

## **The Role of Media and the Cultural Education to Protect the Environment: Implications for Religious Perspectives**

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**Abstract:** The role of media involves in the discourse of human civilization. Its significance is enormous for the environment and development without which the civilization is quite meaningless. Presently, it is treated as one of the state machineries for the modern civilization. It can influence to the society in many dimensions and aspects. It is one of the fastest mechanisms that may change the society. It teaches culture to the people that include every aspects of the life. It is of course the part and parcel of religions. Different religions have different role for the preservation and conservation of the cultural heritage in the society. All the religions such as Islam, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jews, etc. have equal guidance and supervision on the cultural matters in the daily life. Even, Islam implies good order and good policies for the protection of the society from destruction. Islamic is regarded as the complete code of life and its teachings never compromise with any harmful activities to the society. Throughout the human history, religions including Islam played a vital role in promoting and supporting the good governance and emerged as an increasingly vital aspect of both private and public affairs. Islam also asserts that nobody can damage and disrupt the environment in any forms for which the abuser will be punished in the world and the hereafter. Islam including all religions urges everyone boundlessly to live in harmony with others and nature and to act righteously towards a sacred duty to the soil, air, water, plants or animal, etc. as part of our culture. It ensures the environmental rights to all. These are the part of the cultural education as revealed in the different religions. The religions also emphasize on the morals which is also important aspects of our cultural life. It is noted that the media have been playing a critical role in this regard. This study will critically evaluate the cultural aspects of the daily life based on the different religions perspectives. A case study may be done at the department of media and communication with our relevant areas, the university of Malaya, Malaysia. Researchers should obey it for their own beauty and prosperous on this earth, their home.

**Key words:** Culture and cultural education, religions, environment, media, Islam

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Culture is precisely the medium through which individuals express their ability to fulfill themselves which and is therefore an integral part of development.

According to the quoting of the UNESCO, it reads as quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners and scholarly pursuits, etc. It is excellent in the arts, manners, etc. That develops and improves the mind by education or training. Culture in all its dimensions is a fundamental component of sustainable development. It is a powerful contributor to economic development, social stability and environmental protection. It may think as a storehouse of knowledge and information, it defines the way human beings live and interact both at local and global scales. According to the Anthropological point of view, the sum total of ways of living built up by a group

of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another. It is said that culture is a vehicle for economic development. It is also, treated as a Vehicle for Social Cohesion and Stability. As per the UNESCO commitment, it is sometimes called a vehicle for resilient communities.

However, in order to understand the topic of this study, researchers need to explain some keywords as follows for the clear and meaningful understanding. Some definitions on culture, religious culture and environment etc., that have already been discussed in the different studies as pointed by Elkeh (1989), Tyler (1871), Foster (1962), Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (1980), Aberle *et al.* (1950), Selznick in Aweda *et al.* (1987) etc. and a few of the summary understandings attached in the Appendix 1 will be helpful for the understanding on the culture. However, the word culture is most commonly used in three basic senses:

- Excellence of taste in the fine arts and humanities, also known as high culture
- An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning
- The set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group, etc.

Particularly Jekayinfa (2001) clearly mentioned the definitions and scope in her study.

### **BACKGROUND**

The term culture from the Latin *cultura* stemming from *colere*, meaning to cultivate that has various meanings. It has a role in the process of history of human civilization and its origin including the Darwin human evolution theory. In fact, the concept of culture is found in the *Origin of Culture and Civilization* published in 2005 but the process was started in eighteenth and nineteenth-century (Dietrich, 2005). Europe, it connoted a process of cultivation or improvement as in agriculture or horticulture. In the nineteenth century, it came to refer first to the betterment or refinement of the individual, especially through education and then to the fulfillment of national aspirations or ideals. In the mid-nineteenth century, some scientists used the term culture to refer to a universal human capacity. For the German non-positivist sociologist, Georg Simmel, culture referred to the cultivation of individuals through the agency of external forms which have been objectified in the course of history. In the twentieth century, culture emerged as a concept central to anthropology, encompassing all human phenomena that are not purely results of human genetics. Specifically, the term culture in American anthropology had two meanings: the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols and to act imaginatively and creatively and the distinct ways that people living in different parts of the world classified and represented their experiences and acted creatively. Following World War II, the term became important, albeit with different meanings in other disciplines such as cultural studies, organizational psychology. Culture is many things and many things may recontextualize for the generations in this earth. Culture, one quickly realizes that there is wide-ranging and contradictory scholarly opinion about which values, norms and beliefs should be measured to represent the concept of culture. According to Kroeber, the word culture came into English usage from nurture from agriculture and pearl culture and from test tube cultures in 1871. Tyler (1871) defined culture as that

complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Prior to this, the term culture was used with its modern meaning in the German word *Cultur* as early as 1843. Kroeber and Kluckhohn's early review (1952) of cultural definitions found over 160 different instantiations. Kroeber defined culture as the historically differentiated and variable mass of customary ways of functioning of human societies. Parsons and Shils states that culture is composed of a set of values, norms and symbols that guide individual behavior. Herskovits argued that there is a general agreement that culture is learned:

- It allows man to adapt himself to his natural and social setting
- It is greatly variable
- It is manifested in institutions, thought patterns and material objects

### **DISCUSSION**

The topic of the study has been discussed in relation to media, environment and the religious perspectives. Particularly, the role of Islam has been highlighted in this regard.

**The role of media on environment and culture:** Since, 19th century, the role of media has been contributing much to the environmental field. The media can play a significant role to the environmental development and conservation. Some visible instance on the environmental development was observed globally. For example, the presence of >9000 journalists covering the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or the 36000 journalists reports at the Kyoto negotiations on climate change. This high degree of involvement of the press and media is related to at least two key factors. It may play its role in three dimensions such as information, formation and transformation dealing with the environmental matters. This work can be done through the mass media role such as the cinema, radio, television, telephonic communication, the internet and networking systems etc. The public opinion is increasingly shaped by these media. The television has been an instrumental in uncovering some of the hidden glories of the environment through programmes. In era of the knowledge based society, the media like television has been playing significant role as facilitator of environmental development, disseminator of information and being an agent of change (Naked Eyes, 2006). Regarding the issue of environment awareness, media plays a vital role in spreading the true message.

But the Western culture has been glorified and vigorously promoted by the media as the culture as if you are not following the Western trend, you are old fashioned, backward and maybe dumb compared to the Islamic culture. But unfortunately, some impacts such as indulgence in drugs and immorality, break-down of respect for parents and elders, disintegration of family structures and high divorce rate etc have been severely observed. In fact, the Western people are concerned about it. That media influences all aspects of culture including religious culture is beyond question. Media may both enhance and flatten culture within the family, region or religion. Pope John Paul II in a May 15, 1994 Vatican address stated, television can enrich family life. It can draw family members closer together and foster their solidarity with other families and with the community at large. It can increase not only their general knowledge but also their religious knowledge, making it possible for them to hear God's word to strengthen their religious identity and to nurture their moral and spiritual life.

Television can also harm family life by: propagating degrading values and models of behavior by broadcasting pornography and graphic depictions of brutal violence, inculcating moral relativism and religious skepticism, spreading distorted, manipulative accounts of news events and current issues, carrying exploitative advertising that appeals to base instincts and glorifying false visions of life that obstruct the realization of mutual respect of justice and of peace (Ioannes, 1994).

Even when television programs themselves are not morally objectionable, television can still have negative effects on the family. It can isolate family members in their private worlds, cutting them off from authentic interpersonal relations; it can also divide the family by alienating parents from children and children from parents.

**Religions and culture:** Religions and culture is closely connected and related just like father without son. It is an important part of culture. It influences the whole human beings on this earth. But the different religions such as the Islam, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Jews, etc. may have separate role and contributions to the cultural development and conservation. This development has been made based on the religious customs and habits in the various stages in the world civilization. For example, in the early middle ages, Muslim thinkers and scientists drawing on the rich heritage of Greece, developed their own world-views and sowed in the subsoil of the Latin middle ages the seeds from which the first shoots of the European Renaissance were to grow. They served as an essential link in that transmission of learning and knowledge which constitutes the most moving illustration

