

## Awareness of Environmental Protection amongst Muslims in Ampara District

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### ABSTRACT

*Environmental protection is the practice of protecting the environment for the betterment of humans and the natural environment with the assistance of individuals, organizations or states. The main objective of this research is to evaluate the level of environmental awareness among Muslims in Ampara District of Sri Lanka. Primary data were collected by administering a questionnaire to 384 selected participants from the total Muslim population residing in Ampara District. All the data from received questionnaires were analyzed through a descriptive method using SPSS software. In addition, research articles, web publications, books, journals, and Islamic sources such as the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the opinions of contemporary Islamic scholars were used as secondary sources in this study. According to results, the model shows that the informants were well aware of environmental protection, and 96.3% of them eagerly acknowledged the relationship between Islam and environmental protection. About 94% of them accepted the link between environmental protection and physical health, and were concerned with protecting the environment in which they live. Moreover, approximately 33% of them had the habit of keeping their environment clean on a daily basis. In summary, awareness of environmental protection in the sample is at a healthy level, and this knowledge is influenced by their religious guidelines. However, despite the sufficient awareness of participants in protecting the environment, they did not show much interest in practicing it. This research will help strengthen environmental protection by voluntary organizations and assist policymakers in the country to take the necessary measures. The study could serve as a starting point for future research to guide the general public on environmental protection.*

*Keywords: Muslims of Ampara District; environmental ethics; awareness of environmental protection; Imanath in Islam*

### INTRODUCTION

The environment is a reformed name for the physical and cultural aspects that surround us (Nalini 1995). Ecology and nature are synonymous with environment. Although the environment can be easily understood, it is difficult to define. Generally, it can be described as “the overall state of all the aspects around the Human being” (Nalini 1995). Since the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the world started to suffer tremendously. The first United Nations Environmental Conservation Conference, held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972, has been a key occasion. Subsequently, various environmental conferences have been held around the world. The most historic was the Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992. Approximately 178 countries participated and adopted the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (Gada 2014). In Sri Lanka, legal and administrative matters related to the environment, such as the National Environmental Act and the Central Environment, were introduced only after 1980 (Riyas 2016). The Forest Management Agency

under the Forest Resources Ordinance is responsible for forest conservation; the Wildlife Conservation Authority is responsible for the conservation of wildlife under the Wildlife Conservation Act; and local councils, which operate under local government authority, are city and handicraft pollution prevention agencies.

As a guide to human life, Islam has provided many guidelines regarding the protection of the environment. It does not oppose modernity, and Islam is a natural religion (Ibrahim Abu Bakar 2007). The environment is created for the benefit of man and to fulfill his needs. In fact, the Qur'an mentions: “we have indeed established you on earth and provided you with a means of livelihood. Yet you seldom give any thanks (Al-Qur'an 7:10). The Qur'an states that the authority granted here are Imanat and Khilafat traditions. Enriching or developing the earth is one of man's greatest activities. The Qur'an further states, “He is the One Who produced you from the earth and settled you on it” (Al-Qur'an 11:61). Thus, the task of enriching the earth is the greatest duty given to man by Allah. Environmental conservation

responsibility is meant to be combined with the duty of the Caliphs; hence, the Prophet and his successors became involved in this endeavor.

When Imam Shatibi mentioned environmental protection, he explains the meaning of preservation when talking about the *sharī'ah's* five essential visions (*maqasid-ash-sharī'ah*): preservation of wealth, preservation of pedigree, preservation of intellect, preservation of life, and preservation of religion. Preservation can take place in two ways. The positive side entails growing, strengthening, and improving its foundations; whereas the negative side entails protecting the environment from destruction or possible harm. Such protection includes not only the prevention of potential damage to a subject, but also the proper growth of the subject (Akram 2018). In this study, environmental protection includes preserving, improving, and developing the environment around us.

Awareness means being alert, and knowing about a subject is also awareness (Arivhedeivam 2010). Each individual's awareness of the environment is essential. Historical evidence confirms that the history of Arabs, the ancestors of Muslims in Sri Lanka, predates Christ (Ameen 2009). Ampara district in Sri Lanka is a coastal region. It is a place of historical significance where aboriginal Muslims settled. Given that environmental protection is an integral part of the religious beliefs and creeds of Muslims, the researchers felt that evaluating their awareness on the subject would be more important than that of other religions.

