

FORMING A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT BASED ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

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Abstract

This study focuses on sustainable development based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formulated by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 to be achieved by 2030 which aims to guarantee sustainable development and human well-being. The objective of this study is to examine the level of knowledge of the community and Local Authorities regarding sustainable development and analyze the factors that affect sustainable development in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia, namely Perlis, Kedah and Penang. This is a quantitative study using questionnaires to collect data from 150 public respondents and 150 respondents consisting of the Local Authority staff from Perlis, Kedah and Penang. The findings of the study reveal although there is a high level of awareness regarding sustainable development among the community and Local Authority staff, there is still a need to enhance understanding of the SDGs. Issues of poverty and the cost of living remain major challenges, while satisfaction with clean water and community safety shows promising potential.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Cost of Living, Clean Water, Poverty.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Sharif Shofirun et al, 2023). This development does not only focus on physical and economic aspects, but social (Firdaus, Mohd Nazaruddin, Rona & Angga, 2023) and environmental factors (Muhammad Aqmarul, Mohd Nazaruddin & Faizal, 2022).

The concept of sustainable development can be understood as a process of economic and social development that aims to improve communities without damaging their natural resources, while ensuring that those resources can still be used in the future. The sustainable development approach shows that this concept has a strong foundation to be widely applied in facing development challenges. Pursuing rapid development can result in environmental pollution (Umar, Said, Wan Azani & Mohd Nazaruddin, 2023) and resource depletion (Mohd Nazaruddin et al, 2018), which in turn affects the quality of life (Nor Suzylah et al, 2023).

In line with the importance of sustainable development, the United Nations (UN) has formulated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which were launched in 2015 and are expected to be achieved by 2030. These goals include various important dimensions to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development.

The SDGs are a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) implemented from 2000 to 2015. The MDGs focus on reducing extreme poverty and achieving eight targets within a set period. Instead, the SDGs encompass a wider range of issues, including social, economic, and environmental development. These include poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, clean water, energy resources, employment, industry, reducing inequality, sustainable cities and communities, efficient use of resources, climate change, sea life, land life, justice, and cooperation for achieve goals (United Nations, 2015).

The SDGs consist of 17 goals with 169 targets covering various social, economic, and environmental development issues. The SDGs serve as a guide to the government in formulating policies that can ensure a sustainable future, as well as face various challenges in economic, social, and environmental development (United Nations, 2015). Malaysia is also active in the implementation of the SDGs by coordinating the Malaysia Plan and the national budget in accordance with the 17 SDG Goals to achieve the agenda.

This study covers the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 to be achieved in 2030 as a plan for sustainable development and guaranteeing human well-being. This exploratory study aims to analyze and identify the level of knowledge of the community and Local Authorities related to sustainable development and the factors that influence it. This study was carried out in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia, namely in the states of Perlis, Kedah, and Penang, involving all Local Authorities and communities in the area. This study focuses on three SDG goals, SDG 1, SDG 6 and SDG 16. These three goals are an important foundation in ensuring the well-being of society (Azlizan et al, 2022) and promoting sustainable development (Sharif Shofirun, 2021).

Challenges in achieving SDG 1 include lack of access to economic opportunities, social and economic inequality, as well as the global economic crisis that exacerbates poverty. Poor basic infrastructure, climate change, natural disasters, and gender inequality also make this effort difficult. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed progress, with nearly 90 million people falling into extreme poverty. If this trend continues, it is expected that 575 million people will be trapped in extreme poverty by 2030. A holistic approach and multi-stakeholder cooperation is essential to provide economic opportunities and effective support.

Challenges in achieving SDG 6 include lack of access to clean water sources, water pollution, and climate change causing extreme weather. Efforts to improve water treatment systems and build resilient infrastructure are important (Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, 2016). A well-managed tap water supply plays an important role in improving the quality of life (Amirah, Nordin, & Adi, 2021). With population growth and challenges in water supply during droughts, there needs to be investment in infrastructure and protection of water ecosystems to ensure universal access to safe drinking water by 2030 (United Nations, 2022).

Challenges faced in achieving SDG 16 include community safety, crime, and weaknesses in law enforcement. Local Authorities needs to collaborate with other agencies to provide responsive services and ensure that there are no marginalized groups (Azmizam, 2016). Armed violence and crimes such as sexual violence also show an increase that requires cooperation between governments and communities to ensure peace and justice (United Nations, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets current needs without affecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). This definition emphasizes that development needs to be managed in a way that ensures a balance between meeting current needs and maintaining the availability and function of natural resources for future generations.

