

# Awareness on Sustainable Development Goals Among University Students in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** *This paper investigates university students' awareness on the concepts of 'Sustainable Development' and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thirty-one (31) Science students from a university in the mid-northern region of Malaysia responded to an exploratory, pen-and-paper survey that asked if they have read about or heard of 'Sustainable Development' and 'SDGs'. Over half (N=18, 58%) of the respondents replied 'yes' while another 13 (41.9%) respondents replied 'no'. However, among these 13 respondents who have not read about or heard of SDGs, all of them were aware of the climate change phenomenon. In fact, all 13 of them were able to explain this occurrence accurately, with ten (32.3%) being able to use terms like 'change in weather patterns' or 'global warming'. Therefore, this preliminary study concluded that there is only moderate awareness among students on environmental literacy. The paper also concluded that many of these students (N=14; 45%) have not joined the university's social programmes on SDGs even though the university itself adopts a 'Green Campus' philosophy and actively tries to achieve the Local Agenda 21 by integrating the SDGs into its mission. Finally, as far as Sustainable Development and its related issues are concerned, food wastage remains a problem in many Malaysian cities and towns (i.e., locally and nationally) and globally as well.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Green Campus, university students, Local Agenda 21

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## 1. Introduction

The global Covid-19 pandemic lockdown has shown us how human activities (e.g., energy and transportation) impacted the environment. For example, Plumer (2021, January 21) of The New York Times reported that "U.S. greenhouse gas emissions fell more than 10 percent, reaching their lowest levels in three decades as the coronavirus slowed the economy". Moreover, Landry (2020, October 15) also of The New York Times, wrote that India, being the world's third largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter after China and the United States, had "its clearest skies in years".

Again, to quote verbatim Delkic & Landry (2020, May 12) of The New York Times, here's what they reported about India's carbon emissions plunge last year after lockdown:

"For the first time in four decades, carbon dioxide emissions fell in the country. This reflects the economic slowdown from the lockdown restrictions imposed during the coronavirus outbreak and also a broader weakening of demand for fossil fuels. Emissions fell around 15 percent in March and probably dropped another 30 percent in April, according

to researchers at Carbon Brief, an environmental website that tracks climate and energy policy. [Moreover], coal-fired power generation, which is linked with higher air pollution, fell 31 percent in the first three weeks of April".

According to Ge and Friedrich (2020, February 6), ten countries produce more than 68 percent of the global GHG emissions. Moreover, energy generation and consumption are the most important contributor to human-produced GHG emissions (Ge & Friedrich, 2020). This energy sector included transportation, electricity generation and heating, as well as manufacturing and construction (Ge & Friedrich, 2020). Meanwhile, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (2020, September 10) greenhouse gases released by human activities included a huge portion of carbon dioxide, followed by methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases (F-gases).

Closer to home, in Malaysia, the data on GHG emissions are, unfortunately, only available for carbon dioxide emissions and not for overall GHG emissions. Moreover, the emissions data (i.e., 8.092 metric tons per capita in 2016) published by the World Bank showed statistics until the year 2016 only (The World Bank Group, 2021). A Google search at the Department of Statistics Malaysia also didn't yield any fruitful results for Malaysia's GHG emissions for last year (i.e., year 2020) but there are statistics available on a series of environmental data such as water production and consumption as well as recycling rate (DOSM, 2020). What is noteworthy is that the carbon dioxide emissions in Malaysia is at an upward trend (The World Bank Group, 2021). Moreover, clinical waste showed an overall increase of 7.5% (DOSM, 2020). As quoted verbatim below, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020) stated that:

"...three (3) states [which] recorded the highest amounts of clinical wastes were Selangor (7.3 thousand tonnes), W.P. Kuala Lumpur (3.8 thousand tonnes) and Sarawak (3.7 thousand tonnes). Currently, with the increase in Covid-19 cases, it is expected that the clinical wastes will rise in line with the Minister of Environment and Water's statement during a session in Dewan Rakyat on 3 November 2020 which stated that clinical wastes generated in the country increased by 20 percent during the Covid-19 pandemic".