#### RESEARCH PROBLEM

Following the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the world was polluted instantly. New technologies have enhanced human life, and people are actively striving to improve the economy and shift towards a convenient lifestyle. As a side effect, the environment is being exploited. Environmental degradation emerged as a major problem that has caught the attention of the world in the 21st century. Soil, water, air, and space are being polluted by human activities. The consequences are human susceptibility to new diseases that our ancestors have not seen; increased heat due to deforestation; thinning of the ozone layer due to the use of chlorofluorocarbon; respiratory cancers; wildfire; the melting of glaciers and rising of sea levels, which lead to drowned islands; and global warming ultimately (Prokopenko et al. 2020).

Environmental impact has become a major problem in Sri Lanka. The identified environmental issues in Sri Lanka are deforestation, improper drainage system, and soil erosion, unsafe handling of household and industrial wastage, combining chemical waste with riverbanks, usage of greenhouse gases and ozone depletion, urbanization, Vehicle smoke and carbon dioxide, Global warming, climate change (Nalini 1995). National and international governments are enforcing a number of laws to protect the earth from disaster. However, environmental problems cannot be solved unless each individual is aware about the environment. Therefore, are Sri Lankan people aware of the environment? Identification is required over time. Against this background, the survey seeks to assess the level of awareness on environmental protection among Muslims living in Ampara.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the state of awareness on environmental protection among Muslims in the district of Ampara in Sri Lanka

#### BACKGROUND NOTE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN ISLAM

Increasing environmental issues have brought in the realization that industrial and Western approaches are not always applicable in many parts of the world, especially where societies are influenced by spiritual and religious value. Ethics can be defined as a field concerned with managing, maintaining, and advising people to adopt concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, virtue and evil, and justice and crime in relation to human behavior (Riyas 2016).

Environmental ethics is a mechanism in which the world is concerned with the environment, and human beings are systematically guided toward environmental protection. This ideology is emphasized in many countries, considering the many issues in today's environment. Environmental ethics in Islam was created to raise awareness on conservation and to provide clarity to academics in this regard, for which guidance can be derived from the words of Allah. Islamic guidance is applied in protecting and conserving natural resources such as water, air, soil, plants, animals, and humans (Noraziah Ali and Shahuruddin Ahmad 2004). Presently, many Muslims embrace Allah as the God and the Prophet as his Messenger.

*Shari'ah* is an Islamic religious law that regulates not only religious practices but also facets of daily life in Islam. *Shari'ah*, roughly translated, means "the way." The *Shari'ah*, in which Islamic ethics are embedded, has four sources:

1. The Qur'an, which expresses the work and will of Allah;
2. Sunnah, a body of rituals and traditions based on the terms (Hadiths) and acts of Muhammad (PBUH) and elaborated by scholars;
3. Islamic law, which is based on the first two sources and consolidated by the consensus of jurists;
4. An individual's own conscience when the path has not been clarified by the first three sources (Rizk 2014).

The sources speaking in *Shari'ah* about the environment and its ethics are discussed in the topics below.

#### SOURCES OF ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Islamic environmental ethics are derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and other sources in the Islamic *shari'ah*. The key sources of Islamic environmental ethics are as follows:

##### 1. Qur'an

The primary source of instruction for Muslims in all areas is the Qur'an, which is believed to be the direct word of God. The Qur'an includes more than 650 references to ecology as well as essential concepts that are applicable to the environment.

##### 2. Sunnah

The sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad, Sunnah and Hadith, are a secondary source of guidance for Muslims. Sunnah also includes a number of essential ecological guidelines. It has an abundance of a hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]) concerning plants, trees, land production, irrigation, grains, cattle, hunting, allocation of water, and the care of animals.

##### 3. Law of *Shari'ah*

The law of *Shari'ah* contains several teachings describing how to apply the values of the Qur'an

and the guidelines of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Collectively, the sources of authority in Islam offer consistent instruction and guidance to Muslims in their contact with the environment.

#### THE SIX KEY PRINCIPLES OF ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

##### 1. *Tawhid* (oneness of God)

The core principle in Islam is *tawhid*, which covers every part of Islam, including environmental ethics. *Tawhid* is the connectedness and oneness of God and includes not ascribing any kind of partnership with God. *Tawhid* means that God is the owner and creator of all things on earth.

