

# From Stewardship to Sustainability: A Comparative Analysis of Islamic Ecological Jurisprudence and Western Anthropocentric Regimes

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**Abstract:** The escalating global environmental crisis, exemplified by climate-induced displacement and systemic economic loss, necessitates an urgent critical re-evaluation of the ethical foundations of contemporary environmental policy. This study investigates the comparative efficiency of Islamic ecological jurisprudence and Western anthropocentric regimes, evaluating whether a synthesis of these paradigms can enhance global sustainability. To address methodological concerns, the research utilizes a mixed-methods design. The qualitative component employs a thematic content analysis of 675 Qur'anic verses, identified across 84 chapters, which were coded into practical mandates for water conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable resource management. These findings are framed by the theoretical principles of *Tawheed* (divine unity) and *Khalifah* (stewardship). The quantitative phase employs descriptive statistics to analyze the growth of Islamic green finance as a practical enforcement mechanism for environmental stewardship. Our analysis demonstrates a significant capital trajectory, with Islamic finance assets rising from \$1.2 trillion in 2010 to \$3.8 trillion in 2023. Through regional case studies, we examine specific mechanisms such as the implementation of environmental fatwas in Indonesia and Malaysia's leadership in the Green Sukuk market, contrasting these with the decline of traditional *hima* protected zones in Saudi Arabia, from over 3,000 in the 1960s to fewer than 12 today. The study reveals that while Islamic principles offer a strong ecocentric alternative to the instrumentalist limitations of Western anthropocentrism, their practical application is often impeded by political and economic prioritization. This article contributes a novel hybrid framework that integrates the moral stewardship of Islamic jurisprudence with the market-driven regulatory mechanisms of Western legal systems to create a legally enforceable sustainability model.

**Keywords:** Islamic Ecological Jurisprudence; Western Anthropocentrism; Sustainability; Environmental Ethics; Green Finance

## Introduction

The existing environmental issues, such as climate change, biodiversity degradation, and natural resource depletion, require timely moral reasoning and collective legal intervention (Aminzadeh, 2006; Ndubuisi & FNisafetyE, 2025). With ecosystems collapsing and human populations in crisis, society must have a single guiding principle in its relationship with nature (Martin et al., 2016). The moral issue at hand is no longer whether we should preserve nature but how we can develop ethical, legal, and philosophical frameworks that would make ecological responsibility a routine (Halkis & Waldani, 2024). The urgency of this task is more apparent due to a distinct contrast between the Western tradition of

environmental thought, which has always been anthropocentric, and the Islamic ecological jurisprudence, which proposes an alternative way of thinking about human and nature (Hamidullah, 2024a; Rizvi, 2010). Both traditions have ethical issues of the ecological crisis, but they are founded on different premises and lead to different answers to the question of how to treat the environment. Although the literature recognizes the potential of Khalifah, there is a critical paradox: why do strong ecocentric doctrines tend to be ineffective in enforcing the law in the Global South? The literature on Islamic environmentalism is quite rich—there remains a longstanding theoretical gap between the metaphysical expansiveness of Islamic ethics and the pragmatic inflexibility of international environmental law. The massive issues of the environmental crisis force us to look for solutions beyond traditional law, but to do this well, we need a clear focus. In this difficult situation, and because current climate policies have clear limits, this study moves beyond a mere descriptive comparison. It asks: To what extent can the ontological framework of Tawheed provide the normative foundation for a legally enforceable *duty of care* that Western anthropocentric law currently lacks? Furthermore, how can the integration of Islamic stewardship (Khalifah) and Western regulatory frameworks mitigate the 'enforcement gap' in global environmental policy? To answer these questions, we must transcend the narrative and critically and comparatively analyze it.

Western environmental philosophy is mostly anthropocentric (Hay, 2002). It makes humans a focal point and views nature primarily as a resource bank (Mazzaro, 2021; Morrison, 2017). This perception resulted from a combination of philosophical, theological, and economic concepts. It presupposes that nature is meant to be used by humans. While the prevailing Western approach to environmental law often appears dominated by anthropocentrism—where nature's value is seen primarily through its utility to human well-being—it is very important to acknowledge that this tradition is far from monolithic. Over the last century, influential, divergent strains of thought have actively challenged this instrumentalist orthodoxy. Our analysis will therefore provide a deeper look at variations like deep ecology, which advocates for the inherent worth of all living things, eco-feminism, which links environmental exploitation to patriarchal structures, and post-humanist theories, all of which offer a broader, non-human-centric basis for ecological valuation. The Western tradition has developed ecocentric and biocentric theories that value non-human entities, human interests still dominate most environmental policies and actions (Saha, 2025). As a result, when contemporary environmental catastrophes take place, individuals tend to perceive them in a humanistic or anthropocentric perspective. They admire the utility, beauty, or life-giving capacity of nature. Due to this perception, human beings overconsume and exploit resources in unsustainable ways, which damages ecosystems and increases global inequality. Islamic ecological jurisprudence offers a distinct approach to considering human-nature relations. It teaches that humanity is a steward, and the natural world must be preserved according to the Quran and Islamic traditions (Arauf, 2021; Muhamad et al., 2020). According to this perception, every living thing possesses an intrinsic value, and the primary responsibility of people is to preserve all kinds of life. This contrasts with Western thought in philosophy as well as in action. It perceives the environment as an entity in which human interests are related to the welfare of the whole ecological system. Despite the fact that the environmental problems of both Western and Islamic traditions are similar, their various beliefs result in disparate approaches to the maintenance of the planet (Hamidullah, 2024b). The awareness of those differences can help Western thinking to be more ecocentric and biocentric, and Islamic jurisprudence can provide a holistic way of viewing humans as stewards of nature.

Islamic environmental ethics are found in the Quran and the Hadith. These revolve around three ideas: tawhid (oneness of God), khalifah (stewardship), and the significance of nature (Wani and Azhar, n.d.). These ideas state that all things are interrelated, and individuals and nature must be in a state of balance and harmony (Gada, 2014). When analyzing Islamic ecological thought, we should distinguish between the ideal ethical principles of Islamic theology—based on foundations such as *Tawheed* (divine unity) and *Khalifah* (stewardship)—and the practical, changing reality of legal practice, known as *fiqh al-bi'ah* (environmental jurisprudence). To avoid presenting an overly idealized picture, we recognize that treating this legal framework as a single, uniform whole overlooks the major historical and regional differences in how various schools of *fiqh* (legal thought) have interpreted and applied these environmental

rules. We addressed this point to ensure that our discussion is grounded in legal reality (Ojo, 2020). These ethical norms are not necessarily equally applied and depend on economic and political problems. Contrary to the prevailing view that religious ethics are purely aspirational, this study argues they function as necessary precursors to regulatory compliance, provided they are structured within a formal legal framework. Modern political societies of Islamic states claim to express Islamic values, but it often ignores the religion's teachings about the environment. Instead, it mainly focuses on economic growth and gaining political power. The clash of Islamic environmental regulations and Western anthropocentric perspectives raises some serious questions concerning the ways of balancing human needs and the need to preserve nature. In contrast to the Islamic doctrine, which offers an ecocentric perspective on environmental stewardship, Western environmentalism has had to grapple with the issue of transcending its deeply entrenched anthropocentric origins (Thohir & Gunaryo, 2023). Although ecocentric and biocentric ethics have evolved in the West, they do not tend to question the fundamental concept that humans are superior to nature. The aim of the discussion below is to examine these two conflicting ideas, challenge their philosophical and ethical foundations, and explore how each can contribute to the development of a more sustainable and fair global environmental system.

