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## The Role of Green Environment in Stress Management from Islamic Perspectives

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### Abstract

Stress is a mental illness that leads to depression and anxiety. Changes to one's physical, psychology, social and spirituality can be attributed to stress. Stress usually happens when a person experiences chronic disease, disability, feeling loss or having financial difficulties. Therefore, a lot of research in stress management methods has been carried out to alleviate stress problems. One of these methods involves a person's interaction with green environment. However, the question now arises: what is the relationship between stress management and green environment? Is green environment capable of creating a mental wellbeing? Hence, this paper aims to identify the relationship between stress management and green environment and analyze the process of stress management that takes place in one's interaction with green environment. This research is studied from an Islamic perspective and uses documents based on scientific and non-scientific sources while referring to the Quran and Hadith as the main sources. This research found that green environment does affect one's stress due to its being as Allah SWT creation and have physical, psychology, social and spiritual relationship with human. Finally, it is hoped that stress management that involves elements of green environment is practiced so that human wellbeing with *qawiyul amin* characteristics is achieved.

**Keywords:** Stress Management, Human Resource, Human Development, Green Environment.

### Introduction

Stress is a form of illness that could affect one's wellbeing. This is due to its symptoms that influence one's physical, psychology, social and spirituality when experiencing stress. Stress is also a bodily reaction towards any threats and needs. Cannon (1929) explained that when an individual is in a dangerous situation, the body tends to react defensively in a drastic way that eventually leads to fight and flight response. If the body responds well to stress, the negative effect that comes with stress can be avoided. However, what about the case of an uncontrollable stress? Are there ways to handle stress that involves an individual and nature?

There are various ways in treating stress problem. Many suggest that stress can be handled through clinical treatment, counseling or having an interaction with another individual. Nevertheless, it is important to take green environment into account and optimize its benefit. Therefore, this paper discussed stress management based on an individual's interaction with green environment from an Islamic perspective.

This paper consists of four main sub-topics. The first part begins with Introduction, followed by sub-topics of stress management and green environment, process of stress management within individual's interaction with green environment from an Islamic perspective and ended with conclusion.

### **Stress Management**

Stress management is a form of management that aims to alleviate stress problems to avoid harming the individual and his surrounding as well as creating wellbeing. Stress management is divided into two scopes namely stress management in an institution and in a non-institution. The first usually occur in a workplace while the latter outside of the workplace. Nevertheless, stress management in a non-institution also takes place in an intangible institution such as family institution.

Researchers in stress-management field have discovered various ways, techniques, methods and strategies in dealing with stress. These are achieved through a study of certain models such as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) by Seyle as well as theories derived from psychobiology, sociology, psychiatry and antropology factors. Cannon (1929) found the relationship between emotional stress and physiology. He discovered stimuli during a heightened emotion and a change in physiology process through fight or flight response. Lindemann (1944) on the other hand put forward a sociological perspective based on tragedies or Coconut Grove Fire event. Lindemann (1944) has studied surviving fire victims and found that the survivors experienced deep sadness and even fainted when they knew their loved ones were killed. Meanwhile Tyhurst (1951) had developed a model on individual's natural reaction towards disasters. In addition, Holmes and Rahe (1967) discussed events that may lead an individual to experience stress that disrupts the individual's lifestyle pattern.

Caplan (1974) furthermore had developed stress theory into a theory of crisis development. This theory focuses on prevention of mental disorder that differentiates it with earlier psychiatric theories. Sifneos (1961; 1979) attempted a model on crisis intervention that contributes to development of stress theory in anthropological field. Hoff (1989, 1995, 2001) in Weber (2010) had developed Crisis Paradigm to explain individual's experience during distress period based on anthropological factors. The development of Crisis Paradigm is expected to help an individual in managing crisis. It is important to note that stress-related theories will continue to be developed for as long as stress problems are not solved. Additionally, newer research and discoveries will continue to be made if stress issues have yet to be solved. Thus, the role of stress management is in need of being developed to solve stress problems.

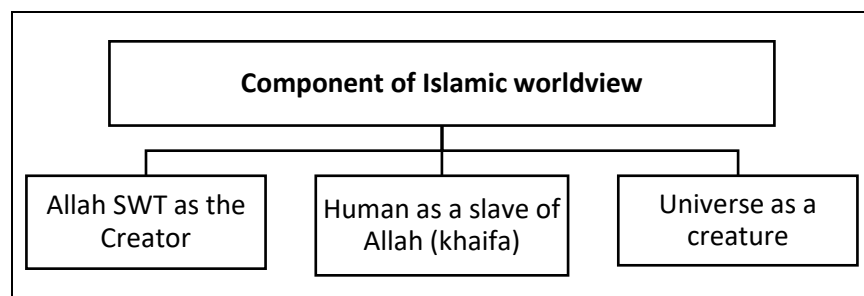
## Green Environment

Green environment is a combination of two words namely environment and green. According to English Oxford Living Dictionaries, the word 'environment' refers to surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates. Gupta (2010) stated that environment refers to all conditions that influence living things on earth including atmosphere, food chain and water cycles. In addition to this, environment consists of living and non-living things. Non-living components such as soil, air, water and temperature also influence living components such as animals, plants and humans.

