

Reconceptualizing Sustainability through Islamic Legal Philosophy: Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Environmental Ethics, and Contemporary Governance

Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul¹, Mutasim Al Deaibes², Layan Hesham Herzalla³

Affiliati: ^{1,3}Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi, Uni Emirat Arab; ²American University of Sharja, Sharja, Uni Emirat Arab

Corresponding Author:

labeeb.bsoul@gmail.com

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Abstract

Research Background: This study addresses the growing global environmental crisis by critically examining the ethical limitations of dominant sustainability paradigms, which often neglect deeper moral and metaphysical foundations.

Methods: Using a normative-analytical and comparative approach, the research integrates textual analysis of Islamic sources—Qurʿan, Sunnah, and classical jurisprudence—with contemporary sustainability theories such as ecological economics and the circular economy. The study focuses on the foundational Islamic principles of tawḥīd (unity), khilāfah (stewardship), and mīzān (balance), alongside the juridical framework of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah.

Key Findings: The findings demonstrate that Islamic legal philosophy offers a coherent and integrative sustainability model that unites metaphysics, ethics, and law. Importantly, the study advances the extension of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah to include environmental preservation (ḥifẓ al-bīʿah) as a core objective. This framework not only aligns with contemporary environmental concerns but also provides a stronger moral and legal foundation for governance.

Contribution: The study contributes to sustainability discourse by positioning Islamic jurisprudence as a globally relevant paradigm capable of enriching and restructuring existing models.

Conclusion: Islamic legal philosophy presents an ethically grounded and operational framework that supports long-term, just, and holistic environmental governance.

Keywords: Islamic environmental ethics; sustainability; maqāṣid al-sharīʿah.

A. INTRODUCTION

The accelerating global environmental crisis has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century, with far-reaching consequences for ecological systems, human livelihoods, and civilizational sustainability. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and the rapid depletion of natural resources have fundamentally destabilized the conditions upon which human societies depend, exposing deep structural failures in prevailing modes of production, consumption, and governance. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, current trajectories of greenhouse gas emissions and ecosystem degradation represent an existential threat to planetary stability, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities across the Global South (IPCC 2023:4–7). These developments are not merely technical or economic in character; they reflect a profound moral crisis rooted in the dominant paradigm's failure to situate human activity within a coherent ethical and cosmological framework. The urgency of this crisis demands not only policy innovation but a fundamental reexamination of the philosophical and normative foundations that govern the relationship between humanity and the natural world—making this an issue of critical academic and practical significance.

Scholarly engagement with environmental sustainability has produced a rich body of literature, yet significant conceptual and normative gaps remain. A first category of studies, centered on technocratic and economic paradigms, has advanced frameworks such as sustainable development, ecological economics, and the circular economy, offering valuable policy instruments and analytical models (Falkner 2021:23–28). However, these approaches have been widely critiqued for their utilitarian assumptions and their failure to address the deeper ethical and metaphysical dimensions of ecological responsibility. A second category of scholarship has sought to remedy this deficit through the integration of environmental philosophy and ethics, examining concepts such as intrinsic value, intergenerational justice, and ecological integrity as normative foundations for sustainability theory. While these contributions have enriched the field, they remain predominantly anchored in Western philosophical traditions, thereby limiting their cross-cultural applicability and their capacity to engage diverse epistemic communities. A third category of research has begun to explore religious and indigenous traditions as sources of ecological insight, recognizing that faith-based frameworks offer integrated moral cosmologies that embed environmental

responsibility within broader systems of meaning and obligation. Within this emerging body of work, studies on Islamic environmental ethics have drawn attention to foundational concepts such as *khilāfah* (stewardship), *tawhīd* (divine unity), and *mīzān* (balance) as potential resources for sustainability discourse (al-Ghazali 2012:306; Kamali 1991:351–70). Nevertheless, these studies remain largely fragmented and descriptive, focusing on individual concepts in isolation rather than articulating a comprehensive and systematically integrated normative paradigm. Crucially, the potential of Islamic legal philosophy—particularly the doctrine of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (objectives of Islamic law)—to serve as an operational framework for contemporary environmental governance remains substantially underexplored.