As outlined by the 1987 Brundtland Report or also entitled *Our Common Future*, it is indeed necessary to re-think our existing consumption-based and fossil fuel-based economic model so that we have "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987; Jarvie, 2016). Moreover, the concept of 'Sustainable Development' requires no introduction since it's a concept that has been discussed for decades and have also been defined by the Brundtland Report. Although many scholarly works have emerged hereafter, they have all provided more succinct ideas and concepts surrounding 'Sustainable Development'. For example, Baker (2016) has outlined the background to this concept and provided theoretical as well as conceptual explanations on this issue. Below I quote verbatim Baker's (2016) definition of 'sustainable development' and what it entailed:

"Sustainable development refers to the many processes and pathways to reconcile the ecological, economic and social dimensions of life. This can include, for example, the promotion of sustainable agriculture and forestry, sustainable production and consumption, good government,

research and technology transfer, education and training, recognition of cultural values and different forms of knowledge". [Moreover], "[p]romoting sustainable development is about steering societal change at the interface between: (1) The social: this relates to human mores and values, relationships and institutions. (2) The economic: this concerns the allocation and distribution of scarce resources. (3) The ecological: this involves the contribution of both the economic and the social and their effect on the environment and its resources. These are known as the three dimensions, or pillars, of sustainable development (Ekins, 2000)" (Baker, 2016, p. 9).

The environmental movement which is linked to sustainable development is important too because the problem of global warming or also known as climate change has yet to be resolved. This is partly because of the lack of political will. Furthermore, the dominant narrative remains that a government must provide jobs and a vibrant, functioning economy. This is usually accomplished at the expense of our environment because political leaders or the government they represent are mostly elected within the range of only between three and five years whereas the environment clean-up requires commitment and a longer span of time.

On the other hand, the United Nations' proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are ambitious, challenging and have been targeted for global achievement by the year 2030. Fortunately, there has been progress made by the Malaysian government, some Malaysian companies, the Malaysian higher education institutions (HEIs) and individual countries around the world despite its wide-ranging, grand goals.

## **2. Literature Review**

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are vital agents of change (Mohammad Imam Hasan Reza, 2016) and can transform and even speed up the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. According to Mohammad Imam Hasan Reza (2016), education for sustainable development (ESD) means that universities include "...key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption".

Moreover, ESD creates added value for expanding the minds and horizons of young university students (Mohammad Imam Hasan Reza, 2016) who are our nation's hope and asset. The author had also listed out the role of research in helping achieve the SDGs by Malaysian HEIs. Moreover, course curriculum of HEIs also help expose students to issues related to sustainable development and the 17 SDGs (Mohammad Imam Hasan Reza, 2016). Many other scholars (as cited in his paper) agree that ESD is vital and as such research on university students' awareness of these concepts and issues give researchers a peek into their minds, their understanding of these concepts and their inner world.

For example, Table 1 in his paper showed how different aspects of sustainability and sustainable development have been incorporated into course programmes in our local HEIs (Mohammad Imam Hasan Reza, 2016).

Young Malaysians play a significant role in helping the Malaysian government achieve the 17 SDGs by 2030 (Fatin Nabilla Ariffin & Ng, 2019). According to the authors, HEIs could be "...instrumental in training, helping and preparing youths to make needed and meaningful

contributions to sustainable development" (Fatin Nabilla Ariffin & Ng, 2019). Their research was interesting because they had investigated whether there were gender differences in understanding 'sustainable development' or whether Arts and Science stream students differed in their understanding of 'sustainable development'. While they didn't find gender differences in their own study, they quoted another researcher who did find such a difference (see Misbahul Jannah et. al., 2013). As for the different stream of studies, the researchers concluded that the science students surveyed in their study had more exposure to environmental literacy even though in terms of their understanding of the sustainable development concept, it wasn't obvious between the Arts and Science stream students (Fatin Nabilla Ariffin & Ng, 2019).

