

The Role of Malaysian Hajj Pilgrims in Preserving The Environment: A Maqasid Al-Shari'ah Perspective

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i12/20061> DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i12/20061

Published Date: 19 December 2023

Abstract

The issue of environmental pollution is a global concern faced by countries worldwide. It demands integrated efforts related to the preservation and conservation of the environment. Even the nation hosting the Holy Land of Islam, Mecca and Medina, grapples with the same issue. The gathering of millions of Muslims in the Holy Land during the annual Hajj pilgrimage has the potential to exacerbate environmental pollution if not handled and managed properly. Ironically, the issue of environmental pollution during the Hajj season is one that receives comparatively less attention, including from Malaysian pilgrims. The study that employs a qualitative approach and adopts a content analysis method involving document analysis protocols attempts to dissect the issue of pollution and environmental preservation from an Islamic perspective, based on sacred texts and the maqāsid al-sharī'ah. The study found that Islam, through its sacred texts, demands the proper preservation of the environment. The Hajj season, which gathers millions of Muslims every year, should be the main field for practicing actions that lead to environmental conservation. Therefore, awareness campaigns towards this goal must be intensified starting from specially organized Hajj courses by Tabung Haji.

Keywords: Hajj, Pilgrims, Environment

Introduction

The environment plays a crucial role in human existence and is intricately connected to all creatures shaped by Allah. Every being on the Earth requires a suitable environment to meet their needs and continue their life journey. The well-being of all creatures hinges on the quality of their surroundings. Clean air, for instance, is essential for the respiration of humans, animals, and plants. Any negative impacts originating from the environment will affect all forms of life. Hence, prioritizing environmental cleanliness is of utmost importance in ensuring the safety and health of both humans and the various living organisms that coexist within it.

Safeguarding and upholding the environment stands as a paramount responsibility for humanity. It serves to mitigate the destruction of diverse ecological systems and the ensuing environmental deterioration, which poses risks to the well-being of humans, animals, plants, and beyond. Islam, through its verses and Prophetic teachings, advocates for environmental cleanliness while also cautioning against any form of corruption or pollution within it. Currently, safeguarding and maintaining the environment has emerged as one of the most significant challenges of this era.

Environmental pollution during Hajj is a new issue that has not been clearly addressed. Despite sincere efforts to elucidate the key elements of environmental pollution during Hajj and highlight the negatives, it has not manifested in the desired manner. Environmental pollution during Hajj remains a peripheral element that does not rise to the level of concern for the fundamental pillars of Hajj such as safety, organization, transportation, accommodation, and the comfort of the pilgrims.

The congestion, noise, and rising smoke from vehicles, as well as leaking water, all lead to one outcome, which is environmental pollution. Many people do not realize such issues and believe that it is only environmental pollution that is carried by containers of food remnants and waste generated by the pilgrims (Al-Lahibi, 2007). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to promote an understanding of the significance of preserving the environment, ensuring that our lives are not disrupted or harmed by pollution that damages nature.

Literature Review

Tabung Haji (TH) is the sole official agency, up to this day, entrusted by the government with full responsibility for overseeing the pilgrimage affairs of the Malaysian citizens. Among Tabung Haji's most significant responsibilities related to managing the affairs of the Hajj pilgrims is the aspect of providing religious guidance, which also includes the responsibility of issuing legal opinions pertaining to Hajj and Umrah matters.

The establishment of TH began with the formation of Perbadanan Wang Simpanan Bakal-Bakal Haji - PWSBH (the Pre-Hajj Savings Fund Corporation) under Law No. 34, 1962 in 1963. It was the brainchild of a prominent Malay Economist, Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz bin Ungku Abdul Hamid, in 1959. In 1969, PWSBH was merged with Pejabat Urusan Hal Ehwal Haji (the Office of Hajj Affairs) established in 1951, under the name Lembaga Urusan Tabung Haji (LUTH) under Act 8, the Board of Trustees and Tabung Haji Act. The main purpose of this establishment was to uplift the economic status of Malays and manage Hajj services to the Holy Land. The name was later changed to Lembaga Tabung Haji in 1995 under the Tabung Haji Act 1995, and it is commonly known by its abbreviation, Tabung Haji or TH, to this day (Tabung Haji, 2022).

In addition to managing halal savings and conducting investment activities, Tabung Haji is the sole official agency, up to this day, entrusted by the government with full responsibility for overseeing the pilgrimage affairs of the Malaysian citizens. Among Tabung Haji's most significant responsibilities related to managing the affairs of the Hajj pilgrims is the aspect of providing religious guidance, which also includes the responsibility of issuing legal opinions pertaining to Hajj and Umrah matters (Aiza, 2016; Hasanulddin et al., 2020; Muhaimin & Jasni, 2018).

