

Sustainable Environment in Islam, Its Manifestations and Causes

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and analyze the Islamic foundations of environmental sustainability within the framework of Sharia law. It seeks to explore how Islamic principles shape individuals' understanding of a sustainable environment. The study investigates the moral, ethical, and behavioral aspects promoted by Sharia law to address the growing environmental challenges. By involving religious organizations and leveraging the scientific knowledge of jurists, the project aims to enhance the concept of social responsibility and provide solutions to environmental problems. Furthermore, it elucidates the Islamic philosophical precepts that strongly emphasize the protection and conservation of the environment. The study underscores the significance of addressing environmental issues, transforming attitudes and behaviors towards the environment, and finding effective solutions to the challenges it presents. It establishes a connection between environmental concerns and Islamic beliefs within the context of sustainable development objectives.

Keywords: Sustainable Environment, Atmosphere, Land, Water, Environmental Media, Islamic Sharia.

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, Islamic environmentalism has gained momentum in Muslim-majority countries as well as in regions where Muslims are a minority (Kolkailah, 2023). The environment encompasses various resources and elements crucial for human life, including land and air (Aldulaimi & Abdeldayem, 2022; Chen et al., 2024). However, the environment faces numerous risks and challenges that necessitate increased attention and proactive measures (Hladik et al., 2018). As a response, countries worldwide have implemented laws and regulations to regulate the human-environment relationship and mitigate environmental problems (Lazarus, 2023; Yang & Percival, 2009).

The interdependence between humans and the environment is evident, as humans rely on the natural environment for their basic needs such as air, water, food, clothing, shelter, and energy. Additionally, the environment serves as a source of inspiration, knowledge, and spiritual connection (Xu et al., 2018). However, this balanced relationship has become distorted in the modern era, resulting in severe environmental issues. These issues include pollution from industrial and nuclear waste, extinction of species due to environmental changes, water pollution in rivers and seas, carbon emissions from factories and vehicles, deforestation, desertification, and the depletion of natural resources (Xu et al., 2018).

The environment should be a safe haven where individuals can thrive, utilizing its resources while preserving its integrity. However, the growing global concern for protecting and preserving the natural environment reflects the realization that environmental degradation poses a significant threat to humanity (Cutter, 2018). Scientists have warned of the rapid depletion of the environment's resources, predicting that by the year 2050, humanity will require the equivalent of two Earth-sized planets to meet its increasing needs (Nadeson & Halim, Meerah, 2010). Consequently, environmental protection has become a pressing issue for the international community, with some experts labeling this era as a period of global environmental crisis (Schild, 2016).

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Islamic teachings emphasize that humans are appointed as stewards of the Earth, responsible for populating and benefiting from it. The Quran highlights the Earth's creation and its purpose for sustenance and moral stability (Ar-Rahman 10; Araf 56). The Quran and Hadiths also condemn corruption and emphasize the importance of preserving the environment (Abdeldayem & Aldulaimi, 2024). Although the term "environment" itself may not be explicitly mentioned, Islamic teachings encompass a comprehensive understanding of the environment.

Corruption, as defined by Transparency International, refers to the misuse of public office for personal gain or the abuse of entrusted authority (Kimeu, 2014). Environmental corruption, inspired by Islamic studies, can be defined as the mismanagement of human life's components, leading to environmental deterioration and hindering its development. The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 25% of preventable diseases can be attributed to environmental degradation (WHO, 2020).

Since many environmental problems stem from human behavior, environmental protection organizations emphasize the rehabilitation of individuals and their personal responsibility in preserving and protecting the environment. This shift in focus from solely relying on laws and regulations to individual accountability has led to the emergence of the concept of environmental citizenship (Nadeson & Halim, Meerah, 2010). However, harmful practices such as land encroachment, destruction of green spaces, urban expansion at the expense of agricultural land, and water pollution indicate a lack of awareness and preservation efforts.

