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AN EXPLORATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN THE LOW CARBON CITY (LCC) INITIATIVE: CASE STUDY OF MAJLIS BANDARAYA SHAH ALAM

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Abstract

This research paper examines the state of community awareness and participation in the Low Carbon City (LCC) initiative by the Majlis Bandaraya Shah Alam (MBSA). The study aimed to explore the level of understanding, awareness, and involvement of the community in the low carbon city initiative, and to identify the factors that influence community participation. The study employed a qualitative approach where focus group discussions involving key stakeholders were conducted, and subsequently, thematically analysed. The findings suggest that the level of community awareness and participation in the low carbon city initiatives in Shah Alam is relatively low. Factors such as participation and information-sharing methods, and a lack of collaboration between stakeholders were identified as barriers to community participation. The study recommends that MBSA prioritises community engagement and education, including best practices, to increase community awareness and participation. In addition, the methods for participation and information sharing should be tailored to the target group. The findings also suggested continuous discussion and engagement among the stakeholders, especially between the communities and the local authority, can promote active participation in the LCC initiatives among the communities in Shah Alam.

Keywords: Community participation, low carbon city, carbon reduction, climate change, Majlis Bandaraya Shah Alam

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INTRODUCTION

In response to the growing threat of climate change, and the need for sustainable development, many cities worldwide have developed Low Carbon City (LCC) initiatives. These efforts attempt to minimise carbon emissions, enhance energy efficiency, and stimulate the use of renewable energy sources. In recent years, the city of Shah Alam, through its city council called the Majlis Bandaraya Shah Alam (MBSA), has adopted its own LCC initiatives with the purpose of establishing a sustainable and low carbon urban environment through various strategies, including energy-efficient buildings, green transportation, and green communities.

In spite of its potential benefits, it is yet to be determined how participative the community has been in the LCC initiative. As with such sustainable development initiatives, community engagement and participation are critical factors in their success. With active community participation, the LCC initiative will be able to achieve its goals. Therefore, the aims of this study were (1) to explore the level of understanding, awareness, and involvement of the community in the low carbon city initiative, and (2) to identify the factors that influence community participation.

This paper reviews the relevant literature on carbon reduction, low carbon cities, and community participation. Thereafter, it describes the methodology used to collect and analyse the data, whereby the Focus Group Discussion was the primary method for collecting data involving various key stakeholders. The results of the study are then presented and discussed, followed by the conclusion. Overall, this study sought to contribute to the understanding of community engagement and participation in implementing low carbon city initiatives, hence providing insights and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the LCC initiative by MBSA.

CARBON REDUCTION, LOW CARBON CITY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Low Carbon City (LCC) initiatives have increasingly gained attention in recent years as a response to climate change and urbanisation challenges. The United Nations (UN) has recognised the importance of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and improving energy efficiency in cities, and has called for cities to take action on climate change (United Nations, 2022).

In addition, LCC initiatives also provide benefits, such as improved air quality, reduced traffic congestion, and increased green spaces, which then improve the quality of life for communities, and enhance the economic competitiveness of cities (Wu et al., 2022; Su et al., 2013). These also contribute to achieving carbon reduction, which is the ultimate goal of LCCs in the first place, for which community participation is crucial. Community engagement and