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UNCLOS Gaps and the Blue Economy: Integrating International Maritime Law and Fiqh al-Bī'ah for Sustainable Ocean Governance

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ABSTRACT

Existing blue economy frameworks and international maritime governance continue to face limitations in addressing contemporary marine sustainability challenges, particularly biodiversity loss, deep-sea mining, unequal benefit-sharing, and weak implementation mechanisms. This study examines how international maritime law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), can support the blue economy and SDG 14, while also analyzing the ethical contribution of Fiqh al-Bī'ah (Islamic environmental jurisprudence) to sustainable ocean governance. Using a normative juridical approach, this research analyzes international legal instruments, policy documents, and scholarly literature related to maritime governance, the blue economy, SDG 14, and Islamic environmental ethics. The findings show that although UNCLOS provides an important legal foundation for marine environmental protection, sustainable resource use, benefit-sharing, and international cooperation, several normative and implementation gaps remain, especially in relation to biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction and deep-sea mining. The study further finds that Fiqh al-Bī'ah principles, including khilāfah, mīzān, amānah, and lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār, can complement international maritime law by strengthening ethical responsibility, ecological balance, and intergenerational justice. This integration offers an interdisciplinary framework for sustainable maritime governance, particularly for maritime and Muslim-majority states such as Indonesia.

Keywords: *Blue Economy; Fiqh al-Bī'ah; International Law of the Sea; Islamic Environmental Ethics; UNCLOS Gaps.*

INTRODUCTION

Oceans play a fundamental role in sustaining human civilization, economic development, and ecological balance. They serve not only as routes for transportation and trade but also as sources of food, energy, biodiversity, and essential ecosystem services. More than seventy percent of the Earth's surface is covered by oceans, and a significant proportion of the global population depends directly on coastal and marine ecosystems for livelihoods, food security, and socio-economic resilience (World Bank, 2021). However, the sustainability of marine ecosystems is increasingly threatened by overexploitation, marine pollution, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, biodiversity loss, climate change, and the growing pressure of maritime industrialization. These challenges indicate that ocean governance can no longer be approached merely through economic extraction, but must be guided by sustainability, equity, legal certainty, and ecological responsibility.

In response to these challenges, the blue economy has emerged as an alternative development paradigm that seeks to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and marine environmental protection. Unlike conventional extractive models that often prioritize short-term economic benefits, the blue economy emphasizes the sustainable and equitable use of marine resources. Recent studies have also highlighted that blue economy development should not only be evaluated through economic indicators, but also through equity, social participation, and the well-being of coastal communities (Chen et al., 2024; Geng et al., 2024). This perspective is important because marine governance involves not only states and markets, but also coastal societies whose livelihoods and cultural identities are closely connected to the ocean.

The blue economy is closely connected to international maritime governance, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS provides the legal foundation for regulating maritime jurisdiction, marine resource management, marine environmental protection, scientific research, and dispute settlement among states (Barnes & Barrett, 2016; Nguyen, 2021; United Nations, 1982). Although UNCLOS does not explicitly use the term blue economy, many of its provisions are normatively aligned with the principles of sustainable ocean governance. Nevertheless, contemporary maritime challenges show that the current international legal framework still faces limitations in responding to new ecological and socio-economic pressures.

The relevance of the blue economy is also directly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 14, which focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. SDG 14 requires not only global development commitments but also effective legal and institutional mechanisms capable of guiding state behavior and policy implementation (United Nations, 2015; Zhang et al., 2024). However, emerging issues such as biodiversity protection beyond national jurisdiction, deep-sea mining, marine genetic resources, unequal benefit-sharing, and weak enforcement mechanisms reveal that international maritime governance still contains normative and implementation gaps. The 2023 BBNJ Agreement represents an important step in addressing some of these gaps, particularly in relation to biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, but its implementation still requires stronger coordination with existing maritime regimes and equitable participation among states (Friedman, 2024; United Nations, 2023).

