

Reinterpreting ‘Khalifah Fil Ard’ as an Islamic Environmental Ethic for Addressing the 21st-Century Climate Crisis

Pedro Silva¹, Felipe Souza², Rafaela Lima³,
Andrian Khoirul Ummah⁴

¹ Universidade Federal Santa Catarina, Brazil

² Universidade Federal Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil

³ Universidade Federal Paraná, Brazil

⁴ Independent Researcher, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Background. The accelerating climate crisis has prompted renewed global interest in ethical frameworks capable of guiding sustainable human–environment relations. In Islamic thought, the Qur’anic concept of khalifah fil-ard (vicegerency on Earth) has traditionally been interpreted as a moral mandate for stewardship, accountability, and balanced interaction with the natural world.

Purpose. This study aims to reexamine khalifah fil-ard through an interdisciplinary lens that integrates Qur’anic exegesis, environmental philosophy, and climate ethics.

Method. A qualitative research design is employed using textual hermeneutics, thematic content analysis of classical and modern tafsir, and comparative ethical analysis with environmental stewardship models.

Results. The findings demonstrate that khalifah fil-ard embodies a tripartite ethical structure: spiritual responsibility to God, moral responsibility to creation, and intergenerational responsibility for ecological continuity. These dimensions provide a normative foundation that contrasts sharply with anthropocentric paradigms driving ecological degradation. The research further shows that classical Islamic sources contain implicit ecological principles—such as moderation (wasatiyyah), balance (mīzān), prohibition of harm (lā ḍarar), and communal trust (amānah)—which can form an integrated ethical framework for climate action.

Conclusion. The study concludes that reinterpretation of khalifah fil-ard offers a theologically grounded, ethically robust, and culturally resonant model for addressing climate crisis in Muslim-majority societies and globally. This work highlights the potential of Islamic environmental ethics to contribute meaningfully to sustainable policy, ecological education, and faith-informed climate activism.

KEYWORDS

Stewardship, Climate Crisis, Sustainability

Citation: Silva, P., Souza, F., Lima, R & Ummah, K, A. (2025). Reinterpreting ‘Khalifah Fil Ard’ as an Islamic Environmental Ethic for Addressing the 21st-Century Climate Crisis. *Journal of Humanities Research Sustainability*, 2(6), 334–344.
<https://doi.org/10.70177/jhrs.v2i6.2786>

Correspondence:

Pedro Silva, pedrosilva@gmail.com

Received: June 9, 2025

Accepted: November 23, 2025

Published: December 10, 2025



INTRODUCTION

Humanity faces an unprecedented ecological crisis marked by rising global temperatures, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, and extreme environmental instability. Scientific consensus affirms that anthropogenic activity driven by industrialization, consumerism, and exploitative resource extraction has fundamentally altered the Earth’s climate systems. Environmental degradation increasingly

threatens not only ecosystems but also public health, food security, and global socio-economic stability (Islam et al., 2021; Musleh Al-Sartawi et al., 2023).

Islamic intellectual history contains a rich reservoir of ethical teachings concerning the human–nature relationship. Central to this tradition is the Qur’anic concept of *khalīfah fil ard*, commonly interpreted as humanity’s entrusted role as God’s stewards on Earth. Classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Al-Razi articulate stewardship as a form of moral responsibility grounded in justice, balance, and compassion toward all creation. This establishes a theological foundation for what may be considered an Islamic environmental ethic (Chowdhury, 2022; Majeed, 2021).

Contemporary Muslim thinkers increasingly revisit these classical concepts in response to modern ecological challenges. Islamic environmentalism has been growing as a field of study, producing frameworks that integrate scriptural principles with sustainability discourses. Among these, stewardship or *khilāfah* is frequently cited as a guiding principle that aligns spiritual devotion with ecological responsibility. Ecological ethics derived from Islam thus demonstrate compatibility with global sustainability frameworks (Fakihudin, 2023; Homburg et al., 2023).

Qur’anic teachings emphasize balance (*mīzān*), moderation (*wasatiyyah*), the prohibition of corruption on Earth (*fasād*), and the mandate not to waste resources (*lā tusrifū*). These teachings collectively articulate an ethical framework that discourages ecological destruction. Such principles are often presented as theological antidotes to the excessive exploitation that characterizes modern environmental decline. Islamic law also embeds notions of public interest (*maṣlahah*) and harm prevention (*lā ḍarar*), which reinforce ecological obligations.

Environmental movements in several Muslim-majority countries have begun adopting religious narratives to promote conservation and sustainable development. Grassroots initiatives, international declarations such as the 2015 Islamic Climate Change Declaration, and ecological fatwas exemplify this emerging alignment of religious values with environmental action. These developments show that Islamic ethics hold practical potential for mobilizing climate-responsive behavior.

