

Perceived Justice on Sustainable Consumption

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the effect of individuals' perceived justice on sustainable consumption, which is moderated by the scarcity of resources, and to examine the influence of resource scarcity on the effects of perceived justice on sustainable consumption. The experimental method was employed. The result of this study is that perceived justice determines sustainable consumption.

1 INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems and sustainable consumption are included in justice issues. Rising consumption is recognized as a source of the exploitation of environmental resources. Individual consumption can change the environment in ways that may harm us or, on the other hand, lead to a better environment. Some people consume less, but some others consume more than their sustainable share of resources. The mitigation of environmental problems could impose burdens on individuals, from limiting consumption to increasing financial costs. It is a justice problem, so the fair distribution of burdens and benefits is therefore crucial. Consumption processes should not distract from individuals' perceived justice, and sustainable consumption should realize environmental justice.

According to Seyfang and Paavola (Seyfang and Paavola, 2007), there are gaps between sustainable consumption scholarship and environmental justice scholarship regarding agency, orientation, and focus. According to sustainable consumption scholarship, an individual is an actor that influences the environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, environmental justice scholarship sees individuals as victims of the environment. Sustainable consumption is a forward-looking orientation that considers how to make the environment better, whereas environmental justice stream is a backward-looking orientation that focuses on the impact of environmental problems on people.

This paper intends to integrate sustainable consumption scholarship and environmental justice

scholarship and aims to examine the influence of individual's justice perception toward sustainable consumption behavior, as well as the role of resource scarcity on the relationship between perceived justice and the willingness to engage in sustainable consumption.

2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Based on Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the source of global environmental problems was unsustainable consumption, and the summit invited a pattern shift of consumption toward a more sustainable path that would reduce pressure on the environment without ignoring basic needs. Despite many definitions of sustainable consumption, needs fulfillment, life quality improvement, efficient utilization of resources, waste minimization, lifecycle perspective application, and attention to the issue of justice are the agreement (UNEP, 2001). The realization of environmental justice should not be ignored.

Environmental justice is unbiased treatment and needs the significant involvement of people from all backgrounds. Environmental justice refers to the equal distribution of environmental effects such as pollution, and also the benefits of those effects. It implies that no group should shoulder a disproportionate share of negative environmental impacts. There are two popular modes of norms of allocation. The first is the equity principle allocation, which functions to maintain productivity. The distribution of benefits or harms is based on the input

or cost to people. The second is the equality principle, according to which distribution of benefits or harms should be equal. Environmental justice affects an individual's willingness to try for sustainable consumption (Pellow, 2000). Negative experiences do not drive individuals to engage in sustainable consumption, but when facing any environmental injustice, they will do so (Montada and Kals, 2000). These findings can be a basis to build Hypothesis H1 as described in Figure 1.

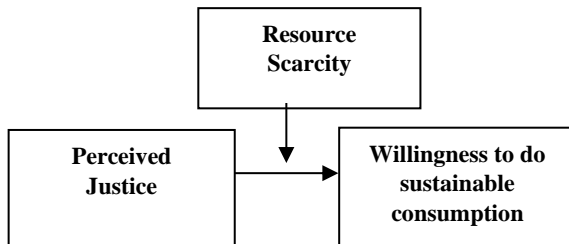


Figure 1: Conceptual Model.

H1: Perceived justice influences willingness to engage in sustainable consumption

Justice has been a critical part of public discourse in environmental discussions. The justice issue matters when addressing resource scarcity (Clayton, 2000). The lower the resource availability, the higher the demand for fair distribution. The decline of resource availability causes individuals to adapt their needs to the carrying capacity of the environment and must consider others' needs. Scarcity could shape the perceived justice of resource distribution and willingness to contribute to the common interest (Terman, 2007). Resource scarcity could encourage the individual's preference for equity justice in communities that have different backgrounds (Smith, 1990).

On the other hand, communities with similar backgrounds favor the equality justice principle as a means to distribute resources (Carson, 2000). These findings can be a basis to build hypotheses:

H2: Resource scarcity moderates the influence of equality justice on willingness to engage in sustainable consumption.

