

Islamic Values in Environmental Communication within the Malaysian Media: A Case Study of *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*

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ABSTRACT

We argue that environmental communication within the Malaysian media landscape is influenced by Islamic beliefs and teachings. Although Islam has a great influence on environmental communication in Malaysia, it is an area underexplored by past studies. We conducted a content analysis on two mainstream Malay media outlets, namely *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*, for a six-year period (2012-2017) in order to investigate the types of Islamic values which were represented in the environmental articles published by both newspapers. We also conducted interviews with 11 journalists from both newspapers to determine the purpose of using Islamic values in environmental articles. The result of content analysis discovered that *tawhid* (unity of God) is the most common Islamic value used in *Utusan Malaysia's* environmental articles, while in *Berita Harian*, *iman* (faith) is the value which most commonly appears. In the interviews, journalists from *Utusan Malaysia* described that the value of *tawhid* is used the most in the environmental articles as it is one of the core values in Islam, while the journalists from *Berita Harian* explained that *iman* has been used the most as this value is an intrinsic part of the readers' lives. However, most of the interviewees stated that the main challenge for them came from the need of the journalists themselves to have a great understanding of both Islam and environment. It is hoped that the findings of this study could serve as a reference for future research in the area of Islamic environmental communication.

Keywords: *Environmental communication, Islam, media, value, Malaysia.*

INTRODUCTION

It is a widely known fact that environmental protection is embedded into all religious teachings in this world (Sachdeva, 2016; Razzaq, Ansari, Razzaq & Awan, 2018). The connection between both the environment and religion has been debated as the "nature-based religion" concept since the first Earth Day celebration in 1970 (Taylor, 2010). Many believe that the alarming increase of environmental problems that we are currently facing is due to the separation of living and religion around the world (Gada, 2014), and a consequence of the lack of values amongst humankind (Ghernaout, 2017). Therefore, the emphasis on the importance of religion in environmental protection is becoming more obvious around the globe. In Dubai for example, a global summit on Islam and the environment was organised in 2013 as an effort to discuss in detail about the connections between ecology and the Islamic faith (Reuter, 2015).

Without a doubt, many religions in this world, including Islam, Buddhism and Christianity, preach for their followers to be kind towards the environment, and to protect and preserve it from degradation. In other words, religion is considered as one of the pivotal remedies and solutions for environmental degradation as it promotes the philosophy of stewardship towards the environment (Preston & Baimel, 2021) and encourages pro-

environmental intention and behaviour among believers (Zemo & Nigus, 2021). For instance, Christianity teaches its followers the importance of stewardship of God's creation, which includes the environment (Randolph, 2011). Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Gandhian teachings emphasise on environmental values via the concepts of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *aparigriha* (non-possession) and *karuna* (compassion) (Joshi, 2017). Similarly, in Islamic teachings, there are 750 verses in the Holy Koran that stress about nature and how it is a precious gift from Allah (God) (Ashtankar, 2016). Muslims are therefore also always taught to be responsible in protecting and respecting the natural environment from degradation (Jusoff & Abu Samah, 2011; Olayiwola, 2014). In legitimately realising a strong relation between religion and the environment, some environmental and faith-based organisations are actively bringing elements of religion and faith in their environmental stewardship efforts (Carlisle & Clark, 2018).

In an earlier study, Hope and Jones (2014) described Muslim and Christian participants as having low perceptions of urgency on environmental issues (particularly climate change) due to their beliefs in the afterlife and divine interventions, compared to secular participants who emphasised human responsibility due to their lack of faith in God. Muslims and Christians were particularly spiritual in the construction of their perceptions on environmental issues, while secular respondents were more action-oriented. Similarly, Morrison, Duncan and Parton (2015) reported that Australian Christian literalists and non-literalists are the least engaged with climate change issues, while the Buddhists are the most engaged, as the human rule of Buddhists seems to be more associated with support for the environment when compared to the Christians. On the other hand, Martin and Bateman (2014) proved that highly religious Judeo-Christian consumers were no less receptive to environmental messages and were as environmentally-friendly as other consumers. Australian Buddhists, Christian literalists, Christian non-literalists and Secularists also had different perceptions on the issues of human-induced climate change, the level of consensus among scientists, their own efficacy and the need for policy responses (Morrison, Duncan & Parton, 2015). These contradictory and different views of religious values and environmental issues thus require further investigation.

