



Research Article

Islamic Values And Environmental Sustainability: An Islamic Perspective On Preserving Nature

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Abstract. Islam offers a profound ethical framework for addressing the global environmental crisis through its core values of tauhid (divine unity), khalifah (stewardship), and maslahah (public welfare). This study examines how these Islamic principles guide ecological conservation and promote sustainable practices grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah. By conducting a thematic literature review of classical Islamic texts and contemporary scholarship, the research highlights the religion's emphasis

on maintaining mizan (natural balance) and condemning israf (wastefulness). The findings reveal that Islamic teachings position environmental preservation as both a spiritual duty and a communal responsibility, urging moderation in resource use and advocating for justice in ecological interactions. Examples such as Indonesia's green waqf initiatives and Morocco's renewable energy projects illustrate the practical application of these values in modern sustainability efforts. However, challenges such as consumerism and lack of religiously-grounded environmental awareness hinder progress. The study concludes that integrating Islamic ethics into education, policy, and grassroots activism can empower Muslim communities to lead in global conservation. By framing environmentalism as worship, Islam provides a holistic paradigm for harmonizing human needs with planetary health, aligning with its vision of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy to all creation).

Keywords: Islamic Values, Environmental Sustainability, Khalifah, Tauhid, Maslahah, Ecological Ethics.

Abstrak. Islam menawarkan kerangka etika yang mendalam untuk mengatasi krisis lingkungan global melalui nilai-nilai utamanya, yaitu tauhid (keesaan Tuhan), khalifah (peran sebagai pengelola bumi), dan maslahah (kemaslahatan umum). Studi ini mengkaji bagaimana prinsip-prinsip Islam tersebut memandu upaya pelestarian ekologi dan mendorong praktik berkelanjutan yang berlandaskan pada Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah. Melalui tinjauan pustaka tematis terhadap teks-teks Islam klasik dan kajian kontemporer, penelitian ini menyoroti penekanan agama Islam pada upaya menjaga *mizan* (keseimbangan alam) dan larangan terhadap *israf* (sikap boros). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ajaran Islam memandang pelestarian lingkungan sebagai kewajiban spiritual sekaligus tanggung jawab bersama, yang menganjurkan sikap moderat dalam penggunaan sumber daya serta keadilan dalam interaksi ekologis. Contoh nyata seperti inisiatif wakaf hijau di Indonesia dan proyek energi terbarukan di Maroko menggambarkan penerapan praktis nilai-nilai tersebut dalam upaya keberlanjutan modern. Namun, berbagai tantangan—seperti budaya konsumerisme dan kurangnya kesadaran lingkungan yang berlandaskan nilai agama—menjadi hambatan bagi kemajuan upaya ini. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi etika Islam ke dalam pendidikan, kebijakan, dan gerakan akar rumput dapat memberdayakan komunitas Muslim untuk memelopori upaya pelestarian global. Dengan memandang kepedulian lingkungan sebagai bentuk ibadah, Islam menghadirkan paradigma holistik untuk menyelaraskan kebutuhan manusia dengan kelestarian bumi, sejalan dengan visi rahmatan lil 'alamin (rahmat bagi seluruh alam semesta).

Kata Kunci : Nilai-nilai Islam, Keberlanjutan Lingkungan, Khalifah, Tauhid, Maslahah, Etika Ekologis.

INTRODUCTION

Explaining The escalating environmental crisis—marked by climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion—demands urgent ethical and practical solutions. Islam, as a faith embodying rahmatan lil 'alamin (universal mercy), provides a compelling framework for addressing these challenges through its emphasis on ecological balance and human accountability. Central to this framework are the concepts of tauhid (the oneness of God), which affirms the interconnectedness of all creation; khalifah (human stewardship), which mandates responsible guardianship of the Earth; and maslahah (public welfare), which prioritizes long-term ecological health over short-term gains.

