



# LINKING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES AND SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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**Abstract:** Rapid economic development has resulted in environmental degradation and social conflict in many parts of the world. The never-ending global issues can be controlled if entrepreneurial activities strictly adopt sustainable practices and be more ethical and responsible. Researchers have examined the relationship between religiosity and ethical business decision. However, research on such relationship often produce mix results. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to assess the potential of religious ideologies in determining ethical decision making of entrepreneurs particularly regarding environmental sustainability. The paper examines sustainability in the light of the Quran and Hadith. It looks at previous research on religiosity and ethics as well as the relationship between religion and awareness towards environmental protection of entrepreneurs. This study introduces a conceptual model that highlights how three religious ideologies in Islam may influence Muslim attitude on environmental sustainability. The paper informs researchers in the area of religion and ethical decision making on the new construct namely religious ideologies as determinants to ethical decision making particularly concerning environmental sustainability.

**Keywords:** Sustainability; Entrepreneurship; Environment; Religious Ideologies; Islamic Environmental Ethics; Conservative; Modernist; Secularist

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There have been increasing demands for businesses to be more ethical and responsible in the light of the increase environmental degradation. Businesses are demanded to incorporate sustainable practices in order to reduce environmental pollution. As a result, scholars have examined the reason as to why managers or business owners implement environmental sustainability in their business operations. Among the construct that were studied by the scholars includes religion. Researchers try to investigate if there is any relationship between religion and ethical business decision using religiosity construct.

Some studies that measure the link between religion and ethical decision making depicted that a more religious person or high religiosity person tend to make more ethical decision making. However, some studies also find that less religious person make more ethical decision making than the highly religious people. Therefore, this study tries to look at different construct i.e. religious ideologies, instead of religiosity in examining the connection between religion and ethical decision making which reflect the attitude on environmental sustainability of business owners.

The nature of Islamic ethical thinking refers to the religious ideology of which the managers belong to. Religious ideology is an approach that individuals take to view their religion, and that approach makes up their beliefs, goals, expectations and motivation. The religious ideologies are conservative, modernist and secularist. The conservatives are those who know the scriptures and think that it should be applied, the modernist also knows the scripture but believes that it is negotiable and the secularist might or might not know the teaching but to them it is not important.

The aim of this paper is to investigate influence of religious ideology on Islamic ethical thinking concerning environmental awareness. This paper intent to examine the types of Islamic ideologies that constitute a Muslim's religious orientation. The argument is that these ideologies may shape Muslim entrepreneurs' ethical thinking concerning environmental awareness.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Environmental degradation and social conflict are escalating alongside with rapid economic development [1], [2]. In order to reduce and to overcome environment and social depravity, authority and consumers demand entrepreneurship to act more ethically by adopting sustainable practices in their entrepreneurial activity. As a result, public, private governance as well as NGOs have developed and regulated various sustainable guidelines for entrepreneurship in achieving sustainability. However, despite countless regulations and enforcement, the unethical conducts still persist. In view of this, scholars are trying to look at various factors that could influence entrepreneurs ethical decision making. Scholars, to name a few, such as Longenecker [4], Singhapakdi et.al [5] and Weaver & Agle [3] examine the link between religiosity and ethical decision making. The inclusion of religion in debates about business ethics can lead to more truthful theory in comparison to excluding religion in the said debates [6]. Therefore, this paper will look at another aspect of religion which is religious ideologies, as a factor that would influence entrepreneurs' attitude on environmental sustainability. To investigate why religion could be an important factor to guide business decision, the following section will examine the scriptures that contain the doctrine associated with environment protection.

### 2.2 Environmental Protection in Islam

The scriptures of Islam have ordained human as stewardship on earth in which human is viewed as the manager of the earth, not a proprietor. All beings, not just human, has the right to use all elements of nature such as land, water, fire, forest and light. Therefore, all persons should ensure that other beings' rights are protected and nature is preserved and shared equally with other beings. The need for human to protect the environment and to deter from destroying and causing harm to nature and other beings are mentioned in the Qur'an such as below:

*"And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order: that will be best for you, if ye have Faith" (Surat Al A'raf, 'the Heights', verse 85)*

*"And He has set within it mountains standing firm, and blessed it, and ordained in it its diverse sustenance in four days, alike for all that seek." (Quran 41:10)*

*"And do good as Allah has been good to you. And do not seek to cause corruption in the earth. Allah does not love the corruptors", (Surat Al Qasas 28:77)*

Many destructions that are happening today has been mentioned in the Qur'an:

*"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]." (Qur'an 30:41)*

#### 2.2.1 Biodiversity

Islam encourages the conservation of the trees, forests, and all other living being and their habitats. Trees and plants are created for man use as mentioned in the Qur'an verse 6:99 [7], [8].