Another important challenge concerns deep-sea mining. The increasing demand for critical minerals has intensified interest in mineral exploration and exploitation in the international seabed area. While the International Seabed Authority has developed regulatory mechanisms for activities in the Area, recent literature indicates that deep-sea mining governance still faces unresolved concerns related to environmental standards, scientific uncertainty, ecosystem vulnerability, and equitable benefit-sharing (Blanchard et al., 2023; Pickens et al., 2024). These challenges demonstrate that blue economy policies must be carefully designed so that marine resource utilization does not reproduce extractive practices that threaten fragile ocean ecosystems.

Beyond international legal instruments, the principle of sustainability in ocean governance can also be enriched through ethical and religious perspectives. In Islamic legal thought, Fiqh al-Bīʼah, or Islamic environmental jurisprudence, emphasizes human responsibility as stewards of the Earth, the obligation to maintain ecological balance, and the prohibition of environmental harm. Principles such as khilāfah, mīzān, amānah, and lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār provide an ethical foundation that is consistent with the objectives of the blue economy and SDG 14. Recent studies on Islam and sustainable development also suggest that Islamic values can strengthen environmental responsibility by connecting ecological action with moral, social, and spiritual accountability (Al-Jayyousi et al., 2023; Dien, 2000; Khalid, 2002). This ethical dimension is particularly relevant for Muslim-majority maritime states, where environmental governance may be strengthened not only through formal legal regulation but also through religious and cultural legitimacy.

Previous studies have discussed the blue economy from the perspectives of international law, marine policy, sustainable development, and environmental governance. Other studies have examined Islamic environmental ethics as a moral basis for ecological responsibility. However, limited attention has been given to the integration of UNCLOS, the blue economy, SDG 14, and Fiqh al-Bīʼah within a single ethical-normative framework for sustainable maritime governance. This gap is important because contemporary ocean governance requires not only legal regulation and economic planning, but also ethical foundations that can strengthen public compliance, social responsibility, and intergenerational justice. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to construct an interdisciplinary ethical-normative framework that connects international maritime law, Islamic environmental jurisprudence, and sustainable development principles. Based on this background, this study examines how UNCLOS supports the blue economy and SDG 14, identifies normative gaps in the existing international maritime legal framework, and analyzes how Fiqh al-Bīʼah can complement sustainable ocean governance, particularly in maritime and Muslim-majority states such as Indonesia.

This issue is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context. As the world's largest archipelagic state, Indonesia possesses vast maritime resources and strategic potential for developing the blue economy. Indonesia's Blue Economy Roadmap 2023–2045 emphasizes the need to consolidate policies, programs, and stakeholder participation to realize sustainable ocean economies and support Indonesia's long-term development vision (Bappenas, 2024). Recent research also shows that maintaining ocean health and ensuring the sustainable use of ocean resources are among Indonesia's most vital interests in pursuing sustainable ocean development while advancing economic objectives and SDG commitments (Wuwung et al., 2024). Nevertheless, Indonesia continues to face serious challenges, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, coastal ecosystem degradation, marine pollution, weak law enforcement, and inconsistencies between national maritime policies and international legal obligations.

Based on this background, this study examines how international maritime law, particularly UNCLOS, supports the blue economy and SDG 14 while also identifying normative gaps in the existing legal framework. It further analyzes how Fiqh al-Bī'ah can complement international maritime governance by providing an ethical-normative foundation for sustainable ocean management. By integrating legal, ethical, and sustainability perspectives, this study contributes to interdisciplinary discussions on environmental humanities, public policy, and social innovation for sustainable development, particularly in maritime and Muslim-majority states such as Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employed a normative juridical method, a legal research approach that focuses on the analysis of legal norms, principles, and doctrines contained in statutory regulations, international legal instruments, and scholarly legal literature. This method was considered appropriate because the study examines how international maritime law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), provides a normative basis for the implementation of the blue economy and its relationship with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 14. In addition, this approach enables the study to analyze the relevance of Fiqh al-Bī'ah as an ethical-normative framework for strengthening sustainable ocean governance.