"To God belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth"

(Al Qur'an 4: 126.)

*Tawhid* includes the human being, who is part of this interdependent world, as all things are made by God. The Qur'an also says that everything that is in the heavens and the earth praises God:

"Glorify Him and there is not a thing but glorifies His praise. But you understand not their glorification"

(Al Qur'an 17: 44).

"See thou not that to God bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth, - the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among Mankind"

(Al Qur'an 22: 18).

"And the herbs and the trees—both (alike) bow in adoration"

(Al Qur'an 55: 6)

Everything is considered to be praising God, because they are following the commandments set by God. For instance, a seed follows the commandment to grow into a tree, whereas a bee obeys God's commandment to pollinate plants. Once a Muslim realizes that a tree praises God and animals equally praise God, he/she will carefully consider their treatment of these resources and be grateful for any benefit he/she gains from them.

##### 2. *Ayat* (signs of Allah)

The word *ayat*, which means "signs," is used in the Qur'an for Creation and the verses of the Qur'an. *Ayat* gives them equal status, both being signs for human beings to read and understand. By describing

nature as signs of God in the Qur'an, He is instructing us to reflect on them to learn about God's *tawhid*, His attributes, and the connectedness of the universe. Many examples are provided in the Qur'an where God mentions the natural environment as a sign for human beings to believe in God. The wonder of the natural environment with its interconnections point toward the existence of God; to understand his names and attributes and demonstrate His *tawhid*.

“And it is He who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers: and fruit of every kind He made in pairs: He draws the night as a veil over the Day. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who think and reflect!”

(Qur'an 13:3).

“It is He who sends down rain from the sky: from it you drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which you feed your cattle. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date palms, grapes and every kind of fruit. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who think and reflect!”

(Qur'an, 16:10–11).

Each creation points to the Divine Creator and allows us to learn about God's attributes. Each entity has a meaning greater than itself as part of a whole; similar to a letter in a word. Reflecting on the interdependence of the universe gives meaning to an entity. For example, a tree seen independently is simply a tree. Yet, when seen in relation to other things, it is a shelter for animals, shade against sunlight, and a source of oxygen. Signs of Allah demonstrates the intelligence and wisdom of Allah and his ability to create all things beautiful.

Walking in nature, seeing the trees, the wind, the birds, the waves of the ocean, and the beauty of sunrise allow this reflection on God. It also allows us to reflect on the role of human beings within God's creation. Even thorns, which are perceived to be ugly, serve as protectors of a plant, hence making them beautiful in essence.

Anything in nature is therefore a sign and a means of reflection on God.

### 3. *Caliph* (stewardship)

God gave human beings the role of caliph, which is defined as successor, guardian, steward, viceroy, and trustee.

“It is He that has made you caliph (vicegerent), over the earth.”  
(Qur'an, 6:165)

Man's responsibilities toward God's creations are:

- a. Not destroying the creations
- b. Maintaining the balance
- c. Protecting all creations
- d. Showing gratitude while enjoying the servitude of the universe

### 4. *Mizan* (balance)

Recognition of God's *tawhid* means acknowledging that God created the universe in perfect balance and measure and should not be altered by human beings.

“Verily, all things have we created in proportion and measure”  
(Qur'an, 54:49).

God tells human beings not to disturb this balance:

“And the sky has He raised high, and has devised (for all things) a balance, so that you might never transgress the balance: weigh, therefore (your deeds) with equity, and do not upset the balance.”

(Qur'an, 55:7-9)

### 5. *Amana* (trust)

As God's stewards, Muslims feel honored to protect the environment.

“Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.”  
(Qur'an, 33:72)

### 6. Accountability

Recognizing the accountability of man over the environment, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

“The world is beautiful and verdant and God has appointed you as His stewards over it. He sees how you acquit yourselves.”

In summary, the only value we can add to the environment is by protecting and preserving it (face value) while simultaneously recognizing its real value and showing gratitude.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sri Lanka holds more than a 3,000-year-old history, and it was occupied by many foreign colonizers. The country was occupied by the Portuguese from 1505 to 1656, by the Dutch from 1656 to 1796, and by the



British from 1796 to 1948. It was finally liberated from British imperialism on February 4, 1948, and was declared an independent republic. Sri Lanka is a unitary country of ethnic, multicultural, and religious histories. The majority of Sri Lankans are

Buddhists, and the primary and secondary minority religions are Hinduism and Islam, respectively. Muslims have historically been identified as “Moors” (Razick, Long & Salleh 2015). In addition, Christians and Jews are also minorities.