Given the above context, this research aims to address the need for an Islamic approach to environmental awareness in order to preserve and protect the environment from threats and dangers. The study seeks to explore the role of Islamic law in addressing environmental issues and fostering environmental consciousness among individuals. It also examines the values, ethics, and behaviors prescribed by Sharia law as a means of addressing environmental problems. The research intends to leverage the expertise of jurists in providing solutions to environmental challenges and strengthen the concept of social responsibility through the involvement of religious institutions. Finally, the study aims to elucidate the intellectual principles within Islam that emphasize the preservation and care of the environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

On the other hand, previous studies on environmental issues have shown variations, with some focusing on the relationship between the environment and other variables, exploring the aspects of mutual influence (Landrigan et al., 2004; Al-Boridi, 2023). These studies emphasized the importance of the environment and its exposure to challenges and risks, whether natural or caused by humans. Patel et al. (2017) concentrated on elucidating the current situation, dangers, and difficulties faced. Liobikienė, G., & Juknys, R. (2016) aimed to enhance social groups' understanding of specific environmental values, while others attempted to gauge awareness among different groups (Szeberényi et al., 2022) (Baqi et al., 2022; Al Baz, 2023). Prior research in contemporary environmental studies has highlighted the alarming deterioration and challenges it poses to continuity. In the following sections, we will shed light on the most prominent manifestations of environmental corruption and its causes.

First: Pollution

Various types of pollution have become common phenomena in the contemporary environment. Among the most significant fear-inducing types are:

Water Pollution: Water is crucial for survival and sustainable development. However, pollution caused by solid pollutants like iron residues, thermal pollutants, and liquid pollutants from factories and wastewater leads to the loss of essential elements and the spread of chronic diseases.

Air Pollution: This has become a pressing issue affecting people's health. Countries and governments have implemented regulations and laws to reduce pollution caused by factors such as fires, volcanic activity, and emissions from factories.

Food Contamination: This refers to the contamination of food with physical, microbial, or chemical pollutants, including toxic elements like mercury and organic materials.

Soil Pollution: Imbalances in soil components occur due to various reasons, including the use of pesticides, chemical fertilization, pollution from fires, and the disposal of industrial and radioactive waste, which hampers ventilation and damages the soil.

Radioactive Contamination: Radioactive pollution is considered one of the most dangerous types. It results from the use of radioactive materials in various fields, including energy production, weaponry, medical applications, and industrial use.

Second: Desertification

Desertification is a contemporary and pressing issue that signifies the decrease and deterioration of the biological capacity of the environment. Desertified areas were not deserts before and had rich plant cover and diversity. Desertification manifests in various ways:

Soil Destruction: This is one of the most dangerous consequences of desertification.

Return Of Fixed Sand Dunes: The reactivation of fixed sand dunes leads to the obliterating and submerging of pastoral and agricultural areas with sand.

Decrease In Plant Cover And Deterioration Of Plant Quality: Desertification causes the replacement of high-value plants with low-value ones, leading to a decline in plant cover and nutritional value. Desertification has natural causes such as water scarcity and increased evaporation levels, along with human-made factors like urban sprawl, overgrazing, agricultural migration, fires, poor exploitation of soil and water resources, and air pollution.

Third: Global Warming

Human activities, particularly industrial processes, have increased the concentration of natural and new greenhouse gases. These accumulated gases are a source of concern, causing a rise in global temperatures. Climate change affects rainfall patterns, wind distribution, crop distribution, organism resilience, and contributes to the emergence of refugee problems.

Addressing Environmental Corruption from The Perspective Of Islamic Economics:

Islam encourages the care, preservation, and safety of the environment. The religion prohibits polluting and abusing the environment, as it is vital for human survival and stability. Islam places responsibility on every individual to care for the environment, as Allah watches over it. The Quran forbids corruption on earth, and harming oneself or others is also prohibited. Environmental corruption in all its forms harms living creatures and is condemned. Islamic law requires the party responsible for pollution and corruption to compensate for the damage, ensuring the preservation of life and property. Rulers are obligated to apply necessary and deterrent penalties against those who perpetrate environmental corruption.