of the many-stranded continuity of the epic of humanity. Muslim philosophers, geographers, physicists, mathematicians, botanists and doctors made their contributions to the adventure of science which paid no heed to borders. Knowledge flowed in from Sicily and Andalusia. Perhaps the apocryphal story of Averroes in Italy whose teaching at the University of Padua was to find an echo in Dante's *Inferno* is emblematic of this itinerancy of knowledge, carried like pollen by the bracing winds of human commerce. Islamic culture whose roots plunge deep into the past but which is still alive today, simultaneously developed a conception of the individual and the universe, a philosophy of life and an art of living still attested in the prestigious vestiges of its heritage which form an integral part of the heritage of humanity. Religion also acts as a control agent for attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and behaviors. In real terms, these controls have been documented to produce a variety of benefits including increased longevity and physical and mental health. The element of control is deep seated in most religions but varies in terms of what is controlled. The following religious quotes provide examples of this control. It is noteworthy that this physical and spiritual control is generally believed to produce eternal rewards and is therefore when viewed in an eternal perspective is often not thought of as a sacrifice at all and (as for) those who believe in Allah and His apostles, these it is that are the truthful and the faithful ones in the sight of their Lord: they shall have their reward and their light and (as for) those who disbelieve and reject the communications, these are the inmates of the hell (The Koran, the Iron). Jesus said unto him if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come and follow me (The New Testament, Matthew). A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation. Joseph Smith Religion based control of thoughts and behavior clearly leads to increased longevity. Meditation, prayer and church attendance have been associated with 7 years greater longevity. Strict religious groups often place controls on diet (vegetarian, fat content, smoking and alcohol consumption and are similarly associated with having greater individual longevity.

**Environmental context and Islam:** As a part of this study, the Islamic culture as example may be put forward in the understanding of the religious culture. In the middle ages, the influence of Islamic civilization was felt throughout the world (Khalid, 2002). There are diverse opinions about the Islamic role and the other category role as discussed in the Appendix 2 of the study. It is observed in the

Islamic jurisprudence that there is a great importance on the environmental conservation and development in the daily life and a close relation and importance are observed between the Environment and the Islamic Jurisprudence and the environment is a creation of God's creation (Dien, 1997). Some verses are mentioned here: The Quran assets that everything belongs to God: He to whom the kingdom of the heaven and the earth belongs. He created everything and determined it most exactly (25:2). The real owner of the natural world is the Creator and He has showered His blessings upon you both outwardly and inwardly (31-19). He appointed us as His Khalif (stewards) on the earth. So, He could test you regarding what He has given you (6-167). The Sunnah of the Prophet defined these injunctions of the Quran as follows:

- The elements that compose the natural world are common property
- The right to benefit from natural resources is a right held in common
- There shall be no damage or infliction of damage bearing in mind future users

Over the centuries, the Muslim legalists have established the following principles: A person invalidates his rights over a particular natural resource if by exercising it he:

- Causes detriment to another
- Causes detriment to another without correspondents benefit to the other
- Causes general detriment to society

**Additionally:**

- Every member of society is entitled to benefit from a common resource to the extent of his needs so long as he does not violate, infringe or obstruct the equal rights of other members of society
- Accountability rests with the user
- In return for benefits derived from a renewable resource the user is obliged to maintain its value
- If the user causes destruction, impairment or degradation he is held liable to the extent of putting right the damage caused

Some other important principles: Allah is the sole owner of the earth and everything in it. People hold land on usufruct that is for its utility value only. There is a restricted right to public property (Khalid, 2002):

- Abuse of rights are prohibited and penalized
- There are rights to be benefits derived from natural resources held in common

- Scarc resource utilization is controlled
- The common welfare is protected
- Benefits are protected and detriments are either reduced or eliminated

Some references are made here from the Holy Quran:

- It is He who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein (11:61)
- It is He who had made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the sustenance which He furnishes but unto Him the resurrection (67:15)
- All things including the earth and all its resources are owned by the Lord as stated earlier in the following verse
- To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth and all between them and all beneath the soil (20:6)
- It is we who have placed you with authority on the earth and provided you therein with means for the fulfillment of your life
- He merges night into day and He merges day into night and he has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts (57:6)
- And we send the fecundating winds, then caused the rain to descend the sky, therewith providing you with water (in abundance) through ye are not the guardians of its store (15:22)
- And the earth we have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance (15:19)
- We created not the heaven, the earth and all between them but for just ends (15:85)
- Not without purpose did we create heaven earth and all between (38:27)

**Institutional principles:**

- People who reclaim or revive land (ihya'al mawat) have a right to its ownership
- Land grants (iqta') may be made by the state for reclamation and development
- Land may be released (ijara) for its usufruct by the state for its reclamation and development
- Special reserves (hima) may be established by a community or the state for use as conservation zones
- The State may establish inviolable zones (al-harim) where use is prohibited or restricted
- Makkah and Madina are known as the two inviolable Sanctuaries (al-haramain) where trees cannot be cut down and animals are protected from harm within their boundaries. They served as examples of best practice (Khalid, 2002)

- Charitable endowments (awqaf) may be established with specific conservation objectives

**The enforcement mechanism in Islam:** The primary concern of Islamic governance is promoting the good and forbidding wrongdoing. As a part of these functions, it has the mandate to protect land and natural resources from being abused and misused (Khalid, 2002). From its earliest source the Islamic state established an agency known as the hisba whose specific task it was to protect the people through promoting the establishment of good and forbidding wrongdoing.