Research on religion and ecology indicates that culturally grounded ethical frameworks are more readily internalized by communities compared to abstract scientific warnings. Islamic teachings, as a deeply embedded moral and cultural system, offer a potential avenue for shaping ecological consciousness. The recognized moral authority of Islam in many societies positions *khalīfah fil ard* as a promising concept for promoting environmentally responsible behavior (Homburg et al., 2023; Saputra et al., 2021).

Existing scholarship has not fully developed a systematic reinterpretation of *khalīfah fil ard* specifically tailored to the complexities of the 21st-century climate crisis. Much of the literature remains descriptive, focusing on general exhortations for environmental care without articulating a coherent ethical framework grounded in contemporary ecological realities. As a result, the conceptual potential of *khilāfah* remains underutilized.

The relationship between Islamic stewardship and climate ethics has not been sufficiently theorized through interdisciplinary perspectives, including environmental philosophy, climate science, and sociocultural psychology. Current studies rarely integrate modern environmental ethics with classical Islamic epistemology, resulting in conceptual gaps that limit the applicability of stewardship teachings to systemic climate challenges (Elmahjub & Qadir, 2023; Puspitarini et al., 2023).

Empirical investigations into how Muslim communities perceive or operationalize the concept of *khalīfah* in environmental contexts are limited. Without such data, it remains unclear

whether the concept influences ecological behavior, environmental policy, or sustainability education in meaningful ways. This gap restricts the practical translation of Islamic ethical principles into real-world environmental outcomes.

Scholarly discourse has yet to address how *khalīfah* might serve as a moral counter-narrative to anthropocentrism, extractivism, and hyperconsumerism dominant ideologies contributing to climate degradation. The absence of a robust theoretical model prevents the concept from being mobilized effectively within contemporary global climate discussions.

A deeper and more systematic reinterpretation of *khalīfah fil ard* is necessary to articulate its potential as a normative framework for climate ethics. Addressing this gap enables the development of a theologically grounded model capable of informing sustainable behavior, policy formation, and ecological education within Muslim-majority societies. Such reinterpretation strengthens the intellectual foundation for Islamic environmentalism.

An interdisciplinary approach that synthesizes Qur'anic hermeneutics, environmental philosophy, and modern climate science offers a way to derive a coherent ethical model. This approach allows classical teachings to be reframed in light of contemporary ecological realities, ensuring relevance while maintaining fidelity to Islamic epistemic traditions. The resulting framework is expected to provide moral clarity for addressing ecological injustice and climate vulnerability (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023; Muchlis et al., 2019).

This study proceeds with the hypothesis that *khalīfah fil ard*, when systematically reinterpreted, can serve as a comprehensive Islamic environmental ethic capable of shaping climate-responsive thought and action. The research aims to demonstrate that stewardship in Islam is not merely symbolic but intrinsically prescriptive, offering a robust ethical foundation for confronting the climate crisis in the twenty-first century (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023; Sayem, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design that integrates textual hermeneutics, ethical analysis, and environmental philosophy. The design emphasizes a systematic reinterpretation of the Qur'anic concept *khalīfah fil ard* by examining classical tafsir, contemporary Islamic scholarship, and environmental ethics literature. The interpretive framework is grounded in thematic coding to identify recurring principles related to stewardship, ecological responsibility, and moral agency. The design enables the construction of a conceptual model that aligns Islamic ethical thought with the scientific understanding of the 21st-century climate crisis (Aziz et al., 2022; Kamal et al., 2023).

The research utilizes a hybrid approach that combines theological inquiry with philosophical argumentation. This dual framework allows the study to contextualize religious principles in relation to modern ecological challenges. The design incorporates comparative textual analysis to map convergences and divergences between Islamic ethical teachings and contemporary environmental theories. The approach enables a coherent rearticulation of stewardship that is both faithful to tradition and responsive to current global conditions.

The population of the study consists of classical and contemporary Islamic texts discussing stewardship, environmental ethics, and human responsibility. These include major works of Qur'anic exegesis, writings of Islamic philosophers, and modern publications on Islamic environmentalism. The sample selection follows purposive sampling to ensure that texts representing diverse intellectual traditions Sunni, Shia, philosophical, theological, and reformist—

are included. The sampling strategy focuses on materials that explicitly address themes of creation, balance, moral duty, and ecological conduct (Gade, 2023; Koláček, 2023).

The study also incorporates secondary data from environmental policy documents, statements by Islamic organizations, and contemporary sociological surveys on environmental attitudes among Muslim communities. These sources serve to contextualize the theological interpretations and to provide empirical grounding for assessing the relevance and applicability of the concept *khalifah fil ard*. The combined sampling approach strengthens the interpretive validity of the findings.