On the other hand, 'green' refers to the color that dominates the earth aside of 'blue'- also earth's dominant color which makes up the color of the seas. Green largely represents natural resources that consist of trees and different stratum of plants. Natural resources also include soil fertility, forestry, mineral, climate, water and also marine resources. Therefore, natural resources are capable of giving benefits to social and economic development.

From an Islamic perspective, natural resources including green environment is a management tool for human as a *khalifah* on this earth (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2001). The need to manage natural resources in an efficient way is crucial to avoid exploitation which can harmed the wellbeing of individuals. Moreover, if the green environment is associated with stress management, it is possible that stress problems can be handled.

This paper explores interaction between individual and green environment with specific scope on stress management. This is studied from an Islamic perspective. From an Islamic perspective, there are basic elements to attain benefits in this world and the hereafter. According to al-Mawdudi (1955), Yasin (1990:87), El-Muhammady (1992:5), Awang (1997:15-16), Salleh (2002:56, 2003a:21 & 2003b:4), Hussain and Yusof (2005:29) stated that the three basic elements from an Islamic worldview are Allah SWT as the creator, humans as slaves and serves as *khalifa* for Allah and the universe as creature. Figure 3 shows a component of Islamic worldview which act as guidance for stress management. Thus, this paper emphasized on interaction process between individual and green environment based on the Quran, Hadith as well as scientific evidences.



**Figure 1. Component of Islamic worldview.** (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2001).

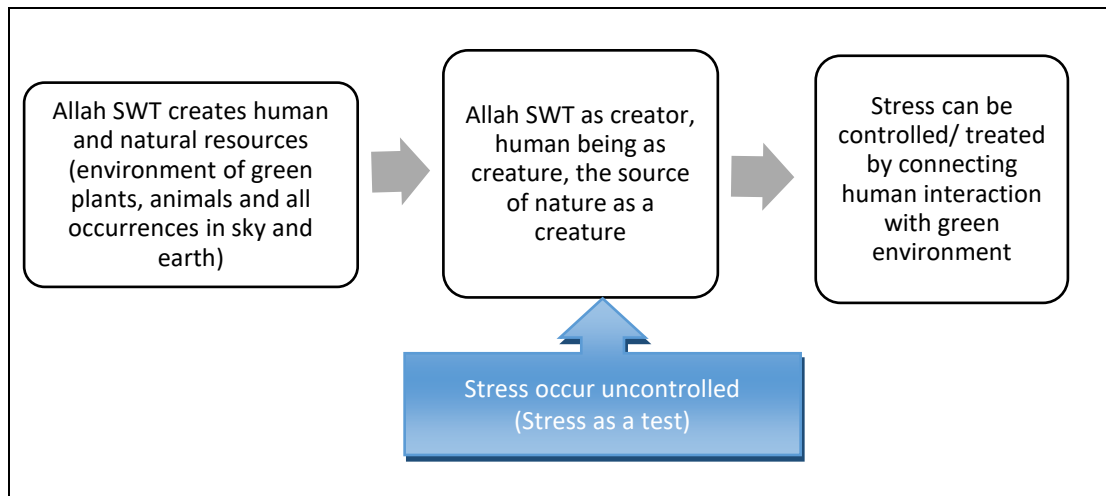
### Process of Stress Management in Interaction between Individual and Green Environment from an Islamic Perspective

Green environment is capable of affecting an individual's physical, mind, spirituality and social relationship. It is also capable of giving a peace of mind to oneself. Apart from that, the beauty of green environment encourages social interaction that helps to alleviate stress through communication. By observing the green environment, it helps an individual to be focused and thus able to practice a balanced lifestyle and carried out everyday tasks efficiently. There are several verses in the Quran that mentioned green environment. These verses are identified with reference to Ibnu Kathir *tafsir*. Furthermore, the chosen verses are studied in relation to stress management based on individual's interaction with green environment, as showed in Table 1.