This article aims to address these lacunae by offering a systematic and integrated analysis of sustainability through the lens of Islamic legal philosophy. Specifically, the study examines how the classical doctrine of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* may be expanded to encompass environmental preservation (*ḥifẓ al-bīʿah*) as a foundational objective, and how the resulting framework can be operationalized within contemporary environmental governance structures. To this end, the research employs a normative-analytical and comparative methodology, integrating textual analysis of foundational Islamic sources—including the Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical juristic literature—with critical engagement with modern sustainability paradigms such as ecological economics and the circular economy. The analysis proceeds through three interrelated stages: textual and interpretive analysis of primary Islamic sources, normative reconstruction of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* in light of contemporary ecological challenges, and comparative evaluation of Islamic legal-ethical principles alongside secular sustainability frameworks. In doing so, the study contributes to broader scholarly efforts to pluralize environmental thought by demonstrating that Islamic jurisprudence constitutes a globally relevant intellectual tradition with the capacity to enrich and reshape sustainability theory and practice.

This study argues that Islamic legal philosophy, grounded in the interconnected principles of *tawhīd*, *khilāfah*, and *mīzān*, and operationalized through the normative concepts of *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) and *ḥifẓ al-bīʿah*, constitutes a coherent, comprehensive, and practically applicable paradigm for sustainability—one that not only resonates with contemporary environmental discourse but surpasses it by embedding

ecological responsibility within a deeper ethical and metaphysical framework. It is hypothesized that the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* into sustainability governance frameworks will provide a more robust normative foundation for environmental policy than technocratic and utilitarian models alone, precisely because it situates ecological stewardship within a system of divine accountability, intergenerational justice, and moral obligation. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the comparative analysis of Islamic and secular sustainability paradigms will reveal substantive areas of normative convergence, demonstrating the potential of Islamic environmental ethics to contribute meaningfully to global environmental governance rather than functioning merely as a context-specific or culturally bounded perspective. These arguments will be tested and elaborated through the analytical and comparative examination that constitutes the remainder of this study.

This article aims to fill a critical gap by offering a systematic and integrated analysis of sustainability from an Islamic perspective, arguing that Islamic thought provides a comprehensive normative framework that not only resonates with contemporary sustainability discourse but also goes beyond it by embedding deeper ethical and metaphysical foundations. Rooted in the principles of *tawḥīd*, *khilāfah*, and *mīzān*, and operationalized through legal concepts such as *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) and *ḥifẓ al-bīʿah* (environmental preservation), the study demonstrates that Islamic environmental ethics represents a coherent and practically applicable paradigm. It further examines the implications of this framework for contemporary environmental governance, showing how Islamic legal-ethical principles can inform policy-making, strengthen sustainable development strategies, and provide a robust moral basis for addressing global ecological challenges. In this way, the article positions Islamic environmental ethics not merely as a context-bound perspective, but as a globally relevant intellectual contribution capable of enriching and reshaping sustainability theory and practice, while also advancing broader scholarly efforts to pluralize environmental thought through the inclusion of diverse philosophical and legal traditions.

B. DISCUSSION

Contemporary sustainability discourse has undergone significant transformation over the past decades, driven by the intensification of global environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion (IPCC 2023:45–52). In response, a range of theoretical frameworks have emerged, including ecological economics, degrowth

theory, and the circular economy. Each of these approaches seeks to address the limitations of conventional development models by rethinking the relationship between economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social well-being.

Ecological economics, for instance, challenges the assumption of unlimited growth by emphasizing the finite nature of ecological systems and advocating for an economic model that operates within planetary boundaries (Daly and Farley 2011). Similarly, degrowth theory critiques the growth-oriented paradigm of modern economies, arguing for a deliberate reduction in production and consumption as a means of achieving ecological sustainability and social equity (Kallis 2018). The circular economy, on the other hand, focuses on resource efficiency and waste reduction by promoting closed-loop systems in which materials are continuously reused and recycled (Geissdoerfer et al. 2017).

