



# Exploring Reaction of Local Authorities on Green Environment Practice Towards Cleanliness City in Malaysia

Muhamad Saufi Che Rusuli<sup>1,\*</sup>, Noraani Mustapha<sup>1</sup>, Anis Amira Ab. Rahman<sup>1</sup>,  
Norshahila Ibrahim<sup>2</sup>, Jati Kasuma<sup>3</sup> and Mohd Baharudin Ridzuan<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Entrepreneurship & Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan Kampus Kota, 16100, Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Art, Computing and Creative Industry, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900, Tanjung Malim, Perak

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Sarawak Branch, Jalan Meranek, 94300, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak

<sup>4</sup> Faculty of Civil Engineering and Built Environmental, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400, Parit Raja, Johor

\*msaufi@umk.edu.my

**Abstract.** Today, green initiatives are becoming a movement to conserve Preserving natural resources for future generations and fostering human well-being through environmental conservation and the adoption of green lifestyles. The primary objective of this study is to explore how local authorities in Malaysia respond to green environmental initiatives aimed at achieving cleaner cities and how they define the concept of a clean city. This inquiry, using several selected cities in Malaysia as location of the study, embarks on a qualitative research approach involving a semi-structured interview with top personnel from four local authorities. Therefore, the results indicated that most of the local authorities are recognized and adhered to local government laws and regulations in creating a green environment. Ultimately, these local authorities hoped that community could give full support and commitment to disseminate the essential of green environment awareness towards cleanliness city.

**Keywords:** Green, Environment, Covid19, Clean City, Malaysia.

## 1 Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic has wrought havoc upon our world. Coupled with pressing environmental concerns like water and air pollution, as well as the specter of climate change, it becomes imperative for individuals to actively engage in efforts to ameliorate the damage inflicted upon our planet. Some may believe their individual actions are too insignificant to make a substantial impact, yet it is through collective, concerted efforts that we witness the transformative power of positive change.

Emerging from the crucible of this ongoing pandemic, people have grown acutely aware of the urgent need to preserve and protect our environment. Initiatives aimed at ensuring the cleanliness and safety of our surroundings have gained newfound prominence. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, abstaining from single-use items, fostering the growth of trees and native flora, altering travel habits, supporting local businesses, and adopting responsible composting practices. Furthermore, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to conserving water, reducing chemical usage, and disposing of waste in an environmentally responsible manner. These practices collectively bolster the overarching campaign to safeguard our environment. Based on previous researches, there exist essentially ten highly practical methods for contributing to environmental cleanliness. These encompass reducing the utilization of electrical appliances, minimizing car usage to alleviate parking issues, curtailing the use of wood stoves, preserving a healthy ecosystem, diminishing chemical and pesticide application, recycling waste materials, mitigating carbon footprints and combating air pollution, promoting local food cultivation, adopting practices that reduce contaminants, and avoiding pollution. It is crucial to recognize that the environment should be approached holistically, rather than confined to specific locations or regions. An environment has created to be part of the planet and it becomes the responsibility of every person or the community at large to keep the environment clean with pleasurable condition.

In contemporary times, environmental concerns have taken center stage in global discussions, prompting a clarion call for heightened awareness among societies worldwide. The primary focus of promoting "go green" awareness is to instill eco-friendly behaviors within society, thereby ensuring the cleanliness and health of our environment by safeguarding it against pollution and diseases [1]. Pollution originates from various sources, significantly affecting our planet in profound ways. It encompasses a wide range of types, including air, water, soil, noise, radioactivity, thermal emissions, light pollution, and visual disturbance. Each type exerts distinct influences on our lives, leading to unique consequences and repercussions. Air pollution from open burning for instance causes severe haze with high air pollution index (API) and to some extent will stop planes from flying beside impacted human through various respiratory problems. Furthermore, when such conditions persist over an extended duration, they can potentially result in life-threatening diseases. Prolonged exposure to polluted air, for instance, can lead to a significant decline in lung capacity, diminished lung function, and ultimately, a shortened lifespan. Conversely, water pollution has the potential to trigger a range of ailments, including but not limited to diarrhea, malaria, hepatitis A, and lead poisoning. It is evident that various forms of pollution are linked to distinct types of diseases, emphasizing the diverse health risks associated with environmental degradation. No matter how many campaigns and programs has been designed and launched, if member of communities does not practice and implementing a go green lifestyle, it will be left ineffective and far from sustained. At its core, there are some profoundly basic actions individuals can take. For instance, cultivating habits such as disposing of trash in designated bins and ensuring it reaches appropriate collection points, opting for recyclable materials, minimizing the use of plastic bags, ceasing open burning, refraining promoting environmental conservation involves discouraging indiscriminate tree

