

# Self-enhancement Values and Social-sustainability Decision Making of Micro Fashion Entities during the Covid-19 Pandemic Period

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**Abstract.** The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has become a deadly pandemic in the early 2020. It has caused several changes in society. Social-sustainability dilemmas need to be faced by micro fashion entities during the pandemic. Self-enhancement values, which is based upon egoistic personal values have long been associated with ethical decision making. This study examines the relationship between self-enhancement values and social-sustainability decision making of micro-fashion entities located in Indonesia, as they relate to do donations and sell ethical fashion products during the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship was measured using Spearman correlation analysis. A significant negative relationship between self-enhancement values and social-sustainability decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic was found. The implication of this empirical result may be used as a basis of considerations for the government to make an online donation platform and regulations relating to ethical fashion products for supporting micro-entities as the main contributor in Indonesian economics.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus Disease, COVID-19 pandemic, self-enhancement values, social-sustainability, ethical decision making, donation, micro-entrepreneurship, contingency theory

## 1. Introduction

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus2 (SARS-CoV-2) or mostly known as the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic has altered the way of living and caused some changes in the society. The disease has crossed the borders of China where it began spreading to become the worldly pandemic. The pandemic has led to the new development of fashion where masks, face shields, gloves and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) play an important role. In accordance with the World Health Organization's (WHO) advice, Indonesian government has made a rule which urges people to wear masks in public places. As a result, the production of cloth mask need to be ramped up through small, medium and micro-enterprises to fulfill the need of masks.

Sustainability has become an increasingly important point of concern for the society[1].The COVID-19 pandemic has made social-sustainability programs and commitments were becoming the norm in the fashion industries. A number of fashion entities are doing donations during the pandemic to help combat the COVID-19 crisis outbreak. Social media is becoming

the platform of gaining donations since the pandemic has led people to social-distance. The success of social-networking services enable users to actively participate in a manner which is of personal benefit by creating value for themselves [2]. The sustainability efforts encompassed both environmental and social aspects, including donations and selling of ethical fashion products. Ethical fashion refers to fashion products made by considering the social and environmental aspects. Ethical fashion includes products made with eco-friendly or made under fair-trade conditions [3].

Ethics provides rules that determine actions and decisions. Individuals' attitude towards ethical or unethical behavior in their personal life would be the same as the moral belief system of the community and culture in which they live [4]. Ethical decisions are decisions that are legal and morally accepted by the larger community [5]. Personal values have been widely associated with decision-making. According to Schwartz (2012), value is a belief connected with feelings. Values are important in human life. Each individual holds their values. Values that are used by individual as their guiding principles are different one to another [6]. Values and attitudes as individual factors influence individual decision making in the Contingency Theory of Ethical Decision Making [7]. Ferrel and Gresham (1985) explain that contingency factors can be found in individuals, and organizations. Individual factors (knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions) are considered to interact with organizational factors (significant others and opportunity factors) to influence individuals involved in ethical dilemmas of decision making.

## **2. Literature Review**

Personal beliefs and feelings of individuals determine their behavior in public [8]. The definition emphasizes that behavior is strongly influenced by beliefs and feelings. This indicates that values impact how individuals behave in the society.

According to Schwartz (1992), self-enhancement value structure consists of values that prioritize individual achievement, success and dominance over others. This value structure contains the value type of hedonism, achievement and power. Hedonism is derived from enjoyment associated with satisfying human needs. This type of value prioritizes pleasure and satisfaction for oneself. Specific values included as hedonism in the Schwartz Value Scale are pleasure and enjoyment in life. Achievement is the type of value purposed to gain personal success by showing competence according to the social standards. Specific values found in this type of value in the Schwartz Value Scale are: success, capability, ambition and influence. Power is the individual needs for dominance and control that is identified through an analysis of social motives. The main purpose of this power is the achievement of social status and prestige, as well as control or dominance over other people or certain resources. Specific values of power in the Schwartz Value Scale are: social power, authority, wealth, preserving public image and social recognition [9]. Self-enhancement values reflected self-interested value [10]. Self-enhancement values are egoistic and associated with unethical behavior.

Ethical decisions made by fashion micro-entities during the COVID-19 pandemic made by considering ethical values in their environment. Some decision making models incorporate values as influences in the ethical dimensions of decision making [11]. Public perception on doing donation and selling ethical fashion products may still be heterogeneous because of the differences in values, knowledge, concern and moral awareness of the community. The extent

of individual involvement in social activities is a function of many factors like personality, age, culture, belief systems and values and other factors[12].

There are five basic needs of human according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs: the need of self-actualization, esteem, love and belonging, safety and physiological[13]. Along with the theory, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the physiological needs are considered the most important need. Ethical fashion products which are considered as the self-esteem needs is not a priority during the pandemic.