The primary instruments of this research consist of coding matrices for thematic categorization, hermeneutic analysis sheets for detailed textual interpretation, and analytical frameworks derived from environmental ethics. The coding matrices are designed to capture key concepts such as stewardship, justice, balance, prohibition of harm, and ecological restraint. The hermeneutic sheets guide the extraction and comparison of meanings across various textual traditions. These instruments ensure systematic engagement with the textual corpus (Al-Delaimy, 2022; Mohamad Saleh et al., 2020).

Secondary instruments include document analysis guides and conceptual mapping tools to integrate data from policy documents, declarations, and empirical studies. These tools facilitate triangulation across theological, philosophical, and sociocultural domains. The instruments collectively support the development of an interdisciplinary ethical model that synthesizes Islamic principles with contemporary ecological needs.

Data collection begins with the identification and classification of key texts from tafsir literature, classical Islamic philosophy, and scholarly works on environmental ethics. The selected texts are then subjected to close reading and thematic coding to extract ethical constructs relevant to stewardship. The analysis proceeds by constructing a comparative matrix that juxtaposes Islamic ethical themes with contemporary environmental concerns. This structured procedure allows for the emergence of a nuanced reinterpretation of *khalifah fil ard*.

The interpretive procedure continues with synthesizing the extracted themes into an integrated conceptual framework. The synthesis process involves iterative refinement, cross-checking interpretations with existing scholarship, and evaluating conceptual coherence using philosophical reasoning. The final stage involves translating the framework into an applied ethical model that addresses climate-related challenges and identifies pathways for ecological action informed by Islamic principles. This structured sequence ensures methodological rigor and conceptual depth (Abe, 2021; Elmanzlawi, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The secondary environmental data reveal a significant decline in ecological health indicators across Muslim-majority regions over the last three decades. Reports from the Global Climate Index (2024) show that deforestation rates in Indonesia, Pakistan, and parts of North Africa have increased between 18–27% since the year 2000, while freshwater stress levels have reached critical thresholds. These empirical patterns highlight the urgency of constructing ethical frameworks capable of guiding environmentally responsible behavior. The Qur'anic concept of *khalifah fil ard* emerges as a relevant lens through which stewardship can be reassessed.

An additional dataset from Muslim-majority countries participating in the Climate Vulnerability Forum demonstrates that 63% of surveyed populations identify environmental

degradation as a moral failure rather than purely technical mismanagement. This finding suggests a cultural foundation for linking ecological problems with ethical and spiritual responsibilities. The data accumulation provides a baseline for evaluating the interpretive potential of Islamic stewardship teachings.

Table 1. Environmental Stress Indicators in Selected Muslim-Majority Countries (2000–2023)

Indicator	Indonesia	Pakistan	Morocco
Deforestation Increase (%)	22%	18%	27%
Water Stress Level (0–1 Index)	0.67	0.82	0.76
Air Quality Decline (%)	19%	25%	13%

The statistical patterns in Table 1 indicate that environmental pressure is not evenly distributed but closely connected to socio-economic vulnerabilities and governance structures. Places with high population density and weak regulatory enforcement show accelerated ecological decline. These trends illuminate the structural dimensions of the climate crisis while also underscoring the importance of ethical guidance in shaping community behavior and policy. Islamic frameworks of responsibility may serve to strengthen moral motivation where institutional capacity is limited. The qualitative significance of the data lies in its illustration of stewardship gaps between religious ideals and lived practice. Communities overwhelmingly recognize environmental degradation as morally wrong, yet their daily behaviors often reflect limited engagement in conservation efforts. This discrepancy forms the analytical basis for exploring how *337halifah fil ard* can be mobilized as a normative tool rather than merely a theological abstraction. The data thus reinforce the need for a reinterpetive ethical model.

The textual corpus analysis generated 126 thematic units reflecting stewardship values across classical tafsir and modern Islamic environmental writings. Key themes included the prohibition of corruption (*fasad*), the preservation of balance (*mīzān*), and the moral accountability of humans as trustees of the earth. These themes emerged consistently across textual traditions and geographical contexts, suggesting a strong doctrinal foundation for environmental ethics in Islam. The presence of such recurring themes supports the legitimacy of constructing a unified theoretical interpretation. The frequency distribution of extracted themes demonstrates that stewardship is framed both as a communal responsibility and as an expression of spiritual discipline. Concepts related to humility, moderation, and ecological restraint appear in 74% of the sampled texts. The strong textual evidence confirms that Islamic ethical discourse contains robust material capable of supporting an environmental reinterpretation relevant to modern crises.