Malaysia is a Muslim-majority country located in Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, Islamic values such as being truthful exert a great influence on journalistic values among Malaysian journalists (Steele, 2011a). This is not particularly surprising, as Pintak (2014) in his study also discovered that Islamic values influence and shape the views of journalists in other Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan and the Arab states. Within the Islamic perspective, the media is a platform for Muslim journalists to spread good information (*da'wah*) to the public, which includes environmental information (Ishak & Solihin, 2012). Within the Islamic communication perspectives, the media as well as other stakeholders such as mosques, schools, and the government are recommended to address and promote environmental issues to the public (Olayiwola, 2014).

Environmental communication is an interdisciplinary field of study that aims to communicate environmental affairs for public consumption. In the West, this area first emerged in the US during the 1980s (Cox, 2010), while, the development of environmental communication in Malaysia is still rather novel and evolving. Environmental issues in Malaysia are highly related to its history of colonisation and subsequent developments. This is the reason that many past research on environmental communication mainly associated media representation with developments and politics (Seng, Jalaluddin, Mohd Yusof, Zurinah & Nor

Hisham, 2021), and overlooked other sociocultural aspects such as religion and culture. Consequently, this creates gaps in the communication of environmental issues in Malaysia that leaves room for further exploration. In relation to this, there is a number of environmental information being represented in Malaysian media, especially in Malay newspapers, which is influenced by Islamic values. For instance, a local Malaysian newspaper *Berita Harian* discussed environmental management via *sharia*, or the Islamic way (Arifin, 2018). The environmental information that has been written by Muslim journalists from an Islamic perspective is different from secular environmental information, due to the inclusion of verses from the Holy Koran or citations from Hadith (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad), which thus contextualises such environmental information within an Islamic framework. For example, in an article discussing the use of mosques for the housing and protection of flood victims, including non-Muslim victims, which was published in *Berita Harian* included a citation of verses the Koran from Surah At-Taubah about the history of prophet Muhammad who gave protection to the non-Muslim community (Luqman & Fahmy, 2017). Most journalists who wrote these Islamic environmental articles are Muslim and work for Malay-language newspapers whose majority readers are from the Malay Muslim population of Malaysia (Mohamad Saifudin & Nik Norma, 2019). For Muslims, Islamic environmental information is a pivotal vehicle for solving serious environmental problems (Olayiwola, 2015).

Although Islam exerts a great influence on environmental communication in Malaysia, there is no specific studies that have related the two concepts. This is due to the novelty of environmental communication in Malaysia, as established by the limited quantity of available research (Lee & Chuan, 2012; Nor Azah, Tze, Soon, Rosmila & Hassan, 2018). Substantiating this, though the research on environmental communication has been around for a while (Taylor, 2010), the connection between religions, particularly Islam, and environmental communication has not been clearly drawn. More recent publications touch on this issue (Bratton, 2021; Nche, 2020), and analysed case studies and views of religious leaders. While Nche's (2020) study is specific to Christianity, Bratton's (2021) looks into case studies from various religions including Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity mainly. In an effort to add more literature in this field, this research focuses on the relationship between Islam and environmental communication. It fills the gaps by exploring the types of Islamic values and ethics that have influenced Malaysian Muslim journalists in their environmental news reporting, and to develop an understanding of the reasons journalists included such values in their reporting and communication. This is in line with the notion of religious discourses that focuses on the importance of understanding the influence of religion on social and cultural aspects of human life (Wan Norshira, 2019).

It is hoped that the study can contribute to the understanding of how Islamic values influence environmental communication activities in Muslim-majority countries. Drawing on this idea, it can be argued that Malaysian's environmental communication within the perspective of a Muslim-majority country is different from the perspective of secular Western environmental communication. Environmental communication especially from the Malaysian Malay media is influenced by the Islamic ethics based on the holy Quran, and promotes the good act of environmentalism (Mohamad Saifudin, Nur Atikah, Sharifah Nadiah & Rani Ann, 2020). To this end, the researchers have analysed the content of Islamic environmental information obtained from two selected Malaysian Malay newspapers and interviewed 11 journalists from the same media organisations. It is expected that the study can fill the gap of

underexplored past studies on the influence of religion on the environment (Zemo & Nigus, 2021).

Islamic Environmental Communication in Malaysia

Malaysia is a developing country with a tropical climate strategically located in the heart of Southeast Asia. Malaysia is adjacent to Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei. Geographically, Malaysia is divided into two parts: Peninsular Malaysia (also known as West Malaysia) and Borneo Sabah and Sarawak (also known as East Malaysia). Both parts of Malaysia are separated by about 450 km of the South China Sea (Anuar, 2012). Peninsular Malaysia consists of 11 states and is a more populated area compared to Borneo Sabah and Sarawak. After more than 60 years of independence, the Malaysian population has reached 32.66 million (as of second quarter of 2021), with the *Bumiputera* as the majority (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2021).