In the effort to carry out efficient guidance for the Hajj pilgrimage, Tabung Haji has provided guidance modules for Hajj and Umrah in various forms, including written and electronic formats. However, orally delivered guidance modules by qualified individuals appointed by Tabung Haji are considered the primary approach used (Hasanulddin et al., 2020). All publications of these modules are overseen by a committee known as the Jawatankuasa Penasihat Ibadat Haji TH-JAKIM (JPIH). Members of this committee (AJPIH) consist of several religious scholars and academic experts who are recognized as authorities in various disciplines of Islamic studies (Haji, 2020). The study by Hasanulddin et al (2020) found that the reference sources utilized by this committee are authoritative and credible.

Although Tabung Haji is said to have comprehensive guidance modules, Malaysian Hajj pilgrims are reported to have a low level of knowledge and awareness regarding the practices and underlying philosophy of Hajj. A study by Sabri et al (2022) indicates that many Malaysian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims do not comprehend and internalize the philosophy and objectives behind the rituals they perform. This includes awareness of the importance of preserving the environment while performing the pilgrimage in the Holy Land of Mecca and Medina. The actions and behaviors of some Malaysian Hajj pilgrims observed in the Holy Land depict their lack of seriousness in carrying out the pilgrimage in line with its objectives. This encompasses openly smoking in hotel lobbies, wastefulness in consumption, inefficient use of water during ablution and bathing, demonstrating a lack of awareness about the importance of preserving the environment. Upon examining the materials utilized in Hajj preparation courses, it becomes evident that there is a noticeable lack of emphasis on the environmental preservation objectives advocated by Tabung Haji. Consequently, the crucial topic of incorporating environmental preservation goals into the execution of the Hajj pilgrimage, a practice that should be adopted by the pilgrims, is not receiving the adequate attention it requires.

In connection with this, this article aims to demonstrate the demands of preserving the environment from the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Moreover, it underscores the responsibilities that both Hajj pilgrims and organizers must undertake in preserving the environment during the pilgrimage. This consideration is especially crucial given the comparatively low level of environmental awareness in Malaysian society et al., 2011; Hamdan & Diana, 2017).

Methodology

To achieve the outlined objectives, this study employs a qualitative approach and adopts a content analysis method involving document analysis protocols. The secondary data highlighted and analyzed in this study were obtained from ancient and contemporary scholarly works, journal articles, and theses.

Maqasid Al-Shariah

Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah is an Arabic term composed of two components, namely *maqāṣid* and *al-sharī'ah*. Ibn 'Ashūr provides a definition of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, referring to it as "the meanings and wisdoms manifested by the Islamic law in the entirety of its legislation or a significant portion thereof, not limited to any particular category of Islamic law alone. It also encompasses the characteristics of legislation, its general objectives, and the meanings that are always taken into consideration in legal legislation. Included in this general objective are also the meanings of wisdom that are not manifested in the entirety of Islamic law but are manifested in the majority of it" (Ibn Ashur, 2004:165).

Meanwhile, al-Fāsi presents a more concise definition of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. He defines it as "the objectives and secrets that have been established by Islamic law in each of its legislations" (Al-Fāsi, 2013:7). Additionally, other contemporary scholars have also put forth their own definitions of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. al-Raysūni explicitly states that all the definitions of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah provided by scholars after Ibn Āshūr and al-Fāsi are based on the definitions put forth by these two scholars (Al-Raysūni, 2014, 2015). For al-Raysūni himself, after examining the definitions of previous scholars, he formulates maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as "the objectives established by Islamic law with the aim of realizing human welfare" (al-Raysuni, 1995:19).

This definition affirms that the interests of humans always serve as the purpose and objective behind the legislation of Islamic law. Therefore, humans are obliged to obey the Sharia of Allah because such obedience undoubtedly brings benefit to humans themselves.

The knowledge of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah should be accessible to all of humanity. This is because knowledge of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah can elucidate the noble goals embedded within the legal framework of Shariah. However, understanding it is even more pressing for authorities in religion. This is asserted because familiarity with maqāṣid al-sharī'ah aids them in comprehending Islamic texts, interpreting and accurately applying their true meanings in every action and decision they undertake.

