



Research Article

Integrating Classical Islamic Philosophical Thought and Modern Environmental Ethics: Toward a Sharia-Rooted Eco-Theology for Global Sustainability

Rawuh Yuda Yuwana^{1*}, Chairul Hakim²

¹ Universitas Musamus Merauke, Indonesia rawuhyudayuwana@unmus.ac.id

² Universitas Mohammad Husni Thamrin, Indonesia chairulhakim1001@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author: rawuhyudayuwana@unmus.ac.id

Abstract: This study explores the intersection of classical Islamic philosophical thought and modern environmental ethics to propose a Sharia-based eco-theology model for addressing global sustainability challenges. It investigates key Islamic environmental principles, such as khalifah (stewardship), amanah (trustworthiness), and mizan (balance), which emphasize humanity's responsibility to protect and preserve the environment. These values, derived from Islamic teachings, offer a moral and spiritual framework for ecological stewardship, aligning closely with contemporary concerns like sustainability, biodiversity preservation, and climate change mitigation. The research integrates these Islamic principles with modern ecological ethics, including ecocentrism, deep ecology, and environmental justice, to construct a holistic eco-theological model. Through this framework, the study emphasizes the importance of balancing ecological, economic, and social factors to promote environmental justice. The findings suggest that Islamic eco-theology can play a significant role in fostering environmental responsibility within Muslim communities and beyond, contributing to global sustainability efforts. Practical applications of these principles are seen in educational initiatives, such as the incorporation of eco-theology into curricula at Islamic institutions, and in community-based environmental projects. The research also highlights the challenges and limitations of traditional interpretations of Islamic environmental ethics, suggesting the need for progressive and adaptive approaches in addressing modern environmental issues. Future research directions include exploring the integration of this eco-theology in policy-making, Islamic education, and cross-cultural applications, ensuring its relevance to diverse communities facing environmental challenges.

Keywords: Climate Change; Eco-Theology; Environmental Stewardship; Islamic Ethics; Sustainable Development

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1. Introduction

The global environmental crisis is a multifaceted issue that calls for a reevaluation of existing ethical frameworks and theological approaches. Problems such as global warming, climate change, deforestation, and the loss of biodiversity are not only environmental concerns but also stem from deeper anthropocentric behaviors that prioritize human dominance over nature (Shaleh & Islam, 2024). This ecological crisis highlights the ethical breakdown between humans, nature, and power structures, thus necessitating a revision of the paradigms that sustain these harmful relationships (Hussein et al., 2024). Environmental degradation is increasingly recognized as a spiritual and ethical dilemma, which requires a holistic approach that incorporates scientific, political, and theological perspectives (Setianingrum et al., 2024).

In response to these global challenges, integrating classical Islamic philosophical thought with modern ecological ethics can offer a unique perspective on environmental conservation. Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE) emphasizes justice ('adl), balance (mizan), and

responsibility (khalifah), collectively affirming humanity's role as custodians of the Earth (Hussein et al., 2024). These principles can guide individuals and communities in adopting more sustainable practices, including water conservation, ethical consumption, and sustainable agriculture (Shahida, 2023). By integrating Islamic faith, religious law, and ethics, IEE provides a comprehensive moral framework for environmental stewardship that aligns with the values of modern ecological ethics (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023).

However, implementing Islamic environmental principles faces significant challenges, such as resistance from patriarchal structures and a lack of financial and technical support (Shaleh & Islam, 2024). Overcoming these obstacles requires the integration of Islamic environmental teachings into education systems to foster awareness and action (Setianingrum et al., 2024). Furthermore, incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives, such as ecofeminism and global policy frameworks, can ensure that Islamic environmental ethics are inclusive and contribute to sustainable, equitable environmental policies (Buitendag, 2023; Hussein et al., 2024).