Sustainable development was first introduced since the First Human Environment Conference in Stockholm in 1972, which focused on global environmental issues. This effort reached its peak with the publication of the Brundtland Report or Our Common Future by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987.

In 1987, the term sustainable development became a global focus in the World Conference in Rio de Janeiro that discussed environmental issues comprehensively (Hairy, Hashiq, Mazlini & Habibah, 2022). The concept of sustainable development, or balanced development, is proposed as a modern approach to dealing with environmental problems and meeting development and conservation needs more proactively. Accordingly, in 1992, the concept of sustainable development was officially introduced at the Earth Conference in Rio de Janeiro (Ibrahim, 2000).

Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, all countries have been reminded of the importance of protecting and conserving the environment while continuing to pursue development and modernization. However, the concept of sustainable development still faces challenges in terms of interpretation and understanding, as well as its application in various aspects of national development (Lim & Jalaluddin, 2020).

In general, sustainable development has been part of Malaysia's development agenda and plans since the 1970s. The Malaysian government has always focused on economic growth with various initiatives to improve the well-being of the people, including efforts to eradicate poverty, provide access to health and education, and protect the environment. Elements similar to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) began to be applied since 1970 through the New Economic Policy (NEP) (Sahul & Khairi, 2021).

Hezri and Nordin (2006) stated that Malaysia has integrated sustainable development in the national development plan and action plan due to two main factors which are increased diplomatic influence and pressure from the international community on uncontrolled deforestation. Mohd Idham and Mariani (2020) stated that Malaysia has shown a strong commitment to sustainable development through the implementation of frameworks such as Local Agenda 21 (LA21), the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and now the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Malaysia welcomes the SDGs as proof of its commitment to sustainable development (Hairy, Hashiq, Mazlini & Habibah, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This study is in the form of a questionnaire and quantitative survey which aims to examine the level of knowledge of the community towards sustainable development, the level of knowledge of Local Authorities towards sustainable development as well as the factors that influence sustainable development. This study involved the use of questionnaires and distributed to 150 members of the public and 150 local government employees in the states of Perlis, Kedah and Penang who were involved as respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

90% of the public respondents have a high awareness of the concept of sustainability and its importance in daily life while, Local Authorities staff show a very good level of knowledge, with 99% understanding the concept and 98% understanding the concept of sustainable development and how it is applied in their daily tasks. However, there is a need to increase specific knowledge about the SDGs, especially among the general public where only 44% know about them showing less knowledge about the goals compared to Local Authorities staff with 66% knowing about them.

In the context of the SDGs, this study emphasizes the dimension of poverty, where 53% of the public respondents feel their income is insufficient for the cost of living, showing the financial challenges they face. Local Authorities respondents showed high confidence in their role in poverty eradication, with 99% believing that Local Authorities provides various forms of assistance to the poor.

For the dimension of clean water, all respondents agree that they enjoy clean water facilities and 94% of public respondents are satisfied with the quality of water supplied. Local Authorities staff respondents indicated that the issue of clean water supply may not be entirely within the responsibility of the Local Authorities, but with clear communication between the Local Authorities and related agencies, water supply issues can be dealt with more effectively and comprehensively. 95% agree that Local Authorities needs to ensure that development plans do not affect water resources. This reflects the awareness of the importance of maintaining the quality of water resources.

In the community safety dimension, 94% of the public respondents felt their area was safe, however 42% expressed concern about crime, showing a different view in the community. Local Authorities respondents almost entirely (99%) believe that they play a role in ensuring the safety of residents, and emphasize the importance of cooperation with the police. This shows a high commitment from Local Authorities, but also suggests the need for more initiatives to increase community confidence in security.

Overall, this study shows that although there is a high awareness of sustainable development among the community and Local Authorities staff, there is still a need to improve understanding

of the SDGs and specific aspects related to them. Issues of poverty and the cost of living remain major challenges, while satisfaction with clean water and community safety show good potential.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the importance of awareness about sustainability in society, where even though there is a good understanding of the concept of sustainability, there is still a gap in knowledge about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The SDGs, which consist of 17 goals set by the United Nations, aim to overcome global challenges such as poverty, clean water and community security, but understanding of them is still low among society. Therefore, disclosure about the SDGs needs to be expanded. Cooperation between the government, Local Authorities and the community is also needed to build a stronger foundation to ensure sustainability and a more sustainable future.

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