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## Environmental Concern and Recycling Behaviour

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### Abstract

This study was carried out to determine recycling behaviour among 143 householders in Selangor. Data were analysed using the Structural Equation Modelling technique. Analysis shows that environmental concern is important towards attitude, and attitude helps to enhance the environmental concern to improve recycling behaviour. This study may help the understanding among householders of their attitude towards recycling. The findings will help the authority to address the issue.

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### 1. Introduction

Environment protection has become an important issue for many years not only locally or nationally, but also internationally. Meanwhile, solid waste is one of the major environmental problems that have to be faced by societies. Recycling is the best solution to overcome this major problem. Moreover, recycling will continually support economic productivity, and provide safe, dignified and secure employment (Ezeah & Roberts, 2012). In Malaysia, recycling rate is still low at about five percent even though recycling has been accepted worldwide as a form of waste disposal (Chandravathani, 2006). This shows that the participation among Malaysians is still low even though the communities' awareness in recycling is increasing. Moreover, according to Chandravathani (2006), about 30% of domestic waste is recyclable, and hence, can be sustainably processed rather than be disposed at the landfills.

According to Solid Waste Management and Public Cleaning Corporation (PPSPPA), one survey had been conducted where 99% of the 17,000 respondents were aware of recycling but only 68.8% were committed in putting it to practice

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(The Borneo Post, 2013). Even though PPSPPA had initiatives in introducing programs regarding recycling, especially by introducing recycling bins, it was disappointing as the recycling bins were not put into optimal use. The amount of waste is increasing in line with the growing number of population in Malaysia. The main solution for solid waste in Malaysia is the use of landfill but this practice can cause negative impacts towards the environment in the long-term because the landfill sites are open dumping areas. If Malaysia keeps on relying upon landfills, it may increase greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) to 50% by 2020 as mentioned by The National Solid Waste Management Department. Moreover, Iyer and Kashyap (2007) stressed out that landfills can be harmful to the Earth and can change the soil fertility. This study examines the environmental concern towards recycling attitude and the relationship between attitude and recycling behaviour.

## 2. Literature Review

In the past several decades, environmental problems have been an important issue from global warming to climate change due to the greenhouse effect; pollution of air and water are some of the main environmental problems that must be taken seriously (Kim & Choi, 2005). Interestingly, it is found that people that have concern in environment are more likely to recycle (Domina & Koch, 2002).

To determine the individual's performance, attitude can be a psychological emotion whether the behaviour is positive or negative (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Besides, an individual will perform a consistent behaviour if he or she has a positive attitude toward environmental issues. Family, friends, neighbours or colleagues may influence the positive environmental behaviours such as composting, recycling and conservation. Further, showing acceptable social behaviour or normative influences can result in a change in attitude or behaviour (Tucker, 1999). Blake (1999) has stressed on the fact that environmental concerns are outweighed by other conflicting attitudes for instance, laziness or lack of interest in protecting the environment.

The actions of neighbours can strongly influence recycling behaviour among householders (Shaw, 2008) and actions, attitudes and motivation of recycling are biased towards individuals rather than communities (Lyas et al., 2005). Martin, Williams and Clark (2006) have conducted a study to understand how behaviour can be changed by using the behavioural elements of waste management indices. The result shows that there was a correlation of recycling behaviour between newspaper reading, religious activities and politics. There were also other big impacts that included age, education level, gender and household income (Fiorillo, 2013).

## 3. Hypotheses

### 3.1. *Environmental concern and Attitude*

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) have introduced the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which assumes that people behave rationally and they consider the implications of their action. Later, Ajzen (1991) revised and extended the TRA in the Theory of Planned Behaviour. In the TPB, intention strength is a proximal cause of behaviour. Attitude in turn is determined by the strength of beliefs about the consequences of behaviour and evaluation of these consequences. In evaluations, value priorities play an important role.

There was a study on environmental concern among the secondary students in Malaysia to observe their environmental concern. The results showed that even though they had a high level of environmental concern, they did not act and practice the same attitudes in making their surrounding better because they felt it was difficult (Hassan, Noordin & Sulaiman, 2010). This study was supported by Simmons and Widmar (1990). It is proposed that:  
H<sub>1</sub>: Environmental concern is significantly related to attitude.

### 3.2. *Attitude and Recycling Behaviour*

Using the TPB, Chu and Chiu (2003) assumed that if householders believe in recycling, it will help in lessening the environmental pollution. Therefore, an individual's attitude towards recycling will be more positive. Numerous

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