The legal materials used in this study were classified into three categories. Primary legal materials consisted of binding international and national legal instruments, including UNCLOS 1982, the 2023 Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), United Nations General Assembly resolutions on sustainable development, and relevant Indonesian maritime regulations and policy documents. These materials were selected because they directly regulate maritime jurisdiction, marine environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable ocean governance. Secondary legal materials included textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, and official reports from international institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, and other relevant organizations. These sources were used to support the analysis of blue economy governance, SDG 14 implementation, and Islamic environmental jurisprudence. Tertiary legal materials, including legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and legal indexes, were used to clarify technical legal terms and concepts.

Data were collected through library research and document analysis. The literature search was conducted using academic databases such as HeinOnline, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect, supported by relevant official institutional sources. The search focused mainly on publications from the last ten years, while older sources were included when they were considered foundational to the discussion of Islamic environmental ethics, international law of the sea, or the blue economy. The search terms included combinations of keywords such as “UNCLOS gaps,” “blue economy,” “SDG 14,” “international maritime governance,” “BBNJ Agreement,” “deep-sea mining,” “Fiqh al-Bī’ah,” and “Islamic environmental ethics.” The inclusion criteria covered sources that directly discussed international maritime law, sustainable ocean governance, blue economy policy, marine biodiversity protection, SDG 14, and Islamic environmental principles. Sources that were not directly related to maritime governance, sustainability, or environmental ethics were excluded from the analysis.

The collected materials were analyzed qualitatively through a structured normative legal analysis. First, the legal and scholarly materials were classified according to their relevance to three main themes: regulatory gaps in UNCLOS, the blue economy and SDG 14, and the ethical contribution of Fiqh al-Bī’ah. Second, the study applied legal interpretation methods, including grammatical, systematic, and teleological interpretation. Grammatical interpretation was used to understand the wording of relevant legal provisions, systematic interpretation was used to examine the relationship between norms within international maritime law, and teleological interpretation was used to identify the sustainability-oriented objectives underlying legal instruments and policy frameworks. Third, the study conducted a conceptual-normative synthesis by connecting international maritime legal norms with the ethical principles of Fiqh al-Bī’ah, such as khilāfah, mīzān, amānah, and lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār. This synthesis was used to assess how Islamic environmental principles may complement existing legal frameworks in addressing normative gaps in sustainable ocean governance.

This study did not involve empirical fieldwork, interviews, or statistical analysis. Its focus was limited to the normative and conceptual examination of international maritime law, blue economy governance, SDG 14, and Fiqh al-Bī’ah. Therefore, the findings should be understood as a doctrinal and conceptual contribution to the development of sustainable maritime governance, particularly for maritime and Muslim-majority states such as Indonesia.

RESULTS

The normative analysis of international maritime law, the blue economy framework, SDG 14, and Fiqh al-Bī’ah produced four main findings. These findings concern the normative relevance of UNCLOS to the blue economy, the existing regulatory gaps in international maritime governance, the ethical contribution of Fiqh al-Bī’ah, and the implications of these findings for Indonesia as a maritime state.

Normative Linkage between UNCLOS and the Blue Economy

The analysis shows that UNCLOS 1982 provides an important normative foundation for the implementation of the blue economy, although the convention does not explicitly use the term “blue economy.” UNCLOS regulates the rights, obligations, and jurisdiction of states at sea, including the utilization of marine resources, protection of the marine environment, marine scientific research, and international cooperation (United Nations, 1982). These elements correspond to the main principles of the blue economy, particularly sustainable resource use, equitable benefit distribution, and marine environmental protection.

