

Youth's Intention to Participation in Community through Urban Agriculture Program

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Introduction

Urban agriculture (UA) is playing a significant role in promoting community development, food security, income opportunities, and economic growth in developing countries (Frayne, McCordic & Shilomboleni, 2014). University Putra Malaysia (UPM) has introduced UA programs to people living in urban areas. The university has been trying to encourage city people to perform some farming activities in limited spaces of their backyard or balcony as a source of food for the nation by 2020. UPM goal is to become a centre for guaranteeing food and green spaces for urban areas. To promote UA, UPM have started to encourage students to participation in community service and to train urban residents implementing UA. It is anticipated that a larger percentage of university students will become volunteer for the program in Malaysia. However, the extent to which university students intend to participate in the program is uncertain. Given the important benefits of community service to students' academic and personal development, their future career development and civic engagement, the main question is, would students intend to participate in the program during college? Finding answer to this question at the early stages of the program might help university policy-makers in readjusting the program and resources toward eliminating the barriers to participation to maximize the number of volunteer students. Thus, this study focused on university students' intention to volunteer the program in the future. The purpose of current study is to examine students' intention to participate in UA program; a community volunteer project which leading by university Putra Malaysia. Based on a first research project carried out in Malaysia to survey the university students' behavioural intention to participate in urban agriculture the paper aimed to: (1) provide an overall description of respondents, and (2) examine students' intention to participate in urban agriculture in the future.

Literature

Urban agriculture is very important for food security in developing countries. It contributes to urban food security, recycling of nutrients, community development, opportunities for leadership development, income generation, a social safety net for poor populations and the maintenance of green spaces (Stewart et al., 2013). There is a need to place an emphasis to the role that youth can play in urban agriculture (Muhammad-Lawal et. al., 2009). Involving youth in urban agriculture program is very important as one strategy to promote youth interest in the agriculture (Gwanya, 2008). Recently Malaysian government is aiming to change the perception of youth towards agriculture which was the third biggest contributor to the economy. Youth involvement in urban agriculture is important to reduce our country's dependency on imports, as well as providing job opportunity for young people (Mohamad Kamal Abdul Kadir, 2013). University decision makers expect that majority of students will devote their time voluntarily for urban agriculture community service in future. According to the Youth Participation in Development (DFID, 2010), promoting youth participation can take many forms, from encouraging youth volunteering in community development projects, to empowering young people to offer their perspectives on world issues, to having youth serve as members of advisory boards, become peer mentors, and lead development programs, non-profit organizations and small businesses. According to the theory of planned behaviour, intention or willingness to perform behaviour is the instant precursor to the individual engagement in the behaviour (Brayley et al., 2015). In fact, intention or willingness to perform behaviour is determining the readiness to perform behaviour (Ajzen, 2011). Intention to volunteer has shown to have strong and positive relationship with voluntary behaviour (Chancon et al., 2007).

Methods

Data were collected from the undergraduate students at faculty of agriculture using a quantitative method. The survey was adopted from previous study (Chancon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Greenslade & White, 2005; Hyde & Knowles, 2013; Warburton & Terry, 2000). Only a subgroup of questions from the questionnaire is used in this particular publication. A total of 438 students completed the survey. Variables of the study were measured based on 7-point Likert scales from 1 to 7. Participants were asked to indicate the likelihood that they would participate at some points in the future on a 7-point scale (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 =

extremely likely). “I will participate in the UA program,” I will consider participating in the UA program,” I will volunteer for the UA program at some point? and “How likely is it that you would participate in the UA program during your free time” . Descriptive analysis was used to describe the respondent’s sociodemographic variables.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic profile of the respondents

Sociodemographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1. Results show that out of the 438 respondents, 71.5% were female. Students were mainly Malays (92%), followed by Chinese (7.8%) and Indians (0.2%). Majority of respondents reported that their family involve in agricultural activities (236 persons, 53.9%). However, only 138 respondents 31.5% reported that their parents work in the agricultural sector. 71.9% of students have past voluntary experience. The results also show that most of the respondents were 21 years old and above (329 persons, 75.1%), while 24.9% were of ages below 21 years. As for the GPA, 96.3% of students had GPA above 3.

Students’ intention to participate in urban agriculture in the future

Five items were asked with students to determine their’ intention to participate in urban agriculture program. Students recorded high mean score for all items: with mean scores ranging from 5.39 to 5.44, students rank first item “I will participate in the UA program “as highest (M = 5.44) (Table2). The overall mean of response on intention to participate in the program was divided into three levels for reporting purposes. Majority of students, 68.4% (n=300) had a high intention to participate; 31.1% (n=136) had a moderate intention to participate and 0.5% (n=2) had a low intention to participate (Table 3). Therefore, the overall mean rating implies that students will participate in the program.

Table 2: Youth's Intention to participate in UA

Statement	Mean	SD
I will participate in the UA program	5.449	1.103
I will consider participating in the UA program	5.402	1.103
I will volunteer for the UA program at some point?	5.436	1.080
How likely is it that you would participate in the UA program during your free time	5.339	1.093

Table 3: Level of Youth's Intention to participate in UA

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (1.00-3.00)	2	0.5
Moderate (3.01-4.99)	136	31.1
High (5.00-7.00)	300	68.4

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=438)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	125	28.5
	Female	313	71.5
Age	Below 21	109	24.9
	21 and above	329	75.1
Race	Malay	403	92.0
	Chinese	17	3.9
	Indian	18	4.1
GPA	Below 3	16	3.7
	3 and above	422	96.3
Level of education	Diploma	3	0.7
	Bachelor Degree	435	99.3
Parents work in the agricultural sector	No	300	68.5
	Yes	138	31.5
Family involve in agricultural related activities	No	202	46.1
	Yes	236	53.9
Past volunteering experience	No	315	71.9
	Yes	123	28.1

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings showed that majority of students are intent to participate in UA program; a community volunteer project which leading by university Putra Malaysia. Strategies for providing them with skills and knowledge development in urban agriculture are required. In addition, priorities can be focused on supporting students' access to information through workshops, seminars, journals, and practical training on urban agriculture. It is recommended to conduct relevant studies that can help develop policies to encourage more university students to get involved in urban agriculture. Policy should be implemented to increase knowledge of young students towards urban agriculture.

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