METHODOLOGY

The current study employed a hybrid approach, incorporating ethnographic research, comparative analysis, surveys, historical database analysis, data visualization, and interviews with five Islamic scholars. The inductive approach involved gathering information from scientific sources such as books and scholarly references related to the research topic. It explored various aspects of the environment in Islamic law and its connection to sustainable development and sustainability. The study employed a historical approach to trace scientific material back to Islamic Sharia provisions from multiple sources. Additionally, a deductive approach was used to establish links between the introduction, topic, and conclusion, leading to the derivation of key conclusions.

Sharia Directives For Confronting And Protecting The Environment

Islamic Sharia (law) encompasses numerous directives, measures, and controls aimed at caring for, protecting, and preserving the environment. These directives are tailored to the nature of each environmental element and its relationship with humans. The following points explain this in detail:

Emphasis on constant purity and cleanliness: Islam promotes the purity of the soul and body, making it a prerequisite for accepting many things. The Quran and Sunnah contain numerous references to the importance of purity and cleanliness, ranging from personal hygiene to the cleanliness of clothing, utensils, and dwellings. For instance, the Quran states, "Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves" (Quran 2:222).

Purification of roads, public places, and all elements of the environment: The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, emphasized the cleanliness of courtyards and ordered the purification of public spaces. The Prophet's teachings stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness in residential environments and keeping sewage away from inhabited areas.

Rationalizing the use of environmental resources: Islam promotes moderation in all aspects of life, discouraging excess, negligence, and extravagance. Moderation and fairness are praised in Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, discouraged extravagance even in food, drink, and clothing. He taught the virtue of frugality and avoiding wastefulness. This extends to the use of water and other resources, emphasizing the importance of conserving and not being extravagant.

Land development and cultivation: Islam encourages the development and cultivation of land, considering it a noble and beneficial act. Planting trees and crops are highly rewarded deeds in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said, "No Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a human being, bird, or animal eats from it, except that it is regarded as charity for them on the Day of Judgment" (Muslim).

Solutions

Developing Religious Consciousness in Bangladeshi Society: Raising awareness about the environmental corruption as a violation of Quranic and Prophetic teachings is crucial. Strengthening the religious motivation of individuals and society can help reduce corruption.

Promoting Social Justice: Equitable distribution of resources and ensuring basic needs are met contribute to a balanced society. Neglecting these aspects can lead to corruption and environmental deterioration. Addressing poverty is important, and creating job opportunities and implementing economic support systems like zakat and endowments can help achieve a clean and sustainable environment.

Community-Based Corruption Prevention: The Quran and Sunnah emphasize the importance of confronting corruption by enjoining good and forbidding evil. Encouraging individuals to actively participate in promoting positive change can help combat environmental corruption.

Applying Islamic Sharia Principles: Incorporating Islamic principles and jurisprudential rules in all aspects of life, including the environment, can guide environmental protection efforts and ensure the well-being of humanity.

Establishing Specific Laws And Policies: Developing legislation and policies that protect the environment while aligning with the principles of Islamic Sharia is crucial. These measures should prioritize the interests of the country and its people.

Islamic Law As A Guiding Educational Approach

Islam celebrates the educational values that guarantee the preservation of the environment and its optimal investment. It sets an example in caring for and preserving its basic natural elements, keeping them away from exploitation. To address this issue, we conducted interviews with Islamic scholars and gathered their opinions using unstructured interviews based on the Islamic view. We can summarize their thoughts as follows:

Preserving The Environment and Benefiting From Its Resources As Intended By God Almighty

The Value of Rationalization: Islam calls for conserving energy, rationalizing its consumption, and protecting humans from harm. The saying of Jabir bin Zaid reflects this: "Turn out the lamps at night when you lie down, close the doors, water the watering holes, and cover food and drink."

