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Analyzing the Thoughts of Ecological Footprints of University Students: A Preliminary Research on Turkish Students

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Abstract

Investigating the carbon, food, goods and services usage and consumption levels of people to realize probable damage of consumption habits is essential to decrease ecological destruction and at the same increase consciousness of people in our planet. This paper's aim is to present the results of questionnaire of ecologic footprint that was applied to 420 Turkish students, in the southern part of the country. As a data collection tool "Ecological Footprint Quiz", placed on www.myfootprint.org site, was used. The questionnaire had four main parts. First three parts include statements about the carbon, food, goods and services footprint. Housing footprint statements has ignored in this study, because university students generally live in dormitories or rented houses, not in their own houses. The last part of the questionnaire, participants responded to demographic questions. Descriptive statistics was conducted to analyze the data.

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1. Introduction

Since 1980s, ecologic problems are occurred in our planet due to rapidly increasing population, industrialization, urbanization, and technological developments (Borucke, Moore, Gemma, Gracey, Iha & Joy, 2011). In near future it is seen that earth is not able to meet human's needs in a sufficient way as today's. Growing population fast leads to waste resources more and bring pollution to our environment. Depending on our living arrangements, it can be easier and challenging to account for our consumption of commodities like water, natural gas and electricity. Measuring

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consumption patterns of your water, electricity and gas are the first valuable tips to reduce wasting resources. Sustainability is directly related to using effectiveness of natural resources and its factors. Last decade conscious people began to recognize of world's limited resources and their importance for our tomorrows. Economic prosperity and societal well-being depend on the planets capacity to provide resources & ecosystem services and while most policy decisions are taken on an assumption of limitless resources and ecosystem services, the planet has boundaries and sustainable development cannot be secured without operating within them (Akıllı, Kemahlı, Okudan & Polat, 2008). The ecological footprint gives an estimation of the biologically productive land that is necessary to sustain current natural values (Borucke, Moore, Gemma, Gracey, Iha & Joy, 2011). Demand for natural resources in Turkey is increasing along with the rise in population and wealth. This study is prepared to analyze the ecological footprint quiz choices of university students living in Adana, Turkey. There are some studies measuring Turkish people's ecological footprints, but any research analyzing choices of university students in relation to ecological footprint quiz is not found. By conducting this research, detailed information will be obtained about carbon, food, goods and services usage and consumption amount of students. In order to increase the consciousness of Turkish people about ecological balance it is needed to spread these kinds of papers. Students were selected as a sample of Y generation due to understand the manners of them. Y generation members are called the next generation of spenders. Therefore it is important to investigate carbon, food, goods and services usage and consumption of students to realize probable damage of consumption habits.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Sustainability and Ecological Footprint

Sustainable development is accepted as one of the key factor for global economy in the future. One of the key aspects of sustainable development is that it makes us consider the problems of intergenerational and intragenerational equity. As currently reported the ecological footprint merely shows that current human development is unsustainable- we only have one earth (Moffatt, 2000; Ward & Dubos, 1972). The main goal of sustainable development economy is to improve well-being and to lower the exploitation of global resources at the same time (Latszek, 2013). Sustainable consumption is the consumption behavior of private households aimed at contributing to the sustainable development of society. The agenda 21 which was adopted at the Rio conference in 1992 introduced the term "sustainable consumption" into scientific and environmental political discussion. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specifically focused on environment and sustainable consumption, and to some degree, other more general Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like consumer organizations, have traditionally played an important role in developing and implementing initiatives to promote more sustainable

The concept of ecological footprint was created by Mathis Wackernagel and his professor William Rees within their PhD thesis (www.wikipedia.org, 22.07.2014). Then they developed the tools to measure and worked on the relationship of sustainability concept over the countries by this way. According to the report of World commission on environment and development By United Nations in 1987 discussions were structured about the destructive social and ecological impacts of humanity's current approach to development that became prominent on political agendas. The starting statement was directly related to challenges for human's future. The commission declared these sentences: "we all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country, strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impact on others. Some consume the earth's resources at a rate that would leave little for future generations. Others many more in number, consume far too little and live with the prospects of hunger, squalor, disease, and early death" (Wackernagel, 1994). An ecological footprint is the area, for examples hectares, of productive land and water required for a given population to maintain their consumption and absorb the ensuing waste over the course of one year (Venetoulis, 2001). The concept of ecological footprint (EF) is well known amongst ecological economists and it represents the human impact on the Earth in a clear manner and the ecological footprint compares renewable natural resource consumption with nature's biologically productive capacity (Moffatt, 2000). Similarly EF measures the extent to which humanity is using nature's resources faster than they can regenerate and it is usually presented together with biocapacity (BC) that measures the bioproductive

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