

## Driving Factors behind Malaysian Muslims' Environmentally Ethical Behavior

Mashitoh Yaacob

mash@ukm.edu.my

Pusat Citra Universiti; and Institute of Islam Hadhari, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

---

### Abstract

For Muslims, Islam plays a crucial role in the formulation of worldviews regarding the natural world and in the articulation of *akhlaq* that guide human behavior. As the country gets hotter, crowded, less bio-diverse and polluted Muslim religious activists in Malaysia are among the groups that drive Malaysian Muslims' environmentally ethical behavior (EEB) within the framework of their respective realm. Aware of the environmental problems that the country is facing, activists from Islamic religious organizations in Malaysia are participating in the struggle to secure the wellbeing of the nation by addressing environmental issues within the framework of Islam. They not only propagate Islamic environmental values but clearly act upon those values and promote respect and care for the environment as well as assist in halting environmental degradation. Hence, I argue that among the driving factors behind Muslims' EEB are Muslim religious scholars and Islamic religious organizations. This paper makes explicit these driving factors behind Malaysian Muslims' EEB in that how exactly Muslim religious scholars and Islamic religious organizations respond to the environmental challenge within the context of industrial development in Malaysia. This work utilizes methods of analysis and synthesis of relevant documents in exploring the efforts of Muslim religious scholars and Islamic religious organizations in driving Muslims' EEB in Malaysia. The result of the analysis and synthesis of the relevant documents illustrates that Muslim religious scholars and Islamic religious organizations drive Muslims' EEB through diverse methods within their individual and organizational scope and autonomy such as via *khutbah* or sermons during Friday congregational prayer, public speeches, forum in the media, and activities of the mosques and religious-based nongovernmental organizations. This finding may shed light on the level of involvement of Muslim religious scholars and Islamic religious organizations in driving Muslims' EEB in Malaysia.

Keywords: Environmentally ethical behavior; Muslim religious activists; Muslim religious scholars; Islamic religious organizations; Malaysian Muslims

© 2018 Published by HADHARI-UKM.

---

### Introduction

The root cause of environmental degradation is when 'needs' is being used interchangeably with 'desire' or 'want' feeding 'greed'. We always justify our 'desire' or 'want' with the use of the term 'need.' For example, I 'need' a new dress while the highest of need must be meant if we do not get that kind of need we will die – such as water, air and food, i.e., physiological needs. The second highest of 'need' is when we do not get it we usually would not be able to function well in a community. Hence, environmentally ethical behavior (EEB) is a balanced behavior between 'desire' and 'need.' To be 'ethical' to the environment for a Muslim means to have an *akhlaq* and *adab* in his or her interactions with the environmental elements. The *akhlaq* and *adab* in a Muslim interaction with the environmental elements are prescribed in al-Quran and exemplified by Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. The environment is created by Allah with purposes, i.e., for religious and social functions.