TABLE 1.

No	Religion	Percentage
01	Buddhism	69.3%
02	Hinduism	13.6%
03	Islam	9.8%
04	Christianity	7.3%
05	Judaism	1%
06	Others	2%

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050

The Republic of Sri Lanka is composed of 25 administrative districts and 23 constituencies. The study area in Ampara is one of the administrative

districts. It consists of 20 divisional secretariats and 2 municipal councils. Figures 1 and 2 show the area map of Ampara.

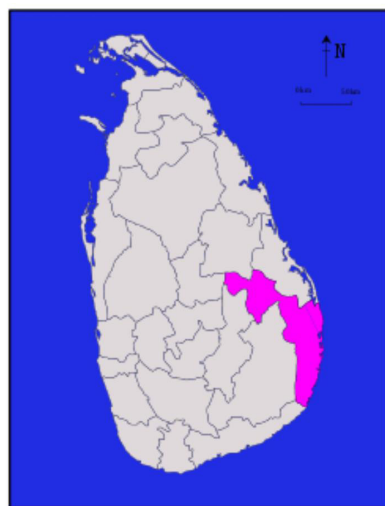


FIGURE 1

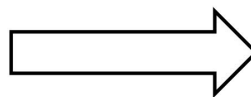


FIGURE 2

FIGURE 1 & 2. Area map of Ampara

Ampara District is inhabited by people of three ethnic groups, namely, Muslims, Tamils, and

Sinhalese. Table 2 shows the ethnic distribution of residents in Ampara.

TABLE 2. Ethnic distribution of residents in Ampara

No	Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
01	Sinhalese	252458	38.88%
02	Sri Lankan Tamils	112457	17.32%
03	Indian Tamils	846	0.13%
04	Sri Lankan Moor (Sri Lankan Muslims)	281702	43.38%
05	Others	1036	0.11%

Source: Census of Population and Housing [2012], Population Table

According to Table 2, the study area is dominated by Muslim (Sri Lankan Muslims). Hence, study samples were collected from the total number of Muslims in the study area (Population: 281,702). A total of 384 individuals were selected as study samples on the basis of the population samples in the study sample schedule of Krejcie and Morgan. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed among selected participants according to the population sample methodology, and 98% of the questionnaires were returned to the researcher. In addition, direct sources related to the study were obtained from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Secondary data such as research articles, books, and online publications were accessed from the official website of the Central Environmental Authority of Sri Lanka. The study was completed by collecting information on the protection of the environment in Islam from the Fatwas of Islamic Fiqh institutions and opinions of contemporary Islamic scholars.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The received questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS, and the central tendencies such as summation, frequencies, percentage, mean, mode, median and standard deviation were calculated.

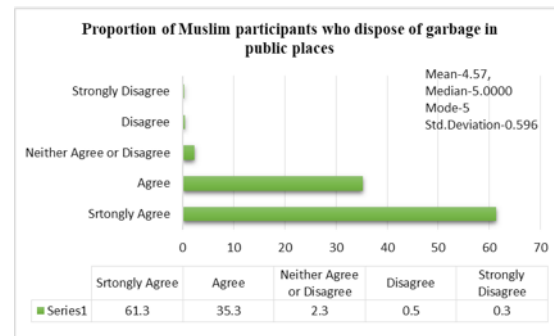
TABLE 3. Source from which information on the relationship between Islam and environmental protection was obtained

No	Sources	Frequency	Percentage
01	Al-Qur'an and Sunnah	156	38%
02	Religious Sermons	115	28%
03	Schools	58	14%
04	Islamic magazines	39	10%
05	Social media	28	7%
06	Peers	10	2%
07	Research	05	1%

Source: Questionnaire Survey, obtained knowledge from Sources

Most participants (38%) obtain their knowledge directly from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The involvement of Arabic colleges in the study area and the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka were found to be the reason for this predominance. The area is home to 42 Arabic colleges and a university (Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs, 2020). Thus, those who identified the Al-Quran and the Sunnah as their sources could be graduates or students in these Arabic colleges. The next main source is the religious sermons by Islamic

### Connection between Islam and environmental protection



Environmental protection is one of the most important topics in Islam. Conservation is a great service that combines Islam's fundamental principle of faith with worship. Thus 96.3% of participants in the study sample accepted the connection between Islam and environmental protection. Such connection is recognized mainly by the younger generation, and more women acknowledge this relationship. Moreover, those who have attained formal education and those employed in the government sector are more aware, because they have gained knowledge through their exposure to various sources of information.