As a newly industrialised country, Malaysia has faced a myriad of environmental problems including haze, landslides, floods, and pollution, amongst others. One of the most serious and challenging environmental issues in Malaysia is pollution that has occurred due to fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, industrial activities, open burning and emission of motor vehicles in the country (Nor Azah et al., 2018). In recent years, there was also public uproar regarding the controversial environmental risk issues related to Lynas (Nik Norma & Sharafa, 2020), a rare earth power plant project and bauxite mining project, which could potentially harm public health. Although environmental problems in Malaysia are getting increasingly serious, a recent study conducted by Saiyidatina, Hanifah and Mohmadisa (2021) found that environmental literacy among Malaysian youth is merely at a satisfactory level. Malaysian journalists, therefore, view environmental communication as playing an important role in improving the general Malaysian public's understanding, awareness and knowledge about environmental issues (Mohamad Saifudin, 2017).

Environmental communication among the local media in Malaysia is quite different from the secular Western tradition, where Western journalists tend to be intellectually influenced by the European Enlightenment and the concept of natural rights (Steele, 2014b). Islamic values have a great influence on the communication and media reporting activities among Muslim journalists, including their environmental communication activities (Elliott & Greer, 2010). This study therefore includes Islamic communication perspectives so that Islamic elements in environmental communication may be comprehended. In this study, "Islamic communication" can be generally defined as communication that is in line with the teaching of the Holy Koran and Hadith (Azad, 2015). There are five main components of Islamic values according to Ayish (1998). The definitions used in this study are constructed based on discussions made by a few scholars as follows: (1) *tawhid* (the one God), (2) *iman* (commitment to the six core of Islamic beliefs: the one God, angels, prophet Muhammad, the Holy Koran, the judgement day, destiny and divine decree), (3) *umma* (community), (4) *ibadah* (worship), and (5) *ilm* (absolute comprehension of a particular thing) (Ayoub, 2004, p. 55; Ayish, 1998, p. 37; Kasmani, Yusoff, Kanaker & Abdullah, 2017).

The first component, *tawhid*, means that Muslims believe not only in God, but also in His angels, books, messengers and in the Last Day (or the Judgement Day) (Ayish, 1998, p. 37). The second component, which is *iman*, refers to the belief that God is The Only One worthy of worship and that Muslims are not allowed to believe in other gods than Allah (Ayish, 1998). The act of worshipping or associating other gods with Allah is termed '*Shriq*' (Ayish,

1998). The third component, *ibadah*, refers to the belief that humans are responsible to serve and worship Allah (Ayish, 1998). The fourth component is *umma*, which is the importance of a harmonious community in Islam, while the fifth component is *ilm*, which is the importance of knowledge and literacy in Islam (Ayish, 1998). Within the context of this study, it is posited that Islamic environmental communication, especially amongst the Malaysian media, encompasses these five values.

METHODOLOGY

It is the researchers' intention in this retrospective paper to investigate the kinds of Islamic values represented in environmental articles. Why do Malaysian journalists incorporate such Islamic values in their environmental articles? What are the challenges faced by journalists in Islamic environmental communication? To address these research questions, the researchers have employed a mixed method approach, specifically a combination of a content analysis and in-depth interviews. The objective of applying a mixed method approach that combining between quantitative and qualitative methods in this study is due to the fact that such an approach enables researchers to obtain more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Ho, Chen, Shao, Bao, Ai, Tarfa, Brossard, Brown & Brauer, 2021), that provides the potential for a more holistic view of the findings (Nastasi, Hitchcock, Gutierrez & Oshrin, 2021). The mixed method approach also allowed the researchers to conduct cross checking and verification of the findings, particularly between the content analysis and in-depth interviews (Chee, Joanne & Poh, 2017). This cross checking would help the researchers enhance the credibility and reliability of the research results, and add value to the study (Kerdngern & Thanitbenjasith, 2017; Khakrangin, Eghlima, Rafiey, Fathi & Roshanpajoh, 2018; Whatley & Stich, 2021). Purposive sampling was used to collect news related to environment and Islam, using the key search button of the online news portals.

In the first phase, a quantitative and qualitative content analysis was conducted on two mainstream Malay media outlets with national circulation in the country, namely *Utusan Malaysia* (ceased operations in October 2019) and *Berita Harian*, in order to investigate the Islamic values present within the environmental articles published by both newspapers. All articles were collected from the online news portal of both newspapers. In the case of this study, the articles were discovered and selected by the researchers using the keyword search terms in the archives such as "Islam and environment", "environment and Allah", and other similar terms. In Malaysia, many newspapers are available in both print and online modes. *Utusan Malaysia* for example, has introduced its online version of news since 1997 (Ahmad & Buyong, 2017). The online option allows readers, especially the younger generations to easily access the news. In addition, both newspapers were selected because they share a similar ideological position, as Malay newspapers tend to cater to the Malay and Islamic issues (Ermolaeva, 2014). The quantitative content analysis allowed the identification of the number of Islamic values which appeared in both newspapers, while the qualitative content analysis assisted recognition of the textual interpretation of the Islamic values in both newspapers' Islamic environmental articles.