Restoring And Developing The Environment To Achieve Environmental Balance: Islam encourages planting, cultivation, and rewards those who contribute through such actions.

Protecting the plant environment: Islam emphasizes reviving, reconstructing, and reclaiming the land, as well as benefiting from its resources. The Prophet said, "Whoever revives land, it belongs to him."

The value of reform and avoiding corruption: Islam commands the planting of trees and prohibits cutting them down. The Prophet stated, "One of you is guilty of her sins" when referring to cutting down trees.

Protecting The Environment From Pollution:

Ancient Muslims, including jurists, paid attention to protecting the air from pollution. They discussed various forms of air pollution, including smoke, unpleasant odors, and noise pollution.

Muslims were aware of the harms of smoke pollution and took measures to prevent it. The muhtasib (market inspector) was responsible for monitoring smoke pollution, among other duties.

Islam encourages the care of livestock and warns against harming or destroying it without benefit. The Prophet emphasized the necessity of caring for animal habitats and preventing harm to them.

Preserving Resources From Depletion:

Islam places value on preserving environmental resources, including animals, and emphasizes rational use to avoid depletion. The Prophet cautioned against wasting milk when slaughtering animals.

Islam promotes cleanliness of the environment and removing harmful objects from pathways. The Prophet stated, "Your smile in the face of your brother is charity, and removing stones, thorns, and bones from people's paths is charity for you."

Islam calls for preserving goodness and beauty.

These etiquettes represent the rules governing the interaction with materials in the environment that humans have no control over. These materials include air, water, sun, plants, animals, soil, petroleum, natural gas, coal, and mineral ores. The following are the prominent points:

Consolidating The Concept of Environmental Friendliness: The Arab environment faces pollution from various factors, including industrial waste, vehicle exhaust, and agricultural technology.

To prevent further pollution, individuals need to exercise wisdom, foresight, and appropriate attitudes. They should be careful not to pollute their environment while engaging in activities that benefit them.

Activating The Principle Of Rationalization And Preventing Depletion: Natural resources, especially non-renewable ones like oil, are at risk of depletion due to human abuse. Even renewable resources, such as agricultural soil, are susceptible to depletion and degradation caused by urbanization and industrialization. It is evident that these problems primarily arise from human behavior, resulting from a lack of environmental awareness. Both citizens and officials need to take a firm stand against these harmful patterns of behavior.

Promoting Environmental Balance: The natural environment remains in a state of balance unless disturbed by human intervention. The Arab environment, being a part of the natural world, is vulnerable to disturbances. To maintain balance, humans should adopt a rational approach, understanding the intricate relationships and connections between environmental components and refraining from disrupting them. This requires cultivating the right attitudes towards the environment.

Protecting the Environment: Given the current and potential dangers to the environment, protective measures are crucial. Efforts have already been made in this regard, including the establishment of various environmental bodies, councils, committees, and associations.

Disturbance of the Environmental Balance and Its Consequences

Disturbing the balance in the composition and relationships of environmental components violates the laws of the universe and leads to environmental corruption. This corruption is a severe form of aggression, resulting in negative consequences, loss of purpose, and potential divine punishment.

The causes of environmental corruption include:

Man's rejection of his responsibility and belief that he has authority over the Earth, leading to arrogance and disregard for the effects on humanity and the balance of the universe.

The influence of Satan, who promotes domination and corruption, exploiting human arrogance and deviation from God's command.

Values of environmental preservation in Islam: Islamic teachings emphasize the following principles for preserving the environment:

The Principle of Stewardship: Humanity is appointed as custodians responsible for caring for the living and non-living creatures. While benefiting from the Earth's resources is permitted, absolute ownership and uncontrolled exploitation are prohibited. Muslims are obliged to be moderate, well-behaved, and actively involved in the development, purification, and prevention of sabotage and corruption.