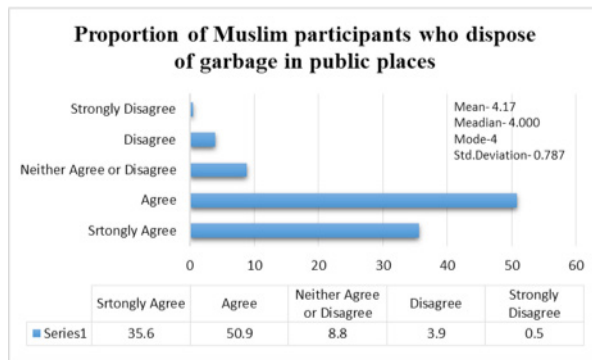
Table 3 presents the sources from which information on the relationship between Islam and environmental protection was obtained.

propagandists (Daei). Such sermons enable religious schools in the area to raise awareness about the environment. The least common sources identified were peers (2%) and research (2%).

### THE HABIT OF DISPOSING OF GARBAGE IN PUBLIC PLACES

Garbage can be classified as dry/solid waste or wet/liquid waste. Dumping of such litter in public places can lead to the proliferation of flies and other insects,

rats, dogs, and crows. Moreover, garbage can breed microorganisms, contaminate water, lead to risks of abrasions and foul odors, and the risk of trapping fruit on the road. Methods of disposing of this type of debris include open dumping, controlled dipping, burning, and composting. Given that such hazard is common knowledge, everyone can put a stop to this environmental threat by minimizing these methods (Rusaina 2019).

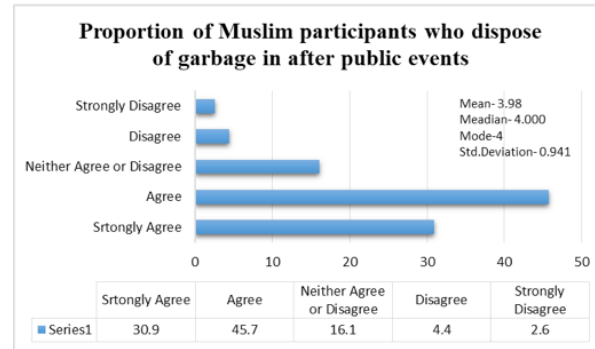


According to the survey results, most of the research samples had a habit of throwing garbage in public places (86.5%, frequency= 333). The main reason for such habit is their religious beliefs. Islam emphasizes the elimination of harm from public places and roads and identifies it as the lowest degree of faith. *“Iman has more than seventy branches, the highest of which is the Kalima of Lailahailallah. The most Inferior of these is to remove the harm along the way.”* Thus, littering in public places is an injustice done to one’s brother and nature, and man will be questioned by Allah in the Hereafter. The fact that this number is not an improvement from this inflated number puts their faith into question. The clergy need to be careful and provide clarification in this regard.

REMOVING GARBAGE AFTER PUBLIC EVENTS

Garbage is man-made waste (Kaleel 2010). These can be classified as biodegradable trash or non-biodegradable trash. Public events are one of the most common sources of environmental pollution. In Ampara, weddings, civic forums, family celebrations, and public political platforms are customarily social events. In these scenarios, are the food given to attendees disposed of properly? The results reveal that 76.6% of participants were aware that they should throw garbage properly after public events. This habit seems to be the key aspect that indicates that research samples are mindful of the

environment in which they reside. Moreover, during such events in the study area, attendees are given instructions on the proper disposal of garbage and the location of garbage bins.



However, 23.4% of participants do not practice this habit, which, in turn, affects their knowledge on environmental protection. Despite their knowledge of environmental protection, neglect and lack of concern have been identified as the cause. This shortcoming is prevalent among people in backward villages. Hence, community leaders and spiritual leaders are responsible for ensuring that their constituents practice proper garbage disposal. If this wrong practice continues, Ampara will face a major problem in the future due to improper garbage disposal.