The unit of analysis involved in this study is the individual Islamic environmental articles reported in *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* for a total of a six-year period, spanning from 2012 to 2017. Islamic environmental articles were determined by the researchers by looking at the content of articles that contain citations of verses from the Holy Koran or Hadith, as well as articles that discussed about Islamic messages on the environment.

As a result, the researchers obtained a total of 64 samples from *Utusan Malaysia* and 48 samples from *Berita Harian*, which were selected over a six-year period from the year 2012 onwards. Based on the search for articles which were published in 2011, there were no environmental articles related to Islam published by both media outlets that year.

The researchers have coded the samples by using the following five main components of Islamic values including, (1) *tawhid* (unity of God, man, and the universe), (2) *iman* (belief), (3) *umma* (community), (4) *ibadah* (worship), and (5) *ilm* (knowledge), which were introduced by Ayish (1998). However, the researchers also applied the flexible approach where new Islamic values that were not listed by Ayish (1998) were also included and coded in this study by two trained independent coders possessing a background in environmental communication (Şenocak, 2017).

In the second phase, in-depth interviews were conducted with the journalists from *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* with the purpose of cross-checking and strengthening the results of the qualitative content analysis, particularly in answering the question of why journalists have included Islamic values within environmental articles and also the challenges faced by them in communicating Islamic environmental themes. It was crucial that the in-depth interviews were conducted as the researchers would be able to explore the interviewees' personal feelings or perceptions (Silverman, 2017; Tu, 2018), as well as the interviewees' perspectives on certain topics relating to Islamic environmental communication that the researchers were not familiar with (Sbalchiero, 2018). In terms of sampling, the purposive sampling technique enabled the researchers to select the journalists that possessed the experience of covering environmental or Islamic news for the interview session. Apart from that, respondents were recruited through the snowballing technique by collecting their email addresses and telephone numbers from their respective journalist colleagues.

In regard to this matter, it should be noted that the interview questions were in open ended format in order to encourage the interviewees to freely express their opinions (Turner, 2010). The majority of the interview questions were developed based on the results obtained from the quantitative content analysis. All of the interviewees were identified with a specific identification number such as EJ1 and EJ2 for the purpose of protecting their confidentiality (Lynch, Dauer, Babchuk, Heng-Moss & Golick, 2018) and all interviewees were guaranteed that the interview information would be used only for academic purposes (Sriyasak, Almqvist, Sridawruang & Häggström-Nordin, 2017). All the interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed verbatim upon completion (Besomi, Leppe, di Silvestre & Setchell, 2018; Sriyasak, Almqvist, Sridawruang, & Häggström-Nordin, 2017). The interviews were carried out by the same interviewer (Van Parys, Provoost, De Sutter, Pennings & Buysse, 2017) from September to December 2017 and all of the interviews lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. All interviews were duly arranged at the interviewees' work places (Magadzire, Mathole & Ward, 2017) and other places such as the office cafeteria, subject to the convenience of the interviewees.

As language plays a crucial role in interviews, especially regarding how an interviewee's mother tongue can affect the way questions are answered (Zhang & Guttormsen, 2016), the interview sessions were conducted in the Malay language due to the fact that all of the interviewees came from Malay-language newspaper organisations that use Malay as their main language of communication at work. Hence, they felt more comfortable speaking in Malay compared to other languages such as English. However, it should also be

noted that code-switching still occurred during the interviews, which refers to the mixing of Malay and English, considering that it is a common culture among Malaysian speakers.

In total, there were 11 interviewees that participated in this study. By using the data saturation technique, the interview stopped at journalist number 11 because no new data emerged from that particular interview (Turk, Celik, Çetin & Soydan, 2016). Out of 11 interviewees, six of them were from *Utusan Malaysia*, while another five were from *Berita Harian*. It is crucial to note that all of the journalists (N=5) from *Utusan Malaysia* were male, while there were more male (N=3) compared to female journalists (N=2) from *Berita Harian*. The majority of the interviewees from *Utusan Malaysia* (N=3) are seniors who have a working experience of more than 15 years, whereas majority of the interviewees from *Berita Harian* (N=4) are young journalists who have working experience of less than six years. In addition, it is interesting to note that all of the interviewees from both organisations have acquired a bachelor's degree which further indicates that they are a group of elite professionals in Malaysia. However, the journalists from *Utusan Malaysia* came from a diverse background of studies compared to the journalists from *Berita Harian* who specifically come from the field of communication. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the profile of the interviewees has no relation to the results of the interviews, but only serves as an overview of the background of the respondents who participated in this study.