Micro-entities is the most important factor of Indonesian economic growth. In the COVID-19 pandemic situation, focusing on micro-entities will lead to awaken the micro-businesses in Indonesia. Septiyanti (2020) had conducted a research of the managerial strategies on the performance of micro-scale business entities in Indonesia. By using 2,532 micro-entities in Indonesia as the sample, the study shows that micro-scale business entities in Indonesia tend to be individually-managed [14]. Therefore, the owner takes charge in making decisions for the entity. Thus, self-enhancement value become the main concern in the business of micro-entities. Limited literature studying the self-enhancement values and social-sustainability in micro fashion entities decision making makes it an interesting concern to discover, especially for Indonesian context.

A few researches about values and ethical decision making had been conducted. Fritzsche and Oz (2007) have conducted research on the influence of personal values: altruistic(self-transcendence), self-enhancement, openness to change, and traditional value structures on the ethical dimensions of decision making. The study provides results that the altruistic values (self-transcendence) are significantly positively related to ethical decision making, self-enhancement values are negatively related to ethical decision making, while the traditional and openness to change values are not statistically significant and the value pathway is negatively related to the indicated ethical behavior. Manchiraju and Sadachar (2014) conducted a study using a model of Fritzsche and Oz (2007) about the relationship between personal values (self-transcendence, self-enhancement, openness to change, and conservation) with the intention of ethical decisions in fashion consumption on ethical issues related to the purchase of organic clothing products, donations of used clothing, promotion of fair-trade fashion brands, and the use of counterfeit fashion products. The study found that self-enhancement values are negatively related to the intention of ethical decision making, the openness to change values are positively related to the intention of ethical decision making, while conservation and self-transcendence values do not have a significant relationship with the intention of ethical decision making [15]. The result is contrary to the existing literature and is not in accordance with the hypothesis of researchers in which the value of self-transcendence hypothesized to have a positive relationship with the intention of ethical decision making and the value of openness to change hypothesized to have a negative relationship with the intention of ethical decision making. According to the past studies, self-enhancement values, consisting of egoistic values, are negatively related to ethical decision making.

This study aimed to determine the relationship of self-enhancement values and social-sustainability decision making of micro fashion entities focused on decisions of doing donations and selling ethical fashion product during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ferrel and Gresham (1985) explains that contingency factors can be found in an individual and organizations. The individual factors (knowledge, value, behavior and intention) are considered to interact with the organisational factors (significant others and probability) to influence individuals involved in ethical dilemmas of decision making. Ferrel and Gresham (1985) used advertising deception, falsifying research data, price collusion, bribes and bid rigging as the ethical issues. Based on the theory of Ferrel and Gresham (1985), we

developed the ethical issues suitable on the COVID-19 pandemic which are decisions on doing donations and selling ethical fashion products during the pandemic.

This study developed a hypothesis that self-enhancement values are negatively related with social-sustainability decision making of micro fashion entities during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

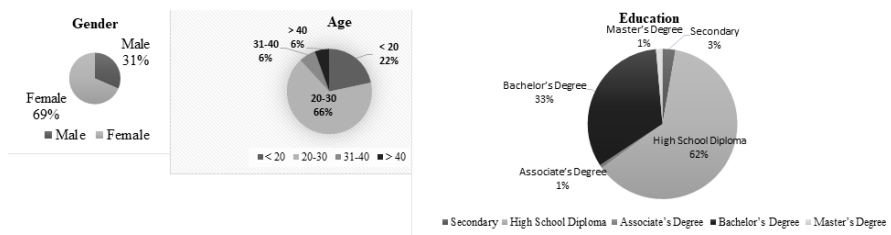
### 3. Methodology and Data Analysis

Data were gathered from an online survey by sending the questionnaire to micro fashion entities in Indonesia during the social-distancing period on the first two weeks of April, 2020. The online survey is considered as the best method during the COVID-19 pandemic since the government urge Indonesian citizen to social-distance and stay at home. The data was analyzed using the Spearman correlation analysis.

Self-enhancement values were measured using the Schwartz Value Scale. The Schwartz Value Scale is a 9-points bipolar scale consists of how important is the values to each individuals. The scale ranged from "7" for "supreme importance" to "1" for "opposed to my values". The Schwartz Value Scale has been tested for validity and reliability and has been used in various studies both in the original and modified versions.

Vignettes are used to measure the social-sustainability decision making. The vignettes focused upon the social-sustainability issue of donations and ethical fashion selling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 9-points bipolar scale the chances that they would take the specific action posed in the vignette. The scale ranged from "7" for "definitely would not" and "-1" for "definitely would". The vignettes had been tested for the validity and reliability.