The link between Islamic ecological ethics and Islamic finance is not just theoretical; it also functions as a practical and regulatory bridge. Stewardship principles from these ethics are now being applied through modern financial tools. We studied how Islamic finance, using tools like green sukuk and ethical investment screening, helps enforce environmental principles (*fiqh al-bi'ah*) in the global economy. This article addresses a major gap in research regarding the similarities between Islamic and Western environmental ethics. Even though much has been said on the weaknesses of anthropocentrism in the Western tradition, and an analogous upsurge of interest in the Islamic version has occurred, relatively few attempts have been made to bring the two approaches to the same table (Rizvi, 2010; Ten Have & Patrão Neves, 2021). Problematic of the current dependency on secular-instrumentalist paradigms, this article argues that the environmental crisis is not only a policy failure, but also a failure of the underlying ethical ontology. This study also provides a new, hybrid legal system that attempts to balance ethical requirements and law enforcement tools. By carefully analyzing the moral and legal aspects in which each of the frameworks considers the protection of the environment, we can promote a more comprehensive model of ecological stewardship that is not limited by the boundaries of anthropocentrism and represents a more comprehensive, ecocentric perspective.

## Literature Review

The existing literature on environmental governance that is of interest to this research is based on three different yet interrelated thematic streams: the ethical and legal constraints inherent in Western anthropocentric approaches, the theoretical foundations of Islamic ecological ethics, and the use of financial mechanisms to convert ethics into action. Although each of these areas has been studied individually, there remains an important gap: we lack an analysis that integrates them to propose a practical hybrid model. Current scholarship often suffers from a "silo effect," where ethical inquiries remain disconnected from legal enforcement, and Western secularism is treated as irreconcilable with religious ontology. Thus, this review is not only organized to summarize these works, but to approach them critically and thematically, identifying the specific conceptual and enforcement flaws in current paradigms that require the comparative approach of our study.

One of the most important problems of the start of the 21st century is the human destruction of the environment (Drotianko et al., 2023). Such problems as climate change and biodiversity loss prove that we are in urgent need of efficient and fair regulations that would govern the interaction between human society and nature (Seddon et al., 2020). Two key concepts can be identified: the Islamic ecological law and the human-centered perspective that is dominant in the West. We studied the two concepts in this review and presented what each can contribute to the table, and what each is lacking.

The first major theme in the literature concerns the transition from metaphysical concepts to behavioral mandates. The work of Dina M. Abdelzaher, Amr Koth, and Akrum Helfaya in their 2019 paper

"*Eco-Islam: Beyond the Principles of Why and Into the Principles of How*," published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, is a seminal contribution to the field of Islamic environmental ethics (AbdelZaher et al., 2016). The article explains key concepts of Islamic environmentalism, specifically the ideas of *tawheed* (the unity of God) and *khalifah* (human vice-regency), and aims to make these concepts understandable and applicable for action. In this regard, the authors apply a strict qualitative content analysis to approximately 675 Quranic verses, thereby formulating a framework in which these principles can be expressed in specific behavioral principles, such as not exploiting (*wasataya*), finding balance (*qadr*), and being accountable (*muhasaba*). This article provides an important outline of the way to think about Islam and the environment. Nevertheless, it has many shortcomings. Firstly, the authors fail to prove their concepts. They rely on quotations of the Quran on everything but neglect the Hadith and the Sunnah, which are the other two primary sources of Islamic law. That being said, the framework is based on a single text. Secondly, it does not examine actual cases or figures. There are no reports on how businesses, local communities, or other groups have effectively used these ideas in real life. Thirdly, this article does not compare this model to other similar concepts in different religions, e.g., Christian or Buddhist teachings. The alignment of Islam with other religions would have revealed the areas where the two traditions could complement each other (Rusmiati et al., 2023). These gaps must be addressed in any future work on the topic. Scholars would be able to collect data in different locations and compare them to one another. They may also carry out surveys or experiments that demonstrate that the framework actually works in real life (Haider, 2025).

Building upon these foundational principles, a second thematic debate centers on the legal versus rhetorical utility of Shari'a. David L. Johnston's 2012 paper, "*Intra-Muslim Debates on Ecology: Is Shari'a Still Relevant?*" published in *Worldviews*, explores the role of Shari'a in contemporary Islamic environmentalism (*Intra-Muslim Debates on Ecology: Is Shari'a Still Relevant? In: Worldviews Volume 16 Issue 3 (2012)*, 2012). Johnston discusses how key figures such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mawil Izzi Dien, Fazlun Khalid, and Othman Llewellyn have interpreted Shari'a as an ethical and rhetorical tool for addressing environmental issues (Muhammad Yaseen Gada, 2024). Johnston argues that Shari'a, traditionally interpreted as a system of law, is being used as an ethical standard by Muslim environmental activists, and that this ethical standard is privileging concepts like *maslaha* (public good) and *tawheed* (the unity of God). Even though the author outlines the pluralism of Shari'a interpretations, the main weakness of the article is that it lacks empirical evidence: no case studies and statistical research are proposed to prove the real effectiveness of Shari'a-based environmental activities. Moreover, the article is quite focused on the statements of elite scholars and thus fails to acknowledge grassroots actions and localized interpretations that may be more practically applicable. The analysis does not address the political and economic challenges that impede Sharia-based environmental reform in Muslim-majority countries, especially during times of secular governance and development needs (Sundus Serhan Ahmed, 2025). A more serious consideration of these barriers, along with empirical assessments of *hima* (protected areas) and other Shari'a-based conservation actions, would provide a more thorough evaluation of the potential of Shari'a in environmental law (Halkis & Waldani, 2024).