1. Tawḥīd (Divine Unity) as the Foundation of Environmental Ethics

Tawḥīd is the most fundamental metaphysical principle in the Islamic worldview, which literally means the oneness of God as the creator and sustainer of all existence. In the context of environmental ethics, tawḥīd is not merely theological in nature but also functions as an ontological framework that affirms the interconnectedness and mutual dependence of all elements of creation. The universe, in this perspective, is not a material entity in itself, but rather a manifestation of the divine order that reflects God's signs (*āyāt*) in the universe. Nasr (1996:95) argues that the desacralization of nature in modern thought has contributed to ecological imbalance, as it severing the spiritual connection between humans and the environment. Conversely, the Islamic conception of tawḥīd resacralizes nature, transforming environmental concern into a spiritually meaningful action, rather than simply a pragmatic obligation.

Furthermore, tawḥīd establishes an epistemological basis for integrating environmental knowledge with ethical responsibility. Scientific understanding of ecological systems is not viewed in isolation from moral considerations, but rather as part of a holistic framework in which knowledge (*'ilm*) serves to enhance human awareness of divine wisdom while guiding ethical action. This integration distinguishes the Islamic approach from secular models that tend to separate scientific analysis from moral (Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003; Nasr 1996).

In a literature review, *tawḥīd* as the foundation of environmental ethics can be mapped into three interrelated categorical dimensions. *First*, the ontological dimension, namely *tawḥīd* as a statement that all creation originates from one divine source, so that damage to nature is a violation of God's willed order. *Second*, the epistemological dimension, where *tawḥīd* encourages the integration of empirical science and moral responsibility—an approach that contrasts with the subject-object dualism that underpins modern secular science. *Third*, the ethical-practical dimension, where recognition of the unity of creation demands ethical behavior toward all forms of life. Classical Islamic scholars assert that recognizing the unity of creation necessarily necessitates dignified action toward the universe (Dien 2000). These three dimensions collectively demonstrate that *tawḥīd* is not merely a religious dogma, but a normative paradigm with concrete implications for ecological sustainability.

2. Khilāfah and Mīzān as an Ethical-Normative Framework

Based on the ontological foundation of *tawḥīd*, the concept of *khilāfah* defines humanity as a vicegerent—a trustee entrusted with the care and management of the earth. The Qur'anic designation of humanity as *khalīfah* (Qur'an 2:30) establishes a moral and legal framework in which environmental responsibility is inseparable from human identity itself. *Khilāfah* is not merely a symbolic designation, but rather embodies concrete obligations rooted in accountability and justice: humanity as trustees is obligated to maintain ecological balance, ensure sustainable use of resources, and prevent environmental degradation (Kamali 1991:351–70). This concept also carries an important intergenerational dimension, whereby stewardship responsibilities extend beyond the needs of the present to embrace the rights of future generations.

Complementing the *khilāfah*, the principle of *mīzān* (balance) represents the normative dimension of Islamic environmental ethics by emphasizing balance, moderation, and justice as essential components of sustainability. The Qur'an repeatedly affirms that God has created the cosmos in a state of balance and commands humans not to violate that balance (Qur'an 55:7–9). The ethical implications of *mīzān* are reinforced by the Qur'anic prohibition against *fasād* (corruption), which includes environmental degradation, resource exploitation, and ecological imbalance (Qur'an 7:56). The Prophetic tradition complements this principle through an emphasis on moderation and conservation—including the prohibition of wasting

water even when performing ablution by a flowing river—demonstrating that sustainability in Islam is a practical ethic embedded in everyday behavior (bin Majah 2006, Hadith 425).

