Malaysian millennials are frustrated by the recurrent haze and smog pollution. Concrete and urgent measures are required to ensure that the haze crisis does not recur year after year. This study explores the views of Malaysian millennials on the measures that should be undertaken to resolve the haze crisis. This paper also sought to employ moral suasion to persuade the main stakeholders to tackle the crisis. Moral suasion is an appeal to moral arguments in order to influence or change behavior. This study employed a qualitative approach to seek inputs from business undergraduates at a Malaysian public university. Moral arguments calling for action to resolve the haze crisis are highlighted centered on the reason based moral principles such as moral rights, utilitarianism and justice. To the best of the author’s knowledge, there is little if at all any literature in academic journals on the haze crisis in South East Asia from the perspective of moral suasion.

Key words: ASEAN, haze, human rights, justice, moral suasion, utilitarianism

INTRODUCTION

The first occurrence of the haze in Malaysia was recorded in 1994 (Malaysia, 2018). Malaysians millennials are understandably frustrated by the perennial haze and smog pollution which has plagued the nation for more than two decades. According to a recent poll, a total of 98,900 or 87 per cent of haze social media conversations were from Malaysia as compared to 7,300 or 7 per cent recorded from Singapore and 6,800 or 7 per cent from Indonesia (Choong, 2019).

There is a need for urgent actions leading to a permanent solution on the haze crisis. Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was reported as saying, in his speech delivered at Columbia University in New York in September 2019 that “there is nothing that the world could do to compel Indonesia to deal with widespread forest fires contributing to the haze situation in parts of Southeast Asia... but we should try persuasion...” (Bernama, 2019).

The haze can be viewed as a moral crisis. According to Velasquez(2013), there are four steps required in solving a moral crisis. The first step is the recognition of the situation as an ethical issue followed by efforts in judging the ethical course of action, deciding to do the ethical course of action and carrying out the ethical decision (Velasquez, 2013). In line with the above mentioned four step framework in resolving a moral situation, this study follows-up on an earlier paper by the researcher that highlighted the moral dimensions of the haze problem. This paper
aims to judge the ethical course of action from the lens of Malaysian millennials and provide suggestions on moral suasion in line with the inputs from the respondents. To the best of the author's knowledge, there is little if at all any literature in academic journals on the haze crisis in South East Asia from the perspective of moral suasion.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research instrument was a survey questionnaire containing open-ended questions. Forty-eight (48) completed questionnaires were obtained from business undergraduates at a public university in Malaysia which specializes in management education. The profile of the respondents is presented in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Respondents’ profile (N = 48)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Acct.(Hons)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Fin(Hons)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Banking(Hons)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBA(Hons)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.POM (Hons.)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBA(Log.&amp;Tpt.)(Hons)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Mktg.(Hons)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBM(Hons)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ent.(Hons)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIFB(Hons)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMA(Hons)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semester No</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The data to the open ended survey questions were reviewed manually and analyzed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software (QDAS). Five major themes emerged from the qualitative data based on actions to be undertaken by various stakeholders, namely governments, businesses,
farmers, individuals and other parties such as non-governmental organizations, academia and the media.

a. **Actions to be taken by Government Authorities**

Some examples of quotes from respondents in relation to this theme are presented below:

“...Malaysian government should take legal action to protect its people by punishing the companies responsible and suing Indonesia under international law... Malaysian government must do more to protect its citizens. ... There were too many meetings and agreements on this issue. But no positive results...No country should allow another country to endanger their citizens in this way...As air pollution are usually identifiable point sources via imaging technologies, it should be possible to trace the culprits and to regulate...”

“...Government authorities should monitor smoke from factories and vehicles...and curb illegal logging...”

“...The central government in Jakarta must pressure the local and provincial governments to enhance surveillance.. they must work constantly in monitoring and checking the hot spots, especially during the dry season to prevent forest and peat fires from strating ..prevention is very important...once fires start they are difficult to put out.. ”

“...Indonesian government should take immediate action by building canals in farmlands, so the land always remained moist and not easily combustible as promised... Indonesia should create awareness and educate its farmers on the consequences of the “slash and burn” method...and provide incentives to poor farmers...”

“...Indonesian government should accept assistance from its neighbors to expedite emergency measures to control the forest fires...”

“...Governments of countries in South East Asia must co-operate and do more.....ASEAN should have better enforcement for the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. ASEAN should act quickly by sending manpower, equipment, waters bombers and doing cloud seeding in central Sumatra or any other area in Indonesia when the fire occurs...ASEAN should pressure Indonesia to be more proactive and ensure haze does not recur...”

b. **Actions to be taken by Businesses**

Some examples of quotes from respondents in relation to this theme are presented below:

“...Companies causing the haze lack of corporate social responsibility. They must have better CSR (corporate social responsibility) policies and strategies...”
“...Companies should review their supply chains, Do not buy from suppliers who practice slash and burn. ... they also need to monitor their subsidiaries to ensure they don’t practice slash and burn...”

“...Companies must have good environmental practices, adopt pollution prevention through changes in operating practices, improved and preventive maintenance, or changes in raw materials; build good air pollution control systems into new or modified production processes; improving or replacing air pollution control systems in existing facilities; and reducing air pollution and improving energy efficiency through process change...”

“...Companies should educate their workers and have environmental, health and safety training...forbid employees to behave in unsafe ways like tossing cigarette butts into dry scrub. Once a fire begins on peat soil it is difficult control...”

“...Companies must take action to reduce air pollution from their factories. Factories need to install smoke filters before releasing into the air...and have chimneys to release the smoke high up in the atmosphere... Companies should allow workers to work from home during the haze...”

c. **Actions to be taken by Other Stakeholders**

Some examples of quotes from respondents in relation to this theme are presented below:

“...We as individuals need to stop open burning. Open burning can make the haze become worst...”