The third thematic stream examines the tension between ethical aspirations and the geopolitical realities of development—a conflict that often renders environmental mandates secondary to economic survival. A. Kadir Yildirim's 2016 paper, "*Between Anti-Westernism and Development: Political Islam and Environmentalism*," published in *Middle Eastern Studies*, examines the gap between Islamic environmental ethics and the priorities of Islamist political movements (Yildirim, 2016). In his discussion, Yildirim argues that Islamist parties in Muslim-majority countries often push environmental concerns aside due to ideological imperatives and position ecological activism as an exclusively Western initiative aimed at undermining these countries. He also says that economic growth and industrialization take precedence over ecological stewardship in most countries that are still in the development stage. Even though the discussion by Yildirim sheds light on the political forces that drive environmental policy in the region, many methodological limitations can be raised. Firstly, the research is largely qualitative and relies extensively on both anecdotal evidence and exemplary cases like the *Gezi Park* protests and the tree-planting initiative by *Hizbullah* (Kurtic, 2022). It, however, does not provide quantitative measures, such as pollution indices, which could more scientifically measure the environmental effect of Islamist rule (Can &

Ahmed, 2023). The article fails to differentiate between moderate Islamist groups, like the *Turkish AKP*, and more extreme ones, such as *Hizbullah* (Özen, 2022). Lastly, it fails to acknowledge grassroots initiatives in environmentalism by Islamic movements, community-based conservation efforts in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, which could complicate the relationship between political Islam and environmentalism (Dewayanti & Saat, 2020). With the philosophical duality and ethical inadequacy of instrumentalism having been established in the Western legal tradition, despite efforts to remedy it by such movements as deep ecology, the quest to find a more ecocentrically oriented moral ground brings us to our next body of literature. The literature on Islamic ecological ethics provides an essential alternative in that environmental responsibilities are based on a spiritual imperative, shifting the discourse out of secular control. This shift enables us to evaluate an entirely new ethical paradigm that seeks to avert the very instrumentalist thinking that tends to weaken Western environmental law.

One of the lessons of the above ethical analysis is that theoretical frameworks, be they Western or Islamic, are useless without strong enforcement mechanisms. Thus, the final part of this review fills the gap between ethics and law by discussing how these ideas are applied in practice. We particularly look at the way the scholarship on Islamic finance tries to operationalize the moral obligations of stewardship using market-based instruments such as ethical investment and *green sukuk*. This synthesis is important because it assists us in deciding whether such economic tools can effectively transform the powerful moral imperatives mentioned above into binding measures.

This leads to a critical sub-debate regarding the institutionalization of religious ethics through traditional legal instruments, such as the *Waqf*. In her work, Samira Idllalène critiques the revival of Islamic environmental law, particularly the *Waqf* system and its potential for addressing environmental challenges (Idllalène, 2021). Idllalène examines how Islamic legal doctrines, particularly *khalifah* (the concept of stewardship) and *maslaha* (public good) can be used to justify modern environmental law. The author develops the new concept of *Atmospheric Waqf* as a possible tool of environmental protection, but the article stirred significant criticism because of the excessive reliance on abstract comparative arguments and the absence of any specific evidence of the feasibility of *Atmospheric Waqf* or modern attempts to restore *Hima* (protected areas) in Muslim-majority communities. Another limitation is that Idllalène refers to secondary, English-language literature instead of primary Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in her exegesis of classical texts. This approach does not cover all the possibilities for how these principles can be practically applied in today's legal systems. Even though the discussion presents several policies, it does not provide a specific legal framework in favor of creating an *Atmospheric Waqf* or extending *green sukuk*. To add to the existing literature, future questions could focus on specific case studies and empirical research about how effective Islamic environmental law is in Muslim-majority countries (Alibašić, 2024). Also, it could explore the political and economic challenges that impede its broader application. These initiatives may assist in contextualizing *Atmospheric Waqf* and thematic conservation projects within broader discussions of sustainable development and explaining the more precise institutional processes that are required to institutionalize them.

Lastly, the literature reveals a fundamental dialectic: Western law possesses the institutional strength but lacks an ecocentric ethical core, while Islamic jurisprudence possesses the ethical core but lacks modern institutional teeth. A query into Islamic environmental ethics presents an integrated, ecocentric approach that is wholly different from the anthropocentric focus of Western environmental thinking (Hamidullah, 2024a). Western and Islamic cultures of thinking about the environment encounter the same issues repeatedly. Anthropocentrism, the view that only humans are important, still underlies Western laws and economic thinking (Pelizzon & Ricketts, 2015). The Islamic environmental regulations are replete with religious and ethical instructions and have not yet taken a significant place in contemporary courts or legislation. Political, economic, and secular obstacles to environmental guidelines founded on Sharia are also present in Muslim-majority countries. To fill these gaps, it is necessary to have long discussions about theory and empirical studies, including case reports in real life, to prove that Islamic ecological ideas can be effective (Alibasic, 2024). Although these two bodies of literature—one highlighting the institutional limitations of ecocentric faith-based ethics and the other exposing the ethical weaknesses of secular anthropocentric law—are effective at criticizing their own systems, they rarely move beyond simple

opposition to explore how they might work together. The precise research gap, therefore, is not a lack of ethical description but a lack of a comparative, theory-testing framework that evaluates how these systems can be harmonized to overcome their respective failures. Existing studies have productively focused on the separate ethical principles using philosophical analysis; however, they have failed to address how these principles translate into enforceable legal mechanisms in comparative contexts. This article intervenes by utilizing a mixed-methods approach to bridge this divide and examine the possibility of a hybrid ethical-legal model directly. It searches for the possibility of a hybrid ethical-legal model to be effective in practice. Specifically, it raises the question of whether the moral principles of Islamic stewardship can be used to inform and assist the Western legal rules, such that the outcome is a system that is both morally strong and legally enforceable.

## Method

The research is based on a convergent parallel mixed-method design. We gather both qualitative and quantitative data and examine them independently and simultaneously to address our research question from different perspectives. This design is what we refer to as triangulation. Combining the moral wisdom of Islamic law with actual financial and environmental statistics, we obtain a more precise and comprehensive picture of the enforcement gap than a one-method study would offer.

### Qualitative Content Analysis

In this first phase of our investigation, we analyzed texts and articles about Islamic environmental ethics, Western human-centered views, and different religious approaches to environmental issues. The unit of analysis for the primary sources is the thematic "verse" or "legal principle. The primary sources include: First, Islamic texts. Verses were identified through a keyword-in-context (KWIC) search of the digital Qur'anic corpus using terms related to 'earth' (*ard*), 'balance' (*mizan*), and 'water' (*ma*). Coding was conducted using a deductive codebook based on the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* framework.)

Step	Focus Area	Details of Analysis
1	Scope of Text	Identification of Qur'anic verses specifically related to environmental responsibility.
2	Quantitative Data	Analysis of a total of 675 verses spanning across 84 chapters for their thematic significance.
3	Core Principles	Contextual analysis through Islamic environmental principles: <i>tawheed</i> (oneness), <i>khalifah</i> (stewardship), and <i>maslaha</i> (public interest).
4	Thematic Coding	Classification into practical categories: water conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable resource management.

Second, scholarly papers.