Local research universities have also incorporated the concept of sustainability in higher education. For example, they have aligned their growth strategies and plans with the 17 SDGs (Choong, 2020; UM, 2020; USM, 2019; UTAR, 2019; Mohd Zamri Husaini & Ahmad Jusoh, 2017; Omidreza Saadatian et. al., 2009). Some of these universities also have an environmental policy and a sustainable food policy whereby food operators within the universities are encouraged to minimize negative socio-environmental impacts with the products and services which they provide to the staff and students. Moreover, both staff and students were discouraged from using plastic bags, and the so-called 'white coffins', the environmentally-bad polystyrene-based food and drinks packaging, as well as to adopt a Zero Food Waste philosophy (UM, 2020; USM, 2019; UTAR, 2019).

In terms of the universities' administrative operations, research publications, community outreach, and course content development associated with the 17 SDGs, there have been efforts made and research done on each of the 17 SDGs (UM, 2020; USM, 2019; UTAR, 2019; Mohd Zamri Husaini & Ahmad Jusoh, 2017; Omidreza Saadatian et. al., 2009). The universities have also published documents showcasing their commitments and work to all the 17 SDGs and the Local Agenda 21 which formed part of the non-binding, three-level integration action plan of the United Nations.

Hawken, Lovins & Lovins (1999) emphasized a new way of doing business which mimics nature, i.e., creating no waste (zero waste). They cited the Japanese motor company, Toyota, as an exemplary model for efficiency and little waste (Hawken, Lovins & Lovins, 1999). They argued that if business efficiency was increased and wastage minimized, the natural resources used in economic productions would be reduced vastly too. This would translate into much savings and resource conservation. Moreover, they suggested an important concept of not wasting people (Hawken, Lovins & Lovins, 1999, p. 53). Among others, this concept of 'not wasting people' relates to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Baker (2016) argued that promoting sustainable development is challenging, especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), where "poverty is widespread, educational and employment opportunities are weak, healthcare is minimal, and life chances are severely restricted, especially for women". Many social scientists and organizations do agree that improving gender equality and supporting women in their formal as well as informal work can vastly advance lives in their respective families and countries as well as in achieving the 17 SDGs (Macionis, 2015; Global Volunteers, 2002; UN Women, n.d.). In Malaysia, being an upper-middle-income country and not an LDC, progress has been made in women's status even though there still exists the traditional patriarchal ideology within the more rural communities. In fact, in our local universities, women constitute a higher majority in student numbers than

men. One further improvement for Malaysian women would be encouraging more of them to take up Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses. Finally, the Human Development Index (HDI), a multifactorial scale of health, education, and income, is important because it doesn't just focus on collective outcomes but also individual capabilities (Baker, 2016).

'Climate change' or sometimes also known as 'global warming' is an issue that cannot be ignored as the Earth gets hotter. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014), HEIs can expose students to field realities via lectures and course work, field studies, internships, and research. Besides, climate change has also increased the threats of flood for many coastal areas in Asia. In Malaysia, for example, the number of floods almost doubled from 496 incidents in 2015 to 844 cases in 2018 (DOSM, 2020).

According to Siti Wahidah Abd Ghafar (2017), food waste is a serious problem worldwide, and Malaysia is no exemption. As the country urbanizes and its population rises, the problem of food wastage has become worse, not better. The author also defined food waste as "...all edible food materials produced for human consumption but left uneaten, either lost or discarded throughout the food supply chain, from farm to fork". This issue is also a sustainability issue and forms part of the Local Agenda 21 because food waste is unsustainable, especially when 868 million people globally still suffer from starvation and malnutrition annually. The author also stated that more than one-third of food made globally is squandered every year. However, public awareness is increasing about such losses. For example, Malaysia has also participated in the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Save Food initiative, with the local version being called MYSavefood network.

### 3. Method

This preliminary study has set out to answer three research themes:

- (1) Awareness of General Environmental Issues: Were young university students aware of current debates and issues related to environmentalism? For example, do they have awareness about 'sustainable development'?
- (2) Awareness of Environmental Issues in their Communities: Were they aware that their own HEI organizes programmes and research activities in its commitment to achieving the SDGs and its three-level (local, national, and global) integration?
- (3) Importance Ranking of the 17 SDGs: In the students' opinion, what should be Malaysia's top five most important SDGs to achieve?