This agency was headed by a learned jurist (muhtasib) and he functioned like the chief inspector of weights and measures and chief public health officer rolled into one. He was also responsible among other similar duties for the proper functioning of the hima and al harim zones and acted as what one may describe as an environmental inspector. The development and application of these principles and institutions have seen a decline over the past two centuries as another worldview based on the exploitation of natural resources for profit gradually overtook this model. We are experiencing the consequences of this now. However, there are indications here as to how this Islamic heritage has been and could again be put to good use in the modern context.

### **SOME CASE STUDIES**

The empirical study finds that the culture is quite diversified in nature. It cannot be separated from the people. Its tests and nature depends on the different outlook. It cannot be measured at all. The Islamic culture is regulated and guided by the Islam. It is dive and complete code of life which is declared by the Islam. But the other cultures like the Western culture Chinese culture are purely based on customs and traditions and their religious beliefs. These practices are not recognized by their own religions. It is not treated as universal. The Islamic culture is more moral than those of other religions. So far the study observes, the Western people are giving attention to their culture and their family values. Their families have been breaking down day by day. They need to think about the Islamic value systems. In order to maintain the global environment and culture, researchers need to have respect to the meanings of the respective religions along with the international human rights law and environmental law for sustainable development on this earth.

### **CONCLUSION**

Cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations.

In support of the cultural policies, in the meantime, the UNESCO has already developed some standard setting instruments including seven conventions such as the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005, the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage in 2001, Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972, Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit, Import, Export and Transfer of Cultural Property in 1970, Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict in 1954 and the Universal Copyright Convention 1952 and 1971, etc. Presently, the UNESCO has been advocating that sustainable development strategies sensitive to cultural assets are the key to addressing the interlinked economic, social and environmental problems confronting all societies today and going to discuss this issue in a high-level round table on Culture for Development during the UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, New York, on the 20-22 September, 2010. Researchers need to implement the provisions of these instruments by enacting laws. Additionally, researchers should teach the generations relating to cultural education due to the fact it cultural education means that it develops quality and meaningful environment along with novelty for the mankind. It includes the research-based education; international environmental principles based education, public international based education, different religious based education, etc. Moreover, we also need to regulate the life based on the different religious principles along with the quality cultural phenomenon as defined by the scholarships. The parents and the guardians may take special care of their children in this regard in order to maintain the cultured life on this mother earth, the home. Last but not the least; we need to follow strictly the inner meanings of the different religious on the movement towards the environment.

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## APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Understandings, origin classification, context, importance, dimensions, schools, etc.