*"... We produce thereby the growth of all things. We produce from it greenery from which We produce grains arranged in layers. And from the palm trees - of its emerging fruit are clusters hanging low. And [We produce] gardens of grapevines and olives and pomegranates, similar yet varied. Look at [each of] its fruit when it yields and [at] its ripening. Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe". (Qur'an 6:99)*

Along with proper care of the environment, Islam suggests individuals not to corrupt and be wasteful. Allah gives order to humankind [8];

*"And He it is who causes gardens to grow, [both] trellised and untrellised, and palm trees and crops of different [kinds of] food and olives and pomegranates, similar and dissimilar. Eat of [each of] its fruit when it yields and give its due [zakah] on the day of its harvest. And be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess". (Qur'an 6:141)*

The Qur'an also draws attention to the importance of the balance of nature in life and society. Islam does not endorse man's vicegerent of the earth which destroys and spoils ecological balances and system. Meadow, wildlife and forests could not be privately owned or monopolized, as they belong to the public and thus, should be managed by the state authority for the benefit of all [9]. Man is therefore responsible for the earth in which God has entrusted to preserve.

*"The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation. And the stars and trees prostrate. And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance. That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance". (Qur'an 55:5-9)*

The importance of conserving forest and planting trees in Islam to sustain nature's growth can be proved by the narration of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) below:

*"If the Hour (the day of Resurrection) is about to be established and one of you was holding a palm shoot, let him take advantage of even one second before the Hour is established to plant it."*

*Ahmad reported from Jabir bin Abdullah that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The area between two black tracts of Madinah is a Haram (a sanctuary). No tree must be cut (within this area) except for use as fodder for animals."*

Those who destroy forest for the sake of racing development should think of a Hadith [8], [10] such as below:

*“he who cuts a lote-tree (without justification), God will send him to Hellfire”.* Narated By Abdullah ibn Habashi

Islamic laws has rules concerning scarce water resources, land conservation and wildlife protection and conservation [11]. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) organized the planting of trees on migrating to Madinah. He designated a Hima or a sanctuary on a twelve miles wide of land in Madinah where every living creature and green spaces are protected. Hima is to be shared among all individuals [12].

### 2.2.2 Water

The Qur'an and the Hadiths contain notably specific statements about water. Allah mentioned about how He create life from water, how He creates rains, river and oceans in the Qur'an. The word water is mentioned 60 times in the Qur'an [13]. Allah impedes human being from causing destruction to plants and animals, and contaminate water, destroying land and pollute air because all this can contribute to the destruction of human being as well as to the environment.

*“And spend in the way of Allah and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction [by refraining]. And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good”.* (Qur'an 2:195)

Extravagance in using water is forbidden in private as well as in public use. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) instructed his followers to preserve water and to stop its misuse [14], [15]. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said to Saad when he was performing ablutions;

*“Do not waste. Saad said: Is there extravagance in ablutions? The Prophet said: Even though you were on a running river”.*

There is no doubt that conservation of water is important to preserve life. All Muslims are obliged to avoid any actions that can damage and pollute nature elements. Accordingly, the juristic principle is, "What leads to the prohibited is itself prohibited." Any waste products or hazardous product should be treated appropriately to avoid injury where this is on line with the juristic principle in this connection: "Damage shall not be eliminated by means of similar or greater damage."

### 2.2.3 Air

Air is no less important than water. All creatures depend on air to breathe. Therefore ensuring that the air is pure and unpolluted is one of the fundamental objectives of Islamic law [16]. Any activities which pollute the air, ruins or impairs its functions will lead to problems such as a hole in the ozone. The Qur'an speaks of protective layer or ozone in the following verses:

*"And We made the sky a protected ceiling (canopy), but they, from its signs, are turning away." (Qur'an 21:32)*

*"It is Allah who made for you the earth a place of settlement and the sky a ceiling and formed you and perfected your forms and provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord; then blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds." (Qur'an 40:64)*

The ozone hole over the Antarctica indicates that the earth is losing its protective layer hence exposes us to cancer-causing ways. And thus, whatever pollutes the air and is harmful towards the overall health should be forbidden [8], [17].

*"It is Allah who sends the winds which raise the clouds which We then drive to a dead land and by them bring the earth to life after it was dead. That is how the resurrection will be". (Holy Qur'an – Al- Fatir 35:9).*

### 2.2.4 Land and Soil

Land and soil are significant for the continuation of our lives as well as other creatures as mentioned in the Qur'an: *"And the earth He has established for living creatures." Qur'an: Surat ar-Rahman (55), ayah 10. 21.*

*"It is crucial to maintain the productivity of the soil, and not expose it to erosion by wind and flood; in building, farming, grazing, forestry, and mining, we are required to follow practices which do not bring about its degradation but preserve and enhance its fertility" - [16].*

Islam encourages reviving of soil by planting and cultivating it while preserving and enhancing its fertility. Under Islamic law, any act that leads to destruction and degradation of earth is prohibited. According to the book of Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), the revival of the dead land or *ihya' al-mawat* is necessary for the economy and a source for a healthy environment [18].