First, UNCLOS supports the sustainable use of marine resources by requiring states to manage living and non-living marine resources in a way that considers conservation and long-term ecological sustainability. This principle is consistent with the blue economy, which seeks to balance economic growth with the preservation of marine ecosystems. Second, UNCLOS recognizes the principle of equitable benefit-sharing, especially in relation to the international seabed area as the common heritage of mankind. This principle reflects the social justice dimension of the blue economy, particularly for developing countries. Third, UNCLOS obliges states to prevent, reduce, and control marine pollution, which directly supports the environmental dimension of sustainable ocean governance.

The findings therefore indicate that UNCLOS functions not only as a legal instrument for regulating maritime jurisdiction but also as a foundational legal framework that supports the development of the blue economy. Its provisions on resource management, environmental protection, and international cooperation provide a legal basis for aligning maritime development with SDG 14.

Regulatory Gaps in International Maritime Governance

The study identifies two major regulatory gaps in the current international maritime legal framework. The first gap concerns the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). UNCLOS provides a general framework for ocean governance, but it does not comprehensively regulate biodiversity protection in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The 2023 BBNJ Agreement has begun to address this limitation by providing a more specific legal instrument for high seas biodiversity protection (United Nations, 2023). However, issues related to benefit-sharing, access to marine genetic resources, and equitable participation of developing countries remain important concerns.

The second gap relates to deep-sea mineral exploitation. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) regulates exploration and exploitation activities in the international seabed area based on the principle of the common heritage of mankind. Nevertheless, the existing legal framework still faces limitations in establishing strong and operational environmental standards for deep-sea mining. The extraction of minerals such as cobalt, nickel, and manganese may generate economic benefits, but it also creates risks for fragile deep-sea ecosystems that remain insufficiently understood by scientific research (Levin et al., 2018).

These findings show that international maritime governance still contains normative and implementation gaps, particularly when dealing with emerging ecological challenges. Although UNCLOS remains the central framework for ocean governance, additional legal instruments and ethical frameworks are needed to ensure that the blue economy does not become merely an economic development agenda but also a sustainability-oriented governance model.

Ethical Contribution of Fiqh al-Bī'ah to Sustainable Ocean Governance

The analysis also finds that Fiqh al-Bī'ah provides a complementary ethical-normative framework for strengthening the blue economy. Fiqh al-Bī'ah views nature as a divine trust (amānah) and positions humans as stewards (khalīfah) who are responsible for maintaining ecological balance. Its principles include the prohibition of environmental harm, the obligation to preserve ecological balance, and the moderate use of natural resources.

Several principles of Fiqh al-Bīʹah are relevant to maritime governance. The principle of khilāfah emphasizes human responsibility in managing marine resources responsibly. The principle of mīzān highlights the importance of ecological balance in the relationship between humans and nature. The principle of lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār prohibits actions that cause environmental harm. Meanwhile, the concept of amānah reinforces moral responsibility in protecting marine ecosystems for present and future generations.

These principles are consistent with the objectives of the blue economy and SDG 14. They support the sustainable use of marine resources, pollution prevention, biodiversity protection, and intergenerational justice. In this sense, Fiqh al-Bīʹah can complement positive legal norms by providing an ethical foundation for sustainable ocean governance, particularly in Muslim-majority maritime states.

Implications for SDG 14 and the Indonesian Maritime Context

The findings further indicate that the blue economy has strategic relevance for Indonesia. As an archipelagic state with extensive maritime territory, Indonesia has strong potential to develop the blue economy as part of its national development strategy. Marine sectors such as capture fisheries, aquaculture, coastal tourism, marine biotechnology, and renewable marine energy can contribute to food security, energy transition, economic development, and coastal community empowerment.

However, the analysis also shows that Indonesia faces several challenges in implementing sustainable ocean governance. These challenges include illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, coral reef degradation, coastal pollution, weak law enforcement, and inconsistencies between national regulations and international maritime obligations. These issues demonstrate the need for stronger harmonization between national maritime policy, international legal commitments, and sustainability-oriented governance principles.