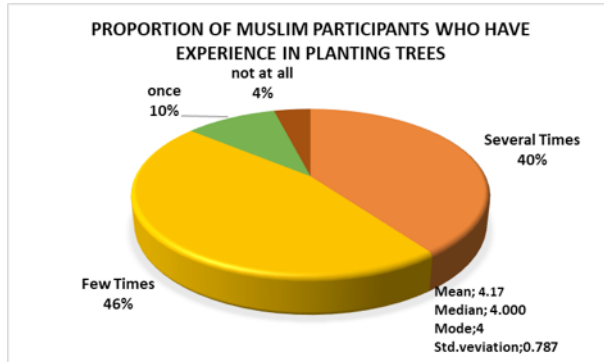
TREE PLANTING

Deforestation is one of the major causes of environmental degradation. To some extent, deforestation is necessary to increase human habitat. However, deforestation for development projects is dangerous. It can cause chaos in the lives of animals. Today, animals are invading human habitations and causing danger and destruction. Therefore, planting trees is essential to prevent serious deforestation. Tree planting is a common environmental protection activity carried out by governments, volunteer groups, and institutions around the world. In fact, Tree Day (Arbor Day) is celebrated every April 29 all over the world. On this day, everyone is encouraged to plant trees and care for trees (Foundation 1920). This worldwide event has attracted the attention of the Government of Sri Lanka. Thus, the Government of Sri Lanka has implemented tree planting through Pradeshiya Sabhas and other departments.

Islam teaches planting trees as an *ibadah* and a form of worship. The Messenger of Allah said,

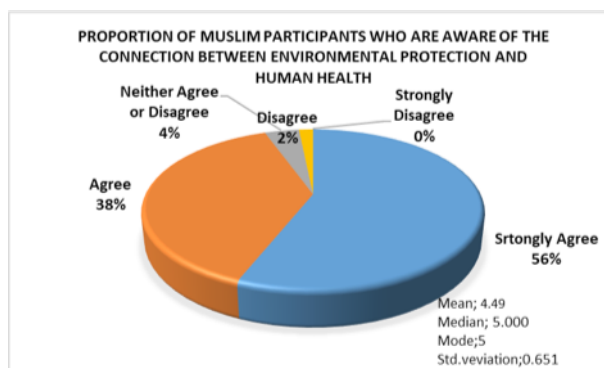
“If a Muslim cultivates a tree by planting or sowing it, and if there is a bird, a man, or an animal from it (its produce or vegetables), he will be rewarded for doing a good deed because of it”.

(al-Bukhari: 2320)



The survey results show that 86% of participants have experience in planting trees, whereas 14% have no experience. This increased involvement is truly commendable and shows that people are concerned about the environment. Among those who have no experience, they identified that the lack of encouragement and proper guidance from family, school, and working environment had contributed to their lack of experience. People living in urban areas are especially uninterested in planting trees, and such inexperience was prevalent among the younger generation and teens (aged 19–28 and 13–18, respectively). Man’s first school is his family. Hence, the lack of proper guidance from family is a major reason for their disinterest. Researchers have identified the need for the Sri Lankan government, schools, and volunteer groups to pay attention to environmental protection and tree planting.

#### CONNECTION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND HUMAN HEALTH



Man constantly influences the environment throughout life. During the stone era, nature was an integral part of man; hence, nature was favorable to

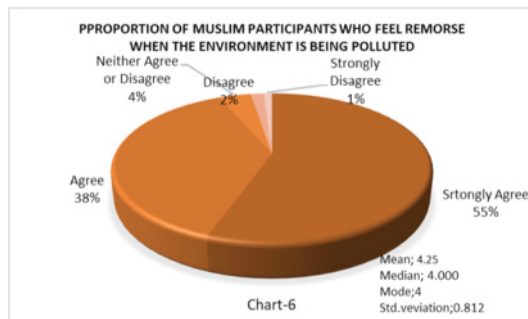
them. After the start of the Industrial Revolution in the 16th century and since the world wars in the 19th century, people have generally lost concern about the environment. As a result, land, water, and air were polluted, which led to the outbreak of unknown diseases that needed to be treated in a growing number of hospitals. Man has unquestionably destroyed the environment in their own hands. Thus, the Nobel Qur’an says, “*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]*” (30:41) This verse speaks not only about the disorders of human conduct but also of the effects of the physical environment. Given that the fundamental duty of man is to develop the earth called “Imaratul Arh,” the transgressions and mistakes that take place in their duty are likely to make human life on earth uncertain.