For the interview data analysis, all the transcriptions were reviewed by the researchers at least three times before the analysis was started (Świda, Halagarda & Popek, 2018). Transcriptions were translated by the first author of this study, whose first language is Malay and whose second language is English. MAXQDA software was used to manage the transcription and assist data analysis, while the interview data was analysed using qualitative analysis that started with sorting out of data and continued with coding and interpretation of data.

RESULTS

This section explains the frequency of the appearance of Koranic or Hadith verses in Islamic environmental articles published in *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*. As shown in Table 1, only N=10 articles from *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* have cited verses from the Koran in their Islamic environmental articles. For instance, in discussing about disaster, one of the articles in *Utusan Malaysia*, published on 20th November 2017, cited Surah Ar-Rum [30:41] “*corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]*” to support their explanation. Similarly, in explaining about disaster and God's execution of destiny, a citation from Surah Al-Baqarah is provided in an article published in *Berita Harian* on 14th January 2015 [2:117]: “*Allah is the originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, be, and it is*”.

When compared to verses from the Koran, verses from Hadith were even less cited in both *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian's* Islamic environmental articles (N=4 for *Utusan Malaysia*, N=2 for *Berita Harian*). In an explanation about earthquakes and juxtaposition of the short span of human life in this world (*dunya*) compared to the permanent life in the Hereafter (*akhirah*), one of articles in *Utusan Malaysia* published on 11th March 2016 cited a verse from the Hadith: “*By Allah, this world in comparison to the hereafter is nothing but as though one of you dipped his finger in the sea. So ponder how much (of sea water), the finger*

returns with". As a whole however, the majority of the articles, N=50 from *Utusan Malaysia* and N=36 from *Berita Harian*, contain no citation from either the Koran or Hadith but tend more towards a general discussion on Islam and the environment.

As verses from the Koran and Hadith are fundamental and pivotal for Islamic environmental articles, the researchers therefore asked the interviewees the reason why there is such a dearth of citation of Koranic verses in the articles. Some of them mentioned the suitability of an article for the usage of verses from the Koran and Hadith. In other words, inclusion of citations from the Koran and Hadith within an article is dependent upon context and suitability, and thus not every Islamic environmental article must contain such citations. Other interviewees mentioned of the difficulty of finding the suitable Koranic or Hadith verses for their articles, like one of interviewees from *Utusan Malaysia*:

Usually it will take a long time to find [verses from the Koran and Hadith].
There are [many] verses in the Koran (ID EJ2).

Table 1: Citation of Koran verses or Hadith in the articles

Types of citation	<i>Utusan Malaysia</i> (N)	<i>Berita Harian</i> (N)
Citation of Koranic verse	10	10
Citation of Hadith verse	4	2
No citation	50	36
Total (N)	64	48

In terms of Islamic values in environmental articles, Table 2 shows that there were differences between the types of Islamic values which appeared in environmental articles published by *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*. For *Utusan Malaysia*, the most common Islamic value which appeared in their environmental articles is *tawhid*, which emphasises on the unity of God, man and universe (N=29), while for *Berita Harian*, the majority of environmental articles in their publications have incorporated the value of *iman* or the belief in Islam (N=21).

The researchers also conducted a qualitative analysis on each of the Islamic values that appeared in environmental articles and the researchers discovered that the value of *tawhid* in environmental articles in both newspapers was discussed in relation to words from Allah that were mostly cited from the Koran, in order to impart to the readers that the totality of the natural environment was created solely by Allah for human beings. For instance, *Utusan Malaysia*, in an article published on 7th May 2015, mentioned the words of Allah from the Koran, specifically from Surah Saba, verse 13, which relates to the story about prophet *Sulaiman* (Solomon). Besides that, the researchers also found that the value of *tawhid* had also been discussed, with the explanation of natural disasters such as floods being a form of test and a reminder from Allah which needs to be viewed positively by humans. However, there are some articles that also relate to the concept of *kifarah*, which is retribution from Allah towards human sins, such as adverse consequences stemming from man-made environmental degradation thus requiring the need for humans to repent.

The qualitative analysis also unearthed that the value of *iman* in environmental articles is discussed from the perspective of the importance of belief towards Islam's emphasis on the importance of environmental protection. In other words, as a Muslim, it is a fundamental responsibility of human beings to protect the environment from destruction.