The caliphate can be categorized into three operational variants that reflect its implementation in different contexts. *First*, individual stewardship, which manifests itself in the practice of moderate consumption and the avoidance of waste (*isrāf* and *tabdhīr*) in everyday life. *Second*, communal stewardship, reflected in classical legal doctrines on land use, water rights, and animal welfare as an application of the principle of stewardship in historical Islamic societies. *Third*, institutional stewardship, in which the caliphate serves as a normative foundation for environmental governance and public policymaking.

Meanwhile, *mīzān* operates at three interrelated categorical levels: the ecological level (maintaining the balance of natural ecosystems), the social level (justice and equity in resource distribution), and the economic level (moderation in consumption and production). These categories demonstrate that *mīzān* is not merely an environmental principle, but rather a comprehensive governance principle that encompasses all dimensions of human life and has direct relevance to contemporary sustainable development discourse.

3. Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Maṣlaḥah, and Ḥifẓ al-Bīʿah as the Legal Framework for Sustainability

Maqāṣid al-sharīʿah—the highest objectives of Islamic law—is a jurisprudential doctrine conceptualized by classical jurists such as al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) as the protection of five essential human interests: religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property (al-Ghazali 2012:416–22; al-Shatibi 2009:221–23). In contemporary developments, scholars such as Kamali (1991:143) have begun to explore the possibility of extending this framework to include environmental preservation, arguing that these five classical objectives cannot be realized without the stability and health of the natural environment.

Maṣlaḥah (public interest) serves as the most flexible and dynamic legal principle in Islamic jurisprudence, enabling law to respond to changing times while remaining rooted in its ethical foundations. In the context of environmental sustainability, maṣlaḥah provides a robust legal mechanism for addressing contemporary ecological challenges by prioritizing the common good—allowing environmental considerations to be incorporated into legal and policy frameworks, even for issues not explicitly addressed in classical sources (Auda 2015;

Kamali 1991). Meanwhile, ḥifẓ al-bī'ah (environmental preservation) represents a contemporary extension of maqāṣid that makes ecological preservation a distinct legal objective, providing a legal basis for environmental protection policies within an Islamic governance framework (IPCC 2023:83–92).

In the literature, the application of maqāṣid to sustainability can be categorized into three stages of development. *The first stage* is the classical formulation, in which traditional jurists established five core objectives without explicit reference to ecology, but laid down methodological principles that would later allow for their extension. *The second stage* is the contemporary normative reconstruction, in which modern scholars such as Kamali (1999) and Auda (2015) began to argue that environmental preservation is a logical prerequisite for all classical objectives, and should therefore be accommodated as a sixth objective or integral dimension of maqāṣid. *The third stage* is the operationalization of governance, in which these principles are translated into concrete legal mechanisms and policies.

The categorization of maṣlaḥah and ḥifẓ al-bī'ah in the context of governance encompasses three application domains: *the natural resource regulation domain*, encompassing water, land, and biodiversity management; *the climate policy domain*, including the sharia justification for carbon emission reduction policies; and *the classical heritage domain*, reflected in the institution of ḥimā (protected zones)—an Islamic-based natural resource protection mechanism historically used to prevent overexploitation and the earliest example of Islamic law-based environmental governance. Together, these three domains demonstrate that the Islamic legal framework provides not only a moral foundation but also legal instruments that can be operationalized within the contemporary environmental governance architecture.

4. Islamic Environmental Ethics and Contemporary Sustainability

This study critically demonstrates that prevailing sustainability paradigms, while methodologically sophisticated, remain normatively underdeveloped. In contrast, Islamic legal philosophy offers a teleological framework grounded in moral accountability and metaphysical coherence. Unlike secular environmental models, which often rely on utilitarian calculus, Islamic jurisprudence integrates ethical obligation with legal enforceability, thereby providing a more sustainable basis for long-term environmental governance.

From a broader theoretical perspective, Islamic environmental ethics can be situated within the framework of global environmental justice. Scholars such as Schlosberg (2007)

have emphasized that sustainability must address not only ecological concerns but also issues of distributive, procedural, and intergenerational justice. The Islamic concepts of *'adl* (justice), *maṣlaḥah* (public interest), and *khilāfah* (stewardship) align closely with these dimensions, suggesting that Islamic legal philosophy offers a culturally grounded yet universally relevant approach to environmental justice.