Focus Area	Key Elements and Objectives
1. Islamic Environmental Ethics	Review of key contributions from prominent scholars, including: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mawil Izzi Dien, Fazlun Khalid, Othman Llewellyn Objective: To extract their specific interpretations of Islamic environmental ethics.
2. Western Environmental Thought	Analysis of papers focusing on anthropocentric frameworks and their critiques. Objective: To examine these frameworks in relation to environmental degradation and sustainability.

In the context of Islamic environmental jurisprudence, thematic analysis serves as an interpretive tool that emphasizes two essential notions: *tauheed* (unity of God) and *khalifah* (stewardship)(Wani, 2024). It is on these principles that we can project the Islamic perspectives on the current environmental issues that humanity is facing.

### Quantitative Statistical Analysis

We must put theories into practice, and to do so, we had to use numbers and statistics to determine how effective Islamic ecological jurisprudence can be in practice. The quantitative strand serves to measure the empirical "footprint" of the ethical theories identified in the qualitative phase. The data sources for the statistical analysis include: First, Islamic finance data. The growth and impact of Islamic finance, particularly in the context of green finance (e.g., *green sukuk*), are analyzed (Liu & Lai, 2021). Data is taken from different financial reports and industry analyses, such as the projected growth of Islamic finance from \$1.2 trillion in 2012 to \$2.6 trillion by 2017, with a focus on its implications for environmental sustainability(Ahmed, 2017). Second, environmental performance indicators. international organizations like the World Bank, ISESCO, and the United Nations have gathered enough environmental performance data to thoroughly analyze Muslim-majority countries (Ismail et al., 2024). Specific attention is paid to environmental policies aligned with Shari'a, such as *hima* zones, and the success or decline of these projects (e.g., Saudi Arabia's reduction of its protected zones from 3,000 to fewer than 12) (Serhal et al., 2011). Third, case studies of Islamic environmental initiatives: To further explain the relationship between Islamic environmental jurisprudence and empirical environmental performance, we systematically examine policy interventions in a few Muslim-majority countries. Our corpus was *fatwas* issued in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia that are related to deforestation, water conservation, and resource management (Mangunjaya & Prahrawati, 2019a). Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia were our main case studies since they are a purposeful sampling of the three most important ecological and regulatory archetypes in the Muslim world. Criteria for Selection: Maximum Variation Sampling was used to ensure the framework was tested against diverse economic and ecological biomes. Integration Procedures: The point of interface occurs during the "Interpretation Phase" using a Joint Display. We utilize a "side-by-side comparison" technique, where qualitative themes (e.g., the mandate of *Khalifah*) are mapped directly against quantitative outcomes (e.g., the issuance of *Green Sukuk*). This integration serves the purpose of "Complementarity," illustrating where ethical mandates successfully drive financial policy and where "decoupling" occurs due to political barriers.

### Case Studies and Regional Focus

In the next phase of our research, the study incorporated in-depth case studies from different Muslim-majority countries. These case studies examined how different regions have implemented or neglected Islamic environmental principles, focusing on:

Country	Key Contribution	Focus Area
Indonesia	The role of <i>fatwas</i> in environmental protection	Peatland conservation
Saudi Arabia	The history and current state of <i>hima zones</i> and their impact on biodiversity	Biodiversity conservation, protected areas
Malaysia	The use of <i>green sukuk</i> for funding renewable energy and land conservation projects	Sustainable energy, land conservation

As the discussion continues, the study looked at how region, culture, and economic factors come in when deciding on the diffusion of Islamic environmental principles. Of special interest were the conflicts that Muslim-majority states faced as they sought to balance economic growth and environmental sustainability, a conflict compounded by the competing logics of political Islam and secular governance.

### Limitations and Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, we have used a carefully planned mixed-methods approach. However, several limitations can be identified based on the given data set and the extent of the case studies. The

primary limitation is the lack of longitudinal environmental data specific to Shari'ah-compliant projects in certain jurisdictions. Unfortunately, not all Muslim-majority states have information publicly available on how they operationalise Islamic environmental ethics; therefore, the data sample was limited. In addition to that, since the work relies heavily on secondary, quantitative sources, there is an intrinsic possibility of bias or inaccuracy in the interpretations. These limitations are overcome by focusing on countries with developed environmental policies and on localised projects that serve as examples of Islamic environmental projects. Ethically, the study is dedicated to an objective and respectful interpretation of religious texts and practices, and it does not aim to make reductive or misleading generalizations about Islamic environmental ethics. Lastly, as a matter of ethical conduct in data analysis, the study is open in the presentation of statistical evidence and visual display.

## Results

This section presents the findings produced by both qualitative and quantitative approaches. By situating these findings within specific theoretical frameworks and presenting empirical data collected during the research, the study assessed the degree to which Islamic ecological jurisprudence aligns with Western environmental paradigms. Rather than treating the data in isolation, this section utilizes a "Joint Display" approach to integrate theological mandates with empirical capital trajectories, revealing the friction between ethical ideals and market realities. The following sub-sections analyze the possibility of uniting these frameworks and the implications for contemporary environmental governance.

### Thematic Coding of Islamic Texts

We performed a qualitative content analysis and re-evaluation of 675 verses of the Quran on the topic of environmental accountability and found that a significant portion of the doctrine is devoted to the conservation of water, biodiversity, and mitigation of waste, a methodology used by Helfaya et al. (2018) in their study. The results show that the Islamic environmental ethics are based on the two pillars of *Tawheed* (oneness of God) and *khalifah* (stewardship) (Ozdemir, 2024); (Silviana et al., 2025) Fundamental Tenets of Stewardship and Balance

The most notable was the ecocentricity of Islamic ethics. *Tawheed* educates that the entire creation is a chain, and *khalifah* is presented as a task of responsible management, not control. The information revealed that the concepts of measure (*mizan*) and moderation (*i-itidal*) are examples of a way to sustainability and ecological justice (Muhamad et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the findings showed that the transfer of these teachings to actual governance is still a challenging issue because environmental protection is usually secondary to economically oriented development (Rees, 2003).

### Evidence from Quranic Data Points

The qualitative coding revealed certain verses that can be used as practical mandates in managing the environment. For example, water Conservation: Surah Al-Baqarah (2:164) was examined in terms of its focus on the sacredness of water and its necessity in life. The verse emphasizes that water is distributed as per the will of God and, therefore, human management is a religious duty that can be used alongside modern conservation practices. Waste Reduction: Surah Al-A'raf (7:31) was coded because it is concerned with moderation in consumption. Since the contemporary economy generates too much waste because of consumer demand (Romero-Hernandez & Romero, 2018), this principle offers a theological rationale to reduce climate change and biodiversity loss through behavioral change (Rajput and Sarkar, n.d.). Biodiversity and Interdependence: Surah Al-An'am (6:38) was found to be an ecocentric perspective, which refers to animals and birds as communities like you, and which emphasizes the intrinsic value that is absent in anthropocentric models. In the same way, Surah Al-Nahl (16:5-8) confirms that nature supports human life and has its own value, which implies that the perception of animals and plants as a community improves the chances of responsible stewardship (Tully, 2019). Resource Management: Surah Al-Mulk (67:15) was found to be a guide to sustainable land and energy consumption, and the management of natural resources was defined as a moral duty (Neyrat, 2018). Moreover, Surah Al-Anfal (8:11) was examined in terms of its emphasis on ecosystem purification, reinforcing the ecological importance of water in ensuring balanced life-support systems.