In relation to SDG 14, UNCLOS provides a legal basis for marine environmental protection, while the SDGs provide a global development agenda for conserving and sustainably using oceans and marine resources. The interaction between UNCLOS and SDG 14 shows that hard-law obligations and soft-law development goals must be connected through stronger policy implementation, institutional coordination, and community participation.

Table 1 presents the relationship between UNCLOS provisions, SDG 14 targets, and their implications for the blue economy.

Table 1. Comparison between UNCLOS and SDG 14 Targets

Aspect	UNCLOS 1982	SDG 14 Targets	Implications for the Blue Economy
Marine environmental protection	State obligations to prevent and control marine pollution,	Reduction of marine pollution	Requires stronger monitoring, enforcement, and pollution control mechanisms

	particularly Articles 192–196		
Conservation of living marine resources	Conservation and management of fisheries within the exclusive economic zone, particularly Articles 61–62	Conservation and sustainable use of marine resources	Requires additional regulatory and conservation instruments
Global ocean governance	Common heritage of mankind principle concerning the international seabed area	Sustainable utilization of ocean resources	Requires sustainable standards for deep-sea mineral exploration and exploitation
International cooperation	Cooperation in marine scientific research, technology transfer, and environmental protection	Strengthened global partnerships for sustainable development	Requires inclusive cooperation between developed and developing countries

Overall, the results show that UNCLOS, SDG 14, the blue economy, and Fiqh al-Bī'ah are normatively connected. UNCLOS provides the legal foundation, SDG 14 establishes the global sustainability agenda, the blue economy offers a development framework, and Fiqh al-Bī'ah contributes an ethical-normative basis for responsible ocean governance. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

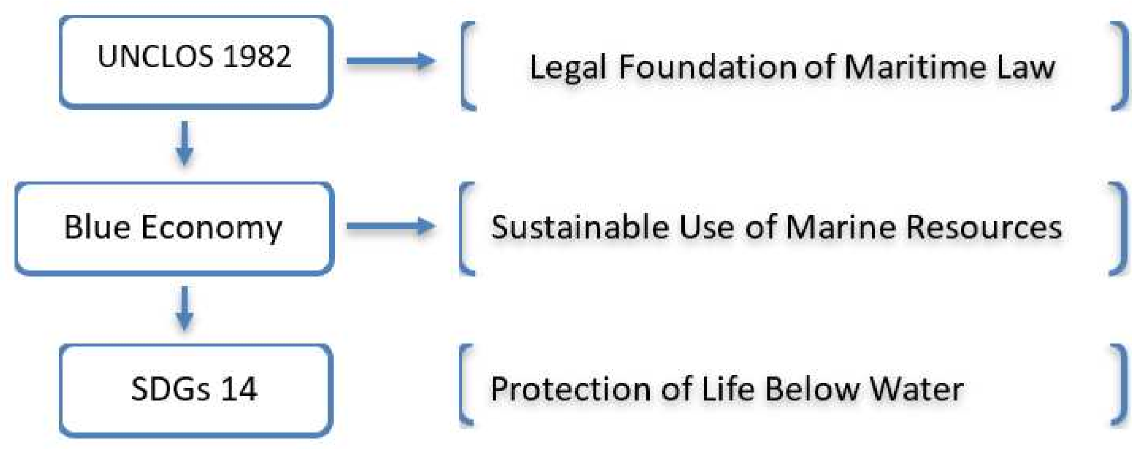

Figure 1. The Relationship Framework between UNCLOS, the Blue Economy, and the SDGs

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the blue economy cannot be understood merely as an economic framework for utilizing marine resources. Rather, it represents a broader governance paradigm that requires legal certainty, ethical orientation, ecological responsibility, and social justice (Chen et al., 2024; Geng et al., 2024). Although UNCLOS 1982 provides the foundational legal framework for maritime jurisdiction, resource management, environmental protection, scientific research, and international cooperation, its provisions were not originally designed to address all contemporary ecological challenges associated with the blue economy (United Nations, 1982). This condition creates an important space for further normative development, particularly in relation to biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, deep-sea mining, equitable benefit-sharing, and the integration of sustainability principles into national maritime policies.

