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Green Campus Initiatives at Rahim Kajai College: Students' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The concept of green campuses has become increasingly important for higher education institutions that aim to provide a conducive learning environment for students. This research aims to investigate the current trends in the green campus initiative and the perceptions of students regarding its implementation at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, specifically at Rahim Kajai Residential College (RKRC). An online survey using Google Forms was conducted, with 208 students from RKRC participating in the study. The results indicate that over 80% of the respondents hold a positive view of green campus activities, and 90% of them feel that these activities have positively contributed to their awareness of environmental issues, encouraging them to adopt energy-saving practices. The study provides recommendations for promoting green campus initiatives at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Contribution/Originality: This study documents the awareness level of Rahim Kajai College students on green campus initiatives. This understanding allows RKRC and UKM to tailor suitable methods to enhance their environmental consciousness and foster greater participation in green campaigns and programs.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the world has become increasingly aware of the urgent need to address environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion. The green campus concept focuses on educating students about their environmental responsibilities both within and outside of the campus. As a result, individuals, businesses, and organizations are seeking ways to reduce their impact on the environment and promote sustainability. For academic institutions, higher education institutions have a significant responsibility in teaching and researching sustainability issues (Foo, 2013; Tezel, Ugural, & Giritli, 2018).

A green campus refers to a college or university that places a high emphasis on environmental sustainability across its operations, curriculum, and overall ethos. Such institutions implement various initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability, including energy-efficient buildings, utilization of renewable energy sources, offering sustainable transportation alternatives, and developing environmentally focused academic programs.

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Furthermore, a sustainable campus actively provides opportunities and incentives for students, faculty, and staff to engage in creating an environmentally conscious campus environment.

One area that has seen significant progress in recent years is the concept of "green campuses." As institutions that often have a significant impact on their surrounding communities and the environment, colleges and universities have an important role to play in promoting sustainability and reducing their environmental impact. Tiyarattanachai and Hollmann (2016) argue that universities, leaders, educators, researchers, and students can leverage their resources to confront the issue of reconciling economic and technological progress with environmental conservation. Additionally, students should be actively involved in creating sustainable campuses, and universities can serve as agents of change with significant impact.

Considering the substantial role that universities play, the primary objective of this study is to explore the extent of awareness regarding the importance of campus sustainability. Specifically, the study focuses on Rahim Kajai Residential College (RKRC) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Moreover, by comprehending the significance of green campuses and examining the strategies implemented to promote environmental sustainability, the study aims to contribute to the collective effort of achieving a more sustainable future for our communities.

2. Literature Review on Green Campus Initiatives

Higher Education has significant impact in promoting sustainability for society (Foo, 2013) and university researchers were the first to raise the alarm about environmental issues through their research effort (Tiyarattanachai & Hollmann, 2016). There are tremendous studies have focused on the importance of promoting environmental sustainability on college and university campuses. Fachrudin, Fachrudin, and Utami (2019) highlighted the importance of promoting green campus engagement and activities in their research. The results of a survey conducted with 400 respondents from Universitas Sumatera Utara revealed that initiatives such as seminars, campaigns, and the implementation of a paperless policy could encourage greater involvement of the campus community in green campus initiatives.

Asif et al. (2020) investigate the perceptions of university teachers in China and Pakistan regarding moral education for sustainable development. The findings of the study reveal that both the institutions and the majority of teaching and learning practices are not conducive to the cultivation of morally developed individuals who can actively contribute to the sustainable development of their respective countries. From another perspective, Clark (2016) argues that the success of sustainability initiatives on campus heavily depends on the willingness of individuals and groups to voluntarily engage in sustainable behaviors. This highlights the untapped potential of collective voluntary action as a powerful tool for campus sustainability practitioners, which is currently underutilized. Meanwhile, Lo (2019) digital applications significantly contribute to promoting sustainability in the workplace through altering behavior and enhancing eco-consciousness.