H3: Resource scarcity moderates the influence of equity justice on willingness to conduct sustainable consumption

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a laboratory experiment method. The participants of the experiment were

grouped into four: Group of Scarce Equality, Group of Scarce Equity, Group of Abundant Equality, and Group of Abundant Equity. The scarcity condition was symbolized by lower availability of water in gallons and the abundant condition with the abundant water.

The environmental problem is classified as one of public goods. The sustainability of the environment is determined by the public's willingness to cooperate in keeping the environment safe, manifested in sustainable consumption. The problem might be the free riders. Social dilemma analysis can be used to analyze the people's willingness to cooperate or to be free riders. We employed a one-shot five-player public goods game. By upholding sustainable consumption, individuals are prioritizing the common interest rather than their self-interest. Each participant decided how they would contribute to a shared public resource, represented by a gallon of drinking water from an endowment of Rp.100.000,00. The researcher informed the participants that any money they contributed would be doubled and would be distributed evenly among all members of the groups. If a participant chose to keep his or her endowment, while the other four group members contributed their earnings, they would receive earnings that would maximize their total earnings. The dependent variable was the amount of money contributed that represents the willingness to conduct sustainable consumption. The perceived justice measures to what extent the participant perceives the distribution of public resources. To manipulate participants' understand the perceived justice as either equality or equity justice, we alter the wording of the instructions according to the condition. The public goods were presented with amounts of drinking water distributed. In the equality distribution, participants were told that "they could equally take glasses of water regardless of how much they contributed." In the other justice principle, the equity principle, the participants were informed that "those who contributed more could take more glasses of water than those contributed less."

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using simple regression analysis, the result of this research shows that H1 is not rejected, meaning that perceived justice influences sustainable consumption ($B = 0,85$). The ANOVA revealed that there is an interaction between perceived justice with resource scarcity ($F = 51,67$, $sig = 0,00$) indicating that resource scarcity moderates the perceived justice to sustainable consumption, as described in Figure 2.

The significant influence of perceived justice on sustainable consumption and the positive relationship between them shown in this research means that the higher the level of perceived justice, the higher level of sustainable consumption. Therefore, there is a possible synergy between environmental justice scholarship and sustainable consumption scholarship. It was affirmed that the feeling of justice would drive people to make the environment better and convenient. Injustice causes some inconvenience, so that people usually intend to ignore such situations⁴. From this research, we also know that the influence of perceived equality justice on sustainable consumption occurs more often in a scarcity environment. Resource scarcity has a positive relationship with perceived equality justice but a negative relationship with perceived equity justice (Hegtvedt, 1987). It means that in a scarcity environment people tend to prefer harmony and justify equal outcome (Kazemi, 2006).

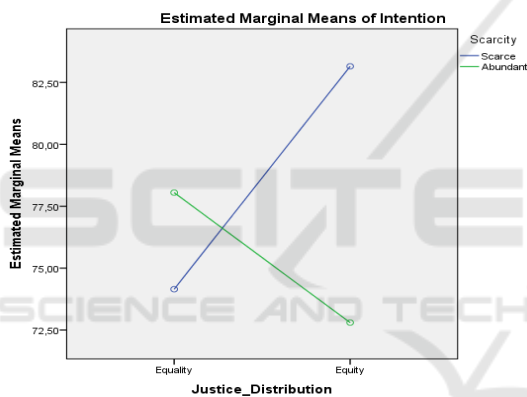


Figure 2: The interaction between perceived justice and resource scarcity.

Returning to the research gaps, the position of people as the object of an environmental problem can be empowered as a subject of the environmental solution. The feeling of injustice can drive people to shift their behavior to create a new and better environment.

5 CONCLUSION

We can conclude that perceived justice influences sustainable consumption, and that scarcity of resources moderates the relationship between perceived justice and sustainable consumption. In an abundant resource situation, the influence of perceived equality justice on sustainable consumption is higher than the influence of perceived

equity justice. On the contrary, when resources are scarce, the influence of perceived equity justice is higher than that of perceived equality justice. This research shows that people might be the object of environmental justice, but they can be the subjects of sustainable consumption. Environmental injustice drives people to curb it by engaging in sustainable consumption. The integration of environmental justice scholarship and sustainable consumption scholarship opens up a new perspective in exploring environmental problems.

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