At the same time, Islamic environmental ethics challenges dominant secular paradigms by reintroducing metaphysical accountability into sustainability discourse. Whereas contemporary models often rely on regulatory mechanisms and market incentives, the Islamic framework grounds environmental responsibility in moral obligation and divine accountability. This dual structure combining ethical commitment with legal enforceability distinguishes Islamic thought as a uniquely comprehensive approach to sustainability.

The integration of Islamic ethical and legal principles into contemporary sustainability discourse offers a compelling framework for addressing the complex and interrelated challenges of the modern environmental crisis. While dominant sustainability paradigms have made important contributions in terms of policy design and technical innovation, they often remain limited by their failure to address the deeper ethical and ontological dimensions of environmental degradation. In contrast, the Islamic framework provides a holistic approach that integrates metaphysical principles, ethical obligations, and legal mechanisms into a unified model of sustainability.

One of the most significant contributions of Islamic environmental ethics lies in its ability to reframe the human–nature relationship. Rather than viewing nature as a passive resource to be exploited, the Islamic perspective situates human beings within a broader moral and cosmological order defined by *tawḥīd*. This ontological shift has profound implications for sustainability, as it challenges the anthropocentric assumptions that underpin many contemporary models. By emphasizing interconnectedness and moral accountability, it encourages a more responsible and respectful engagement with the natural environment.

Moreover, the concept of *khilāfah* introduces a powerful ethical framework for environmental governance. By defining human beings as stewards accountable for the preservation of ecological balance, it establishes a normative foundation for sustainable practices. This notion of stewardship is particularly relevant in addressing issues such as climate change and resource depletion, where collective responsibility and long-term thinking

are essential. It also aligns with contemporary calls for intergenerational justice, emphasizing the need to preserve environmental resources for future generations.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the application of Islamic environmental ethics is not without challenges. Institutional fragmentation, varying interpretations of Shari'ah, and the lack of unified environmental governance frameworks across Muslim-majority contexts may limit its immediate implementation. Addressing these challenges requires not only theoretical development but also institutional reform and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The principle of *mīzān* further reinforces this ethical framework by emphasizing balance and moderation as central components of sustainability. In an era characterized by overconsumption and ecological imbalance, the Islamic emphasis on moderation offers a critical corrective. It challenges unsustainable patterns of production and consumption while promoting a more equitable distribution of resources. This perspective is particularly relevant in addressing global inequalities, as it highlights the ethical dimensions of resource allocation and environmental justice.

From a legal perspective, the integration of *maṣlaḥah* and *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* provides a dynamic and adaptable framework for environmental governance. *Maṣlaḥah* enables policymakers to prioritize the public interest and to develop innovative solutions to contemporary environmental challenges. Its flexibility allows for the incorporation of scientific knowledge and technological advancements into legal decision-making, ensuring that Islamic law remains responsive to changing circumstances.

At the same time, *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* establishes environmental preservation as a core objective of Islamic law, reinforcing the moral and legal imperative of sustainability. By embedding environmental protection within the *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* framework, it elevates sustainability from a policy concern to a fundamental legal obligation. This integration of ethical and legal principles distinguishes the Islamic approach from many secular models, which often lack enforceable moral foundations.

The relevance of this framework is increasingly evident in contemporary environmental initiatives. For example, the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (Istanbul, 2015) draws explicitly on principles such as stewardship, balance, and public interest to advocate for sustainable development, renewable energy, and environmental justice (Idlilène

2021:114–15). Such initiatives demonstrate the practical applicability of Islamic environmental ethics in addressing global challenges. Furthermore, the Islamic framework facilitates interdisciplinary engagement, bridging the gap between religious ethics, environmental science, and policy studies. By providing a common ethical language, it enables dialogue across different fields and perspectives, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability.