The intersection of religion and environmental sustainability has increasingly gained prominence in recent years, particularly in response to the growing ecological crises that threaten the planet. Eco-theology, a multidisciplinary field that merges religious values with ecological concerns, offers a unique approach to fostering environmental stewardship (Leese, 2019; Wozna, 2021). This paper aims to propose a Sharia-based eco-theological framework, which integrates Islamic principles with contemporary environmental challenges to address sustainability issues in the modern world. The objective is to develop an eco-theology rooted in Sharia principles that aligns Islamic teachings with global environmental sustainability.

Eco-theology is a field that draws from diverse religious traditions, offering varying perspectives on human responsibility toward nature. In Christianity, eco-theology has emphasized stewardship and the interconnectedness of all creation, underscoring the ethical obligation to protect the environment (Leese, 2019). Similarly, ecofeminism has explored the links between the oppression of women and environmental degradation, advocating for a holistic approach that incorporates justice for both women and nature (Wozna, 2021). These theological frameworks, while valuable, often focus on general environmental justice and may overlook the specific teachings of individual religions regarding ecological responsibility (Dames, 2024).

Islamic environmental ethics provide a robust foundation for an eco-theological framework. Central to Islamic teachings are the concepts of khalifah (stewardship) and tawazun (balance), which stress humanity's role as caretakers of the Earth, entrusted with maintaining harmony with nature (Abd-Elsalam & Binay, 2024; Makki & Juilleret, 2023). The Quran and Hadith emphasize environmental care, advocating for the protection of natural resources and the prevention of harm to the environment (Abd-Elsalam & Binay, 2024). These principles offer a profound moral compass for addressing environmental challenges, making them highly relevant for the development of a Sharia-based eco-theology (Nasir et al., 2022).

A Sharia-based eco-theological framework integrates these Islamic environmental principles with modern sustainability goals. It emphasizes khalifah (stewardship), encouraging humans to act as caretakers of the Earth, responsible for its preservation (Nasir et al., 2022). The concept of tawazun (balance) encourages a harmonious approach to resource use, ensuring that consumption does not exceed the Earth's regenerative capacity (Abd-Elsalam & Binay, 2024). Furthermore, the principle of hisab (accountability) encourages individuals and societies to be responsible for their environmental actions, ensuring sustainable practices at all levels of life (Abd-Elsalam & Binay, 2024; Makki & Juilleret, 2023). Integrating these principles into educational systems and policy-making can foster a culture of environmental responsibility, ensuring that Islamic ethical teachings guide practical efforts toward global sustainability (Makki & Juilleret, 2023).

2. Literature Review

Classical Islamic Thought on Nature

In classical Islamic thought, humanity's role as stewards (khalifah) and trustees (amanah) of the Earth is fundamental to Islamic environmental ethics. The concept of *khalifah* positions humans as caretakers of the Earth, entrusted with the responsibility to preserve ecological balance (*mizan*) and prevent environmental corruption (*fasad*) (Ismail & Berghout, 2024; Kadir et al., 2023). This stewardship is regarded as a divine mandate, emphasizing the moral and

spiritual obligation of humans to protect and preserve the environment. Moreover, the Islamic notion of *amanah* (trusteeship) underscores that natural resources are a trust from God, to be used sustainably and justly (Fuseini & Lever, 2021; Kadir et al., 2023).

Islamic environmental ethics are rooted in the belief that all resources provided by God should be used in moderation. The ethical principles of gratitude (*shukr*) and humility towards God for the blessings of nature promote a sense of responsibility in the use of resources (Ismail & Berghout, 2024). These teachings advocate for moderation in consumption and accountability to God, encouraging a sustainable management of biodiversity and the promotion of environmental justice. These values integrate social and economic justice, especially for vulnerable populations who are often disproportionately affected by environmental degradation (Fuseini & Lever, 2021; Ismail & Berghout, 2024).

Modern Environmental Ethics

Modern environmental ethics encompasses several key perspectives, such as ecocentrism, deep ecology, and environmental justice. Ecocentrism is a view that ascribes intrinsic value to all living beings and ecosystems, advocating for the rights of nature and a holistic view of the environment. This approach challenges anthropocentric perspectives by arguing that humans are but one part of the ecological whole (Gates, 2021; Kortetmäki, 2016). Ecocentrism promotes the idea that environmental care should not be driven by human needs but by a respect for nature's inherent worth (Homem & Rego, 2015).