Islamic values, derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, establish a moral code that governs human behavior toward the environment. These values reject exploitation and wastefulness (*israf*), instead promoting *zuhud* (moderation) and *'adl* (justice) in resource management (Abdelzaher et al., 2019; Kamali, 2010). For instance, the Qur'an explicitly condemns environmental corruption: "Do not spread disorder on Earth after it has been set in order" (Qur'an 7:56). Similarly, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) modeled sustainable living by conserving water, protecting wildlife, and forbidding deforestation (Zamroni, 2019). These teachings position environmental sustainability not merely as a technical goal but as a divine obligation integral to Islamic faith.

Environmental sustainability, defined as the responsible use of natural resources to ensure intergenerational equity (Goodland, 1995), aligns seamlessly with Islamic ethics. Scholars like Al-Damkhi (2008) argue that Islam's holistic view of nature—as a trust (*amanah*) from God—requires humans to adopt practices that preserve biodiversity and mitigate harm. This perspective is echoed in modern initiatives such as green finance in Malaysia and solar energy projects in the Gulf, which operationalize Islamic principles to combat climate change.

Previous studies underscore the role of religion in fostering ecological awareness, with Islam uniquely linking environmentalism to spiritual accountability (Nasr, 1996; Foltz, 2000). Gada (2014) emphasizes that Islamic teachings on *khalifah* challenge anthropocentrism, urging humans to act as caretakers rather than conquerors of nature. Despite this, many Muslim communities remain disconnected from these values, often prioritizing economic growth over ecological integrity (Khalid, 2002).

This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring how Islamic values can revitalize environmental conservation efforts. It investigates two key questions:

1. How do *tauhid*, *khalifah*, and *maslahah* shape Islamic environmental ethics?
2. What strategies can Muslim societies adopt to align modern sustainability practices with these principles?

By addressing these questions, the research aims to empower Muslim communities to reclaim their role as ecological stewards and contribute to global sustainability agendas.

RESEARCH METHODS

Explain This study adopts a systematic literature review approach to explore the intersection of Islamic values and environmental sustainability. Data were collected from peer-reviewed journals (e.g., JSTOR, Scopus), books, and primary Islamic sources (Qur'an, Hadith) using keywords such as 'Islamic environmental ethics,' 'tauhid and ecology,' and 'khalifah stewardship.' Inclusion criteria prioritized works published between 1990–2023 to ensure relevance to contemporary issues. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize findings into three core principles: *tauhid* (divine unity), *khalifah* (stewardship), and *maslahah* (public welfare). To enhance rigor, sources were cross-verified for alignment with Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions. Case studies from Muslim-majority countries (e.g., Indonesia, Morocco) were included to illustrate practical applications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic values provide a strong foundation for environmental awareness and sustainable practices. Some key Islamic concepts related to environmental conservation include:

Tauhid and Ecological Unity

Tawhid and Environmental Preservation: Sustaining the Unity of Creation

The concept of tawhid (divine oneness) in Islam is not only the foundation of theological belief but also an ethical framework for interacting with the universe. Tawhid teaches that all creation—humans, animals, plants, and natural elements—originates from Allah will and exists as part of a divine unity. As Nasr (1996) explains, this perspective asserts that all entities in nature are interconnected within a divinely ordained harmony. Damage to one element risks disrupting the entire system. This underscores humanity's responsibility as khalifah (stewards): nature is not merely a resource to exploit but a sacred amanah (trust) to protect. For the author, this principle holds profound relevance in the modern era, where environmental exploitation is often justified for economic gain. Tawhid reminds us that harming nature violates the sanctity of Allah's creation.

Al-Damkhi (2008) reinforces this idea by arguing that tawhid fosters an intrinsic respect for the environment. Recognizing nature as a manifestation of Allah's majesty encourages a holistic approach to sustainability. For instance, Islam not only prohibits water pollution but also advocates for its mindful use as an act of worship. The author views this as an antidote to today's consumerist culture. When rivers or forests are seen as human "property," exploitation becomes inevitable. However, perceiving them as part of Allah's interconnected web of life replaces exploitation with harmony.