### 4. Research Result and Discussion



**Fig. 1.** Characteristics of the Sample.  
Source: Data proceed, 2020

The responses received only from the surviving micro fashion entities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social-distancing period, most of the micro-entities in Indonesia shut down their business because of the citizens' decreasing purchasing power. The total of 200 responses were obtained out of which 143 were usable. Characteristics of the sample of the sample are shown in figure 1. 66.4 percent of the respondents were among 20-30 years old and

21.7 percent were below 20 years old. This is in accordance with Manchiraju and Sadachar (2014) which stated that people around 18-29 years old are more fashion-conscious. 68.5 percent of the participants were female. This indicates that female is more interested in fashion business than male.

**Table 1.** Average Responses to the Questionnaire

<b>Self-enhancement Values</b>	Average Responses	
<b>Power</b>		
Social Power	5.59	5.04
Authority	4.53	
Wealth	4.90	
Preserving My Public Image	5.53	
Social Recognition	4.67	
<b>Achievement</b>		
Success	6.31	5.81
Capability	6.25	
Ambition	5.07	
Influence	5.59	
<b>Hedonism</b>		
Pleasure	5.64	5.67
Enjoyment in Life	5.70	
<b>Social-sustainability Decision Making</b>		
<b>Doing Donations</b>		3.80
<b>Ethical Fashion Product Selling</b>		2.11

Source: Data proceed, 2020

Table 1 shows the average responses to the questionnaire. Micro fashion entities in Indonesia tend to prioritize achievement values than power values as the average responses of achievement value is the highest among others while power value type responses has the lowest average value. Thus, performance, competency and self-development are more prioritized than their social performance, prestige and domination to others. Among all of the specific values, success is the most important according to the responses as it has the highest average responses value and authority is the less-prioritized specific values with the lowest average responses value. Overall, self-enhancement values are considered important for micro fashion entities in Indonesia with an average responses value above 3 as the minimum point to state that the value is important to their life.

The average response to donation decision making is higher than the average response to ethical fashion product selling decision making. The average response of donation decision making is above the neutral response point (3) while the average response of ethical fashion product is below 3. Thus, micro fashion entities in Indonesia are more likely to do donations during the COVID-19 pandemic than selling ethical fashion products.

**Table 2.** Correlation of Self-enhancement Values and Social-sustainability Decision Making

			<b>Self- enhancement Values</b>	<b>Social- sustainability Decision Making</b>
<b>Spearman's rho</b>	Self- enhancement Values	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.267**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	143	143
	Social- sustainability Decision Making	Correlation Coefficient	-.267**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.	
N		143	143	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Data Proceed, 2020

Table 2 shows the correlation of self-enhancement values and social-sustainability decision making. The probability value (Sig. 2 tailed) of correlation is smaller than 0.01 as the error value. This indicates that the relationship between self-enhancement values and social-sustainability decision making is significant. The correlation coefficient shows a negative number which indicates that the variables are negatively related. The result is in accordance with the result of Fritzsche and Oz (2007) and Manchiraju and Sadachar (2014) that self-enhancement values are negatively related to ethical decision making. The result also supports the Contingency Theory of Ethical Decision Making by Ferrel and Gresham (1985) that values influence individual decision making.

The responses support the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the physiological need is more important than self-esteem as the micro fashion entities tend to do donation during the pandemic than selling ethical fashion products. While fulfilling the physiological needs of those in need by doing donations, micro fashion entities prioritized their self-actualization needs more than their self-esteem needs. Ethical fashion products selling that is associated with self-esteem needs is less-prioritized during the pandemic. Since COVID-19 is a world deadly pandemic, micro fashion entities tend to do donations and reduce their egoistical values to fulfill their self-actualization needs not only in this world but also for the hereafter according to their belief by fulfilling the physiological needs of other. The more decisions to donate indicate the low egoistical self-enhancement values of the micro fashion entities. The low ethical fashion consciousness indicates a high egoistical self-enhancement values of the micro fashion entities.

## 5. Conclusion

This study supports the Contingency Theory of Ethical Decision Making by Ferrel and Gresham (1985) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. The result confirms that there is a negative relationship between self-enhancement values and social-sustainability decision making. The negative relationship between self-enhancement value and social-sustainability

decision making is in accordance with the past studies of Fritzsche and Oz (2007) and Manchiraju and Sadachar (2014).

## 6. Implications

This study suggest that micro fashion entities tend to do donations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study may become a consideration for the government to create online platform for micro fashion entities' online donation activities to help the national economic grows even in the pandemic. Online donation platform is needed since social-distancing is a way to prevent the virus from spreading. This may also be the consideration for the government to make a regulation relating to the ethical fashion products. It may reduce the self-enhancement values and increase the social-sustainability consciousness of micro fashion entities and its chain.

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