One of the articles from *Berita Harian* for instance, published on 15th December 2015, highlighted that “Allah SWT gave the mandate to Adam and his descendants, or mankind, to manage and prosper the earth. Thus, the earth becomes a place of dependence for mankind and a place for prosperity as well”.

Additionally, the value of *ummah*, or community, used in environmental articles focused on the discussion of the importance of a Muslim community to work together in playing their role in protecting the environment. The role of institutions such as mosques and community centres in supporting environmental protection and helping to solve environmental problems has also been highlighted in the discussion. For example, *Berita Harian* published an article on 7th May 2017 that discussed the role of mosques during flood disasters, and also highlighted that mosques will be equipped with flood detectors and disaster management alarm tools in the near future.

While for the value of *ibadah* or worship, the researchers discovered the environmental articles in both newspapers linked the discussion of environmental issues with the importance of the obligation of worship activities, like one of articles published in *Berita Harian* on 23rd December 2013, which discussed about how the flood victim had been sponsored to do their *umrah* so that they can be patient with the test from God (i.e.; the flood) and thus always remember Allah. For the value of *akhlaq*, the focus is more towards moral values in environmental protection and management. For instance, one of articles in *Utusan Malaysia* published on 9th November 2017 discussed the moral way of doing waste disposal, especially when it is associated with disposing of copies of the Koran.

Table 2: Islamic values in the articles

Types of Islamic values	<i>Utusan Malaysia</i> (N)	<i>Berita Harian</i> (N)
<i>Tawhid</i> (unity of God, man, and the universe)	29	10
<i>Iman</i> (faith)	25	21
<i>Umma</i> (community)	5	15
<i>Ibadah</i> (worship)	2	1
<i>Akhlaq</i> (morals)	3	1
Total (N)	64	48

In the present study, the researchers also interviewed the journalists to understand why Islamic values, particularly the values of *tawhid* and *iman*, have commonly appeared in the environmental articles published in the *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* newspapers. The journalists from *Utusan Malaysia* agreed that *tawhid* is the most commonly used value in the discussion of environmental articles as the almighty attribute of God is something that can be very obviously seen through everyday human life and human surroundings, especially the beauty of the environment. Most of them said that the value of *tawhid* is the core and basic value in Islam and therefore they usually incorporated *tawhid* in the environmental articles. As a consequence, the environmental write up can serve as a reminder to the readers that the environment is created by Allah and thus needs to be protected. One of the interviewees from *Utusan Malaysia* commented that:

For me, the value of *tawhid* is very important because it teaches the reader to know [about] our God. No matter what religion is, but we have to agree that God is Everything and He is The Creator (ID EJ4).

In the interviews with journalists from *Berita Harian*, the majority of them agreed that the value of *iman*, which is the value relating to the faith of Muslims, is highly incorporated in their environmental articles as it is considered the closest value to readers. In fact, some of them described that the value of *iman* is part of the Muslim readers' life and therefore it is easy for them to relate to this value compared to other values in their environmental articles. One of the journalists from *Berita Harian* further explained:

This *iman* [faith] is in us. What we have to do is start from ourselves. This is why the value of *Iman* is often applied in the articles (ID EJ11).

As a whole, the majority of interviewees from both *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* collectively agreed that the main reason why they have incorporated Islamic values in the environmental articles is due to the influence of being Muslim themselves. All of these values are part of their life and as Muslim journalists, they have the advantage of having knowledge on Islamic values and therefore they usually include such knowledge in their environmental articles. In fact, some of them have a background in Islamic studies and therefore this has influenced their write up, as stated by one of interviewees from *Berita Harian*:

Islamic environmental feature writings, for example, are mostly written by senior journalists who have a strong background in the Islamic religion as they previously studied in Egypt or in Tahfiz schools (ID EJ7).

During the interview, the researchers also asked the interviewees' opinions on the challenges faced by them during the process of communicating environmental messages with Islamic values. The majority of them elaborated that the main obstacle is from the journalists themselves, as they need to have a good knowledge and understanding about both Islam and the environment at the same time in order to be able to write good and accurate Islamic environmental articles. In fact, some of them explained that without a great knowledge on Islam and environment, journalists would face a risk of disseminating wrong information in the articles and could potentially be faced with problems such as legal summons. At the same time, religion itself, especially Islam, is a sensitive issue in the country. Therefore, some of them are worried of writing Islamic environmental articles, as described by one of interviewees from *Utusan Malaysia*:

Because we write about religion, so if we write a religious article wrong, it [could be] dangerous (ID EJ4).