The Quran explicitly states, "Indeed, We have created all things in due measure" (Quran 54:49). This verse affirms that nature exists in precise balance, and humans are forbidden from disturbing this mizan (equilibrium). Khalid (2002) adds that tawhid also critiques excessive materialism. When nature is reduced to an economic commodity, ecological limits are ignored. Here, the author agrees that modern lifestyles—marked by wastefulness and resource overconsumption—conflict with tawhid's principles. Islam promotes zuhud (moderation), not as a rejection of worldly life but as reverence for nature's finite capacity.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified this ethos through his environmental actions. During warfare, he prohibited the unnecessary destruction of trees (Zamroni, 2019), a radical policy for his time. He also urged water conservation, even in acts of worship like ablution. To the author, these are not mere practical guidelines but reflections of a spiritual truth: every element of nature holds sacred value. Amid today's climate crisis, the Prophet's teachings remain relevant. For example, his ban on tree destruction could translate to opposition against industrial deforestation, while water conservation addresses global resource scarcity.

Personal Reflection: Tawhid as a Solution to the Ecological Crisis

As a Muslim, the author believes tawhid offers a transformative framework. When nature is viewed as "signs of Allah" (ayatullah), environmental degradation becomes not just a technical issue but a spiritual crisis. Tawhid shifts humanity from

anthropocentrism—the belief that humans are the center of existence—to theocentric, where Allah is the focal point, and humans and nature stand as equals in His creation. This approach inspires individual consciousness and systemic sustainability policies. For instance, declaring environmental pollution haram (forbidden) could integrate into national laws, or waqf (endowment) practices could expand to protect forests.

In an era of global capitalism that often neglects sustainability, tawhid serves as a counterbalance, it reminds us that human progress must not disrupt divine harmony. In essence, preserving the environment is an act of obedience to the Creator. By anchoring environmental ethics in tawhid, Islam provides a timeless blueprint for reconciling human needs with ecological integrity—a vision urgently needed today.

Khalifah: Human Responsibility in Environmental Stewardship

The concept of khalifah (stewardship) in Islam positions humans as custodians entrusted by Allah to manage the Earth with wisdom and accountability. This role, as stated in the Qur'an, "It is He who has made you successors (khalifah) upon the Earth" (Qur'an 6:165), underscores a divine mandate to uphold justice ('adl) and maintain ecological balance (mizan). Contrasting the anthropocentric worldview that prioritizes human dominance, Islam frames stewardship as a moral duty to protect all creation. For instance, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) warned against wastefulness, even in abundance: "Do not waste water, even if you perform ablution on the banks of a flowing river" (Ibn Majah). This education reflects the principle that resources are a shared trust (amanah), not an entitlement to exploit.

Overexploitation of natural resources—such as deforestation, overfishing, or pollution—directly contradicts Islamic ethics. The Qur'an condemns imbalance (fasad) in creation: "Do not corrupt the Earth after it has been set in order" (Qur'an 7:56). Scholars like Al-Damkhi (2008) argue that excessive consumption and environmental degradation violate the rights (huquq) of other species and future generations, breaching the covenant of stewardship. Similarly, Nasr (1996) emphasizes that the khalifah role requires humans to emulate Allah's attributes of Rahman (compassion) and Hakim (wisdom) in ecological decisions. For example, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) historically regulated land use and resource distribution to prevent harm (darar)—a principle that could inform modern sustainability policies.

Contemporary issues like climate change and biodiversity loss expose the consequences of neglecting this stewardship. Khalid (2002) links ecological crises to a spiritual disconnect, where materialism overshadows the khalifah's responsibility. The Prophet's prohibition against cutting down trees unnecessarily during wartime (Zamroni, 2019) illustrates how Islam prioritizes long-term ecological integrity over short-term gains. Similarly, the concept of haram (forbidden) could extend to practices like industrial pollution or overconsumption that destabilize ecosystems.

Reflection and Contemporary Relevance

For the author, the khalifah framework challenges modern capitalist paradigms that equate progress with resource extraction. Islam's emphasis on moderation (zuhud) and justice offers a counter-narrative: development must respect ecological limits. Policies such as Islamic green finance or waqf-based conservation projects (e.g., endowments for

forests) could operationalize this ethos. Ultimately, stewardship in Islam is not passive—it demands proactive, ethical engagement with nature as an act of worship (ibadah).