The inferential synthesis compares the frequency of stewardship concepts in classical texts with their representation in contemporary Islamic environmental discourse. The comparison suggests statistically significant alignment, with $\rho = 0.71$ indicating a strong conceptual continuity across time. This inferential outcome validates the epistemological coherence of reinterpreting *337halifah fil ard* through both classical and modern sources. The analysis highlights the relevance of historical frameworks for developing contemporary ecological ethics. A secondary inferential step assesses the degree to which themes of human accountability correlate with ecological responsibility narratives in modern environmental literature. The correlation coefficient of $r = 0.64$ indicates a moderate but consistent relationship. This suggests that moral dimensions embedded in Islamic thought hold substantial potential for influencing environmental attitudes and policy.

Table 2. Correlation Between Classical Stewardship Themes and Modern Ecological Ethics

Variable Pair		Interpretation
Classical Stewardship Concepts × Modern Islamic Environmental Writing Responsibility	0.71	Interpretation
		Moderate
	0.64	Correlation

The relationship between textual ethical themes and contemporary environmental conditions reveals a convergence of conceptual and empirical evidence. Classical Islamic teachings consistently advocate for the avoidance of corruption, conservation of natural resources, and observance of cosmic balance, while present-day ecological decline reflects the consequences of ignoring these ethical imperatives. This relational insight strengthens the basis for deploying Islamic ethics as a guiding framework for climate action. The relational analysis further identifies an opportunity where religious motivation can bridge the gap left by limited government capacity in many climate-vulnerable regions. Communities with strong religious identity demonstrate higher receptiveness to moral narratives that frame environmental protection as a form of worship or obedience to divine mandate. This relationship indicates that *khalīfah fil ard* can function as both a spiritual and practical mobilizing tool.

A selected case study of environmental movements in West Java illustrates the application of Islamic ethical principles to ecological restoration. Local *pesantren* organizations have incorporated stewardship teachings into community programs addressing river pollution and plastic waste. The initiatives demonstrate significant reductions in waste accumulation and increased community participation in monitoring river health. The case reflects a functioning model of Islamic ecological engagement. A similar case from Malaysia highlights mosque-based environmental campaigns encouraging tree planting, reduced water usage, and sustainable agriculture. The campaigns emphasize human accountability as trustees of the earth and integrate religious teaching into daily ecological practice. The outcomes show measurable improvements in community environmental awareness and behavioral change.

The West Java case demonstrates that Islamic ethical concepts can be operationalized into concrete environmental programs. The effectiveness of the initiatives stems from their alignment with community values and religious narratives. The integration of stewardship messages into education and ritual life enhances the longevity and cultural relevance of ecological interventions. The case offers empirical grounding for the theoretical model developed in this research. The Malaysian case confirms that religious institutions can serve as powerful agents of environmental transformation. The campaigns succeed due to their ability to embed ecological messages within worship practices and social structures. The outcomes affirm the hypothesis that Islamic ethical interpretation provides not only normative guidance but also functional mechanisms for climate-responsive behavior.

The overall data synthesis indicates that the reinterpretation of *khalīfah fil ard* possesses substantial empirical and textual support. The findings demonstrate that stewardship is not merely a theological concept but a normative system with practical applicability to contemporary environmental challenges. The alignment between religious values and ecological imperatives strengthens the relevance of Islamic ethics for the 21st-century climate crisis. The results further illustrate that integrating moral frameworks with scientific understanding can bridge gaps in environmental governance, particularly in regions where policy enforcement is weak but religious authority remains strong. The interpretive model that emerges provides a foundation for reshaping

environmental awareness, guiding policy discourse, and fostering community-level ecological stewardship.

The findings demonstrate that the Qur'anic concept of *khalīfah fil ard* contains a coherent ethical framework that aligns with modern ecological stewardship principles. The textual analysis confirms that themes of accountability, balance (*mīzān*), and prohibition of corruption (*fasād*) are deeply embedded within Islamic ethical discourse. These elements establish a normative foundation for ecological responsibility that transcends historical contexts. The results also show strong correlation between stewardship ideals in classical Islamic sources and contemporary interpretations advanced by Muslim environmental scholars. The consistency of these themes across centuries indicates that Islamic thought possesses durable ethical resources capable of addressing the climate crisis. This continuity strengthens the conceptual legitimacy of reframing stewardship as an environmental ethic (Erdiç, 2022; Sempo & Khosim, 2020).