## Environmental and Financial Indicators

The study employed descriptive statistics to quantify the effect of the Western and Islamic environmental frameworks.

### International Environmental Performance

The data painted a challenging picture for current anthropocentric models. In 2020, the global carbon dioxide emissions were at an all-time high of 59.1 gigatons, even with the emergence of green technologies (Shideler and Hetzel, 2021). However, the quantitative analysis of Islamic finance assets indicated a distinct capital shift: total assets increased from \$1.2 trillion in 2010 to \$3.8 trillion in 2023. This implies that anthropocentric values remain prevalent, and economic development is so vigorous that it tends to disregard the protection of the environment (Goodstein and Polasky, 2017).

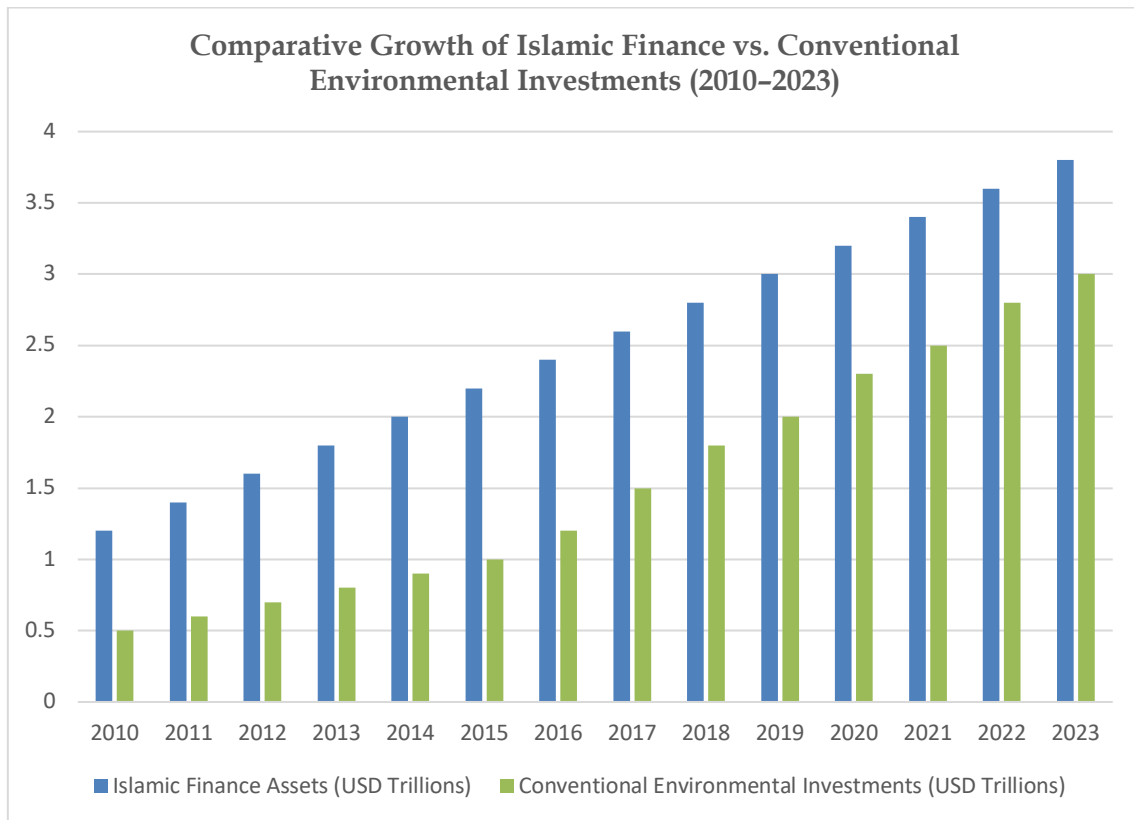
### The Development of Islamic Green Finance

Likewise, the quantitative analysis of Islamic finance assets indicated an increasing trend in sustainability-linked capital. The total assets increased to 3.8 trillion in 2023 compared to 1.2 trillion in 2010. There was also an increase in conventional environmental investments, which increased by 0.5 trillion to 3.0 trillion during this period. The researchers concluded that the Islamic finance market is expected to reach USD 6.7 trillion by 2027, which will enable the diversion of finances to renewable energy and land protection (Hadda & Rym, 2024). Such tools as Green Sukuk were found to be useful tools that convert Islamic ethics into capital that can be used by environmentally friendly businesses (Supriyadi et al., 2023). Regional Implementation Metrics: First, Saudi Arabia: The discussion showed a historical degradation of traditional stewardship systems. Hima (protected areas) have declined to fewer than 12 today, compared to more than 3,000 in the 1960s, suggesting that these traditional models have been increasingly replaced by modern forms of development and governance (Serhal et al., 2011). Second, Malaysia and Indonesia: These areas showed how Islamic finance is increasingly becoming powerful in promoting ecological responsibility. Through Green Sukuk, these jurisdictions have begun to fill the gap between religious ethics and economic policy (Supriyadi et al., 2023).

## Discussion: Filling the Ethical-Legal Gap

The findings confirmed that Western environmentalism, while effective at raising awareness through treaties like the Paris Agreement (Falkner, 2016), is still held back by its history of focusing mainly on human interests (Burchett, 2016). This paradigm considers nature as a source of human good and, therefore, is biased towards short-term economic profit at the expense of long-term ecological integrity. Islamic thinking, in its turn, is among the most intellectually challenging traditions, which focuses on unity and interdependence (Faisal & Hashmi, 2025). The results indicate that it is not only possible but also necessary to create a correlation between these two traditions. A hybrid model is a blend of the planet-oriented well-being of Islamic jurisprudence and the market-oriented approaches of the contemporary global economy. Although challenges remain—such as Western secular policies and the rise of political Islam focused on development—the findings show that Islamic finance principles are increasingly linked to ecological responsibility. The fact that the development of Islamic finance and traditional green investments is growing in parallel, as shown in Figure 1 below, suggests that the two paradigms can effectively intersect to address the ecological issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century on a large scale.