Deep ecology, closely related to ecocentrism, emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life forms and the intrinsic value of nature. It critiques modern technological civilization for its anthropocentrism and consumerism, urging a shift toward eco-centric values and lifestyles (Homem & Rego, 2015; Mathews, 2017). The deep ecology philosophy calls for reducing human impact on the environment by promoting simpler living and respecting the natural world.

Environmental justice, on the other hand, expands beyond traditional environmental concerns to include ethical, political, and legal responsibilities toward both humans and nature. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues, advocating for a more inclusive approach that acknowledges the needs of future generations (Ajeesh, 2024; Chandramohan & Bhagwan, 2023). Modern environmental justice integrates intersectional environmentalism, recognizing the importance of solidarity between human and ecological well-being (Sbert, 2020).

Eco-Theology

Islamic eco-theology places significant emphasis on humanity's role as stewards of the Earth, a concept known as *khalifah*, rooted in both the Qur'an and Hadith traditions. The idea of *khalifah* underscores the responsibility of humans to protect and maintain ecological balance (*mizan*) and prevent environmental corruption (*fasad*) (Bayat, 2023; Bhat, 2024). These teachings highlight a deep-seated ethical framework within Islam that aligns closely with contemporary ecological concerns, making Islamic environmental ethics a critical component of the global sustainability discourse. The Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad advocate for environmental care and emphasize values such as moderation, interconnectedness, and the intrinsic value of all living beings (Moneim, 2023; Nasir et al., 2022). These values resonate with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those focused on environmental conservation, suggesting that Islamic principles can make a substantial contribution to global efforts toward sustainability (Setianingrum et al., 2024).

Islamic environmental education plays a crucial role in fostering eco-conscious attitudes. In particular, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia have successfully integrated eco-theology into their curricula, leading to tangible environmental transformations within their communities (Romdloni et al., 2024). These educational initiatives emphasize practical applications such as water conservation, sustainable agriculture, and ethical consumption. By incorporating Islamic eco-theology into their teachings, these schools have not only raised awareness about environmental issues but also inspired collective action and social cohesion among students and local communities (Setianingrum et al., 2024). The integration of eco-theology in educational systems exemplifies the potential of Islamic teachings to drive practical and widespread environmental stewardship.

Challenges in Existing Frameworks

Despite the rich environmental principles found within Islamic teachings, traditional interpretations of Islamic law often fall short in addressing contemporary sustainability challenges. Many Islamic legal systems remain influenced by colonial and Western frameworks, which can limit the application of Islamic environmental principles in modern contexts (Bhat, 2024). These limitations hinder the potential for Islamic environmental ethics to be fully integrated into contemporary environmental governance systems. Moreover, there is a growing need for progressive interpretations of Shariah that incorporate contemporary economic and social changes, allowing for more effective responses to new environmental challenges (Moneim, 2023)).

Enforcing environmental laws within Islamic contexts faces several challenges, including cultural, societal, and jurisdictional factors. These barriers can undermine the effectiveness of legal measures aimed at promoting environmental stewardship (Lokhandwala, 2022). For instance, in many Islamic countries, environmental laws may be inadequately enforced due to a lack of integration between Islamic principles and national environmental legislation. There is a pressing need for legal frameworks that respect cultural and religious diversity while also addressing the urgent need for ecological justice (Nasir et al., 2022). The integration of Islamic teachings into environmental legislation and decision-making processes is essential to enhance the ethical and moral conduct of human environmental actions.