Islam gives priority to revival of the dead land (*ihya' al-mawat*) which is important for human survival, and the dead land should be declared as state property and reserved for public use which can be designated as Hima [18]. Hima is the conservation and management of meadows, forest and jungle, watersheds and wildlife [12].

The Qur'an also says that human should not do mischief after the Creation has been set in order by Allah and not transgress due balance. Therefore, to find the solutions to existing problems, the Qur'an stresses that humans should use their intelligence, their heart, mind and senses to study the universe and come out with a relevant solution. On that note, it is expected that Muslim entrepreneurs will incorporate sustainable practices and will not contribute to environmental degradation. Previous research on religion and ethical decision making measure religiosity construct. The following section will discuss this construct and its mix results.

### 2.3 Religiosity and Ethics

Religiosity is defined by McDaniel and Burnett (1990) as belief in God along with following the principles set by God. A particular religion may have an influence on how some business conduct. Nevertheless, it is still unknown if a religion guides business decision and behaviour of that religion's practitioner. While it is common to expect that religion will guide individuals in making an ethical decision, it is also common where a practitioner of particular religion show little or no awareness of those religious beliefs [3].

Much of empirical research in the area of religion and ethical decision is underpinned by Hunt and Vitell (1986, 1993) theory of ethics which mentions personal characteristics such as individuals' religion and religiosity in the general theoretical framework for ethical decision making. This theory depicted that a religious person generally have clearer definition what duty is morally accepted and forbidden which results in prominent role in ethical judgement.

According to Weaver and Agle [3] theory of ethical behaviour, religious belief, knowledge, experience and rituals influence the process of ethical awareness, judgement, intention and behaviour. is influenced by the religious role expectation. This religious role expectation as mentioned by them, is influenced by identity salience. Identity salience is a person self-identity as a result of his belief and practice of his religion. However, other ethical theories such as Ferrell and Gresham [23], Linda K Trevino [22] and the most recent, Jackson, Wood, and Zboja, [24] do not include religion into their theoretical framework under individual factor.

Likewise, results on religiosity and ethical standard of business professionals studies also have been inconsistent hence difficult to draw any wide-ranging conclusions [3]. Longenecker et al. [4] for instance discover that business professionals whom religion is highly or moderately important exhibit a higher level of ethical judgement than those who held limited or no importance of religion. A similar result is attained by Singhapakdi et al. [5] who examine the influence of religiosity on ethical decision making of marketing professionals.

However, a number of studies yield negative relationship between religiosity and ethical standard of business managers. For example, McDonald and Pak [26] find that religious orientation does not influence managers responses to ethical scenario. In the same manner, Clark and Dawson [27] find a negative correlation between religiosity and judgement of business ethics in a scenario base study. Kidwell et al. [28] also find no connection between church attendances and opinion of what is ethical in a survey performed on 50 male and 50 female business managers.

Failing to identify the congruence between ethical behaviour and religion in organizations may demonstrate an incompetency in investigating religious role expectations adequately which indicate the urgency to conduct analyses on the impact of religion on behaviour [3]. Furthermore, potential linkage of religiosity and ethical attitudes in organizations need to be assessed concerning specific ethical conduct and specific approach to religion [3].

Therefore, since religiosity construct cannot explain the religion's impact on ethical attitude, this paper argues that religious ideology has an impact on ethical awareness and attitude. The following section will look at previous research on religious ideology and environmental awareness.

### 2.4 Religious Ideology and Ethics

There is a shortage of empirical research on Islamic environmental ethics despite increasing literature on the presence of environmental ethics in Islamic teachings [29]–[31]. The relationship between entrepreneurs' religious ideology and their awareness towards environmental protection is scares except for a study by Rice [14] who investigates the relationship between pro-environmental behaviour and religiosity. In measuring the Egyptian pro-environmental behaviour and demographic variables, beliefs, values and religiosity, Rice [14] uses a scale item from New Ecological Paradigm to measure environmental behaviour. To measure individual value, she uses the Schwartz Value Survey, and religiosity is measured by asking if the respondents believe that they are religious or not. The study suggests that personal religiosity has an important association with pro-environmental behaviour which supports the argument that there is a strong pro-environmental ethics within Islam. There are many types of Islamic ideologies which are common in writing about modern Islam, however, the present paper will focus only on three ideologies; conservative, modernist and secularist.

#### 2.4.1 Conservative

The conservative Muslims rely on the two sources of scripture i.e. Qur'an and Hadith for all aspects of life. The conservative Muslims are sometimes known as traditional Muslims or traditionalist. To the conservatives, the Qur'an and Hadith remain the source of authority in this world [32]. Continuing the older models and values is part of their identity. Graham [32] stresses that a significant element of Islamist conservative or traditionalist is a "sense of connectedness" which is the passion for personal "connectedness" across generations. Therefore, Islamist conservatives are those who treasure and follow Islamic jurisprudence strictly and exclusively and always keen to see that the next generations are applying the same principles.

On the other hand, Shepard [32] defined traditionalist as those who would mix Shariah and non-Shariah element when facing Western impact and are not attracted to Western ways. Shepard [32] suggests that the traditionalist is still open for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning on the implementation and interpretation of Islamic Law) within the framework of tradition.



The above discussion about the characteristic of conservative shows that they conform to the Qur'an and Hadith while at the same time providing little space for a reinterpretation of authoritative texts. The conservative is also those who would like to see that the Islamic traditions being ponder across the next generations. In summary, the conservatives are those who know scripture and think it should always be applied. On that account, it seems logic if Muslim entrepreneurs who are conservative or traditionalist will have a high environmental awareness hence conscious about any disputed practices. Furthermore, it can be predicted that they would be able to demonstrate understanding and could recall and relate all the Islamic perspectives on the environment and indigenous people rights.

#### 2.4.2 Modernist

Similar to the conservative Islamist, the modernist believe that Islam provides an adequate ideology base for public life. The modernist Islamist view Islam as flexible and the gate for 'ijtihad' (discussion on issues not mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith) is always open. They usually refer directly to the Qur'an and Hadith to seek a fresh interpretation of modern-times pre-Islamic superstitious culture instead of referring to the four mazhab (school of thoughts) [33]. Additionally, they tend to combine Islam and western models. Their approach to religion is drawn from traditional sources of moral commitment, more efficient than secularism. As they may choose desired Islamic law which is essentially on secularist ground, they are not as authentic as claimed.

On that account, it is projected that the modernist Muslim entrepreneurs would have a limited awareness of current controversial practices and knowledge in Islamic ethics concerning the environment, human and land rights.

#### 2.4.3 Secularist

Individuals who separate their religion and their day to day activities are known as a secularist. Secularism believes in religious freedom and equality. Secularist also believes that religion should be separated from politics, administration, law, economics and education [34]. They accept many ways in dealing with religious plurality. Shepard [32] in his study on Islamic ideology states that secularist will adopt an ideology other than Islam in most aspect of public life. He also suggests that most secularist will support nationalism, capitalism, pluralism, liberalism. To the secularist, according to Shepard [32], Islam is not the religion of the state, and Islamic Law will be replaced by Western law in all area. Secularist usually adopts western ways of thinking and admire for all things western. Their religious roots are not absent but are rather weak. To them, religion is a personal ritual and concern with family matters only. Also, this group views Islam as human cultural heritage rather than a response to the divine initiative. However, they may actively concern with Muslim charity organizations hence usually promote such groups. While they may quite consistently view religion as desirable, they believe that Islam does not provide an adequate ideology base for public life.

The secularist view of nature and environment is summarized by Kirman [34] in his paper where he provides discussion in sociological perspective about secularist and religious view of nature. Kirman [34] summarizes secularist views of nature as follows:

- 1) Human attitudes to nature can be defined on utilitarian and exploiter ground.
- 2) Human liberation and fulfilment come about through the domination of the natural world.
- 3) Religious texts are interpreted in manipulative ways.
- 4) Nature is not related with the divine.
- 5) Nature was not given any special status or privileges in the face of human inquiry.
- 6) Humans are not accountable for how they use it.
- 7) Humans are at the centre of all things and are the origin of all values.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to expect that the secularist will have low awareness of good environmental practices and inadequate knowledge of Islamic environmental ethics, human and land rights.

### 3. CONTRIBUTION

This paper contributes to the understanding of the relationship between religion and entrepreneurs' attitude on environmental sustainability. The potential religious ideologies as determinants to ethical business decision may contribute to the theory of religion and business ethics. Researchers may investigate this construct apart from religiosity construct when trying to examine the connection between religion and business ethics. Furthermore, this paper is important to the development of organizational science as it explores the link between religious ideology and environmental awareness. In addition, this study will add to understanding on why some individuals of the same religion will act differently despite believing in the same values.

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study intends to investigate how perception on religion can affect ethical awareness and reasoning. Hence, the current study aims to examine how religious ideology affects Muslim entrepreneurs' ethical or unethical practices concerning the environment and social impact. The entrepreneurs' religious ideology could be identified within these three typologies; conservative, modernist and secularist.

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