Maslahah and Sustainability Principles: Aligning Human Actions with Long-Term Welfare

The Islamic principle of *maslahah* (public interest or long-term welfare) serves as a compass for ethical decision-making, including environmental management. Rooted in the objectives of Sharia (*maqasid al-Sharia*), *maslahah* prioritizes actions that ensure collective well-being across generations, rather than short-term gains. The Qur'an emphasizes this holistic outlook: "And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart—all of these will be questioned" (Qur'an 17:36). This verse underscores the necessity of foresight and responsibility in resource use. For example, sustainable agricultural practices that preserve soil fertility align with *maslahah*, whereas deforestation for immediate profit disregards future consequences. Scholars like Al-Damkhi (2008) argue that environmental sustainability is inherently tied to *maslahah*, as ecological health directly impacts human survival, social justice, and spiritual harmony.

Islam's advocacy for a simple lifestyle (*zuhud*) further reinforces sustainability. Excessive consumerism—rooted in greed and heedlessness (*ghaflah*)—is condemned in Islamic teachings. The Qur'an warns, "Eat and drink, but do not waste. Indeed, He does not like the wasteful" (Qur'an 7:31). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) modeled this simplicity, owning minimal possessions and repurposing resources. His famous hadith, "The best of you are those who benefit others" (Al-Tabarani), extends to environmental stewardship: reducing waste and sharing resources are acts of charity (*sadaqah*). Khalid (2002) links consumerism to ecological crises, arguing that Islam's emphasis on contentment (*qana'ah*) counteracts the culture of overconsumption that depletes finite resources.

Application in Modern Contexts

The principle of *maslahah* can guide policies such as transitioning to renewable energy, regulating industrial emissions, or protecting biodiversity. For instance, Islamic finance's prohibition of *riba* (moneylending) could incentivize investments in green technologies that serve long-term communal good over exploitative profit models. Similarly, urban planning inspired by *maslahah* would prioritize green spaces and public transit to reduce pollution and enhance quality of life.

The Prophet's teachings on simplicity also resonate today. Fast fashion, single-use plastics, and food waste exemplify modern excesses that clash with Islamic values. Conversely, initiatives like zero-waste iftar meals during Ramadan or community gardens reflect *zuhud* in action. Nasr (1996) reminds us that balance (*mizan*) in consumption is not strictness but a conscious alignment with nature's limits.

Reflection: Maslahah as a Path to Global Sustainability

For the author, *maslahah* challenges the prevailing "growth-at-all-costs" paradigm. By framing environmental protection as a sacred duty to future generations, Islam redefines progress through the lens of intergenerational justice. This principle also

democratizes sustainability—individual choices, like reducing energy use or supporting ethical brands, become acts of worship when rooted in *maslahah*. Globally, Islamic institutions could champion climate agreements or carbon-neutral waqf projects, proving that ecological ethics transcend cultural boundaries.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that Islamic principles offer a robust ethical and practical framework for addressing contemporary environmental challenges. The principle of *maslahah* (public welfare), for instance, has been operationalized in policies such as community-based waste management systems in Indonesia, where fatwas (religious edicts) have encouraged recycling and reduced plastic use to protect marine ecosystems (Rahman, 2017). Similarly, renewable energy projects in Morocco—such as the Noor Solar Plant—reflect *maslahah* by prioritizing long-term ecological and economic benefits over fossil fuel dependency (Abuzaid, 2020). These examples demonstrate how Islamic ethics can bridge spiritual values and technical solutions.

Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) practices further validate Islam's alignment with sustainability. His emphasis on cleanliness (*tahara*) and resource efficiency, such as conserving water during ablution (Zamroni, 2019), provides timeless guidelines for reducing waste. Modern applications include eco-mosques in the UAE that utilize solar energy and rainwater harvesting, directly mirroring the Prophet's pragmatic stewardship (Al-Maktoum, 2022). Such initiatives underscore that environmental sustainability is not a novel concept but an integral part of Islamic tradition.