“...Individuals should be more conscious of their environmental impact..we should use public transport, reduce use of air condition, ensure our cars are well maintained.. Motor vehicles, due to their increasing numbers are also major sources of haze particulates in urban areas...”

“...Individual consumers should stop buying products from companies involved in causing the haze....”

“...Small scale farmers should find other ways...not use the traditional method to slash and burn ...”

“...University researchers and scientists should carry out more research to help find scientific solutions to the crisis...”

“...Organizations such as the Association of Plantation Investors of Malaysia in Indonesia (APIMI) should ensure members comply with good environmental practices...”

“...Environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace, MNS and WWF Malaysia could help raise awareness and put pressure on governments and perpetrators... continuous campaign of the cause, solutions and steps need to be taken to stop the haze...”

“...The press should step up media reporting on this atrocity to human life and environment...”
“...Religious institutions can highlight the disobedience to God’s commandments to do no harm and protect His creations...This is one where religions can unite the people rather than divide ...

“...Corruption related NGOs can create awareness on the link between corruption and the prolonged haze crisis...Weeding out corruption would lead to better enforcement of haze laws...

MORAL SUASION

Based on the required actions as highlighted by the respondents, the following moral arguments are presented to persuade the main stakeholders to undertake urgent and concrete steps to resolve the haze crisis. Governments should care for the wellbeing and health of its citizens and must therefore give top priority to fund and undertake actions to solve the haze crisis. Governments should review their legislations to ensure that perpetrators are severely punished to prevent recurrence of the haze (Heilmann, 2015; Shukor, Kamaruddin, Supaat, Khalid, & Hashim, 2018). This is in line with the principle of retributive justice.

Countries responsible for the haze should take immediate action in order to safeguard good relations with neighboring countries. ASEAN as a regional association should take actions to resolve the annual haze problem and prevent the haze issue from escalating and damaging the goodwill and relations between countries in South East Asia. These actions underlie the wisdom of proponents of care ethics. According to the ethics of care moral theory, we should preserve and nurture valuable relationships and also care for those who are dependent on us (Held, 2006).

As pointed out by one respondent, “…citizens depend on the government to give them a peaceful and safe place to live ... we are disappointed by the lack of resolve and solutions...”. From the human rights perspective, citizens have a moral right to life, clean air and governments have a duty to protect this fundamental human right (Ashcraft, 2013). Governments around the world could work under the auspices of the United Nations to sanction countries and companies responsible for serious forest fires around the globe using various mechanisms. One such platform is the recently created UN framework on business and human rights which outlines the duty of the state and business responsibilities in safeguarding human rights (Ruggie & Des Nations, 2011).

While slash and burn agriculture may maximize profits of companies and farmers, it has immense negative effects to the environment, society, humans, flora and fauna. Companies need to remember that there is no point in becoming the top company in the world if the world is consequently destroyed. Companies need to take a wider and longer term perspective on the direct and indirect effects of their policies and actions, both long term and short term, to all affected parties (Hanafi et al., 2019; Latif et al., 2018; Ng, 2018; Samphantharak, 2019; Wahab, Kamarudin, & Rahim, 2016). Company policies and actions need to be evaluated on the basis of the effects of those policies to all parties, who are directly and indirectly affected by their actions, and not only care about the effects of their cost cutting measures to themselves alone. This is the fundamental requirement of the utilitarian moral principle (Lyons, 2015).
UTILITARIANISM AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS OF SLASH AND BURN AGRICULTURE

Utilitarianism prescribes that the moral action is to make life better by increasing the utility such as pleasure and happiness in the world and decreasing the amount of bad consequences such as pain and unhappiness.

Companies that practice slash and burn agriculture resulting in the destruction of huge forests are contributing to climate change and the accelerated destruction of the earth which would lead to the extinction of humankind and the earth. Although there is likely no hard data as yet on the impact of the ASEAN haze on climate change, companies have a moral obligation to exercise precaution. According to the precautionary principle, if a practice carries an unknown risk of catastrophic and irreversible consequences but it is uncertain how large that risk is, then the practice should be rejected until it is certain the risk is nonexistent or insignificant (Velasquez, 2013). The Maximin rule in relation to environmental ethics also states that when risks cannot be measured, the most rational procedure is to first assume that the worst will happen and then choose the option that leaves us best off when the worst happens (Velasquez, 2013). Those responsible for the haze problem should stop slash and burn agriculture until it is proven that their practices do not contribute to the catastrophic and irreversible consequences of climate change.

Slash and burn agriculture is also unfair and unjust to its victims due to the resultant unfair distribution of cost and benefits from the practice. Companies violate the moral principle of distributive justice (Lamont, 2017) since they pocket the benefits of slash and burn agriculture while other parties do not benefit. Slash and burn agriculture also results in unfair distribution of burden. The negative effects or consequences of slash and burn agriculture are borne mainly by other parties who do not share their corporate profit. Companies should not practice slash and burn agriculture to protect their corporate image and reputation as well as avoid potentially hefty fines by government authorities and lawsuits from haze victims in the future (Listiningrum, 2018). Companies with good corporate image and a reputation for sustainable policies will be more profitable and successful in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This paper contributes to the literature by providing inputs gathered from Malaysian millennials on the actions to be taken to resolve the haze crisis. Views and concerns of the young generation on the haze should be given due consideration as we owe a moral duty to the young and future generations to preserve and safeguard the environment (Hiskes, 2005). This paper also attempts to use moral suasion to provide moral arguments to underline the urgent call for actions to be taken.

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International Policies Governing Haze in Malaysia: a Move Forward towards a Greener