Figure 1. Comparative Growth of Islamic Finance vs. Conventional Environmental Investments (2010-2023)

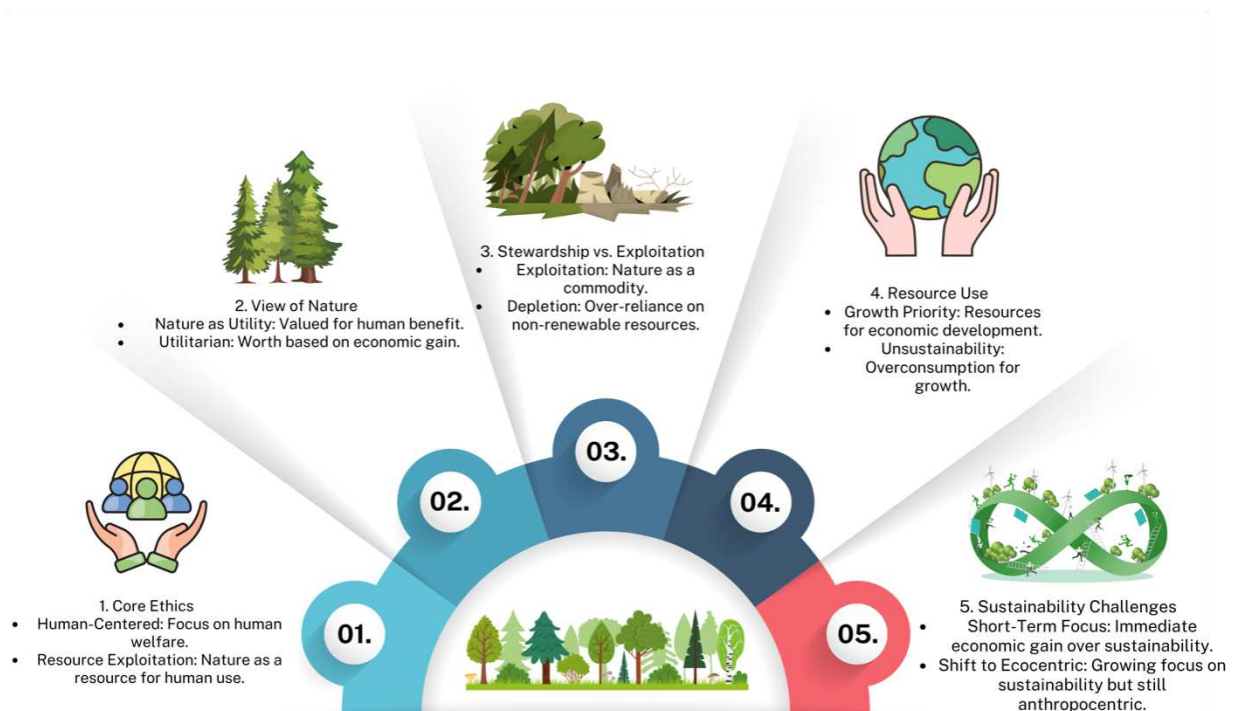


Sources: Islamic Finance: Islamic Financial Services Board | Conventional Environmental Investments: BloombergNEF

Figure 2. Key Islamic Environmental Principles and Their Applications



Figure 3. Western Anthropocentrism in Environmental Ethics



## WESTERN ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

## Case Studies: Malaysia, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia

### Malaysia: Green Sukuk and Environmental Sustainability

Malaysia's example shows how Islamic environmental ethics can be reconciled with government intervention. Islamic finance plays a central role in the country's environmental strategy. The *green sukuk* is its primary instrument. The bonds are used to fund clean energy and land protection. They show that environmental sustainability can be supported by Islamic finance (Liu & Lai, 2021). In 2020, the initial *green sukuk* was used to fund solar energy plants and waste management facilities and attracted both domestic and foreign capital. The program has been effective; however, rules are slow, and the program requires more backing of institutions in case it intends to fund large projects. In due course, the effectiveness of Islamic finance in environmental activities will depend on aligning the long-term objectives of nature as opposed to the short-term economic expansion (Rahman et al., 2022).

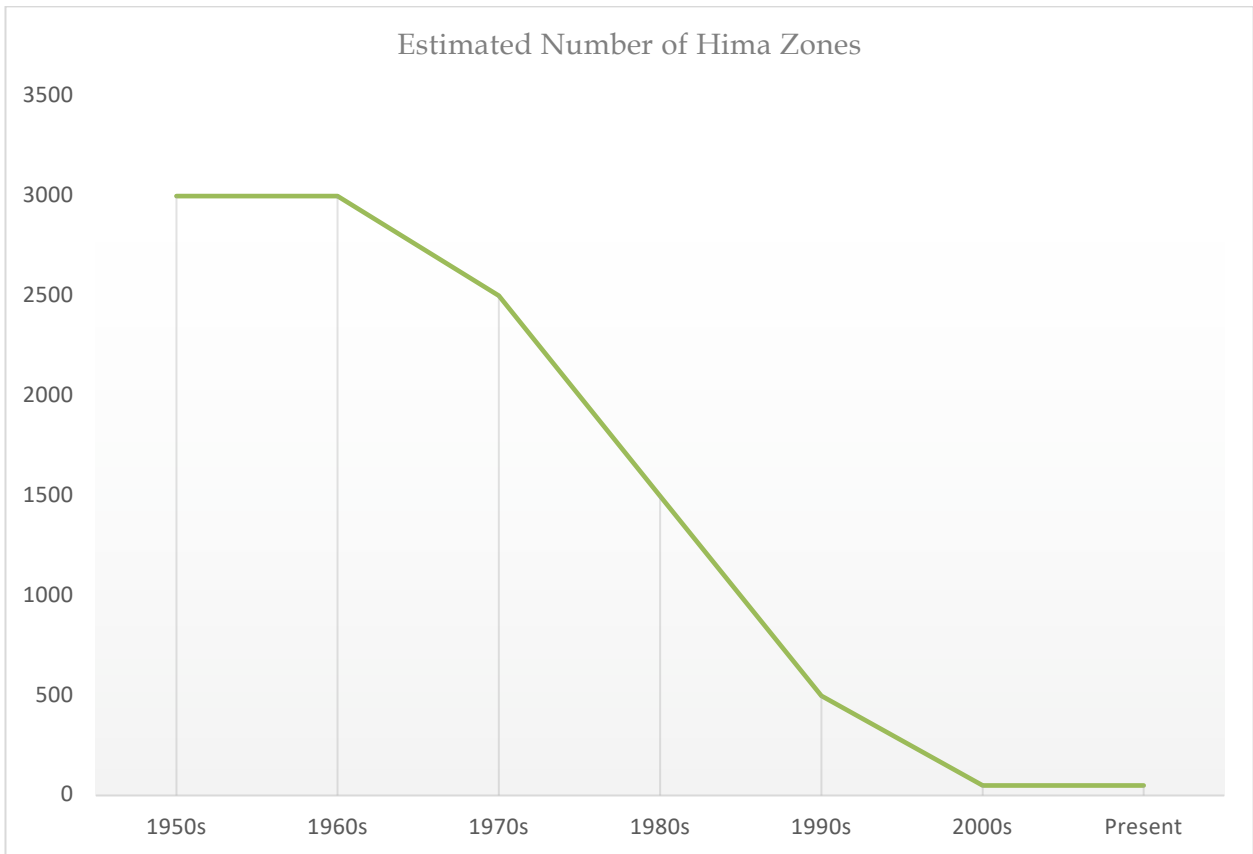
### Indonesia: The Role of Fatwas in Environmental Protection