Among the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah is the preservation of the prosperity and sustainability of the environment. Al-Fāsi (2013) emphasized that the general objective of Islamic law is to enrich and prosper the environment and the earth, as well as to preserve its system of life. The earth will thrive if its inhabitants govern and manage it wisely and justly, both in thought and deed. Islamic law also aims to safeguard the sustainability of the environment by utilizing its resources judiciously for the benefit of its inhabitants. Currently, safeguarding and maintaining the environment has emerged as one of the most significant challenges of this era.

Maintaining Environmental Sustainability As A Ḍarūriyyāt (Essential Necessity) Based on Maqasid Al-Shariah

Darūriyyāt in the context of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah refers to something that cannot be avoided in upholding the interests of religion and the world. If this element is lost, it will not only impact worldly interests but also lead to destruction, chaos, and loss of life. On the other hand, it will result in the loss of security, happiness, and ultimately lead to evident harm. Its preservation involves two aspects: firstly, establishing the basic structure and laying its foundation, i.e., by preserving it in its existence. Secondly, avoiding any deviation that may occur or is expected to occur, i.e., by preserving it in its absence. These five necessities are: preserving religion, life, progeny, wealth, and intellect.

If religion is considered the primary necessity among the five basic needs that must be preserved to uphold both religious and worldly interests, it logically follows that this necessitates the protection and development of the environment. The environment serves as the arena in which humans carry out the governance and management tasks entrusted to them by Allah, the Creator. As Allah has stated: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." (Al-Baqarah: verse 30). He also affirms, "It is He who has created you from the earth and made you rulers over it." (Hud: verse 61).

Therefore, preserving and protecting the environment from any form of abuse is a religious duty, not just a mere livelihood necessity. As stated in the principles of jurisprudence, "That

which a duty cannot be fulfilled without is also a duty." If the principles of religion are divided between worship and worldly affairs, then achieving these principles cannot be done without considering the environment.

Prayer requires cleanliness, which in turn requires water, one of the elements of the environment. Water needs to be clean and protected from pollutants that disrupt its natural properties, and to prevent it from being used for drinking, ablution, or bathing. Zakat, on the other hand, requires distribution across the earth, with efforts and work in various forms such as agriculture, industry, trade, and others. This means advancing and protecting the environment. Fasting requires refraining from doing things that harm or damage elements of the environment, because this is a blessing from Allah. Hajj requires financial and physical ability, and this cannot be attained by humans without effort or work on the earth; to construct, develop, and manage.

Similarly, religion prohibits wastefulness in using elements of the environment as wastefulness is considered one of the main causes of environmental degradation and the depletion of its resources. In all its forms and types, it leads to a consequence, which is the destruction of plants and offspring, and the disruption of the environmental balance, which is crucial for survival on the earth.

Islam and Environmental Sustainability

Environmental preservation is greatly emphasized in Islam. There are many verses in the Quran that urge humans to take care of the environment. Although the Quran does not outline in detail the methods for environmental preservation, a thorough study of its verses reveals an exhortation for humans to preserve and safeguard the sustainability of the environment.

The Quran has addressed environmental issues from various perspectives, including:

- a- Drawing attention to the natural elements of the environment that encompass humans, such as the sky, earth, land, sea, water, air, sun, and moon.
- b- Calling for the preservation of the environmental balance, so that the natural elements and their components remain as created by Allah without any significant alterations.
- c- Prohibiting actions that harm the earth, whether it be the air, land, or sea. This includes physical corruption like pollution that affects the human environment, as well as moral corruption such as injustice and oppression.
- d-

Here are examples of Quranic verses that discuss elements of the environment

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ ۚ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعْيِشًا وَمَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ
بِرَازِقِينَ ۗ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ [الحجر: 19-21]

Translation: And the earth - We have spread it and cast therein firmly set mountains and caused to grow therein [something] of every well-balanced thing(19) And We have made for you therein means of living and [for] those for whom you are not providers(20) And there is not a thing but that with Us are its depositories, and We do not send it down except according to a known measure (21) (Al-Hijr, 19-21)

وقال تعالى: ﴿ أَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَاهَا وَرَازِقْنَاهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوجٍ * وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ رَوْحٍ بِهَيْجٍ * تَبْصِرَةً وَذِكْرَى لِكُلِّ عَنِيدٍ مُنِيبٍ * وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً مُبَارَكًا فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ وَحَبَّ الْحَصِيدِ * وَالنَّخْلَ بَاسِقَاتٍ لَهَا طَلْعٌ نَضِيدٌ * رِزْقًا لِلْعِبَادِ وَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيْتًا كَذَلِكَ الْخُرُوجُ ﴾ [ق: 6-11].