Students from the Science Faculty of a university, located in the mid-northern region of Malaysia, were asked to fill out a 23-item survey. An informed consent statement was included on the front page of the survey. The survey was administered during one of their tutorials in the *Introduction to Sociology* course in the university's January 2020 semester.

However, only relevant questions have been highlighted here for discussion in Section 4. For example, the respondents were asked to explain their understanding of 'sustainable development' and 'climate change'. It's found that some respondents articulated in their explanations, while a small number could only write vaguely and in just one short sentence.

A total of 31 respondents consisted of Year 1, Year 2, and Year 4 students. There was a good mix of 16 male and 15 female students. Most of them (N=93.5%) were Chinese Malaysians, and only two Indian Malaysians (6.5%).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### Theme 1. Awareness of General Environmental Issues

Only 18 (58%) respondents have heard of the term ‘sustainable development’. Another 13 (41.9%) respondents cited ‘no’, meaning that they haven’t heard of the concept of ‘sustainable development.’ However, most of them (N=10, 32.3%) were still able to accurately explain the concept of climate change. For example, they had used the phrase *change in weather patterns* or *global warming*. One student used the phrase extreme weather patterns, yet another student wrote that climate change means that *the Earth is getting warmer*. Finally, another student had answered that *climate change is a disaster*.

When the respondents were asked about the illegal rubbish dumping by the Western countries into Malaysia, almost half (N=15, 48.4%) have not heard of the news. This number shows that slightly over half of the respondents know their surroundings, either gathered from the news reporting or family and friends.

When asked whether they are concerned that future generations of Malaysians might inherit a less pleasant and resource-depleted country, a total of 21 (67.7%) respondents replied with ‘yes’, four (12.9%) answered ‘no’. In contrast, the rest (N=6, 19.4%) answered ‘not sure’. For the respondents who had expressed concern that future generations of Malaysians might inherit a less pleasant and resource-depleted country, one of them cited our financial debt as an example of why future generations might inherit a less pleasant Malaysia. Others cited reasons such as the Malaysian government allowing Lynas, the unpopular producer of high-grade rare Earth in Kuantan, Pahang, to continue operating in the country. In contrast, others mentioned resource overuse in the country. For respondents who answered ‘no’, meaning that they weren’t concerned that future generations of Malaysians might inherit a less pleasant and resource-depleted country, they cited renewable energy as the hope of the future. The rest (N=6, 19.4%) who answered ‘not sure’ said that the future is unpredictable or that they are not very well-versed with the issues discussed.

### Theme 2. Awareness of Environmental Issues in their Communities

When asked ‘Were they aware that their own HEI organizes programmes and research activities in its commitment to achieving the SDGs and its three-level (local, national, and global) integration?’, some respondents were not aware that their HEI is managed and run based on the *Green Campus* philosophy. This university, located in the mid-northern region of Malaysia, has a green campus committee in both its campuses. For example, five (16.1%) respondents from Year 2 were not aware of the *Green Campus* university concept while two (6.5%) Year 1 students were in the same category. In total, there were 7 (22.6%) students in this category.

Meanwhile, 14 (45.2%) students, including two Year 4 students, were aware of the *Green Campus* university concept but not the green campus committees’ existence. Only ten (32.3%) students of the 31 surveyed were aware of both the *Green Campus* university concept and a green campus committee in both their university’s campuses. The combined numbers (N=21, 67.7%) showed that more respondents were ignorant about the environmental efforts made by their own HEI.

When asked if they knew what ‘green campus’ meant, some mentioned the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle), while others mentioned practical tasks like conserving electricity and water. Their responses showed an understanding of the ‘green campus’ concept.