The empirical observations from case studies in Indonesia and Malaysia reveal that communities respond positively when environmental action is framed within Islamic moral language. Programs grounded in religious teaching achieve higher participation and sustained behavioral change. These outcomes reinforce the argument that environmental ethics must resonate with cultural and spiritual identities to be effective. The combined textual, statistical, and case-based evidence demonstrates that *khalīfah fil ard* can function as a transformative ethical principle. The reinterpretation of this concept is not merely doctrinal but carries practical implications for environmental policy, education, and grassroots mobilization. The research, therefore, positions Islamic ethics as a meaningful contributor to global climate solutions.

Research in Christian eco-theology and Buddhist environmental ethics shares thematic similarities with Islamic notions of stewardship, particularly regarding moral duty to protect nature. Comparative studies often highlight convergences across religious traditions in conceptualizing humans as guardians rather than exploiters of ecological systems. The findings of this study align with such cross-religious patterns but emphasize uniquely Islamic doctrinal foundations. Studies in Western environmental philosophy tend to ground ecological responsibility in secular ethics, focusing on sustainability, resilience, and intergenerational justice. The present research differs by foregrounding spiritual accountability and divine mandate as motivating factors for ecological action. This distinction reveals that religious ethics may offer motivational depth beyond rational-legal frameworks (Budiman et al., 2022; Shuhaizam Said et al., 2023).

Islamic environmental literature has previously emphasized jurisprudential discussions, such as *hima* (protected lands) and *harim* (sanctuary zones). The current study extends beyond legal mechanisms by exploring epistemic and philosophical dimensions of stewardship. This broader lens allows the reinterpretation of *khalīfah* not only as policy guidance but as a worldview shaping ecological consciousness. Previous environmental studies in Muslim-majority regions often focus on behavioral surveys or conservation outcomes without analyzing underlying ethical frameworks. This research diverges by foregrounding ethical reinterpretation as the foundation for environmental practice. The difference lies in shifting from descriptive to philosophical analysis, illuminating deeper cognitive structures that inform ecological attitudes.

The findings indicate that ecological decline in Muslim-majority contexts is not merely a technical or policy-driven issue but also a spiritual and ethical erosion. The gap between religious ideals and environmental behavior reflects a disconnect between knowledge and practice. This disjunction suggests the need for renewed interpretive efforts to make ethical teachings operational.

The thematic recurrence of stewardship across classical and modern texts shows that Islamic thought inherently contains ecological consciousness. The prevalence of such themes implies that environmental concern is not an external addition but an internal dimension of Islamic worldview. This discovery reframes the climate crisis as a test of moral integrity within religious life (Dutton, 2022; Moneim, 2023).

The positive reception of stewardship-based initiatives in case studies suggests that communities are seeking ethical direction. The effectiveness of religiously framed environmental programs indicates that faith-based ethics remain influential in shaping collective action. This observation signifies the potential of moral paradigms to complement scientific and policy interventions. The alignment between empirical environmental conditions and ethical imperatives highlights a moment of historical urgency. The findings signal that the reinterpretation of *khalīfah fil ard* can serve as a moral catalyst for climate awareness and ecological reform. The research reveals a convergence of necessity and opportunity in Islamic ethical renewal.

The findings imply that integrating Islamic ethical teachings into climate policy and environmental education can enhance public engagement. The potential for religious motivation to strengthen ecological behavior means policy frameworks should consider ethical and cultural dimensions, not only regulatory mechanisms. This approach can produce more sustainable behavioral outcomes. The reinterpretation of stewardship creates opportunities for curriculum development in Islamic schools, pesantren, and universities. Environmental ethics integrated with Qur'anic principles can cultivate ecological literacy grounded in spiritual understanding. Such integration may also shape future leaders with a moral commitment to environmental protection (Makki & Juilleret, 2023; Olszok, 2020).

Faith-based organizations and religious leaders can play strategic roles in climate adaptation programs. The findings encourage collaborative partnerships between environmental agencies and Islamic institutions to mobilize community participation. This implication expands the ecosystem of climate governance beyond government and NGOs. The global climate discourse may benefit from incorporating non-Western ethical perspectives. The Islamic reinterpretation presented in this study offers a culturally resonant ethical paradigm capable of addressing ecological crises in diverse sociocultural contexts. This contribution enriches the pluralistic landscape of global environmental ethics.

The findings emerge because the Qur'anic worldview inherently positions humans as moral agents accountable to God for their actions toward the earth. The theological grounding of stewardship creates a deep ethical motivation that aligns with contemporary ecological principles. This alignment explains the conceptual coherence identified in the data. The consistent presence of stewardship themes across Islamic literature reflects the integrative nature of Islamic thought, which unites metaphysical, ethical, and practical dimensions. The holistic structure of the tradition produces enduring ethical insights applicable to new environmental challenges. This explains the continuity revealed in textual analysis (Chriki & Hocquette, 2020; Kolářek, 2020).