The first important issue concerns the relationship between UNCLOS and the blue economy. UNCLOS contains several principles that are consistent with the blue economy, including sustainable resource use, marine environmental protection, international cooperation, and equitable benefit-sharing. However, the absence of an explicit blue economy framework within UNCLOS creates interpretive limitations. UNCLOS primarily establishes the legal allocation of rights and obligations among states, whereas the blue economy requires a more integrated approach that combines economic development, ecological protection, and social inclusion (Noonan-Birch et al., 2024). Therefore, the implementation of the blue economy depends not only on compliance with existing maritime legal provisions but also on the capacity of states to interpret and operationalize those provisions in accordance with sustainability-oriented development goals.

This finding confirms that international maritime law needs to be read dynamically in response to emerging environmental challenges. Issues such as biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction and deep-sea mineral exploitation demonstrate that the law of the sea still contains normative and implementation gaps (Blanchard et al., 2023; Friedman, 2024; Sutisna et al., 2025). The adoption of the 2023 BBNJ Agreement represents a significant step toward addressing some of these limitations, especially in relation to high seas biodiversity protection (United Nations, 2023). Nevertheless, legal instruments alone are insufficient if they are not supported by effective implementation, equitable access to marine resources, and strong commitments from both developed and developing states. In this regard, the blue economy should not be reduced to a policy slogan; it must be translated into enforceable regulations, institutional coordination, and measurable sustainability standards.

The second issue relates to the ethical contribution of Fiqh al-Bīʹah. The results show that Islamic environmental jurisprudence can complement international maritime law by providing a moral foundation for sustainable ocean governance. Principles such as khilāfah, mīzān, amānah, and lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār emphasize stewardship, ecological balance, trust, and the prohibition of harm (Al-Jayyousi et al., 2023; Dien, 2000; Khalid, 2002). These principles are highly relevant to the blue economy because they prevent marine resource exploitation from being justified solely on economic grounds. Instead, they place marine governance within a broader ethical framework that prioritizes ecological protection, intergenerational responsibility, and public welfare.

The integration of Fiqh al-Bīʹah is particularly important for Muslim-majority maritime states such as Indonesia. In such contexts, environmental governance may be strengthened not only through formal legal rules but also through religious and cultural legitimacy. This ethical dimension can encourage public compliance, especially among coastal communities whose livelihoods are directly connected to marine resources

(Hussein et al., 2024). By connecting international legal obligations with locally meaningful ethical values, Fiqh al-Bīʼah can help transform abstract sustainability norms into practical social commitments. This is where the study contributes to environmental humanities: it shows that sustainability is not only a matter of law and policy but also a matter of culture, ethics, belief, and collective responsibility.

The third issue concerns the implementation of SDG 14. UNCLOS and SDG 14 operate through different legal characters. UNCLOS is a binding international legal instrument, while SDG 14 functions mainly as a global development agenda with soft-law characteristics (United Nations, 2015). This distinction creates implementation challenges. States may formally comply with maritime legal obligations but still fail to achieve substantive sustainability targets if policy implementation remains weak. Therefore, achieving SDG 14 requires a stronger bridge between hard-law obligations, soft-law development commitments, and ethical frameworks that can guide state and community behavior.

In the Indonesian context, this issue becomes particularly relevant. Indonesia's identity as an archipelagic state provides a strong basis for adopting the blue economy as a national development strategy. However, the persistence of IUU fishing, coastal pollution, coral reef degradation, weak law enforcement, and fragmented maritime governance shows that sustainable ocean governance remains difficult to achieve (Bappenas, 2024; Wuwung et al., 2024). These challenges indicate that Indonesia needs a more integrated maritime governance model that combines international legal commitments, national policy reform, community participation, and ethical values rooted in local and religious traditions.