On another question, eleven (35.5%) respondents were aware of the SDG-related activities organized by the university, and had attended some of its projects. However, more respondents among those surveyed (N=14, 45.2%) were unaware of such activities and had not participated in any SDG-related projects organized by the university. Meanwhile, three (9.7%) respondents stated that they were aware of such SDG-related projects but had not attended any of them.

### Theme 3. Importance Ranking of the 17 SDGs

Respondents had ranked the top five most important goals among the 17 SDGs (see Table 1) that Malaysia should accomplish. Of the 31 respondents, three didn't complete the task as instructed, so their answers were excluded from the analysis. As a result, only a total of 28 respondents' rankings was tabulated. Table 1 (below) showed that rank 1 (i.e., SDG 4, Quality Education) had received the most votes from the 28 respondents as one of their top five most important SDGs which they think Malaysia should accomplish. Meanwhile, rank 15 was shared by three SDGs, namely, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG15 (Life on Land) and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This means that only one respondent had each chosen them as one of their top five most important SDGs which they think Malaysia should be most concerned about.

**Table 1: Ranking of the 17 SDGs by the Respondents (in highest-ranking order)**

Rank	Sustainable Development Goals	N	Percent
1	SDG 4 - Quality Education	23	82.1%
2	SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth	15	53.6%
3	SDG 1 - No Poverty	13	46.4%
3	SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	13	46.4%
5	SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	11	39.3%
6	SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-Being	10	35.7%
7	SDG 10 - Reducing Inequality	9	32.1%
8	SDG 13 - Climate Action	8	28.6%
9	SDG 2 - Zero Hunger	7	25.0%
9	SDG 5 - Gender Equality	7	25.0%
9	SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities	7	25.0%
12	SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation	6	21.4%
12	SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy	6	21.4%
14	SDG 14 - Life Below Water	2	7.1%
15	SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production	1	3.6%
15	SDG 15 - Life On Land	1	3.6%
15	SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals	1	3.6%

#### *Top in rank: SDG 4 (Quality Education)*

Twenty-three of the 28 respondents (82.1%) ranked Quality Education as their top five concerns. As they were students, it was not surprising that education's quality was at the top of their minds. Further study should explore if they were well aware of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in our current Malaysian education system.

*Second in rank: SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)*

Over half of the respondents (N=15, 53.6%) had ranked SDG 8 as their top five concerns. This showed that while studying, they were paying attention to work opportunities, career and the economic development that might impact their lives in the future. Further research should explore if they are aware that our economic growth is based on fossil fuel consumption, and hence, unsustainable.

*Third in rank: SDG 1 (No Poverty) & SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)*

Nearly half of the respondents (N=13, 46.4%) had ranked SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) as their top 5 concerns. This showed that the respondents were aware of the importance of eliminating the nation's poverty and improving technology and infrastructure. While an inclusive society is important, these goals can only be achieved if corruption and extreme poverty are overcome. Nonetheless, Malaysia has developed and progressed by leaps and bounds since its independence in 1957. Even so, poverty and malnutrition are an ongoing social problem which prevents the poor and homeless Malaysians from living a life free of stigmatization and depravity.

*Fifth in rank: SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)*

Nearly two in five (N=11, 39.3%) respondents ranked SDG 16 as one of the top five priorities which Malaysia should focus on. This SDG was related to the SDG 1 (No Poverty) above. A peaceful and fair nation can only be achieved if poverty was eliminated. Respondents were aware of the crimes and petty crimes that were reported in the daily news, and robbery had occurred to and among their family or friends. Thus, having peace, justice and strong institutions are rated one of the top 5 of the 17 SDGs.

*Sixth in rank: SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being)*

While mental health and physical health are such important assets, it was surprising that only one in three (N=10, 35.7%) respondents had ranked SDG 3 as one of the top five priorities that the Malaysian government should focus on. Suicide and suicidal tendencies are on the rise in Malaysia (Cheah, 2019; Macrotrends, 2021; Pillay, 2017) and mental health issues are increasingly emphasized as witnessed by the explosion of counselling and psychology courses in HEIs in the country. Moreover, obesity is a serious health risk in Malaysia. In 2019, UNICEF and WHO representatives had issued a press statement, which among others, stated that Malaysia has now become the most obese country in Asia (Clark-Hattingh & Lo, 2019). Nonetheless, on a positive note, some of these students, as young and healthy people, also valued good health and well-being.

