

CHAPTER

2

UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is really important and needs to be taken seriously worldwide. According to Azhar et al. (2022), it's crucial to embrace sustainability in order to make sure that efforts to promote sustainability are a global priority for the benefit of future generations. This is especially important for Malaysia, which is an emerging economy. According to a recent article by Mumtaz et al. (2021), universities are taking on the role of preparing students for professional careers and placing them in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and other organizations to tackle present-day environmental challenges. In Malaysia, there have been studies conducted at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak by Michael et al. (2020) that explored the acceptance of students towards sustainability. The findings showed that students have limited knowledge about sustainable development. Similarly at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Ang (2021) conducted research on environmental literacy among students and found moderate acceptance levels.

Additionally, many students have not participated in the university's social programs that focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, university initiative approaches

such as curriculum, educational approaches, and campus practices was utilized with the purpose as the independent variable to measure in this study to regulate all the independent variables did influence the dependent variable as undergraduate students' acceptance of sustainability. There are four vital objectives embedded in this research: (1) To determine the relationship between curriculum and the undergraduate students' acceptance of sustainability; (2) To determine the relationship between educational approaches and the undergraduate students' acceptance of sustainability; (3) To determine the relationship between sustainable campus practices and the undergraduate students' acceptance of sustainability; and (4) To determine the relationship between the university approaches and the undergraduate students' acceptance of sustainability.

2.2 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' SUSTAINABILITY ACCEPTANCE

Based on Amaral et al. (2015), higher education institutions have a societal responsibility, particularly to the educational development of future leaders and the expansion of public acceptance of sustainability. Through their educational system, curriculum, syllabus, and practices, as well as their green university vision, universities had the capability to educate the future generations, especially university students, about environmental sustainability (Hamid et al., 2017). Additionally, formal education strengthened students' sustainability recognizing and had a lasting impact on their behaviors and level of awareness (Mojilis, 2019).

2.2.1 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development encompasses three interconnected elements: economic, environmental, and social (Allen, 2022; Arora, 2018). The economic pillar emphasizes the conservation of natural resources and the adoption of resource-efficient practices to promote innovation and economic prosperity (Ikerd, n.d.). The environmental pillar focuses on

preserving global ecosystems, mitigating climate change, and protecting biodiversity to ensure the well-being of current and future generations (Arora, 2018). The social pillar addresses social harmony, human rights, equity, and poverty eradication, promoting inclusive societies and community resilience (Allen, 2022). By integrating these pillars, sustainable development aims to create a balanced and thriving future, recognizing the interdependence of economic, environmental, and social aspects for a more equitable and sustainable world.

2.2.1.1 The Relationship between Curriculum and Undergraduate Students' Acceptance Toward Sustainability

The curriculum plays a critical role in shaping undergraduate students' acceptance of sustainability. Universities modify their curriculum to incorporate sustainability through various means, such as introducing new topics and courses, integrating sustainability into existing programs, and collaborating with industries for practical experiences (Menon & Suresh, 2020). These modifications ensure that sustainability is effectively integrated into the educational framework. Additionally, students' participation in exchange programs and exposure to different colleges contribute to their understanding of domestic and global environmental concerns (Mumtaz et al., 2021). Through extracurricular activities, students gain firsthand experience of sustainability, recognize its importance, and actively contribute to sustainable development beyond the boundaries of their educational institutions.

2.2.1.2 The Relationship between Educational Approaches and Undergraduate Students' Acceptance of Sustainability

Educational approaches are instrumental in forming undergraduate students' acceptance of sustainability. Universities recognize the significance of education for sustainable development (ESD) in