To overcome these challenges and ensure the effective application of Islamic environmental principles, several steps can be taken. First, strengthening enforcement mechanisms and aligning them with international environmental standards is crucial (Bhat, 2024). Second, conducting public awareness campaigns rooted in Islamic ethics can promote environmental stewardship and inspire action at the individual and community levels (Karman et al., 2023). Additionally, developing a comprehensive Sharia-based framework for environmental governance, similar to the water resource management efforts in Indonesia, can provide a more robust and culturally relevant model for managing natural resources (Romdloni et al., 2024). Finally, encouraging the synthesis of Islamic principles with environmental law and policy, as exemplified by the 2015 Islamic Climate Change Symposium, can ensure that Islamic teachings are effectively integrated into global environmental governance (Lokhandwala, 2022).

3. Materials and Method

This study combines classical Islamic philosophical thought with modern environmental ethics to develop an eco-theological framework addressing sustainability challenges. By integrating principles like *kehalifab* (stewardship) and *tawazun* (balance) from Islamic teachings with contemporary ecological concerns such as ecocentrism and deep ecology, the research aims to create a relevant model for environmental stewardship. The study utilizes classical Islamic texts and modern ecological philosophy to offer a holistic approach that emphasizes humanity's responsibility to preserve nature and promote sustainable practices, ensuring that Islamic ethical teachings are effectively applied to global environmental issues.

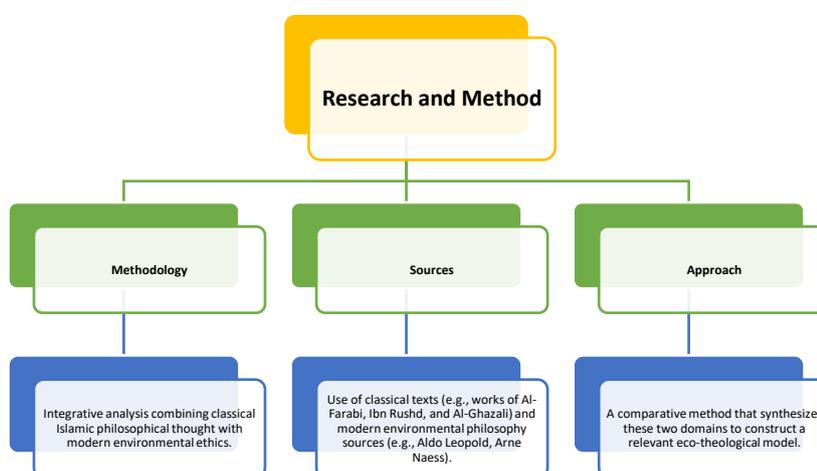


Figure 1. The structure of the Research Methodology flowchart.

Methodology

This study employs an integrative analysis methodology that combines classical Islamic philosophical thought with modern environmental ethics. The purpose of this approach is to explore the intersection of Islamic principles, such as *khalifah* (stewardship) and *tawazun* (balance), with contemporary ecological concerns, such as those found in ecocentrism and deep ecology. By synthesizing these two domains, the research aims to construct a relevant eco-theological model that aligns Islamic teachings with modern environmental sustainability challenges.

Sources

The sources for this research are drawn from both classical Islamic texts and modern environmental philosophy. Classical Islamic works, such as those by Al-Farabi, Ibn Rushd, and Al-Ghazali, provide the foundational principles of Islamic environmental ethics, emphasizing humanity's role as *khalifah* and the ethical responsibility to preserve ecological balance (*mizan*). These classical texts will be used to derive insights into the Islamic understanding of nature and the moral imperatives surrounding environmental stewardship. In parallel, modern environmental philosophy sources, such as Aldo Leopold's "land ethic" and Arne Naess's deep ecology theory, will provide a contemporary framework for understanding the interconnectedness of all life and the intrinsic value of nature. This dual-source approach allows for the creation of a hybrid eco-theological model that is both spiritually grounded and practically relevant to modern environmental issues.

Approach

The research follows a comparative method that synthesizes classical Islamic environmental ethics with modern ecological theories. By examining the parallels and contrasts between these two domains, the study aims to develop a comprehensive eco-theological model. This model will address contemporary environmental issues, particularly focusing on sustainability and justice, through the lens of Islamic teachings on stewardship and ecological responsibility. The comparative approach enables the identification of shared values, such as balance, justice, and responsibility, which can be applied to the global environmental sustainability agenda. Through this synthesis, the research contributes to both the theological understanding of environmental stewardship and the practical implementation of these teachings in modern environmental governance.