The Principle of Purity and Pollution Prevention: Islam encourages purity and cleanliness in various aspects of life, including the environment, personal hygiene, clothing, food, water, and surroundings. Muslims are urged to maintain cleanliness and avoid pollution in their daily lives.

By instilling these values through religious upbringing, Islam aims to raise generations that are aware of their environmental responsibilities, mindful of their surroundings, and compassionate towards the environment.

The Principle of Purification and Prevention of Pollution: Islam emphasizes purity and cleanliness in the environment, places, utensils, clothing, water, food, air, roads, travel, courtyards, dwellings, and the human body. Muslims have been urged to practice cleanliness even before modern medicine recognized its significance, as mentioned in the verse: "Your clothing should be kept clean."

Islam emphasizes cleanliness in its broad sense, urging Muslims to maintain cleanliness in their daily lives, including the cleanliness of their bodies, homes, and surroundings. This emphasis on cleanliness is essential for avoiding infection and diseases. Ablution, in particular, holds great importance in Islam, as it signifies a level of purity and has numerous rewards. Islam encourages Muslims to purify themselves and raise their ranks through acts of cleanliness, highlighting the significance of cleanliness in a Muslim's life. The Quranic verse in Surat Al-Ma'idah (verse 6) emphasizes the importance of purification and completing Allah's blessings upon believers. This demonstrates Islam's keenness on cleanliness, encompassing all aspects of a person's life, from their body and home to the tools they use and the roads they travel. Islam promotes the removal of anything that is harmful or offensive, with the intention of preserving health, maintaining a clean environment, and enhancing the quality of life.

The Principle of Compassion

Allah has prescribed kindness and compassion towards all creatures, reflecting His own kindness and love. The concept of "Ihsan" in the Qur'an and Hadith carries the meanings of mastery, precision, compassion, and kindness. Islam teaches kindness towards animals, cultivation of the land, and protection of the environment from pollutants and filth. This educational value of kindness extends to all beings, human and non-human alike. Islam's emphasis on kindness to animals and the environment serves the best interest of humanity, ensuring

that no harm comes to them. The teachings of Islam establish a relationship between humans and the environment based on righteousness, mercy, and love. Muslims are commanded to treat the environment with gentleness, refraining from cutting down trees unnecessarily or destroying habitats. Islam strictly forbids the mistreatment of animals through beating, imprisonment, starvation, or killing without purpose.

The study findings reveal fundamental elements of sustainable environmental development in Islam, as depicted in Figure 1. The principle of moderation and rationalization is supported by Sharia evidence, combining obedience to Allah with economic benefits and discouraging excessive behavior. Islam considers any action that surpasses reasonable and acceptable limits as negative and harmful to the environment. This value applies to practices such as poaching and the excessive depletion of natural resources, aiming to maintain environmental balance. Islam promotes the values of responsible utilization of environmental components, advocating against wastefulness, luxury, and imbalance. Muslims are encouraged to adopt moderation and balance in all aspects of life, including the consumption of natural resources. This entails meeting one's necessities and needs without extravagance or waste.



Figure 1: Fundamental elements of Sustainable Environment Development in Islam

CONCLUSION

Upon concluding this research and realizing the extent to which Islamic law emphasizes the protection and preservation of the environment, it becomes evident that we are in dire need of Islamic solutions to address the long-standing environmental issues that have plagued societies for decades. The comprehensive concepts, contents, measures, rules, and moral values related to the environment within Islamic teachings are sufficient to tackle both behavioral and legislative problems in relation to the environment.

Islam provides an integrated intellectual perspective on the universe, life, and humanity, and the interconnectedness and effectiveness of these elements. When considering Islamic interpretations of environmental education, key aspects come to light, such as the promotion of independence, combating corruption on Earth, maintaining environmental balance, benefiting from resources, appreciating beauty, contemplation, gratitude for blessings, and other values and morals that are relevant to the environment. Islam calls for cleanliness of homes, roads, and water, protection from pollution, environmental reconstruction, beautification, optimal resource utilization, and balance preservation. Numerous literature exists pertaining to

environmental components, serving as governing rules for dealing with various materials that constitute the environment, such as air, water, sun, plants, animals, soil, and non-renewable resources like petroleum, natural gas, coal, and mineral ores.