Although there are challenges in communicating environmental issues linked with Islamic values, some of the interviewees from this study highlighted these challenges did not affect their motivation in continuing to produce Islamic environmental articles. Most importantly for the journalists, they must be able to ensure the accuracy of the information and find the balance between both Islam and the environment in the articles. One of interviewees from *Berita Harian* commented:

[Challenges] does not affect [us] as for us journalists, we know how to put both of the two elements [Islam and environment] in writing (ID EJ8).

DISCUSSION

The present study has proven that Islamic values have a significant influence towards environmental communication activities in the Malaysian media. This is obviously different from the Western tradition where environmental communication activities are from secular perspectives that are unattached with any religious perspectives. For a Muslim majority country like Malaysia, Islam has greatly influenced every aspect of a Muslim's life, activity and work (Atkinson, 2015; Cader, 2016), including environmental communication in the media by Muslim journalists. The findings of this study show that the majority of the interviewees agreed that their background as Muslims has greatly influenced them in the process of inserting and attaching Islamic values in the environmental articles written by them. In fact, some of the journalists even have a background in Islamic studies. With such a vast knowledge of Islam, it is even easier for some journalists to communicate environmental issues from an Islamic angle for the Muslim readers in Malaysia.

One remarkable finding from this study is that although both *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* are known as Malay newspapers that are mainly focused on Malay Muslim readers, yet the types of Islamic values that appeared in their environmental articles are markedly different. The result of content analysis showed that in *Utusan Malaysia*, the most common value which appeared in their environmental articles was *tawhid* (the belief that God is one / oneness of God), while in *Berita Harian*, the most commonly included value in their environmental articles was *iman*. The researchers interviewed the journalists from both newspapers to obtain further explanation and majority of the interviewees from *Utusan Malaysia* highlighted that the value of *tawhid* value is the basic and core value in the monotheistic religion of Islam, and therefore it is essential and easy for them to include it in the environmental articles to remind the readers on the instructions by the one and only God, Allah, about environmental protection and preservation. Past scholars like Huda, Yusuf, Jasmi and Zakaria (2016) and Kounsar (2016) also agreed that *tawhid* is a core value in Islam that emphasised on the only universal God, and that also relates to the first pillar of Islam which is the creed (*al-shahādah*), which categorically states there is no god but Allah. Indeed, Allah is the top priority of Muslim people (Mamat & Mahamood & Ismail, 2012) and in the spirit of *tawhid*, instructions from Allah to protect the environment are considered good, while what is prohibited by Allah (*haram*), such as environmental destruction, is considered bad (Zakariya, 2015). Due to the extreme importance of the value of *tawhid* in Islam, it is therefore not surprising to find that Muslim journalists in *Utusan Malaysia* have incorporated this value as the main value in their environmental write up.

Conversely, majority of *Berita Harian* interviewees described that the value of *Iman*, which is faith in Islam, is the one that is also important and close to the Muslim readers' hearts. Thus, they have frequently included *iman* in the environmental articles. For example, as Muslims that believe in Islam, Allah and prophet Muhammad, humans should not destroy the environment as this is prohibited in Islam and they are required to play a role as God's vicegerent (*khalifah*) to protect the environment. Ultimately, Muslims also believe in the day of judgement (*qiyama*) which will occur in the Hereafter, and that their performance on environmental matters will also be subsequently judged by Allah (Sarkawi, Abdullah & Dali, 2016). All of these are rooted inside Islamic thought and therefore the media, such as *Berita Harian*, have particularly preferred to put a lot of emphasis on the value of *iman* in their environmental articles.

Even more importantly, out of five values suggested by Ayoub, (2004, p. 55), Ayish (1998, p. 37) and Kasmani et al. (2017) which includes 1) *tawhid* (the one God), (2) *iman* (commitment to the six core of Islamic beliefs: the one God, angels, prophet Muhammad, the Holy Koran, the judgement day, destiny and divine decree), (3) *umma* (community), (4) *ibadah* (worship), and (5) *ilm* (absolute comprehension of a particular thing), the result of this study discovered only four of the values in environmental articles published by *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*. Though the value of *ilm* was present in the articles to some extent, it either made too small a contribution to be appreciated, or at times, non-existent. Arguably, dissemination of information through writing is in itself considered as knowledge; but is quite meaningless without an absolute comprehension of environmental issues. However, the researchers discovered a new value, which is *akhlaq* (moral values / Islamic virtues), in some of the environmental articles published by both newspapers. In Islamic teachings, Muslims like the followers of other religions are taught to have good moral values, particularly the pro-environmental attitude in protecting the earth and natural resources (Mamat & Mokhtar, 2012; Razzaq, Ansari, Razzaq, & Awan, 2018). With reference to the Islamic context, all of the moral values are taught inside the primary texts of Koran and Hadith (Hussin, Siraj, Ab Malik, Mohd Jamil, Sapar & Mat Noh, 2015; Haron, 2017). For example, Muslims are taught to practise moderate attitudes, such as being moderate in their consumption habits and thus supporting the sustainability effort (Razzaq, Ansari, Razzaq, & Awan, 2018). Thus, the Malaysian journalists from both newspapers have included the value of *akhlaq* in their environmental articles as a way to educate the readers. As a whole, it is safe to conclude that Islamic environmental articles published by Malaysian newspapers encompass five main values including 1) *tawhid* (unity of God, man, and the universe), (2) *iman* (belief), (3) *umma* (community), (4) *ibadah* (worship), and (5) *akhlaq* (moral).