Indonesia demonstrates that *fatwas* (Islamic legal opinions) can be used to conserve the environment (Iskandar & Sofuoğlu, 2025). Indonesian religious leaders issue *fatwas* for deforestation, water conservation, and sustainable resource management. For example, the Indonesian Ulama Council has issued a *fatwa* concerning the sustainable use of peatland (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019b). This *fatwa* discusses the issue of deforestation and soil erosion due to the spread of agriculture. It directs policymakers and the general population towards sustainable land-use policies founded on Islamic principles. The *fatwa* also goes to local communities, particularly to rural areas where religious leaders are influential, and they are encouraged to participate in environmental protection (Alimuddin et al., 2025; Wisesha, 2025; Mangunjaya, 2023; Dewayanti & Saat, 2020). The integration of Islamic environmental ethics using these *fatwas* can therefore provide a unique approach to addressing the environmental challenges at the grassroots levels. However, multiple factors limit the ability of *fatwas* to bring about substantive change. Even though *fatwas* support the sustainable practice, political and economic factors usually take precedence over these moral requirements, particularly in areas where deforestation and the conversion of lands are still economically profitable. The major challenge is to fill the gap between religious ethics and environmental policies enforceable in law and able to address the causes of degradation (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2024).

### Saudi Arabia: Decline of *Hima* Zones and Conservation Efforts

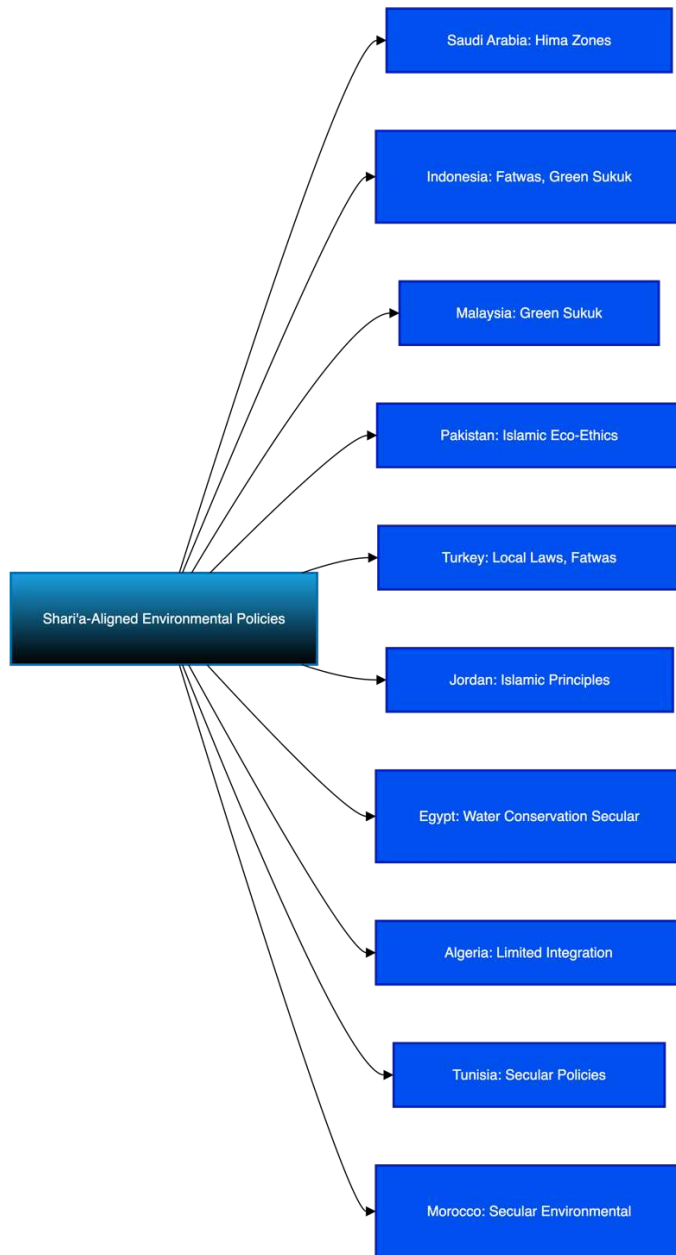
The close consideration of Saudi Arabian experiences with *Hima* zones provides a key example by which we can question the challenges involved in applying the Islamic environmental principles to modern practice (Kilani et al., 2007). Traditionally, land-based ecosystems and wildlife were protected by *Hima* zones in the Arabian Peninsula. In Saudi Arabia, these zones numbered above 3,000 in the 1960s. There are now only about 12 (See Figure 4). This significant loss of *Hima* zones suggests that traditional ecological governance has been challenged by rapid urbanization and industrialization (Alshami et al., 2025). The deterioration also reflects the broader tension that can arise between the principle of *khalifah* (stewardship) and economic growth. While ethical frameworks related to environmental care remain important, development priorities have sometimes limited the effectiveness of existing protections for these reserves. This situation shows the wider challenge many countries face in balancing environmental considerations with the economic demands of modernization. A recent change in environmental issues has been observed in the form of the Saudi Green Initiative.

Figure 4. Decline in the *Hima* zones



Source: Medomed.org - Traditional Himas in Saudi Arabia

The mind map below shows the number of Muslim-majority countries with Shari'a-aligned environmental policies:



**Note:**

Unfortunately, detailed country-by-country data is not easily found in a centralized source, but we have compiled key information from available resources and initiatives.

**Policy Implications and Future Research Directions**

This article addresses two concepts. First, environmental regulation ought to be more interrelated. Islamic environmental law must be united with Western environmental philosophy (Hamidullah, 2024a). By remembering sustainability, justice, and interdependence as policymakers, values that have been ignored, they will be able to create clearer and more powerful rules to address global environmental challenges. The application of *green sukuk* in Islamic finance is a good example. These financial instruments can finance large-scale renewable energy projects, as well as connect economic growth with environmental responsibility (Alam et al., 2016); (Moghul & Safar-Aly, 2014); (Ramadhan, 2020).