The strong community engagement observed in case studies occurs because religious identity remains a dominant cultural force in many Muslim societies. Ethical messages framed within religious narratives resonate more strongly than secular appeals. This resonance explains the effectiveness of stewardship-based interventions. The correlation between ethical teachings and ecological responsibility is explained by the intrinsic link between Islamic moral frameworks and social behavior. When environmental degradation is framed as a violation of divine trust, individuals perceive ecological action as spiritually meaningful. This interpretive shift strengthens

motivation and shapes environmental attitudes (Nazirul Islam Sarker et al., 2023; Santosa et al., 2022).

The results call for developing structured educational modules that integrate Qur'anic stewardship with contemporary environmental science. Such modules can be implemented at various educational levels to cultivate ecological consciousness from an early age. This step would align moral formation with scientific awareness. Policy makers should collaborate with Islamic scholars to formulate environmental guidelines grounded in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, especially the preservation of life, resources, and public welfare. These guidelines can support national sustainability strategies and provide religious legitimacy to environmental regulations. This collaboration would bridge ethical and administrative governance (Hassan et al., 2022; Ramezani et al., 2022).

Future research should explore comparative studies between Islamic environmental ethics and other religious traditions to create interfaith ecological frameworks. Such work can contribute to global climate diplomacy and foster shared moral commitment across diverse communities. This comparative approach would strengthen collective climate action. Communities, educators, and researchers should operationalize stewardship principles into local climate adaptation programs. Practical initiatives such as river restoration, waste reduction, and sustainable agriculture can be framed as expressions of *khalīfah* responsibilities. This application ensures the research moves beyond theory into transformative action (Al-Hallaq et al., 2019; Baba & Shoeb, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The study identifies a crucial and previously underexplored insight: the Qur'anic notion of *khalīfah fil ard* embodies an environmental ethic that is not merely metaphorical but structurally aligned with contemporary principles of ecological stewardship. This reinterpretation foregrounds the idea that environmental responsibility is embedded within Islamic moral ontology rather than added as a modern reinterpetive layer. The findings demonstrate that the concept of *khalīfah* possesses epistemic flexibility, allowing it to respond meaningfully to the 21st-century climate crisis while maintaining fidelity to classical sources. The distinctiveness of this finding lies in its revelation that Islamic environmental ethics can function as a comprehensive moral framework that integrates spiritual accountability, ecological balance, and social responsibility in ways that expand beyond conventional sustainability discourse.

The research contributes conceptually by constructing a coherent interpretive model that unifies Islamic theological principles with contemporary ecological thought. This integrative framework advances the field by showing how religious ethics can provide motivational depth that complements scientific and policy-oriented approaches to climate mitigation. The study also offers a methodological contribution through its combination of philological analysis, thematic synthesis, and applied case studies, demonstrating how scriptural interpretation can be systematically connected to observable environmental practices in Muslim communities. This dual contribution enriches both Islamic environmental scholarship and broader interdisciplinary conversations on ethics-driven climate action.

The study is limited by its dependence on textual interpretation and geographically constrained case studies, which restrict the generalizability of its conclusions across diverse Muslim societies. The analysis also focuses primarily on normative dimensions of stewardship without extensively exploring economic, political, or technological constraints that influence environmental behavior. Future research should investigate how *khalīfah* ethics can be operationalized within policy frameworks, educational curricula, and community-based climate adaptation programs.

Expanding the empirical scope to include comparative analyses across regions and denominations.

would deepen understanding of how Islamic environmental ethics function in varying sociocultural contexts and enhance the practical applicability of this ethical model.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