Additionally, it is imperative to note that although Islamic theological texts from the Koran and Hadith are known as Islam's main sources and perennial references (Jusoff & Abu Samah, 2011; Kounsar, 2016; Sarkawi, Abdullah & Dali, 2016), yet the citation of such texts in the Islamic environmental articles was infrequent (Mohamad Saifudin & Nik Norma, 2019). The majority of the articles contain no citation from the Koran and Hadith and tend towards a more general link between Islam and environment. From the interviews, some interviewees explained that the use of verses from the Koran and Hadith is dependent upon the suitability of the articles, and the infrequent use of such verses is due to the fact that it is time-consuming for them to find the most suitable Koran or Hadith verses for the articles. This is understandable as journalists usually have a limited amount of time in producing an article as they are restricted to deadlines (Hagen, Tolstad & Bygdås, 2021). Time constraints made some of them in this study avoid inclusion of verses from the Koran and Hadith in their articles. This is understandable as not every article needs a support or explanation from the Koran and Hadith sources, depending on the context of the article.

Finally, the findings of this study also provide the discourse about the challenges addressed by these Muslim journalists in writing environmental articles that have relation to the Islamic values. From the interviews, the researchers discovered that the majority of the interviewees agreed that the main challenge stemmed from themselves. Most of them worry about the accuracy of the facts written by them, especially when it relates to Islam. This is fundamentally because the dissemination of inaccurate facts related to Islam is dangerous as it could affect the belief and creed of Muslim especially the young, immature community (Ab Kadir, Sahari @ Ashaari & Mohamad Judi, 2019). Additionally, Malaysia, Islam, and religion in

general, are sensitive topics. Hence, misinformation or misquotations about Islam in the articles can cause a serious consequence like getting legal summons, or in the most extreme cases, it can cause disputations and unrest in society. Therefore, most of the interviewees emphasised on the pivotal requirement of having a vast understanding on both Islam and environmental issues so that they are properly equipped to write good and accurate Islamic environmental articles in newspapers. This is in line with the emphasis of past research such as by Zemo and Nigus (2021) on the importance of understanding religion's influence on environmental attitude and behaviour, before integrating religion and environment together.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Islamic environmental communication can be considered a new area of study which is similar to other fields like Islamic marketing. Like many novel fields, it requires more attention from scholars and researchers in its evolution (Ahmadova, 2016). This study has not only filled the gap of past studies, especially as many past research on environmental (climate) communication originated from the West (Agin & Karlsson, 2021); but has also been able to offer new and interesting insights into the specific application of Islamic values in environmental communication by Muslim journalists in an Islamic country. In fact, information related to Islam is a main concern of Muslim readers and it is the responsibility of the media to educate and inform the Muslim readers about it (Manaf & Sedu, 2015).

The values of *tawhid* and *iman* seemed to be the focus of journalists from *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*, who felt that both values related to many of its Muslim readers in a Muslim majority nation. While the journalists' Muslim background compelled them to include verses from the Koran and Hadith to support their ideologies, they often feared being inaccurate in their selection and interpretation of the texts, which are time-consuming. Therefore, training on Quranic-related environmental matters would be ideal in alleviating this problem. However, the triviality of which environmental news is regarded in Malaysia, might prove the effort insignificant. Nevertheless, the incorporation of these sacred texts into the environmental writing is a projection of their faith, values and *akhlaq* (moral) to their readers in attempts to raise awareness of environmental issues.

Besides that, it is important to emphasise that the findings of this study is very useful as a guidance for future researchers especially from Muslim majority countries in understanding the types of Islamic values that are embedded in environmental articles written by Muslim journalists. Hence, it is advisable for future researchers from Muslim majority countries like Indonesia, the Middle East, Pakistan and others to study the same topic and to compare with the results of this study. Future research can expand upon the findings of this study by exploring the audiences' perspectives on Islamic environmental articles represented in the media.

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