Aligned with numerous prestigious universities, universities in Malaysia exhibit unwavering commitment to the successful attainment of the green campus agenda. One noteworthy example is Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), which has implemented the

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Sustainable Campus Preservation Policy and Framework (SCPPF) since March 16, 2011 (Gholami et al., 2020). Meanwhile, at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), the Institute of Environmental and Development, known as LESTARI, was founded in 1994 with the objective of incorporating sustainable practices into the university's environmental and educational development (Darus et al., 2009).

Universities across the globe have made extensive efforts to foster sustainable campus operations through various initiatives. However, the emergence of barriers presents significant challenges to practitioners, ultimately impeding the successful implementation of these sustainability initiatives. According to the findings of Mohd Isa et al. (2021), the implementation of green initiatives at UiTM Perak highlighted several challenges, including financial constraints, lack of awareness, and limited knowledge regarding sustainable practices. Furthermore, Gholami et al. (2020) conducted a study and identified 18 barriers that impede the effective implementation of green campus initiatives. Among these barriers, lack of awareness, lack of knowledge, resistance to change, and inefficient communication were found to be the predominant obstacles.

In views of the important of promoting environmental sustainability on college and university campuses at it challenges, Darus et al. (2009) emphasized the significant role of good governance as the primary factor facilitating organizations in achieving their sustainability targets. The role of sustainability coordinators, effective communication and collaboration, and the importance of green spaces and sustainable building design are key factors in the success of green campus initiatives.

3. Research Methods

Through the utilization of an online survey, the quantitative study aimed to investigate the level of awareness among students at Rahim Kajai Residential College in UKM regarding green campus initiatives. The sample consists of various background including undergraduate and postgraduate students. This study utilized a quantitative research method, gathering data through a questionnaire distributed to 208 students residing in Rahim Kajai College and they consist of different background of studies.

Data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire that featured statements aligned with a five-point Likert scale. Prior to their involvement, the respondents were provided with a comprehensive briefing regarding the study's objectives, and their informed consent was obtained. The respondents also were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that the gathered information would remain confidential, exclusively used for the study's purposes. Notably, the completion of all questions was deemed necessary.

The survey questionnaire comprised three sections. In the first section, respondents were requested to provide their demographic information, including details such as gender, academic year, level of study, and faculty affiliation. In the next section, respondents were encouraged to show their satisfaction with the environmental situation on campus. The section encompassed a comprehensive range of inquiries, targeting various aspects of the UKM campus environment. These included an assessment of the campus environment itself, an examination of the key determinants impacting its quality, and an investigation into the respondents' level of self-awareness concerning environmental protection. In the third section, respondents were prompted to provide their perspective on the effects of green initiative projects and activities carried out at RKRC.

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4. Result

This academic paper presents a study conducted to gain insights into the perceptions of UKM students regarding environmental protection practices on campus. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire was designed with three key aspects: basic personal information, awareness of environmental protection, and the impact of such activities on individuals. The questionnaire was distributed using a Google form accompanied by a QR code. A total of 208 students voluntarily participated in the survey, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of their perspectives on environmental conservation efforts within the campus.

4.1. Demographic

A total of 208 students from Rahim Kajai College, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, participated in this study. Out of the total participants, 87 (41.8%) were male. The majority of respondents (n=179; 86.06%) were undergraduate students, followed by 25 (12.02%) from the Master's program, and 4 respondents were pursuing their PhD. The summary of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The demographics (gender, discipline) of students responding to the survey (n = 208)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	87	41.8%
Female	121	58.2%
Program enrolled		
Undergraduate	179	86.06%
Masters	25	12.02%
Doctoral	4	1.92%