cutting and actively participating in events such as Earth Hour, Earth Day, World Environment Day, and similar initiatives and programs.

The phenomenon of the greenhouse effect and subsequent environmental issues stem from human activities. Presently, a growing number of individuals are cognizant of their role in preserving a green environment [2]. According to previous researcher [3] the restorative natural environment maybe distracted by social interaction with the natural environment itself. Hence, it is imperative to undertake diverse initiatives aimed at preserving and restoring our natural environment. Nowadays many parties have shown their interest and preference on green concepts. A significant portion of consumers is shifting their focus towards becoming environmentally conscious, demonstrating a willingness to invest in and pay premium prices for green products as viable alternatives [4].

Green consumers are individuals who demonstrate a heightened awareness and concern for environmental issues [5]. While individuals may not consistently integrate green practices into their daily routines, it is crucial for them to recognize the significance of incorporating eco-friendly products into their lives. Neglecting rebound effects in the assessment of 'green' consumption can lead to overestimation of environmental benefits. For instance, overlooking these effects results in an overstatement of approximately 20% for reduced vehicle use and 7% for reduced electricity consumption [6]. Business industries have taken many efforts in producing products in green standards. In a very simple way, the term "green" brings the meaning of taking initiative to keep the environment clean [7] and store it free from any pollution by reusing certain item, recycling or purchasing green product [8].

Go Green consumption can have different meanings for different people and different purposes [9]. In this study, "Go Green" is delineated as an initiative aimed at safeguarding natural resources for future generations and safeguarding human health through meticulous environmental management and the adoption of eco-friendly lifestyles. It becomes parts of higher education role to educate our generation to ensure a sustainability of green environment beside promoting social and economic growth [10]. Not to be bias to any party, in reality, the adoption rate of the green living culture is progressing at a sluggish pace. It appears that either the norm is perceived as less significant, or it is regarded as just another optional task added to the daily routine, causing some individuals to overlook their environmental responsibilities. Let's open our eyes to various activities like campaign, talk, program in our daily lives; and we can simply ask, how many of us feel attracted to those campaigns and activities? Previous studies emphasized that all the information and awareness (e.g., pamphlet and bulletin) that contain best practices of green need to be communicated to the society [11]. Social media also plays a crucial role in connecting and spreading the information to society. How about women which have strongly different in terms of having environmentally friendly behavior rather than men? [12-14]. Therefore, green environmental issues still remain under study and needs to be further explored [15-17].

Accordingly, those efforts still inadequate and did not give significant impact on contemporary society [2,9]. In this study, the researchers aim to comprehend the responses of local authorities to green environmental practices, particularly concerning the concept of a clean city.

## 2 Literature Review

Educational programs may become an important platform in ensuring go green implementation and campaign successful [18]. Normally the educational settings such as school, college and university play their role to educate students to be particular with the green issues. They take initiatives to carry out the campaign regarding the go green issues. Higher education institutions have a crucial role to fulfill in shaping the future generations. Their responsibility goes beyond promoting social and economic development; they must also guarantee the successful and enduring implementation of the Go Green campaign [19]. As such, universities around the world have to modify their educational landscape to address the growing social and environmental problems [15]. A prevailing issue within universities is the lack of awareness and understanding regarding environmental sustainability, particularly among university leaders and academicians. Consequently, numerous activities associated with green campaigns on campuses have proven to be unsustainable [11,19].

