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The Influence of Reward and Penalty on Households' Recycling Intention

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to investigate the influences of economic instruments on households' recycling intention in order to help Malaysian government to apply a proper intervention in advancing and enforcing recycling regulations. The Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) was used in this research to investigate the effects of intervention factors on households' recycling intention. 384 participants were selected and questionnaires were utilized to collect data relating to the influences of reward and penalty on households' recycling intention in Kuala Lumpur. The results showed that both reward and penalty has significant relationship with households' recycling intention (reward $\beta = 0.355$, $p < 0.001$; penalty $\beta = 0.214$, $p < 0.001$) while reward significantly influence attitude ($\beta = 0.414$, $p < 0.001$) and penalty influence perceived behavioural control ($\beta = -0.340$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, the result showed perceived behavioural control as the weakest factor influencing households' recycling intention ($\beta = 0.160$, $p < 0.05$). The results of this study indicate that penalty is a proper intervention to increase households' recycling intention in Kuala Lumpur.

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1. Introduction

Federal governments and local authorities are continuously trying to design and examine proper policies to overcome waste issue around the world. In Malaysia, the government began to organize waste management

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by working on national waste management plans. For an example, the action plan for beautiful and clean Malaysia was introduced in 1988. Similar initiatives were further included in the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005). Among these were programs like 'waste minimization', 'promotion of reuse', 'developing a recycling-oriented society, and 'implementation of pilot projects for recycling'. The Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) also emphasized the continuation of reduce, reuse, recovery and recycling of waste. Likewise, National Strategic Plan on Solid Waste Management (2005) and National Solid Waste Management Policy (2006) emphasized on 3R to achieve sustainable waste management in Malaysia. Furthermore, Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Act (SWPCMA) and Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Corporation Act (SWPCMCA) were enacted in 2007 to pursue the same goals. In September 2011, the government transferred authority on waste management from local authorities to Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Department (SWPCMD) and Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Corporation (SWPCMC). Despite all policies, plans, acts, and programs taken by the Malaysian government, the recycling rate in Kuala Lumpur is still far from the national targets. Since success of 3R activities and specially recycling programs largely depends on the community participation, therefore, investigating recycling from socio-psychological aspect can contribute to design and effective enforcement on recycling programs in Kuala Lumpur. The objective of this research is to investigate the influences of penalty and reward on households' attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and intention toward recycling (separating at source). The findings will be beneficial for governments and policy makers in identifying and implementing appropriate economic intervention to change households' recycling intention.

2. Recycling Studies and Theories

Understanding 'recycling' and factors leading to a sustainable recycling strategy requires understanding of the concept and research in the subject matter from various aspects. The aspects on recycling includes socio-psychological, technological, policy and legislation, and economic. Meanwhile, socio-psychological studies can either show the process of existing, forming, or changing individuals' behavior toward 3R, and also factors affecting these processes. Recycling is the key of municipal solid waste management (MSWM). Hong and Narayanan (2006) define recycling as an attempt to decrease waste volume. These authors believed that compared with other recycling methods, separation at source is the cheaper recycling method but it needs more public participation [1]. Recycling at source or source separation is basically more dependent on households than government, while the role of government and mechanical machines are more important in material recovery facilities. Furthermore, achieving the goal of recycling program largely depends on society participation in separating recyclable material. Therefore, it is crucial to find the fundamental factors affecting households' recycling intention and behaviour. In this line, several socio-psychological studies have been conducted to investigate recycling behavior and factors affecting recycling participation. Two of the most famous and efficient psychological theories which mostly used for conducting this kind of studies are Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [2][3]. The theory of reasoned action was introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). In the TRA conceptual framework, beliefs are the fundamental and constructional block [4]. Based on TRA, if a person evaluate a behaviour positively (attitude), and believe that people who are important to him/her want him/her to carry out the behaviour (subjective norm), the person will be motivated to perform the behaviour (intention) and consequently they are more likely to carry out the behaviour. Over the years, some studies which had used TRA showed that behavioral intention does not always leads to actual behaviour (regarding to context limitations). Ajzen developed the extension of TRA and proposed new theory named theory of planned behavior (TPB). According to Ajzen (1991), the TPB combines some of the central concepts in the social and behavior sciences. It defines these concepts in a way by which prediction and understanding of particular behaviors in specified circumstance will be possible [2].

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