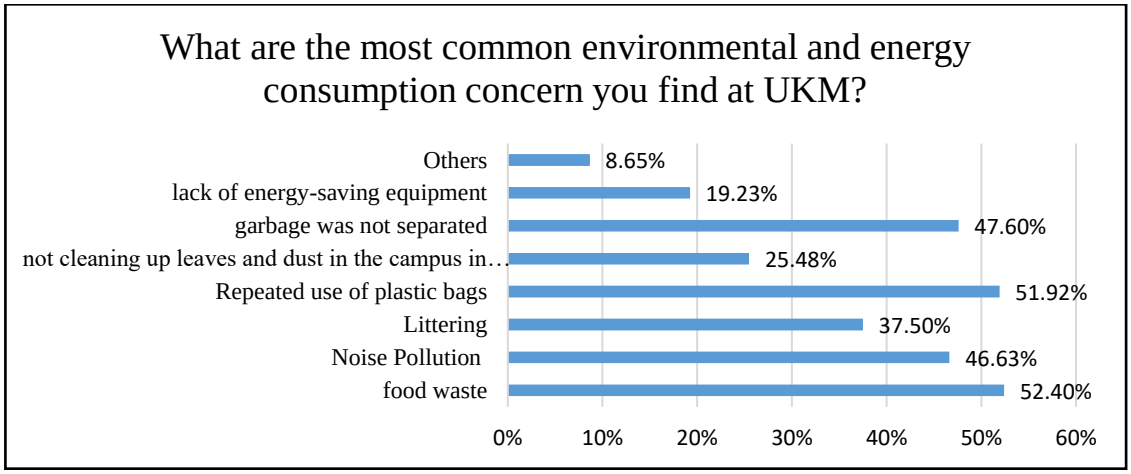
4.2. Environmental Protection Awareness among students

This section aims to determine the level of satisfaction among respondents regarding the environmental conditions prevailing on the UKM campus. We formulated specific questions to assess the evaluation of the campus environment, factors influencing it, the connection between the campus environment and participants' residential areas, as well as their level of self-awareness regarding environmental protection. Based on the responses received, the following findings were obtained.

Out of the total 208 individuals who participated in the questionnaire survey, the majority of respondents (n=109; 52.4%) expressed their primary concern as food waste. Following closely behind, 97 individuals (46.6%) identified noise pollution as a pressing issue, while 78 individuals (37.5%) selected littering. Additionally, 108 individuals (51.9%) raised concerns about the repeated use of plastic bags, and 53 individuals (25.5%) expressed worry regarding the lack of timely cleaning of leaves and dust on the campus. Improper garbage separation was highlighted by 99 individuals (47.6%), while 40 individuals (19.2%) identified the absence of energy-saving equipment as a problem. Lastly, 18 individuals (8.7%) chose the category of "others". The summary of the findings is presented in Figure 1.

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Figure 1: Results of factors affecting the campus environment



The analysis indicates that the campus environment is primarily affected by food waste, excessive use of plastic bags, and inadequate garbage separation. To foster future environmental protection on campus, we recommend implementing several measures. Firstly, there should be an emphasis on reducing plastic bag usage and promoting the adoption of environmentally friendly alternatives, such as cotton or linen shopping bags. Secondly, installing additional clearly labeled garbage sorting bins in prominent locations, along with regular monitoring by dedicated volunteers, can improve waste management on campus.

4.3. Self-awareness of energy conservation and environmental protection

This section aims to analyze the level of awareness regarding energy conservation and environmental protection among the participants. The questionnaire results provided insights into the participants' self-awareness in these areas. It was found that 44 individuals reported paying a significant amount of attention to the issue, while 106 participants reported paying even greater attention. Additionally, 54 respondents expressed that they generally pay attention, whereas 3 individuals admitted not paying much attention, and only one person claimed to not pay attention at all. These findings demonstrate that more than 70% of the respondents are consciously engaged in energy conservation and environmental protection in their daily lives. Furthermore, the questionnaire also examined the usage patterns of disposable items. A majority of the respondents, accounting for more than half of the sample, reported using them 0-5 times per week. However, the remaining participants either used them more frequently or did not maintain a record of their usage. This information sheds light on the practices and behaviors surrounding the use of disposable items among the participants (Table 2).