Most participants (94%) agreed to the connection between human health and environmental protection. Overall, they are aware of the connection. However, despite this knowledge, participants were not interested in practicing the knowledge.

#### REMORSE WHEN THE ENVIRONMENT IS POLLUTED

As man is a social animal, the nature of man is to interact with other people. This nature is what Islam defines by teaching that all Muslims are brothers. Therefore, commanding man to do good deeds and preventing him from doing evil things are important tenets of the commandment “*You are the best community that ever emerged for humanity: you advocate what is moral, and forbid what is immoral, and believe in God. Had the People of the Scripture believed, it would have been better for them. Among they are the believers, but most of them are sinners*” (Ali-Imran: 110). The occurrence of evil acts, first of all preventing it by lips secondly by hand and the thirdly feeling a sense of aversion toward it. “*Whosoever of you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart—and that is the weakest of faith*” (Muslim) regretting is equal to exposing an aversion with heart. Therefore, Chart 6 shows the responses to the question if they feel remorseful during instances when the environment is being polluted.



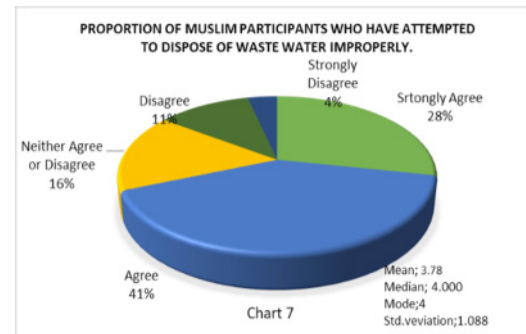


Most participants (86%) expressed that they have felt the desire to stop polluting the environment. The selected participants are mindful about environmental protection, and their age and educational background have an influence in their concern for the environment.

#### TRYING TO DISPOSE OF WASTEWATER IN DRAINS AND RIVERS

Sewage is wastewater discharged from residential, industrial, and commercial areas. Sewage includes piped water from household waste such as toilets, bathrooms, and kitchens. At present, improper sewage disposal is a major problem in Sri Lanka. On average, 21.4% of Sri Lanka’s total population live in urban areas, and yet they live in cities located on 0.5% of the total land area. Waste management is a big issue in cities like Colombo, Kandy, Galle, and Jaffna. These cities dispose of various wastes, such as trash, industrial solid-liquid waste, household waste, and public waste from industry and other construction activities (Kaleel 2010).

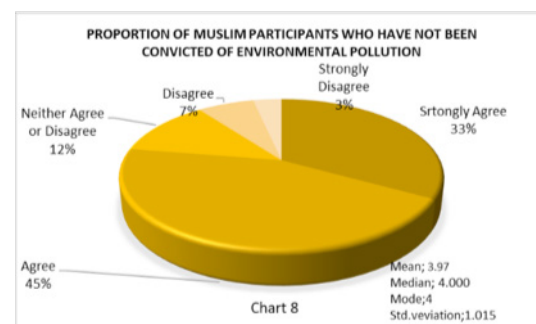
Sewage from factories and residences in urban areas close to main roads is discharged into drains and rivers adjacent to the main road rather than to the coastal areas of Ampara, resulting in water pollution and air pollution. Non-aquatic species have died due to this practice. Moreover, stagnant water and improper waste can lead to deadly diseases such as dengue fever. Therefore, every individual must have concern for the environment. Islam has provided many guidelines regarding the protection of water bodies: *“None of you should urinate and then dig in stagnant water”* (al-Bukhari: 239); *“Do not immerse yourself in temporary stagnant water while bathing obligatory”* (Muslim: 283) (Cited by Anvari, 2016). Hence, Islam has focused on protecting bodies of water. However, are these guidelines practiced by the study participants?



The survey results indicate that 69% of participants have attempted to dispose of waste from water levels, drains, and waterways around their homes. This proportion is higher than other categories. However, 31.1% of participants have not yet attempted to do the same. Again, despite complete knowledge on the preservation of the environment, the majority of participants did not practice it.