Translation: Do they not look at the sky above them? How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it? (And the earth- We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs)- And We send down from the sky rain charted with blessing, and We produce therewith gardens and Grain for harvests; And tall (and stately) palm-trees, with shoots of fruit-stalks, piled one over another; As sustenance for ((Allah)'s) Servants;- and We give (new) life therewith to land that is dead: Thus will be the Resurrection (Qaf,6-11)

It should be noted that among each element of nature, there exists a delicate and orderly balance; for everything in this universe is created with a measure, wisdom, purpose, and calculated with precise calculation.

Islam also prohibits all forms of physical destruction, including environmental pollution, as a means of protecting and preserving human rights from potential harm that could jeopardize their interests. Additionally, Islam forbids wastefulness in all forms, including in the way we interact with the environment, even during acts of worship.

In a hadith, Prophet Muhammad observed a companion using an excessive amount of water while performing ablution. He asked, "What is this wastefulness?" The companion inquired, "Can there be wastefulness in ablution?" The Prophet replied, "Yes, even if you perform it on the banks of a flowing river" (Ibn Mājah, 2009).

From Abdullah bin Amr - may Allah be pleased with them both - he said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "No person kills a bird or anything larger, without right, except that Allah - the Most Noble and the Most Great - will hold him accountable for it." Then he was asked: "O Messenger of Allah, what is its right?" He replied: "Its right is to slaughter it and eat it, and not to cut off its head and throw it away" (Aḥmad, 2001).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is also narrated to have prayed, demonstrating the significance of the sustainability and prosperity of the environment.

In an authentic hadith from Abu Hurairah in Sahih Muslim, he said: "When people brought the fruits of their gardens to the Prophet, upon receiving them, he said: 'O Allah, bless our fruits, bless our city, bless our measurements, and bless our scales. O Allah, indeed, Ibrahim was Your servant, Your beloved, and Your Prophet. And I am Your servant and Your Prophet. He prayed to You for the blessings of Makkah, and I pray to You for the blessings of Madinah, just as he prayed for Makkah.' Then Prophet Muhammad gave the fruit to a child beside him" (Muslim, 2006).

This hadith illustrates the Prophet's supplication for the prosperity and well-being of the environment and the blessings upon the city. It also highlights the parallel between his prayers for Madinah and Prophet Ibrahim's prayers for Makkah.

The Prophet himself also participated in planting trees with his own blessed hands, as narrated in Musnad al-Imam Ahmad from Salman. He said, "I made an agreement with my master that I would plant five hundred trees for them. If the trees grew, then I would be set free." He said, "I went to the Prophet and mentioned it to him. He said, 'Plant them and make it a condition for your emancipation to them. When you want to plant, inform me.' He said, 'I informed him.' The Prophet came and planted with his own hands except for one tree. I planted it with my own hands"(Aḥmad, 2001).

Islam not only allows tree planting, but it also prohibits their destruction, even in the most challenging and hostile circumstances, such as during warfare and facing enemies. The level of attention Islam gives to plants, especially trees, is unparalleled in previous religious laws or secular regulations.

It should be noted that the Caliph, holding the highest authority in an Islamic state, would issue warnings to the leaders of armies when sending them to the battlefield to take care of trees, especially fruit-bearing ones. This directive is equivalent to their instruction to protect the lives of innocent individuals who have no knowledge of warfare and are not involved in it.

Furthermore, the imperative to care for the environment can also be observed through the prohibition set by Allah on all humans from causing harm to the Earth's surface. Any form of damage to the earth's surface falls under what is prohibited by Allah and is detested by Him. Additionally, as individual Muslims, it is incumbent upon us to obey His directives and abstain from all that He has forbidden.

Preservation of Environmental Sustainability By Hajj Pilgrims

Saudi Arabia faces significant environmental challenges, with tons of waste generated by the largest human gathering, Hundreds of thousands of Muslims annually journey to the sacred city of Mecca and the holy sites to perform the rituals of Hajj. While the rites of Hajj and Umrah are not just religious ceremonies, they can also serve as a means to educate over a billion Muslims worldwide about the importance of environmental conservation (Al-Lahibi, 2007)

Allah says: "And do not corrupt the earth after its reformation" (Al-A'raf, verse 56). In a world increasingly threatened by climate change day by day, environmental commitment becomes a legitimate objective aimed at preventing corruption and safeguarding the environment and its natural resources, thus making Hajj more environmentally sustainable.