Despite these strengths, the integration of Islamic environmental ethics into global sustainability discourse faces several challenges. These include the need for greater institutional support, the development of context-specific policy frameworks, and the expansion of interdisciplinary research. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to translate theoretical insights into practical solutions. Nevertheless, the potential of Islamic environmental ethics to contribute to sustainability discourse remains significant. By offering a holistic framework that integrates metaphysics, ethics, and law, it provides a powerful alternative to fragmented approaches and highlights the importance of moral responsibility in addressing environmental challenges.

5. Policy and Institutional Implications

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the Islamic framework for sustainability offers significant implications for contemporary policy and institutional development. In particular, the integration of ethical and legal principles within Islamic thought provides a foundation for designing governance models that align environmental responsibility with economic and social objectives. One important area of application is Islamic finance, which has increasingly engaged with sustainability through instruments such as green sukuk (Islamic bonds). These financial tools demonstrate how the principle of *maṣlaḥah* can be operationalized to support environmentally responsible investments while maintaining compliance with Islamic legal norms. By linking financial activity to ethical considerations, Islamic finance provides a model for integrating sustainability into economic systems without reducing it to purely market-driven mechanisms.

In addition, Islamic environmental ethics can inform public policy by promoting regulatory frameworks that prioritize long-term ecological balance over short-term economic gains. This includes policies related to resource management, energy transition, and urban development. The emphasis on stewardship (*khilāfah*) and balance (*mīzān*) supports a

governance approach that is both preventive and restorative, addressing environmental harm before it becomes irreversible.

At the institutional level, the incorporation of Islamic ethical principles into educational systems, legal frameworks, and community initiatives can enhance environmental awareness and encourage sustainable behavior. Mosques, educational institutions, and civil society organizations can play a central role in disseminating these values, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility that extends beyond formal policy structures. Taken together, these applications illustrate that Islamic environmental ethics is not limited to theoretical discourse but offers practical tools for addressing contemporary sustainability challenges. By integrating ethical accountability with institutional frameworks, it provides a pathway toward more holistic and durable forms of environmental governance.

6. Islamic Environmental Governance in Practice

To further demonstrate the practical relevance of the proposed framework, it is useful to consider contemporary applications of Islamic environmental ethics in policy and institutional contexts. One prominent example is the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, which explicitly draws upon principles such as *tawhīd*, *khilāfah*, and *mīzān* to advocate for environmental responsibility, climate justice, and sustainable resource management. The declaration calls for a transition to renewable energy, reduction of carbon emissions, and the protection of vulnerable communities, thereby illustrating how Islamic ethical principles can inform global environmental policy (Idlilalène 2021:114–15).

Similarly, the emergence of green sukuk (Islamic environmental bonds) in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the UAE demonstrates the operationalization of *maṣlaḥah* in financial governance. These instruments channel investment into environmentally sustainable projects, including renewable energy, water management, and climate resilience infrastructure. By integrating ethical considerations with financial mechanisms, green sukuk exemplifies how Islamic law can contribute to sustainable economic development.

In addition, historical Islamic governance practices such as *ḥimā* (protected ecological zones) provide early models of environmental regulation, emphasizing conservation and sustainable land use. Contemporary adaptations of such principles can inform modern environmental policies, particularly in resource-scarce regions. These examples collectively

illustrate that Islamic environmental ethics is not merely theoretical but possesses significant practical applicability in addressing contemporary sustainability challenges.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the application of Islamic environmental ethics is not without challenges. Institutional fragmentation, varying interpretations of Shari'ah, and the lack of unified environmental governance frameworks across Muslim-majority contexts may limit its immediate implementation. Addressing these challenges requires not only theoretical development but also institutional reform and interdisciplinary collaboration. For example, Indonesia's sovereign green sukuk program, initiated in 2018, has financed renewable energy and climate resilience projects exceeding USD 3 billion, demonstrating the measurable policy impact of Islamic financial instruments aligned with sustainability objectives (Khairunnisa, Suhel, and Asngari 2025).