**Table 1. The chosen verses in relation to stress management based on individual's interaction with green environment**

No	Translate of ayat	Tafsir of ayat	Importance of ayat
1	It is He who sends down rain from the sky; from it is drink and from it is foliage in which you pasture [animals]. He causes to grow for you thereby the crops, olives, palm trees, grapevines, and from all the fruits. Indeed, in that is a sign for a people who give thought (Surah an-Nahl, 16:10-11)	Based on Ibn Kathir (1992), Allah SWT sent rain to blessed mankind and raised the plants on which cattle graze. Allah makes the earth sprout plants with different tastes, colours, scents and shapes. That was a sign and a proof that there is no god besides Allah	The green environment existed due to the rainfall. Allah's wisdom behind this creation is to let human think of the diversity of His creation. The diversity of the green environment is beneficial to humans and other beings of this world
2	The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought (Surah Yunus, 10: 24)	Ibnu Kathir (1992) explained, Allah the Almighty has set an example of the similitude of the life of this world, its glitter and the swiftness of its passage, likening it to the plant and vegetation that Allah brings out from the earth. Allah SWT has symbolize this creation to give a lesson for mankind	Allah SWT explains this verse as an analogy that whatever exists in this world is temporary and will vanish with Allah's power. Humans are also reminded that they should not indulge in enjoyment all the time as this world's enjoyment does not last forever

The verses from the Quran in Table 1 clearly showed Allah's wisdom and guidance for humans in the creation of green environment and natural resources. The relationship between stress management process and individual's interaction with green environment are concluded in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 2. Relationship between stress management process and individual's interaction with green environment**

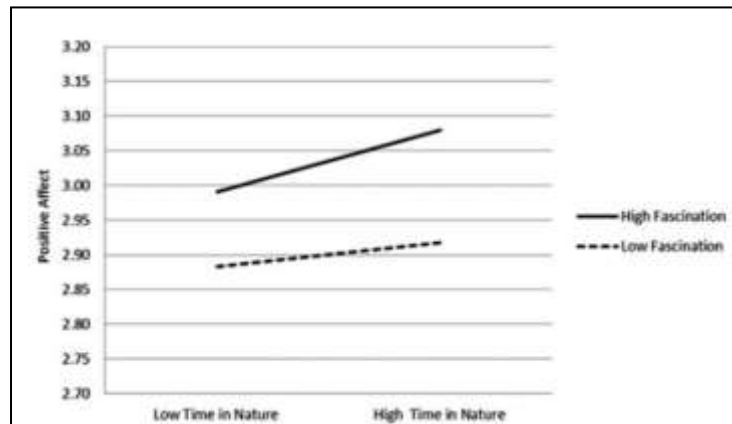
Although the Quran does not explicitly state interaction between individual with green environment within stress management scope, the concept itself does exist. The whole concept is to acknowledge Allah as the creator of nature and humans. Humans on the other hand must reflect on His creation and in this case, manage the natural resources according to His laws. Humans need to play an important role in taking care of the green environment, as it is also Allah's creation. Therefore, the relationship between humans and green environment is obvious based on its similar status. Stress, on the other hand is a natural reaction that happens beyond human control and also Allah's will for it to befall humans as a form of test (Surah al Baqarah, 2:155-157). Thus when humans immersed themselves in a green environment, it will give them tranquility and relieve from stress.

Based on the verses of the Quran stated above, scientific research has proven that natural green environment is capable of creating positive emotion, increase cognitive function and allowed recovery from mental fatigue to a healthy one through individual's experience with green environment (Grinde & Patil, 2009; Han, 2010).

Increasing day-to-day life demands may lead to mental exhaustion to an individual when trying to fulfill his home and work commitment (Kaplan, 1995). This is due to inexistence of balanced lifestyle especially when one's goals are not achieved thus causing stress. Therefore, green environment is able to reduce mental exhaustion as it gives positive effect to the individual's mind. This is working if the green environment is able to attract the individual's attention, which will lead to recovery of mental health and relieve of stress (Berto, 2010). There



are more than hundreds of research to support the fact that green environment helps in alleviating stress, creates tranquility and improve an individual's mood. Figure 2 showed results obtained from an analysis related to affect of fascination on an individual's mental. The effect on individual's mental is analyzed using a tool called electroencephalogram (EEG) that functioned as diagnosis to any interference in human brain.



**Figure 3. Shows high level of fascination towards green environment gives positive effect to human brain (Berto, Zainaghi and Bettella, 2010).**

### Conclusion

From an Islamic perspective, the Quran and Hadith are the earliest sources in putting forward evidences (*dalil naqli*) that act as guidance for Muslims. In the context of stress management, the Quran has stated the relationship between humans and green environment as well as provide understanding on the wisdom of the creation of green environment. In this case, it is proven that green environment is capable in healing stress. It is possible to manage stress by connecting individual's interaction with green environment based on *tadabbur alam* concept. *Tadabbur alam* refers to observing (al-Imraan, 3: 191), studying and doing research (ali-Imraan, 3:190-191; al-Israa' 17:44) on the environment. Observing, studying and doing research on green environment could help in releasing stress as these activities lead to being closer to the Creator.

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