#### PENALTY AND PUNISHMENT FOR IMPROPER ENVIRONMENTAL MAINTENANCE

The Central Environmental Authority of Sri Lanka is the department that implements the necessary measures to protect the environment throughout the country. In addition, safety activities are carried out by public health inspectors. They are authorized to visit every citizen’s home, monitor the living environment, issue warnings to protect it properly, and impose criminal penalties. Additionally, they can impose a penalty of Rs.30,000 and imprisonment for three years against those who are polluting the environment. Moreover, different ministries have separate functions for preserving natural resources and surroundings.

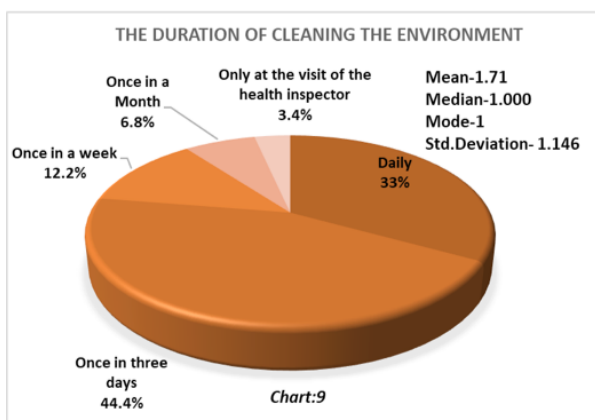


Most participants (86%) reported that they have not been convicted of environmental pollution. This indirectly indicates the interest of the research area in the conservation of the environment.

Furthermore, some participants contributed to public environmental services along with public health inspectors. However, 14% of participants admitted that they had been convicted. For minimizing this statute, appropriate measures need to be taken at the divisional and village levels.

#### THE DURATION OF CLEANING THE ENVIRONMENT

Most participants (44.4%) have a cleaning routine every three days, whereas 33% of participants clean daily. Those who clean only once a week (16%) or once a month (7%) need to be educated that they need to clean their surroundings more frequently. Their low frequency of cleaning may be conducive to polluting the environment. Thus, regular cleaners were assigned for monthly and weekly general cleaning and once a week sewerage cleaning by the Divisional Secretariat.



#### SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Islam is a religion that includes divine guidance on environmental protection, which is elucidated in the doctrine of Environmental Ethics in Islam. This doctrine consists of six principles, namely, tawhid (oneness of God), Ayat (signs of Allah), Caliph/Khalifa (stewardship), Mizan (balance), Amana (trust), and accountability.
2. Among participants, 96.3% recognize the connection between Islam and environmental protection. Majority of them gained the knowledge directly from the sources of Islamic law such as the Al Quran and Sunnah.
3. The majority of participants (86.5%) had the habit of cleaning litter in public places.

4. The habit of properly throwing food packaging supplied at public events were practiced by 76.6% of participants. However, 23.4% of participants do not practice it, which is attributed to negligence and carelessness.
5. Majority of participants (86%) have experience in planting trees. They were influenced by their family, school, and work environment, which were the sources of knowledge.
6. Majority of participants (94%) agree regarding the interference between human health and the environment.
7. Majority of participants (86%) felt remorseful when the environment is being polluted.
8. Majority of participants (69%) have contributed to environmental protection in their areas through activities such as drainage cleaning and river purifying.
9. Majority of participants (86%) have not been penalized by the government for polluting the environment.
10. Approximately half of participants (44%) clean their surroundings every three days, whereas 33% of them clean the environment on a daily basis.

#### CONCLUSION

The environment is a collection of living and non-living objects. Environmental protection is an endeavor that involves individuals, institutions, and the government for the environment's wellbeing and for the betterment of the society. The aim of this survey is to evaluate environmental awareness among Muslims in Ampara district. The research region is predominantly Muslim, and preservation of the environment is an important tenet in Islam. On this basis, the study was carried out using Muslim residents as a research sample. Results show that participants have a high level of awareness on the environment. Such knowledge was influenced by the religious guidelines of the people are concerned. Moreover, spiral protection mechanisms are deficient in the practice of these people. Therefore, the government and policy makers should take the necessary steps to educate the people concerned on environmental protection. This study could be a starting point for future researchers, policymakers, and officials.

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