Table 2: Self-awareness of energy conservation and environmental protection

Statement	Response, n	Percentage (%)
Do you usually pay attention to saving and industrial protection?	Very active	21.15%
	Active	50.96%
	Moderate	25.96%
	Not very active	1.44%
	Not active	0.48%

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How many times a week do you use disposable products and plastic bags on average?	0-5 times	51.0%
	6-10 times	29.3%
	10-15 times	6.7%
	More than 15 times	5.3%
	Have never counted	7.7%

4.4. Student perception on green campus campaign

The aim of this section is to investigate the effects of green campus activities on students encompassing their perception and evaluation of these activities. As indicated in Table 3, the green campus activity is widely viewed positively by a substantial majority of the respondents, with more than 80% expressing favorable opinions. Furthermore, over 90% of the participants reported that the activity has had a positive influence on their environmental awareness and has motivated them to adopt energy-saving practices. The summary of the findings is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Students' perception of the green campus activities

Statement	Response	Percentage (%)
What rating would you give the green campus activity on a scale of 1 to 5?	Very Good	44.20%
	Good	42.80%
	Acceptable	11.50%
	Poor	1.00%
	Very Poor	0.50%
Has the Green Campus campaign impacted your willingness to adopt more environmentally friendly behaviors?	Ver likely	93.30%
	Somewhat likely	3.85%
	Not likely	2.88%

Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into the awareness levels and behaviors related to energy conservation and environmental protection, highlighting areas of strength and areas that require further attention for promoting sustainable practices on campus.

5. Discussion

In response to the research question regarding suggestions for the green campus activity, it is interesting to note that the most commonly mentioned recommendations for improving the activity focused on enhancing waste management practices, increasing the frequency of the activity, and fostering collaborative green initiatives with students and colleagues. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ***Increasing accessibility and affordability*** – To foster increased student engagement in the green campus initiative, it is crucial to prioritize measures that enhance the accessibility and affordability of the activities. This can be accomplished through various strategies, such as hosting cost-effective alternatives like seminars, talks, or workshops related to green initiatives, organizing campus cleaning drives, and promoting the creative utilization of recycled materials. By implementing these measures, the initiative can reach a broader audience and encourage greater student participation.
- ***Strengthening communication and education*** – To foster greater student engagement with the green campus initiative, it is essential for the university to

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implement strategies aimed at enhancing communication and increasing awareness about the initiative. This can be accomplished by developing informative and captivating materials, such as posters, infographics, and public speeches, which effectively convey the objectives, goals, and anticipated outcomes of the initiative. By employing these communication tools, the university can effectively reach out to students and inspire their active participation in the green campus initiative.

- ***Fostering collaboration and participation*** - The feedback received clearly demonstrates a strong inclination towards enhanced student involvement and participation. To foster a more inclusive and engaging initiative, the university could promote collaboration among various colleges and faculties. Furthermore, by organizing green campus activities on a more frequent basis, the university can sustain the momentum and motivate students to integrate environmentally friendly practices into their daily lives.
- ***Introducing innovative green initiatives*** - Based on the feedback received, students have conveyed a favorable disposition towards innovative and easily implementable green initiatives. To inspire students to actively contribute to a sustainable future, the university could introduce a variety of initiatives. These may include organizing a university-wide green day, developing interactive green games that can be enjoyed both indoors and outdoors, and establishing green spaces with trees and gardens throughout the campus. Such initiatives have the potential to engage students and encourage their active involvement in promoting environmental sustainability.

6. Conclusion

Ergo, the integration of green campus initiatives has emerged as a critical element in contemporary higher education institutions. Feedback from students indicates their openness to creative and inclusive initiatives that foster sustainability within the campus community. To further inspire student engagement in shaping a sustainable future, universities can explore the introduction of initiatives like university-wide green days and the establishment of green spaces. By implementing these measures, universities can not only contribute to environmental conservation but also facilitate the holistic growth and development of their students.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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