In order to support the initiative of going green, the communities must aware what they do in their daily routine. Numerous researches have been done regarding to public awareness [20-22]. There are benefits not only to the people but also to the planet if communities take initiative with concerting effort that can give positive effect in many ways. For example, reducing waste. The availability of landfill space is restricted, and the act of recycling plastic water bottles contributes significantly to conserving this limited space, which can then be utilized for other forms of waste disposal. The recycling process conservatively requires up to 65 percent less energy than conventional manufacturing methods, significantly reducing the reliance on energy generated through the combustion of fossil fuels. The plastic manufacturing process emits greenhouse gases, notably carbon dioxide, which significantly contribute to global warming. Recycling plastic bottles, on the other hand, demands less energy and reduces reliance on fossil fuels. Consequently, this approach leads to diminished greenhouse gas emissions, making a substantial contribution to environmental sustainability.

Sustainability is a process of conserving a balanced environment [23]. This process is done through an exploitation of resources [24]. Environmental sustainability revolves around the inquiry of whether environmental resources will be safeguarded and sustained for the well-being of future generations. This concept encompasses the restriction of non-renewable resource consumption, safeguarding the health of ecosystems to prevent irreparable damage, minimizing pollution, making economic decisions with a focus on long-term consequences, and prioritizing measures of economic and social welfare over GDP [25]. Healthy ecosystems and environments are fundamental to the survival of the planet and life beings. Environmental sustainability is a challenge that entails international and national law and procedures, urban planning and transport, industrial growth, individual patterns of lifestyle, ethics, etc.

Further, through green environment practices, it could help individual and society to prolong their life span. Unplanned natural resource management practices, such as uncontrolled logging, extensive land exploration, and the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, along with improper solid waste disposal and related activities, can lead to pollution and environmental damage. If this natural resource management is not

well managed, it also affects the quality of human life and the environment. As reported in Malaysia, this green technology agenda has been placed under the portfolio of the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA), which was established on April 9, 2009 [26]. Therefore, the action and readiness of green city initiatives need to be intensified as an effort to support the sustainable development agenda, as part of initiative to overcome the problem of deteriorating environmental quality in the country.

### 3 Methods

This study, in which qualitative in nature was directed by its objective to identify the reaction of informants about green environment practice towards cleanliness city. This study employs an interpretive paradigm to extract meaning from the field for the construction of reality. From an ontological perspective, this study revolves around the premise that awareness, beliefs, perceptions, interpretations, experiences, and interactions play a paramount role in shaping individuals' understanding and response [27]. This is predicated on the epistemological belief that interactive discourse among people forms a meaningful basis for data collection. Accordingly, purposive sampling is employed to select informants. The study focuses on gathering comprehensive insights from high-ranking officials in local authorities who are deeply engaged in the concept of green environment.

In this regard, four individuals from four distinct local authorities were chosen for interviews. All informants hold pivotal roles related to green management, including a) Yang Dipertua Perbandaran, b) Plan Development and Landscape Department, and c) Corporate and Communication Department. These selections were made with reference to four cities that have declared their commitment to becoming cleaner and more environmentally friendly cities: a) City of Muar Johor, b) City of Melaka, c) City of Kuala Terengganu, and d) City of Ipoh Perak. For the sake of confidentiality, only their initials are disclosed in this report.

Data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews. An interview protocol was meticulously crafted to facilitate the data collection process, designed specifically to capture nuanced insights related to the reactions of local authorities regarding green environmental practices in the endeavor for cleaner cities. In adherence to qualitative research ethics and to establish a rapport with the informants, the researcher sent each participant an interview confirmation letter. This letter conveyed sincere gratitude for their willingness to engage in the study, ensuring a respectful and transparent approach throughout the research process. The interviews, conducted in both Malay and English languages, took place at the informants' offices and lasted approximately two hours each. Before the interviews commenced, formal permissions were acquired from the informants to record the conversations. This step not only expedited the interview process but also ensured the precision and fidelity of their statements. Following the interviews, meticulous manual transcription was undertaken, a crucial step undertaken to facilitate comprehensive and effective data analysis in this study. The transcripts omitted any personal details about the informants, with their names replaced by

identification codes in all written materials and electronic data files connected to the research [28].