Several Muslim-majority countries have pioneered Islamic-inspired environmental policies. Indonesia's green waqf initiative, which dedicates endowed land to reforestation and sustainable agriculture, has restored over 500 hectares of degraded forest since 2021 (Hidayat, 2021). In Malaysia, Islamic green financing frameworks have funded low-carbon infrastructure, while Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 integrates *khalifah* (stewardship) principles into its goal to protect 30% of its land and marine areas by 2030 (Al-Saud, 2023). These efforts highlight the potential of faith-based approaches to complement global sustainability agendas like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While Islamic principles offer robust solutions, their implementation faces systemic barriers. For example, Indonesia—despite pioneering green waqf—remains the world's third-largest emitter of forest-related CO₂ due to weak enforcement of Islamic land ethics (Global Forest Watch, 2023). This paradox underscores a disconnect between religious ideals and neoliberal economic policies favoring extraction. Similarly, in Pakistan, 65% of Muslims are unaware of Qur'anic injunctions against wildlife trafficking (Khan, 2022), reflecting the marginalization of eco-Islamic discourse in mainstream education.

Faith-Driven Solutions in Action

Amid these challenges, grassroots initiatives demonstrate the viability of Islamic environmental ethics. A notable example is the Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*) of Nurul Ummah in Bogor, Indonesia, which integrates *tauhid* (divine unity) into agroecology education. Students learn to view farming as *ibadah* (worship), applying Qur'anic principles like *mizan* (balance) to avoid chemical pesticides and promote

biodiversity. This approach has reduced pesticide use by 40% in surrounding communities since 2020 (Wahyudi, 2021). The pesantren also established a waqf forest, dedicating 15 hectares to reforestation—a direct application of khalifah stewardship.

This case exemplifies how Islamic values, when embedded in education and local governance, can counter exploitative practices. Unlike top-down policies, the pesantren's success stems from aligning ecological practices with spiritual accountability, resonating deeply with Muslim communities. Such models validate the potential of *maslahah*-driven sustainability, where environmental care becomes a communal act of faith rather than a regulatory burden.

Capitalism further complicates this dynamic. Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia, while pledging to protect 30% of their ecosystems by 2030 (Al-Saud, 2023), continue to prioritize oil exports—a contradiction to the khalifah mandate. Such cases reveal how global market forces often override faith-based sustainability.

To address these gaps, a multi-pronged approach is essential. First, Islamic environmental ethics should be mainstreamed into educational curricula, from madrasas to universities, to cultivate eco-consciousness grounded in faith (Khalid, 2002). Second, governments and religious authorities could collaborate to issue fatwas that incentivize green practices—e.g., tax breaks for businesses adhering to zero-waste principles. Third, leveraging Islamic finance tools like *sukuk* (green bonds) could scale up funding for renewable energy and conservation projects. Finally, international platforms such as the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers should advocate for binding agreements that align national policies with *maqasid al-Sharia* (objectives of Islamic law).

CONCLUSION

This study advances the discourse on religion and sustainability by uniquely positioning Islamic ethics as both a spiritual and practical antidote to ecological crises. Unlike secular frameworks that often prioritize technocratic solutions, Islam's emphasis on *tauhid* (divine unity) redefines environmentalism as an act of worship, fostering intrinsic motivation for conservation. For instance, Morocco's Noor Solar Plant (Abuzaid, 2020) exemplifies how *maslahah* (public welfare) can drive renewable transitions without sacrificing cultural identity.

However, the study also identifies critical gaps:

- **Policy-Community Disconnect:** Islamic environmental rulings (e.g., anti-deforestation fatwas) lack enforcement mechanisms in secular legal systems.
- **Educational Gaps:** Madrasas in Pakistan and Indonesia rarely integrate ecological *fiqh* into curricula (Khan, 2022; Hidayat, 2021).

To address these, the study proposes:

- **Faith-Based Green Financing:** Leverage *sukuk* (Islamic bonds) to fund reforestation (e.g., Indonesia's green waqf).
- **Eco-Fatwa Advocacy:** Establish councils of ulama and scientists to issue binding rulings on issues like carbon emissions.

Future research should explore hybrid models (e.g., Islamic-secular partnerships in Nigeria's Great Green Wall project) to amplify impact. By anchoring

sustainability in divine accountability, Islam can uniquely bridge the moral ambition gap plaguing global climate action.

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