4. Results and Discussion

Islamic eco-theology, rooted in the values of *khalifah* (stewardship), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *mizan* (balance), offers a strong ethical framework for addressing modern environmental challenges. These principles emphasize humanity's responsibility to care for the Earth as caretakers, use natural resources justly, and maintain ecological harmony, aligning with contemporary concepts like sustainable development, biodiversity preservation, and climate change mitigation. Practical applications of these values, such as in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia, demonstrate how Islamic teachings can inspire sustainable practices, including water conservation and ethical consumption. By integrating these principles into education and policy-making, Islamic eco-theology fosters global environmental stewardship and encourages practical, faith-driven solutions to ecological issues.

Results

The foundational Islamic values of *khalifah* (stewardship), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *mizan* (balance) form the core of eco-theology in Islam. *Khalifah* emphasizes humanity's role as caretakers of the Earth, entrusted with its protection and preservation. This stewardship is not just a physical responsibility but also a spiritual one, calling for humans to maintain ecological balance and prevent corruption (*fasad*) in the environment. Similarly, *amanah* underscores that natural resources are a trust from God, which must be used justly and sustainably. The concept of *mizan* stresses the importance of balance in nature, urging humanity to respect the limits of the Earth's resources and avoid overconsumption, which aligns with the ethical teachings of moderation and accountability found in Islamic principles.

Table 1. Islamic eco-theological principles and modern environmental ethics.

Eco-Theological Principles	Modern Environmental Ethics Alignment	Practical Applications	Eco-Theological Principles
Khalifah (Stewardship)	Ecological Stewardship	Sustainable Resource Use	Khalifah (Stewardship)
Amanah (Trustworthiness)	Environmental Justice	Responsible Consumption	Amanah (Trustworthiness)
Mizan (Balance)	Ecocentrism & Biodiversity	Ecological Balance Preservation	Mizan (Balance)

This table effectively links the Islamic eco-theological principles with their corresponding modern environmental ethics and practical applications, reinforcing the alignment between religious teachings and contemporary ecological concerns.

These values are deeply rooted in Islamic texts, which highlight humanity's moral duty towards nature. They emphasize the need for respect and care for all living beings, supporting an ethical framework that aligns with modern ecological concerns such as sustainability, biodiversity preservation, and climate change mitigation. *Khalifah* and *amanah* directly contribute to responsible resource use, while *mizan* resonates with contemporary environmental ethics that emphasize ecological balance and the interconnectedness of life on Earth.

Discussion

The alignment of Islamic eco-theological values with modern environmental ethics provides a strong foundation for addressing current ecological challenges. The concept of *khalifah* mirrors modern ecological stewardship, where humans are seen as guardians of the environment, responsible for protecting and nurturing natural resources. This principle supports sustainable development efforts, emphasizing the need to balance human needs with the health of the planet. Likewise, *amanah* aligns with the modern ethical frameworks of environmental justice, where resources are not to be exploited unjustly, but used wisely to ensure fairness across generations and communities.

Furthermore, the principle of *mizan* provides a relevant link between Islamic teachings and modern ecological ethics such as ecocentrism and deep ecology. These modern frameworks advocate for the intrinsic value of nature, asserting that all living beings, ecosystems, and natural processes deserve respect and protection. In this context, *mizan* calls for an approach that prevents over-exploitation and acknowledges the limits of the Earth's capacity to regenerate, supporting efforts in biodiversity preservation and climate change mitigation. This connection demonstrates that Islamic environmental ethics can complement and enhance global sustainability frameworks by grounding them in a spiritual and ethical perspective.

Practical applications of these values can be seen in various community-driven initiatives that integrate Islamic teachings into environmental action. For instance, in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), eco-theological principles have been integrated into curricula, leading to substantial community changes in environmental practices. These schools promote water conservation, sustainable agriculture, and ethical consumption, demonstrating how religious teachings can inspire collective action toward sustainability. By embedding these principles into education and policy-making, Islamic eco-theology provides a pathway to fostering environmental stewardship at the individual, community, and global levels, encouraging practical, faith-driven solutions to the environmental crisis.