The gathered data has been systematically categorized based on emerging themes, following the initial coding process grounded in thematic conceptual coding. These conceptual codes are intricately linked to the responses of local authorities regarding environmentally friendly practices. Subsequent second-cycle coding has highlighted the key themes that underscore the research findings.

## 4 Results and Discussion

In terms of responses, the findings clearly demonstrate that certain local authorities exhibited a positive reaction in support of green environment initiatives and the cleanliness of their respective cities. Five themes have been produced such as below:

### 4.1 Awareness: Daily Routine

There has been some improvement by local authorities in understanding green environmental practices on urban sanitation. Although the changes take time to adjust, some reactions may be negative and slowly accepting the initiative by city governments as well as local governments. Therefore, support from the community such as comments and advice is expressed as follows:

*“... In fact, we received letters from community requesting more trash can for their house. I believed this some of the impact and changes among of the society”*  
(MRH)

*Before...I saw most of them just throw their rubbish improperly, I mean just outside the trash can. but now seems like most of them really place the rubbish inside trash can...*  
(MRH)

As highlighted, to deal with the environmental damage and changes, the cultural approach was expected to make the local authorities aware to have a clean and healthy lifestyle, to maintain and preserve nature and the environment more seriously based on individual and collective awareness [29]. Through this approach, they will easily accept the values and appeals from the message to care about environmental preservation. According to previous researchers, the definition of “sense of cleanliness” as what the local authorities and community perceive, feel and experience on their surroundings with respect to waste and the impacts on cleanliness is suitable until today [30]. Furthermore, this sustainable program is expected to increase the citizen's awareness of the clean and comfortable environment [31].

## 4.2 Enforcement: Local Government Effort

Based on the interview, respondent which is local authorities' awareness alone does not provide good respond, thus enforcement with fine sometimes really help society in following the rules. Although they do not really implement, but with some warning and advice really contribute to the changes of the society attitude. Some of the comments supporting this were stated as follows:

*'... actually, we City council collaborate with MPKK (Village Representative Council) in monitoring community not to simply throwing rubbish improperly. We do enforcement to fine RM50.00 if being caught. But so far, we tolerate by giving community a warning and advice...but as for now the community still follow the rules'*

(MH)

*"...if we continue to catch those are not following the rules, we normally will advise them and not really fine them as what we have stated in our enforcement... Alhamdulillah they really follow the rules and cooperate to us...unless the foreigner"*

(MRH)

*"... Community aware on this matter but they just ignore... but seems like 42% of them recycle the plastic waste, 38% not insulate the plastic waste and other waste, and finally 20% they just burn the plastic waste or just throw it away out from their house area."*

(MRS)

Comparing statements from the interviewees, it becomes apparent that there was significant consensus supporting the enforcement efforts aimed at maintaining Singapore's cleanliness. The enforcement aspect is far-reaching [32]. Based on the interview conducted, the issues on cleanliness and advertisement board are now under control. In fact, the Prohibition against Spitting (Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur) By-Laws 2017 was passed on 15 March 2017 to give power to the local authority to penalize anyone who spits in the area [33].

## 4.3 Supporting: Local Authority Effort

Effort from local authority seem like have a good respond from the public although they will take quite sometimes to follow. Probably awareness campaign from electronic and printed media does giving them good impact since society need to cooperate in taking care of green environment practice towards the cleanliness city.

*'... There is reducing case burning trash can among the community compared to 2015 due to increasing of population and job opportunity. It shows that, community are aware on cleanliness issues of dumping waste disposal.'*

(MRH)

*“... Based on survey done by IPSOS between 2018-2019 shown that 64% of Malaysian aware of government effort on plastic straw ban and 54% concern of plastic waste. Meaning to say that majority of Malaysian are aware on plastic waste issues...although they are hoping government will handle and settle this problem.”*

(MRS)

This study has provided new insights on how e-government can be implemented by the local government after adopting a smart city policy in the context of public participation [34]. In order to obtain a satisfactory result in reducing the use of waste, an increase in the consumers' awareness is important through education [35]. Furthermore, the scarcity and inconsistency in reinforcing the existing regulations might be a significant factor contributing to the limited engagement in recycling and waste separation practices among households [36].