The core values for preserving the environment encompass faith, independence, purity, prevention of pollution, preservation of human health, benevolence towards the environment, resource conservation, rejection of extravagance and waste, enactment and enforcement of laws to prevent environmental corruption, utilization of modern methods for teaching environmental education, and more. Therefore, as a result of this research, we recommend studying everything related to the Prophet in Islam and deriving lessons from it to evaluate the behavior of individuals and groups towards the environment, aiming to mitigate its deterioration.

Furthermore, it is crucial to benefit from the legal provisions of Islamic Sharia to obligate individuals to adopt positive behaviors towards the environment. The role of research centers, universities, and specialized studies in the field of the environment should be enhanced, covering various issues such as chemical pollution, radiation, desertification, resource depletion, and others. Strengthening collaboration between Ministries of Endowments and Ministries of Environment in Islamic countries is essential for joint initiatives that establish Islamic perspectives on the environment and address its issues. A strategic plan should be developed to incorporate Islamic environmental concepts into educational curricula. International conferences, Islamic intellectual forums, and seminars should be organized to discuss the environment and ways to preserve it. A united Islamic environmental front among Islamic countries should be formed to undertake joint actions in resolving environmental issues based on Islamic principles. International agreements concerning the environment should be established between Islamic countries and other nations. Awareness campaigns should be initiated to highlight the importance of environmental preservation, utilizing Islamic perspectives in environmental media, and employing various means and platforms. The role of civil society organizations should be activated, with environmental issues prioritized in their charitable and humanitarian projects, aiming to preserve environmental balance and address challenges.

Lastly, it is recommended to enact special laws and policies to protect the environment, ensuring their alignment with the rules and principles of Islamic Sharia. Improvements should be made in hazardous waste management, and the use of clean technologies should be expanded. Attention should be given to the expansion of green spaces and the cultivation of permissible crops through agriculture. Preservation and protection of water sources, as well as the utilization of hydroelectric energy when necessary, should be prioritized. Sanitary sewers and industrial pollutants must be kept away from waterways and sources.

Recommendations

Enacting Environmental Laws: Environmental legal control encompasses a range of legislative measures aimed at regulating people's interactions with the environment, including their investments, consumption, and behavior. If Islam has already established a strong framework of values, ideals, and etiquette surrounding the environment, guiding people's relationship with it based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, it has also recognized the importance of punishment in preserving environmental resources. Islam has prescribed penalties for those who harm the environment or exploit its resources, tailored to the specific type of violation.

Activating Environmental Media: Developing environmental awareness and promoting environmental concepts and values through the media is an effective means of protecting the environment. The term "media" refers to both public and private institutions, both official and unofficial, that disseminate cultural information and heritage, and provide individuals with the necessary tools and knowledge derived from various cultures.

Utilizing Modern Approaches in Environmental Education: Islamic environmental education can only achieve its goals and implement its programs through well-defined approaches. In educational literature, there are several approaches to integrating environmental education and its strategies across different stages of education. One such approach is the integration approach, which involves incorporating environmental dimensions into all academic subjects, seamlessly weaving environmental information into the fabric of prescribed scientific subjects. For example, topics such as pollution can be addressed within the context of environmental education, while discussions about water purity can be included in Islamic education. Another approach is the integrative

approach, which focuses on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies that present scientific knowledge covering various topics without dividing or fragmenting knowledge into separate subjects. This can involve integrating environmental study units into existing courses or subjects such as science or geography.

Proposals for Future Studies: In order to incorporate environmental values into educational curricula at different stages, it is recommended to conduct a study that provides a comprehensive vision for integrating these values. These values will vary based on the nature of each educational stage, its requirements, and the characteristics of the students involved.

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