*Seventh in rank: SDG 10 (Reducing Inequality)*

Nine (32.1%) of the respondents had ranked SDG 10 (Reducing Inequality) as one of the top five most important SDGs which Malaysia should achieve. In the current Covid-19 pandemic situation, the most vulnerable groups were the hardest hit (UN, n.d.). For example, old people, persons with disabilities, children, women, and refugees as well as migrant workers (UN, n.d.). In pre-Covid-19 days, income inequality was actually falling in some countries (UN, n.d.) which was good news. This goal also planned to help nations around the world achieve income expansion for their Bottom 40 percent by 2030 (UN, n.d.). For this SDG 10, the respondents had ranked it before the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in Malaysia. However, the respondents seemed aware that reducing inequalities can improve the society's overall subjective well-being and ethnic harmony.

*Eighth in rank: SDG 13 (Climate Action)*

Eight (28.6%) of the 28 respondents had ranked SDG 13 (Climate Action) as one of the top five most important SDGs which Malaysia should accomplish. This showed that they do have awareness about climate change or global warming. For example, it's been reported that globally the year 2020 and 2016 were tied as the warmest year on record (NASA, 2021). Closer to home, a study conducted by Think City showed that five Malaysian cities had become warmer over several decades (Mok, 2021). For example, Ipoh, the capital city of Perak, recorded the highest surface temperature increase of 6.75 degree Celsius over a 21-year phase from November 1998 and March 2019, among the five cities surveyed (Mok, 2021). Surprisingly, Kuala Lumpur which is the country's most economically vibrant city, recorded the lowest temperature increase of 1.65 degree Celsius over a 30-year phase, between December 1989 and October 2019 (Mok, 2021).

*Ninth in rank: SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) & SDG 5 (Gender Equality) & SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)*

One in four respondents (N=7, 25%) had ranked these SDGs as one of their top five concerns. This showed that respondents felt that hunger, gender inequality still exist in Malaysia, and that building sustainable cities and communities are important in eliminating many socio-economic problems. The status of women and gender inequality have also been discussed in their Sociology classes and this might have increased their awareness on this issue and the SDG 5. Moreover, some modern women in Malaysia still experience sexual harassment at the workplace, domestic violence, and discrimination due to entrenched patriarchal ideology (Wikipedia, 2021).

*Last in Rank: SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)*

Finally, only one (3.6%) respondent each had ranked SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). There was not enough awareness among the 28 respondents about these three SDGs since SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) is closely tied to the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle). Besides, SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) is essential because Malaysia is a trading nation and must cooperate with international bodies like the United Nations, among others, to improve the lives of our people. SDG 15 (Life on Land) is about halting desertification and the loss of biodiversity, as well as managing our forest as the green lungs of the world (UNDP, 2021).

## **5. Conclusion**

Due to the small sample size (N=31), the results cannot be generalized to Malaysia's youth population but can be used for cross-comparison with other university students' opinions. There is only moderate awareness among the respondents about sustainable development and the 17 SDGs. Much work needed to be done by the university to include these respondents in a fruitful conversation on environmental conservation and sustainable development.

Another limitation in this study is, instead of asking the respondents to rank the 17 SDGs into the top 5 choices in a question, this question deserves a redesign. For example, the 17 SDGs should be given a five-point Likert Scale option for each item. This new format will provide a more detailed understanding of what they think Malaysia's priorities should be.

As university students are future leaders of the country and on the world stage, their worldview and opinions must be tapped into while at the same time creating awareness among them about 'glocal' (i.e., global and local) issues like 'sustainable development' and the 17 SDGs. However, awareness alone is inadequate. There must be behavioural changes if the 17 SDGs were to be meaningfully achieved by 2030. Future research could also investigate the respondents' depth of knowledge on each of the 17 SDGs.

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