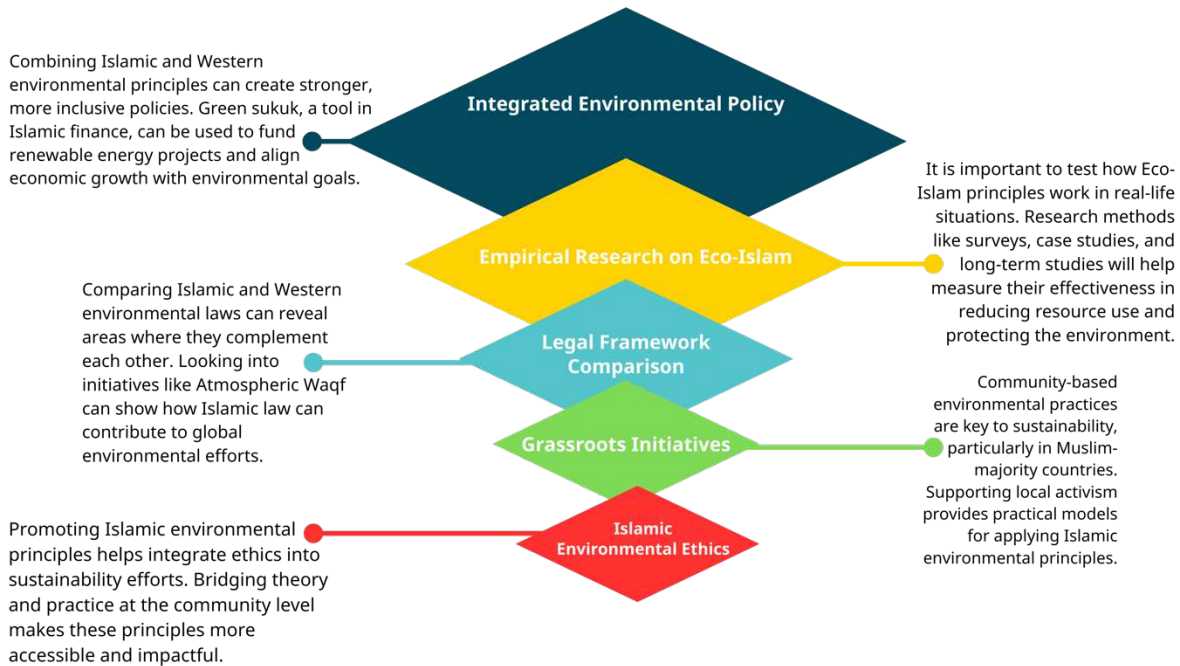
The second priority should be strict empirical research conducted to identify the functioning of Eco-Islam principles in different and diverse social and environmental settings. The theoretical outline provided by Abdelzaher et al. (2019) is a good starting point, but the iconic status of empirical evaluation cannot be overestimated. Case studies, surveys, and longitudinal analyses might measure the empirical effectiveness of Islamic environment policies in the reduction of resource consumption, protection of biodiversity, and mitigation of climate change (AbdelZaher et al., 2016).

It is also important to have a comparative analysis of the legal frameworks that characterize environmental stewardship in the Islamic and Western settings. The work of Idllalene and the environmental efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) provide a useful starting point for this kind of analysis and show how Islamic environmental law can fit within broader international legal frameworks (Idllalene, 2021). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we must not overlook the role of grassroots environmental movements in this discussion. Although the elite scholars and policy makers have a formative role at the global level, the local community is the one that performs sustainable practices most often.

**Figure 5. Key Policy Implications for integrating Islamic and Western Environmental Approaches**

## Key Policy Implications for Integrating Islamic and Western Environmental Approaches

This funnel diagram shows how integrating Islamic and Western environmental policies can strengthen sustainability efforts. It highlights key research areas, legal insights, and community-led initiatives for lasting impact.



## Conclusion

This study has accomplished precisely what we intended to achieve: we have critically compared the ethical and legal basis of Islamic ecological jurisprudence and the prevailing Western anthropocentric view, all to determine whether a hybrid approach would be viable in ensuring global sustainability. It was a hard job, but what we found was a clear and consistent duality in contemporary environmental thought, which implied that neither system can resolve the crisis entirely on its own. In our qualitative study of the Quran, we have demonstrated that Islamic ethics, which are based on the concept of *Tawheed* and *Khalifah*,

possess this unbelievably deep, intrinsic moral imperative to protect the environment. This framing essentially shifts the human role beyond mere dominion or extraction of resources and characterizes it as a serious act of trust and responsible custodianship. It is precisely this spiritual foundation that gives ecological preservation the moral permanence that most secular strategies lack, since it makes ecological preservation a religious obligation. But this great ethical promise was instantly challenged by reality in the light of our case-study. We showed that the practical application of those high ideals, *fiqh al-bi'ah*, is severely limited by political and economic realities on the ground, including policy inertia, strong reliance on resource economies, and regulatory frameworks that tend to favor short-term growth. The Islamic legal system, while morally strong, still lacks the power to challenge today's harmful economic systems.

Meanwhile, our quantitative results on the increasing development of ethical investment and *Green Sukuk* (Islamic finance instruments) provided an optimistic, but complex, outlook. This research contributes a novel methodological bridge by integrating theological content analysis with financial capital metrics, proving that religious mandates are not merely aspirational but quantifiable through market shifts. We ensured that the Islamic finance industry possesses the funds and the appropriate moral codes to impose environmental regulations internally in the market. The issue is, however, that this market-based power simply lacks the extensive, systemic legal power and institutional scope that the structures of the West have. This implies that although Islamic institutions are contributing positively, their influence is voluntary and disjointed in the global regulatory environment. This is the most important thing: The West gives us a strong legal framework on *how* to control things, but its moral basis is weak because it focuses too much on human usefulness. On the other side, Islamic jurisprudence offers that profound moral rationale, the *why* we need to save the planet, but it lacks the regulatory powerhouse that is so needed at the global level. Attempting to depend on either of them is simply predisposing ourselves to failure. The hybrid framework is the only way forward that is sustainable and true. From a policy perspective, this study advocates for the institutionalization of 'Atmospheric Waqf' and the expansion of Green Sukuk as standardized regulatory requirements rather than voluntary ethical options. This is not just an abstract idea; it is a strategic plan to draw on the strong moral guidance of the Islamic tradition and use it to support and guide the existing market-driven legal processes in Western regulatory practice. It is this amalgamation that will eventually produce a framework that is both legally binding and ethically viable in the long term and will provide us with the best chance of dealing with complex global issues such as climate change and displacement. The study provides a baseline comparative model, but it does not have longitudinal data on the long-term ecological effects of Green Sukuk in various jurisdictions. Future studies must shift towards empirical, field-based research that quantifies the actual biodiversity performance of Shari'ah-compliant policies in real-time. Also, further inquiry to demonstrate how this hybrid framework can be modified to suit non-Muslim majority states that desire to improve the ethical aspect of their environmental regulations.

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## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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