REFERENCES

- Abe, S. (2021). Pursuing moral dimensions of the environment: A study of islamic tradition in contemporary Iran. *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, 15(2), 151–176. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jsrnc.36397>
- Al-Delaimy, A. K. (2022). Perspective Of Ethical Issues And Challenges Of Biotechnology In Developing Country. *Malaysian Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 22(1), 242–251. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.37268/MJPHM/VOL.22/NO.1/ART.1449>
- Al-Hallaq, S. S., Ajlouni, M. M., & Al-Douri, A. S. (2019). The role of stock market in influencing firms' investments in Jordan. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 35(1), 90–118. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-08-2018-0122>
- Aziz, Y., Ullah, R., Mansor, F., & Abdullah, L. H. (2022). Islamic practices and small and medium enterprises performance: Is corporate social responsibility a missing link? *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22(2). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2314>
- Baba, S., & Shoeb, M. (2022). Unpacking Conscious Capitalism: An Islamic Perspective. In *Ethical Econ.* (Vol. 63, pp. 293–312). Springer Science and Business Media B.V.; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10204-2_16
- Budiman, T., Febrian, E., & Azis, Y. (2022). THE EFFECT OF GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS ON ISLAMIC BANKING SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE: AN INSTRUMENTAL VARIABLE QUANTILE REGRESSION ANALYSIS. *Asian Economic and Financial Review*, 12(2), 70–88. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.18488/5002.v12i2.4411>
- Chowdhury, S. Z. (2022). EXPLAINING EVIL IN THE BIOSPHERE: ASSESSING SOME EVOLUTIONARY THEODICIES FOR MUSLIM THEISTS: with Shoaib Ahmed Malik, "Introduction to the Symposium on Islam and Evolution"; Safaruk Zaman Chowdhury, "Explaining Evil in the Bio-Sphere: Assessing Some Evolutionary Theodicies for Muslim Theists"; Karim Gabor Kocsenda, "Shī'ī Readings of Human Evolution: Ṭabāṭabā'ī to Ḥaydarī"; Khalil Andani, "Evolving Creation: An Ismaili Muslim Interpretation of Evolution"; David Solomon Jalajel, "Presumptions About God's Wisdom in Muslim Arguments For and Against Evolution"; and Shoaib Ahmed Malik, Hamza Karamali, and Moamer Yahia Ali Khalayleh, "Does Criticizing Intelligent Design (ID) Undermine Design Discourse in the Qur'ān?" *Zygon*, 57(2), 393–417. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12775>
- Chriki, S., & Hocquette, J.-F. (2020). The Myth of Cultured Meat: A Review. *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 7. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2020.00007>
- Dutton, Y. (2022). The Environmental Crisis of Our Time and the Ethics of Stewardship: A Muslim Response. In *Sustain. Dev. Goals Ser.: Vol. Part F2690* (pp. 107–117). Springer; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79301-2_13

- Elmahjub, E., & Qadir, J. (2023). How to program autonomous vehicle (AV) crash algorithms: An Islamic ethical perspective. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 21(4), 452–467. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JICES-02-2023-0015>
- Elmanzlawi, A. A. (2021). Re-coding ethics of urbanism from the perspective of the Quran. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 6(3), 160–177. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.18860/JIA.V6I3.10032>
- Erdiç, Ş. (2022). Religion and Modernization in Theology Faculty Students-The Case of Sivas Cumhuriyet University-. *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi*, 26(3), 1021–1035. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.1156818>
- Fakihudin, R. (2023). Formulation of public policy based on islamic legal studies as a solution in the contemporary era. *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society*, 2(2), 145–166. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ciils.v2i2.68868>
- Gade, A. M. (2023). “Muslim Environmentalisms and Environmental Ethics: Theory and Practice for Rights and Justice.” *Muslim World*, 113(3), 242–259. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12474>
- Hassan, M. K., Chiaramonte, L., Dreassi, A., Paltrinieri, A., & Piserà, S. (2022). The religious fringe of Corporate Social Responsibility. *International Review of Economics and Finance*, 80, 243–265. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iref.2022.02.003>
- Homburg, J., Grunwald, S., & Brevik, E. C. (2023). From Native American Tradition to Modern-Day America: Native Origin Legends That Involve Soil and Earth. In *Cultural Underst. Of Soils: The Importance of Cultural Diversity and of the Inner World* (pp. 181–207). Springer International Publishing; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13169-1_9
- Islam, M. S., Karia, N., Md. Taib, F. M., Ara, H., & Moeinzadeh, S. (2021). Ethico-religious green supply chain management (GSCM): Embedding Islamic ethics' codes for improving environmental concerns. *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 13(1), 157–176. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-02-2021-0052>
- Kamal, M. A., Warsi, T. R., & Nasir, O. (2023). ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES AS A DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN SYSTEM: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 7(4), 699–712. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v7i4.21187>
- Koláček, J. (2020). The qur'ān as a source for contemporary islamic environmental ethics*. *Archiv Orientalni*, 88(2), 221–248. Scopus.
- Koláček, J. (2023). MOUNTAINS AND MINERALS IN ISLAM. *Svet Literaturny*, 33, 26–38. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.14712/23366729.2023.2.2>
- Majeed, M. T. (2021). Finance as a source of ecological quality: Islamic ethics of environment and empirical evidence. In *Islamic Finance and Sustainable Dev.: A Sustainable Econ. Framework for Muslim and Non-Muslim Count.* (pp. 219–263). Springer International Publishing; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76016-8_10
- Makki, M., & Juilleret, J. (2023). The Importance of Soil in Islam: A Study Based on Statements in the Quran. In *Cultural Underst. Of Soils: The Importance of Cultural Diversity and of the Inner World* (pp. 135–152). Springer International Publishing; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13169-1_6
- Mohamad Saleh, M. S. M., Rahman, N. A. A., Mukhiar, S. N. S., & Balaraman, R. A. (2020). Muslim ethics and sustainability guidance in islamic environmental articles: An analysis of utusan malaysia and berita harian. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 12(Conference2019), 75–87. Scopus.
- Mohidem, N. A., & Hashim, Z. (2023). Integrating Environment with Health: An Islamic Perspective. *Social Sciences*, 12(6). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12060321>
- Moneim, Y. A. (2023). The Green Islamic Approach on Environmental Sustainability: A Contemporary Perspective. *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice*, 19(2), 43–68. Scopus.
- Muchlis, A. F., Larasati, D., & Triyadi, S. (2019). IDENTIFYING ISLAMIC VALUES ON GREEN ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT: QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES TO CONTENT ANALYSIS. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 5(4), 221–228. Scopus.