Below are some suggestions to be implemented by the pilgrims to preserve the environment while in the Holy Land (National Centre for Environmental Compliance, 2022)

Housing and Accommodation

- Conserve water usage for ablution and other purposes, and only open the water tap when necessary.
- Reduce the use of plastic bottles and opt for reusable ones.
- Purchase food in quantities that align with the need to minimize waste.
- Dispose of waste in designated areas to preserve the environment.
- Avoid using plastic shopping bags and replace them with multi-use bags.
- Ventilate tents and accommodation continuously to maintain indoor environmental quality.

Transportation and Mobility

- Prioritize the use of public transportation such as buses and trains.
- Utilize walking as a healthy and eco-friendly means of transportation.
- Avoid congested areas and opt for well-ventilated spaces.

Environment of the Holy Mosque and Sacred Sites

- Maintain the cleanliness of the Holy Mosque and the sacred sites.
- Refrain from spitting in the Holy Mosque, courtyards, sacred sites, and roads, as it can lead to the spread of harmful bacteria and viruses in the environment and to humans.
- Dispose of waste in designated areas and preserve the general environment of the sacred places.
- Avoid cutting or damaging trees and shrubs.
- Use restroom facilities and refrain from relieving oneself in non-designated areas.

Environmental Health and Safety

- Preserve the environment and cleanliness of all public areas such as accommodations, residences, transportation, and vehicles.
- Use masks for personal protection, especially in crowded places.
- Ensure not to produce loud noises and contribute to reducing noise levels during Hajj.
- Avoid lighting fires inside camps to prevent fire hazards and the release of harmful gases detrimental to the environment and humans.
- Use sanitizers conscientiously.
- Refrain from smoking during Hajj to prevent harm to pilgrims and to preserve the Hajj environment from air pollutants.
- Avoid climbing mountainous terrains, especially in Arafat and Muzdalifah, to protect trees and shrubs from harm or damage.
- Avoid setting up tents near mountain slopes to prevent rockfalls and preserve the environment for wildlife.
- Do not litter cigarette butts on roads, as it affects both environmental and human health.

Strategies to Increase Awareness about The Importance of Environmental Preservation among Hajj Pilgrims

The strategy to enhance understanding and awareness of environmental sustainability among Hajj pilgrims can be implemented in various ways, including the following:

- 1) Approaches and Techniques in Environmental Education
 - a- Interactive and Field Experience Approach: Introduce an approach that allows pilgrims to directly engage with the environment during their religious practices. For example, organizing clean-up activities around sacred sites, or providing information about the significance of the environment during pilgrimages.
 - b- Utilizing Technology in Education: Harness technology to deliver information and education about the environment. For instance, using smartphone applications to display information about plants or environmental conditions during pilgrimages and religious practices.
 - c- Collaborative Education Programs: Collaborate with organizations or NGOs specializing in environmental education to create joint programs. This emphasizes existing resources and ensures a holistic approach to environmental education.
- 2) Integration of Environmental Education into the Pilgrimage (Hajj) and Umrah Worship Curriculum
 - a- Introduction of Environmental Concepts in Pre-Hajj and Umrah Guidance: Before pilgrims depart, provide initial information about the importance of the environment, individual responsibilities towards it, and how to preserve environmental sustainability during worship.
 - b- Education Sessions During Pilgrimage Visits: During the pilgrimage visits, include brief information about environmental aspects related to the visited sites. For example, understanding the flora and fauna of the area, as well as the impact of human activities on the environment.
 - c- Education Program During the Day of Arafah: Utilize the time spent at Arafah to deliver more in-depth education about the obligation to preserve the environment and its connection to the objectives of Hajj and Umrah.

- d- Reflection and Discussion Sessions: After returning from the pilgrimage, organize reflection and discussion sessions about the experience of performing the worship, taking into consideration aspects of environmental conservation. Discuss ways to improve practices and maximize the benefits of the environment during worship.

Through this approach, education about the environment can be effectively integrated into the curriculum of Hajj and Umrah worship. This ensures that pilgrims have a deeper awareness of their responsibilities towards the natural environment.

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that preserving the environment is the responsibility of all humans. Muslims must take the lead in shouldering the responsibility of preserving the environment from any harm or destruction. This is because it is an Islamic obligation. When the environment is well cared for, it is indirectly regarded that the community is collectively fulfilling the command of Allah, which is to care for the environment and prosper the earth. Moreover, a conducive environment also aids the Muslim community in meeting the five demands of Shariah, namely the preservation of religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to promote an understanding of the significance of preserving the environment, ensuring that the Hajj pilgrimage is conducted sustainably by adhering to Islamic teachings related to environmental preservation. It is hoped that our lives are not disrupted or harmed by pollution that damages nature.

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