A particularly significant contemporary application of Islamic environmental governance can be observed in Indonesia's sovereign green sukuk program, first issued in 2018. As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has leveraged Islamic financial instruments to fund climate mitigation and adaptation projects, including renewable energy development, sustainable transport, and climate-resilient infrastructure. By 2023, Indonesia had issued over USD 3 billion in green sukuk, positioning itself as a global leader in Islamic sustainable finance (Khairunnisa et al. 2025).

From an Islamic legal perspective, this initiative reflects the operationalization of *maṣlaḥah* as a guiding principle in financial governance. The allocation of capital toward environmentally beneficial projects demonstrates how public interest can be aligned with long-term ecological sustainability. Moreover, the structure of sukuk—grounded in asset-backed financing and risk-sharing—offers an alternative to speculative financial models that often contribute to environmental degradation.

Importantly, Indonesia's green sukuk also illustrates the institutional adaptability of Islamic law. By integrating global sustainability frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals with Islamic financial principles, it creates a hybrid governance model that bridges religious ethics and international policy standards. This case underscores the potential of Islamic finance to contribute not only to economic development but also to global environmental governance (Falkner 2021:287–95).

A second critical area in which Islamic environmental ethics demonstrates practical relevance is water governance in the Middle East, one of the most water-scarce regions in the world. Countries such as Jordan and the Gulf states face severe challenges related to water scarcity, population growth, and climate change. These conditions provide a crucial testing ground for the application of Islamic legal principles to environmental governance.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence contains extensive doctrines regulating water use, including principles of equitable access (*haqq al-shirb*), priority rights, and the prohibition of harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*). These doctrines emphasize that water is a shared resource and must be managed in a manner that ensures both sustainability and justice. Contemporary policy frameworks in the region increasingly reflect these principles, particularly in efforts to regulate groundwater extraction, promote water conservation, and develop desalination technologies.

However, the application of these principles remains uneven. Institutional fragmentation, economic pressures, and political constraints often limit their effectiveness. This highlights a key challenge in translating Islamic environmental ethics into practice: the need for strong governance structures capable of enforcing ethical and legal norms. Nevertheless, the continued relevance of Islamic water law demonstrates its potential as a normative framework for addressing one of the most pressing environmental challenges of the twenty-first century.

C. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islam provides a comprehensive and philosophically robust framework for sustainability, as it integrates metaphysical, ethical and legal dimensions into a single, interrelated whole. The relationship between humanity and nature is understood through the concepts of *tawḥīd*, *khilāfah*, and *mīzān*, which not only transcend modern technocratic approaches but also affirm that sustainability is a moral and civilisational responsibility. This finding is significant as it shifts the perspective from merely technical solutions towards a deeper ethical commitment. Therefore, the approach that should be adopted is to integrate these values into policy, education, and social practice so that sustainability does not lose its moral foundation.

This study contributes by emphasising that environmental ethics in Islam is not merely a collection of normative principles, but rather a systematic and relevant paradigm for

engaging with the global sustainability discourse. Furthermore, this research demonstrates how Islamic legal principles such as *maṣlaḥah*, *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*, and the expansion of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* can operationalise the concept of sustainability in concrete terms. This contribution is significant as it offers an alternative to sustainability models that are often lacking in moral foundations and normative enforcement. Consequently, the necessary approach is to open up space for dialogue across intellectual traditions and to encourage the utilisation of the Islamic framework as part of a more inclusive and just global solution.

Although it offers a robust conceptual framework, this study still has limitations regarding empirical implementation and practical contextualisation across different regions and institutions. These shortcomings are significant because, without empirical testing, normative ideas risk remaining at a theoretical level and proving difficult to adopt widely. Therefore, further research is required, focusing on case studies, policy analysis, and the role of sectors such as Islamic finance and community-based initiatives. Previous empirical and comparative studies are also recommended to enrich our understanding of the effectiveness of Islamic environmental ethics in various socio-economic contexts.

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