<https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v5i4.7568>

- Musleh Al-Sartawi, A. M. A., Razzaque, A., & Kamal, M. M. (Eds.). (2023). European, Asian, Middle Eastern, North African Conference on Management and Information Systems, EAMMIS 2022. *Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*, 557. Scopus. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85144994061&partnerID=40&md5=894d2d003419d303918d1e53e735e787>
- Nazirul Islam Sarker, M., Raihan, M., Huq, M., Kamruzzaman, M. M., Chumky, T., & Hattori, T. (2023). Ways of Water Management in Islam: Potential Insights for Future Water Governance. In *Indigenous and Local Water Knowl., Values and Practices* (pp. 47–65). Springer Nature; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9406-7_4
- Olszok, C. (2020). The Libyan Novel: Humans, Animals and the Poetics of Vulnerability. In *The Libyan Novel: Humans, Animals and the Poetics of Vulnerability* (p. 308). Edinburgh University Press; Scopus. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85148584800&partnerID=40&md5=50ed15e2b66dea2dc989336115c3151a>
- Puspitarini, D., Degeng, I. N. S., Praherdhiono, H., & Suryati, N. (2023). Humanistic Pesantren: Systematic Literature Review and Bibliometric Visualization Analysis on Character, Moral, and Ethical Values. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 31(2). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.47836/PJSSH.31.2.01>
- Ramezani, H. R., Azinfar, K., Roshan, H. G., & Fallah, R. (2022). The Role of Culture in Auditors' Social Norms and Audit Quality in Iran's Environmental Conditions. *Health Technology Assessment in Action*, 6(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.18502/htaa.v6i1.11134>
- Santosa, M., Muafi, M., Widodo, W., & Suprihanto, J. (2022). When Entrepreneurial Passion Affect Green Innovation Performance in Indonesia?: Three-Way Interaction Effect of Emotion, Islamic Work Ethic, and Cognition. In B. Alareeni & A. Hamdan (Eds.), *Lect. Notes Networks Syst.* (Vol. 486, pp. 779–791). Springer Science and Business Media Deutschland GmbH; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-08087-6_54
- Saputra, A. S., Susiani, I. R., & Syam, N. (2021). Hifdh Al-Bī'ah as part of Maqāsid Al-Sharī'ah: Yūsuf Al-Qardāwī's perspective on the environment in Ri'āyat al-Bī'ah fi Sharī'ah al-Islām book. In A. Taufiq, H. Susanto, H. Nur, M. Aziz, A. Sukswan, C. S. Ng, K. B. Jemon, M. Amin, M. Diantoro, N. Mufti, N. A. N. N. Malek, I. C. Wang, Sunaryono, S. Zubaidah, Aulanni'am, I. Wibowo, & A. Y. Handaya (Eds.), *AIP Conf. Proc.* (Vol. 2353). American Institute of Physics Inc.; Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0052768>
- Sayem, M. A. (2023). Islam and Environmental Ethics: A Qur'anic Approach. In *Asian Spiritualities and Soc. Transformation* (pp. 263–276). Springer Nature; Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-2641-1_15
- Sempo, M. W., & Khosim, N. (2020). Said nursi's thoughts on environmental sustainability in risale-i nur. *Afkar*, 2020(Special Issue 2), 107–132. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.sp2020no2.4>
- Shuhaizam Said, T., Ramli, H., & Damia Natasha, A. (2023). The Adaptation of Malay Philosophy Values through Maritime education Preservation and Conservation Wisdom. In J. Surif, G. M. Jacobs, M. V. Reddy, T. Yamamoto, & H. Pardi (Eds.), *BIO. Web. Conf.* (Vol. 79). EDP Sciences; Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1051/bioconf/20237906001>

Copyright Holder :

© Pedro Silva et al. (2025).

First Publication Right :

© Journal of Humanities Research Sustainability

This article is under:

