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ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

BY: NOR SYAMALIAH NGAH &
AZLINA MOHD HUSSAIN
(syamaliah@uitm.edu.my) &
(azlin072@uitm.edu.my)

INTRODUCTION

Environmental law is the area of law practice that covers a wide range of laws, rules, guidelines, and authorizations pertaining to environmental protection.

These consist of:

Laws governing pollution control: compliance guidance, granting, and enforcement

natural resource legislation: Environmental impact assessment, endangered species protection, and habitat preservation.

Environmental law services are frequently used by government agencies and departments to safeguard their interests. The same is true for companies, advocacy groups, and individual client legal firms. Environmental law is a developing field with a wide range of activity that includes concerns about the protection of natural resources, curbing pollution, and the quality of the air and water.



Governments all over the world have been stepping up environmental oversight and introducing environmental regulation policies to increase regulatory effectiveness in order to prevent environmental problems from getting worse and achieve sustainable development (Cai et al., 2016, Kraus et al., 2020). According to earlier studies, environmental control by the government is becoming more and more important to the growth of businesses. In particular, it can increase the amount of foreign capital available to businesses, encourage businesses to increase their energy efficiency, and motivate businesses to make green investments (Elliott and Zhou, 2013, Bi et al., 2014, Liao, 2018).

LEGISLATION - ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (EQA) OF 1974

The Environmental Quality Act (EQA) of 1974, which sought to prevent and manage pollution and set up a framework to punish individuals who carelessly destroy the environment, is the keystone of Malaysia's national environmental policy. Even so, some officials and detractors claim that the 46-year-old law has been significantly outclassed by Malaysia's economy and society's growing awareness of environmental issues. According to them, creating a new, more comprehensive code is essential to preventing more pollution problems.

The EQA was designed from the beginning to halt pollution issues. Its regulations defined pollution across a range of chemicals and environments and established licensing and environmental effect assessment methods. The majority of decisions about land use and enforcement against infringers are taken at the state level, but it continues to serve as the foundation of Malaysia's environmental law at the federal level.

More than 20 years after its passage, the EQA didn't really start to have any teeth against violators until 1996. Similar to other laws in the nation, the environmental law was developed through five-year development plans. The third of these "Malaysia Plans," covering the years 1976 to 1980, was the first to incorporate environmental concerns.



ISSUES

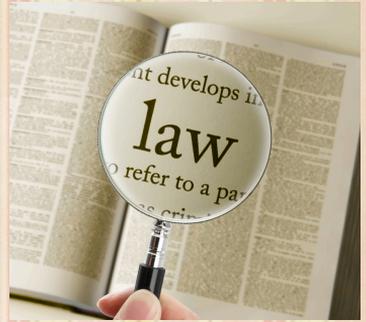
More than a million homes in Malaysia's heavily populated Klang Valley experienced prolonged water outages in September 2020 as a result of unlawful chemical dumping that rendered the area's ageing water filtration facilities inoperable. During the outbreak, locals lined up to fill buckets with water while donning masks.

Before the September 2020 incident's perpetrators could be found and charged a month later, a similar chemical spill again caused more than a million homes to experience days without water. A groundswell of citizens began to demand stronger enforcement against industrial polluters and policies that could stop water cuts from becoming the new normal as a result of what continued happening.

There are signs that the current government, inspired by the recent power transitions and the increasingly dynamic competition among political parties, is taking note and is making a concerted effort to reform the country's environmental policies. As pollution seeps more deeply into Malaysians' daily lives, this surge of incensed consumers is amplifying a call long made by civil society organisations that have demanded better environmental stewardship and heftier fines for violators.

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IN RELATION TO PRESERVING THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental degradation has been brought on by rapid urbanisation and the public's ambition to pursue a luxurious modern lifestyle. The environmental calamities that lower the standard of living include harmful waste generation, climate change, environmental degradation, and ecosystem collapse, to name a few. Numerous scholars from diverse scientific fields have long expressed these (Dominick et al., 2012; Asmuni, Khalili & Zain, 2012).