Fundamentals	Explanations
Some	Culture is a life long process, it continues from cradle to the grave, construct (with diverse applications construct, definitions ideas in a broad spectrum of areas of society, embraces the total repertoire of human actions, socially transmitted from generation to generation, configuration of institutions and modes of life, complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society, reservoir of knowledge that is characteristic ways of thinking and feeling, attitudes, aspirations and ideals, the common learned way of life shared by members of a society consisting of the totality of facts, techniques, social institutions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations and systems of values known to a group. A system of ideals, values, beliefs, knowledge and customs transmitted from generation to generation within a social group, culture is learned, acquired, transmitted or diffuse man learns culture through the process of socialization, imitation, personal experience and through deliberate indoctrination or teaching. ed through contact or other media of communications, culture generally is dynamic and not static and so can lie modified or changed as circumstances dictate, vary from society to society and from one stage to another as the society develops. The meaning of culture is difficult to sort out: the set of inherited beliefs, attitudes and moral strictures that a people use. We teach culture to the children or they learn it by tacit and perhaps unconscious exposure over time, humans inherit culture from the people they grow up with, not necessarily from their genetic forebears. To distinguish outsiders, to understand themselves and to communicate with each other. Culture is a kind of metapreference, in the sense it tells us what we should want to want. A source of identity, innovation and creativity. A set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group. A complex web of meanings, relationships, beliefs and values that frames people's relationship to the world. It is acquired through the process of cultivation and improvement of the individual, especially by means of education. Culture is precisely the medium through which individuals express their ability to fulfill themselves and is therefore an integral part of development. Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, UNESCO, 2009. It is said that culture is a vehicle for economic development It is also treated as a vehicle for social cohesion and stability. An evolving dynamic force relevant to all societies, local or global. It is influenced by and in turn influences world-views and expressive forms. It is located in a time and a place. While culture in the abstract is a set of mental constructs, it is rooted in a place at a moment in history and is always local. Culture is a vehicle for resilient communities; a renewable resource if it is carefully nurtured for it to grow and flower. When neglected, it is easily lost or destroyed, culture is defined as a people's complete way of life. It consists of all the ideas, objects and ways of doing things created by the group. Culture includes beliefs, customs, langua. Numerous cultures and subcultures present in the world of primary concern to us in this discussion are the two main opposing cultures in present day society. One is the culture of Islam the complete way of life set forth in the Qur'an and Sunnah. On the other opposing end is the Western culture. Both cultures present a complete way of life (World Book Encyclopaedia)
Origin	The term culture from the Latin cultura stemming from colere meaning to cultivate that has various meanings, the concept first emerged in eighteenth and nineteenth century. It is based on two very different conceptions of its function
Evolution	It has a role in the history of human civilization and origin including the Darwin huamn evolution theory. In fact, the concept of culture
Classification	Material: Consists of the products of man's industry or works of art e.g., carving, food, dress, pots, paintings, weapons, cloths and houses
Non-material	cultures: These are abstract things. But man has learned them as part of the way of life. Examples are language, dance, religion, music, literature, morals and values such as freedom, justice, honesty, love, beauty, etc. Visible culture: such as painting and sculpture (theatre, film and music) invisible culture: person's profession. Islamic culture and Western culture
Importance	They believe that another culture is good provided it does what their culture does. No culture is superior to another
Factors influencing culture	Physical environment: Land, agriculture, earth gods, etc. Occupation: The nature of work of people such as dressing, eating and culture thinking, etc. Ethnocentrism: A person grows up affects his personality, the ways he views problems and the environment and his manner of choosing wife, getting married, raising children and caring for the aged. Culture relativism: No universal standard which man can use to evaluate culture as either good or bad, customs, values, customs and beliefs with that larger culture, even when they have their own customs called subculture which they share within their own ethnic group but not with the rest of the society. Language: Language is the pivot of culture. No society exists without the language of its own, all-human cultures are based on language, enables man to acquire the culture of his society. Technologies including internet and websites
Culture contact	Person acquires the language, religion, politics, etc. of another society or person through the contact society
Schools	Different writers attach different meanings to it. It has several schools such as Humanists, Sociologists, Anthropologists, Media theorist and behaviorist
Dimensions	National, regional and international

Appendix 2: Islamic culture vs. General culture

Islamic culture	Common culture/General culture
Islamic culture is treated as a complete code of life	It may not treated as the complete code of life
The sources of Islamic culture is Quran, Hadith, Ijma, Qiyas, etc.	It is basically based on customs, traditions, habits, way of life style, beliefs, language, etc.
Islamic culture is concrete	It is diverse in nature
Islamic culture is almost same in the world	Numerous cultures and subcultures present in the world
It is absolutely religious based	It is not absolutely religious based
It is fashioned by religious spirits	It is determined by Western culture
Morality, modesty and simplicity is the cornerstone of Islamic culture	To some extent, the cornerstone of Western culture is immorality and extravagance
Law of Hijaab is important for Islam	No Hijaab is observed
Live together before marry is prohibited	Live together in the Western culture to some extent mutually permitted
Islamic code of conduct and modest dressing including the loose dressing essential for Muslim Ummah	While there are numerous aspects that highlight the immorality of Western culture, perhaps the most visible and marked expression of this culture is in it's dressing including the tight
	There is no binding in this regard
The true Islamic society upholds the highest levels of morality and maintains simplicity in every aspect of life	
The mindset of the Islamic culture stems from the conviction that Allah Ta'ala is the Creator and Sustainer	The mindset of Western culture is that the purpose of life is worldly enjoyment
The Muslim Ummah believes in external and internal ways of life	This people believe in only the external/worldly way of life

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