The discussion also suggests that Indonesia can use the blue economy not only as an economic development agenda but also as a framework for social innovation. Coastal communities should not be positioned merely as beneficiaries of maritime policy but as active participants in marine resource governance. Community-based conservation, sustainable fisheries management, marine ecotourism, and local environmental stewardship can strengthen the social dimension of the blue economy (Chen et al., 2024). When combined with Fiqh al-Bīʼah, these practices may support a governance model that is both legally valid and socially accepted.

This study therefore proposes that sustainable maritime governance requires a dual-normative approach. The first dimension is legal-normative, grounded in UNCLOS, the BBNJ Agreement, SDG 14, and national maritime regulations. The second dimension is ethical-normative, grounded in Fiqh al-Bīʼah and its principles of stewardship, balance, trust, and harm prevention. The interaction between these two dimensions can strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of the blue economy, especially in societies where environmental behavior is influenced not only by law but also by religion, culture, and communal values.

The main contribution of this study lies in its interdisciplinary integration of international maritime law and Islamic environmental ethics. Previous discussions on the blue economy often emphasize economic policy, legal regulation, or environmental management (Geng et al., 2024; Noonan-Birch et al., 2024). This study extends that discourse by showing that ethical and religious principles can serve as complementary foundations for addressing normative gaps in ocean governance. Such integration is particularly relevant for social sciences and humanities because it connects law, sustainability, public policy, culture, and environmental ethics.

However, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. Since this research uses a normative juridical approach, it does not provide empirical measurement of policy effectiveness or community-level implementation. The analysis is limited to legal instruments, doctrinal interpretation, and conceptual synthesis (Marzuki, 2019). Future studies should therefore examine how blue economy policies are implemented in practice, how coastal communities respond to sustainability regulations, and how Islamic environmental values influence environmental behavior in maritime societies.

The discussion confirms that the blue economy requires more than legal regulation and economic planning. It also requires ethical legitimacy, social participation, and culturally grounded environmental responsibility. By integrating UNCLOS, SDG 14, and Fiqh al-Bī'ah, this study offers a conceptual pathway for developing a more holistic, equitable, and sustainable model of ocean governance, particularly for Indonesia and other maritime Muslim-majority states.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the blue economy can be normatively supported by international maritime law, particularly through UNCLOS principles related to marine environmental protection, sustainable resource use, equitable benefit-sharing, and international cooperation. Although UNCLOS does not explicitly formulate the concept of the blue economy, its legal provisions provide an important foundation for advancing sustainable ocean governance in line with SDG 14. However, contemporary challenges such as biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, deep-sea mining, unequal benefit-sharing, and weak implementation mechanisms show that the existing legal framework still requires ethical and normative reinforcement.

The integration of Fiqh al-Bī'ah offers a complementary ethical framework for strengthening sustainable maritime governance. Principles such as khilāfah, mīzān, amānah, and lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār emphasize stewardship, ecological balance, moral responsibility, and the prohibition of environmental harm. These principles can enrich the blue economy framework by ensuring that marine resource utilization is not only legally regulated but also ethically grounded. The main contribution of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which connects international maritime law, Islamic environmental jurisprudence, and sustainable development discourse.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that maritime and Muslim-majority states such as Indonesia can strengthen blue economy policies by harmonizing national maritime regulations with international legal obligations while incorporating culturally and religiously meaningful environmental values. Such integration may enhance public compliance, support coastal community participation, and promote long-term sustainability in ocean governance.

This study is limited by its normative juridical approach, which focuses on legal instruments, doctrinal interpretation, and conceptual synthesis without empirical assessment of policy implementation. Future research should examine how blue economy policies are implemented in practice, how coastal communities respond to sustainability regulations, and how Islamic environmental values influence environmental behavior in maritime societies. Further empirical and interdisciplinary studies are also needed to assess the effectiveness of the BBNJ Agreement and other emerging legal instruments in supporting sustainable ocean governance.

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