5. Comparison

Traditional Islamic approaches to ecology have often focused on general ethical principles regarding environmental care, but they have not always fully addressed modern, global environmental challenges. Classic Islamic teachings emphasize the role of humanity as *khalifah* (steward) of the Earth and encourage moderation and justice in the use of natural resources. However, these teachings were often applied in specific historical and cultural contexts, where environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and overconsumption were not as urgent or widespread as they are today. The traditional focus on individual behavior and local stewardship, while important, did not always provide a comprehensive, global framework for addressing contemporary environmental crises. The

eco-theological framework developed in this study, however, builds on these traditional values while expanding their applicability to modern ecological concerns by integrating them with contemporary environmental ethics and global sustainability goals. This adaptation ensures that the Islamic ethical system remains relevant in the context of today's complex and interconnected environmental challenges.

Western eco-theological models, such as those rooted in Christian stewardship or deep ecology, often emphasize the moral obligation to protect the environment but are sometimes criticized for their anthropocentric focus or lack of religious grounding. For instance, deep ecology stresses the intrinsic value of nature and the interconnectedness of all life forms, but it often operates within a secular framework that does not directly incorporate a religious moral authority. In contrast, the Sharia-based eco-theology framework proposed in this study draws directly from Islamic teachings, offering a theologically grounded approach that emphasizes humanity's divinely appointed role as caretakers of the Earth. This framework also places a strong emphasis on *amanah* (trusteeship) and *mizan* (balance), promoting environmental ethics that are both spiritually and morally rooted in religious doctrine. The Sharia-based approach thus offers a unique contribution by linking environmental responsibility directly to religious duty, providing a holistic, faith-based framework for sustainability that can resonate with Muslim communities worldwide. Additionally, it incorporates broader principles of justice, which are often central in Islamic teachings, ensuring that environmental ethics are also socially and economically inclusive. This makes the Sharia-based eco-theology model particularly relevant in Muslim-majority contexts and offers a complementary perspective to the human-centric or secular models often found in Western eco-theology.

6. Conclusion

This study has explored how integrating classical Islamic philosophical thought with modern environmental ethics can lead to the development of a new eco-theological model. The foundational Islamic values of *khalifah* (stewardship), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *mizan* (balance) provide a robust ethical framework for addressing contemporary environmental challenges. These principles, rooted in Islamic teachings, align closely with modern ecological concerns such as sustainability, biodiversity preservation, and climate change mitigation. By synthesizing these classical Islamic values with modern environmental ethics, the study proposes an eco-theological model that is both spiritually grounded and practically relevant to today's global sustainability issues.

The proposed Sharia-based eco-theology model has significant implications for global sustainability efforts. It offers a theologically grounded framework that encourages Muslims to take responsibility for environmental stewardship, aligning with global environmental goals and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By promoting values such as ecological balance, justice, and responsible resource use, the model can foster greater environmental responsibility within Muslim communities. Furthermore, the model's emphasis on social justice and ethical resource management has the potential to inspire collective action, not only in Muslim-majority regions but also globally, by offering an inclusive, faith-driven approach to environmental sustainability. The eco-theological framework can guide policy-making, education, and community initiatives, encouraging practical solutions to environmental challenges.

Future research could explore the practical implementation of this eco-theology in various contexts, particularly within Islamic education and policy-making. Investigating how Islamic eco-theology can be integrated into curricula at Islamic institutions, such as pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), could provide valuable insights into how religious teachings can promote eco-friendly behaviors and environmental stewardship. Additionally, further research could examine how Islamic principles of environmental ethics can be incorporated into national and international environmental policies, fostering a global dialogue on sustainability. There is also potential to explore how this framework can be adapted and applied in different cultural and geographical contexts, ensuring its relevance to diverse communities facing unique environmental challenges.

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