Fulfilling human greed through aggressive economic activity without sufficient consideration of environmental effects is the primary cause of these catastrophes. Given that anthropogenic activities are the primary contributors to environmental degradation, social and psychological aspects relating to the environment have an impact on quality of life both directly and indirectly.

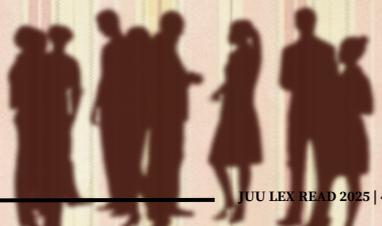
Understanding the context of environmental awareness is crucial to understanding the importance of researching Malaysians' environmental consciousness. Environmental awareness, according to Hassan, Noordin, and Sulaiman (2010), contains three concepts: emotional, attitude, and practice of sustainable awareness. The desire to carry out a sequence of ecologically friendly behaviours is stimulated by psychological and emotional influences.

Environmental awareness and commitments are less studied and reported, despite various environmental events and campaigns about anthropogenic pollution that have been implemented by government and non-government entities in an effort to change public environmental behaviour. Different levels of public concern and awareness about environmental issues affect the corresponding environmental conduct.

According to Altin et al.'s (2014) study, environmental awareness is defined as being aware of environmental problems and actively participating in environmental organisations. Despite this, environmental awareness serves as a catalyst for the development of favourable attitudes and appreciation for pro-environmental activity (Karatekin, 2014).

It should be emphasised that data on public environmental knowledge and behaviour can be a useful guide for policies aimed at improving the environment and, by extension, the quality of life. This article examines the performance level of environmental awareness and behaviour among Malaysians as a result of a nationwide survey. It discusses public environmental awareness and behaviour performance in terms of four (4) categories: water pollution, air pollution, waste management, and climate change.

BEHAVIOUR



Therefore, it is important to quantify environmental awareness in a setting that takes into account both the causes and negative effects of environmental challenges (Karatekin, 2014). The level of purposeful environmental conduct increases as an individual's cognitive sensitivity to environmental issues and cause-and-effect theories increases.

Lack of environmental awareness to the massive environmental issues, urbanisation, industrialization, deforestation, rising global temperature, and destruction of biodiversity obstruct policymakers' attempts to deal with the environmental stressors (Keles, 2012). Life quality suffers as a result, and things are getting out of hand (Keles, 2012). From the perspectives of economic, ecological, social, and human factors, life quality can have several facets (Marans, 2012; Keles, 2012).

Ultimately, the idea of quality of life has always been connected to environmental concerns; as a result, policymakers give it their full attention when planning and managing our living environment (Marans, 2012). Assessing Malaysians' environmental awareness is crucial to the effectiveness of policy planning since policymakers are worried about the lowered quality of life.

Without the assistance of public environmental awareness consideration, the design of policy may result in the environmental protection programme not producing the desired results. Environmental behaviour is a requirement for preventing environmental catastrophes (Klößner, 2013), with a focus on the main factor that shapes people's attitudes towards environmentalism.

Given that behavioural patterns can greatly affect the environmental quality and the efficacy of environmental initiatives, environmental behaviour and the relevant factors that influence environmental behaviour should be assessed (Singhirunnusorn et al., 2012). Given that environmental challenges are a worldwide problem, understanding or anticipating environmental behaviour might assist reduce environmental risks in social and political situations (Harth, Leach, & Kessler, 2013). In other words, policymakers can identify their efforts to enhance public environmental conduct by evaluating changes in attitude and behaviour among the general public (Owens & Driffill, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This endeavour to be informed is crucial when it comes to the formulation of environmental laws and regulations. Instead of the other way around, a change in attitude may make a change in behaviour more likely. As a result, for an environmental policy to be effective, the government must comprehend why and how the public engages in environmentally friendly activity.

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