practice (Susheila, 2006). The principles of sustainable development in Agenda 21 have to be effectively implemented and monitored.

However, despite of the action plan and policy, there is still a wide gap in knowledge, value, and practice in this issue. The Local Agenda 21 programme has brought slightly more awareness (Susheila, 2006). Yet, the true essence of Agenda 21 is frequently ignored. Mohamed Idris (2007, p.T3) insisted that Malaysian continue "to produce more waste instead of moving towards a zero-waste approach". There are not enough efforts done to reuse, recycle, and reduce

waste. Our unsustainable consumption pattern and lifestyles worsen the environment as the resources get scarcer and the earth has been degraded and becoming hotter (Mohamed Idris, 2007).

The 2006 Environmental Quality Report revealed the state of Malaysia environment and disclosed the causes behind the mess (Li, 2007). It was reported that vehicles and power plants were the major air polluters last year. People in Klang Valley breathed in unhealthy air quality 7% of the time and in moderate air quality 70% of the time in 2006. Besides, river was also reported as more polluted (Li, 2007). Last year, 7 river basins were deemed as polluted, 59 slightly polluted, and 80 were considered clean. Importantly, the major river pollutants are domestic sewage, runoffs from towns, waste from livestock farms, litter from riverside squatters, and so on (Li, 2007).

Therefore, human are generally responsible for such destruction of environment in Malaysia and throughout the world through their production and consumption activities (Luqman, 2004). Harwood group (1995, p.2) advocated, "most people have not thought deeply about the ecological implications of their own lifestyles, yet there is an intuitive sense that the propensity for 'more, more, more' is unsustainable". Thus, a reformation in the demand side is as important as that in the production side, so that a more sustainable way of living would be promoted.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Sustainable consumption has been repeatedly identified as a basis for attaining sustainable development in society (Stakeholder Forum, 2003). Sustainable consumption means more efficient, better informed and less resource intensive consumption. It implies a re-definition of relationship between people and the products they consume, as well as their habits and practices. The concept of sustainable consumption embraces ideas and practices such as pollution prevention, waste minimization, recycling, resource conservation, eco-efficiency, and preservation of biodiversity (Dowdeswell, 1995).

However, it is unfortunate that changes in the level of affluence and lifestyles have led to changes in the general pattern of consumption in Malaysia to be less sustainable (Chubashini, 2005). Specifically, the lifestyle of Malaysian consumers has been reported to becoming more materialistic and this weakens the practice of sustainable consumption (Luqman, 2004). Thus, the consumption pattern in Malaysia is becoming similar to that of the developed nation, which is wasteful. This is very unfortunate as over-consumption, one of the characteristics of materialistic lifestyle, leads to pollution, problems in waste management, and the decrement of natural resources (Chubashini, 2005).

It is reported that on average, each residents of Klang Valley produces 1.5 kg of garbage everyday (Consumers Newsletter, 2005). According to Hertwich (2003),

such phenomenon is strongly influenced by the goods and services available, and the habits of individuals. Similarly, Luqman (2004) insisted that environmental crisis nowadays is caused by the humanity crises, which include the failure of educational institution, social, value system, and religiosity. Therefore, they suggested that the solution for environmental crises is by the development of environmental values and attitude in human soul. Dowdeswell (1995) advocated that there must be a shift towards a new worldview, which requires an intensive change in values with regard to consumption. This is because values and beliefs influence the way one is behaving as they determine which mode of conduct is acceptable and ethical (Dubrin, 2001).

Besides, Dowdeswell (1995) reported that the biggest challenge to realize sustainable development is the modification of attitude of producers (in the production side) and consumers (in the consumption side). Both have to recognize the effect of increasing scarcity of resources and expanding population growth in future. A high degree of positive environmental attitude is predicted to create a more responsible consumer who practices sustainable consumption in his or her daily life.

As such, in the context of consumption, it is important to analyze individual's value towards the environment, attitude towards sustainable consumption practices, and materialistic value orientation and how they influence sustainable consumption practices so as to develop intervention program to steer individuals'

behavior to be in line with sustainable consumption concept. There may exist a gap between individual's value, attitude, orientation, and their practice. Perhaps, there are barriers which can constrain people to practice. Jackson (2007) noted that people's awareness of environmental issue has never been higher. Most of the people do care about the environment and want to do the right thing, but only a few will do something on it. He added that people's behavior in sustainable consumption is partly resulted from attitude, partly of habitual response, and partly from situational conditions and constraints (Jackson, 2007).

The most important group to be researched is civil servant as they are the expected person to support governmental policies and plan. People working at governmental offices have to execute governmental plan and they must be sensitive to the needs and problems of the country. Among the environmental principles which have been laid down in "*Dasar Alam Sekitar Negara*" are: preserving the ecosystem to ensure the maintenance of biological diversity, ensuring that the environmental quality as well as productivity is upgraded while aiming the economic growth, and integrating environmental dimensions into the planning and execution of mission and goals of all sectors (Zaini, 2007). Agenda 21 also highlights the role of major groups in advocating sustainable development. These major groups such as women, governmental agencies, local authorities, aborigines, trade unions, corporations, and non-governmental organizations can make core changes through domestic, business, policy, and social practices (*Majlis Perbandaran Petaling Jaya*, 2006).