#### **4.4 Active Involvement: Implementing the Program Effectively**

Local Authorities that regulate a large number of communities in residential areas have direct links with local communities and NGOs that annually organize green program activities. The green community is one of the programs that aims to channel information directly to local authorities. The Green Community Initiative organized by the local authority also aims to inform and educate the community on the value of environmental and sustainable green practices towards clean cities. Through this initiative, it is hoped that the participating groups will recognize the ideas and values of sustainability in the future, i.e., human, environmental and economic, will have a positive impact on clean cities. Some comments from respondents in support of this statement are as follows.

*“... Good support from local authority such as through program as village programs and housing garden. In fact, city council like Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya and Damansara also involved through their CSR program, one of them is encourage of using electric car to proof that is an effort to support awareness program....”*

(MRS)

*“... We collaborate with Majlis Perwakilan Kampung (MPKK) within their community. With this joint venture program is actually helping us in monitoring the area for any possible vandalism or not following the rules by throwing their rubbish in not systematic...”*

(MRH)

*“... there are some cases people burning their trash can kinda protest on the effort of municipal council encouraging people to place their rubbish inside rubbish bin., that was 2015... but a few years later seems like there no cases anymore reporting on people burning rubbish bin...I can assure that people start realizing the importance of our effort towards this...”*

(MRH)



Enhancing a nation's waste management system requires concerted efforts from local authorities, focusing on fostering community understanding and encouraging active participation in waste separation and recycling initiatives [36]. Moreover, according to the Local Government Act of 1976, the Local Authorities bear the responsibility for enforcing the provisions outlined in the Act. Simultaneously, State Governments are entrusted with the task of promoting the principles of 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) through the facilities extended to the community [36]. In our quantitative analysis of the Clean Cities program, we assessed its effectiveness by concentrating on key performance indicators including air quality, the proliferation of alternative fueling stations, private vehicle occupancy rates, and transit ridership statistics. Our findings indicate a substantial correlation: counties actively engaged in the program consistently outperform those that did not participate across all these metrics [37].

## 5 Conclusion

Malaysians is producing approximately 30 000 tons of waste per day and just 5% is recycled. The volume of waste generated by Malaysians is growing rapidly with the average in 2012 was 22 000 tons per day and the system cannot manage this. Deposits are overflowing and often waste is deposited onto rivers or hillsides. The government, in partnership with local authorities, has responded through numerous programs and projects aimed at promoting environmental values. However, these efforts have largely been overshadowed by the rapid pace and lifestyle culture in Malaysia. Despite the existence of various activities, campaigns, rules, and regulations, it is recommended that educational programs be used as a platform to raise awareness among the populace, particularly the younger generation. Educational providers are called to add, to create and to enhance curriculum related to go green lifestyle, to be delivered in the form of syllabus contents, activities as well as its course assessments to give early awareness to the young generation. The study within its limitation was utilizing a qualitative method of data gathering through face- to-face interview against four top personnel of selected four cities in Malaysia. The findings highlight that public awareness activities have become a regular part of local authorities' daily operations, further bolstered by robust enforcement measures. These initiatives have garnered renewed support from the community, with local authorities taking an active role in implementing a diverse range of awareness programs. Additionally, they have extended their efforts to collaborate in joint campaigns with other cities. The insights gleaned from this study can serve as a valuable reference point for the development of an enhanced framework geared toward achieving cleaner and greener cities.

In terms of theoretical contributions, the study's findings provide valuable data that can serve as the foundation for the development of a novel framework and model for achieving cleaner cities in Malaysia. In practical terms, these findings can serve as a reference point for shaping new policies and launching initiatives pertaining to environmental sustainability and green practices. It is advisable that future researchers delve

into potential instances of community resistance when it comes to adopting green environment measures and striving for cleaner cities. Comprehending the fundamental causes of such resistance is paramount, particularly when examining cities that were not included in the current study, as certain communities may exhibit reluctance to participate in initiatives initiated by local authorities.

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