

TAWHIDIC ECOLOGY IN THE QUR'AN AS A SOLUTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

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ARTICLE INFO

Volume 3, Issue 2
March – June 2026
337 - 342
E-ISSN 3047-6968

Received Date

25 June, 2026

Received in Revised

27 June, 2026

Available Online

30 June, 2026

Keywords

Tawhidic Ecology;
Qur'an;
Environmental Crisis;
Mizan; Khalifah.

ABSTRACT

Research Objectives - This study aims to analyze the Qur'anic perspective on the environment and identify ecological principles that can be applied as solutions to contemporary environmental crises.

Method - This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. Data were analyzed through content analysis integrated with the thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) method of Qur'anic verses related to environmental issues.

Research Findings - The findings reveal that environmental degradation (*al-fasad*) is viewed by the Qur'an as a consequence of human behavior that deviates from divine values and ecological responsibility. The concept of *mizan* emphasizes the importance of maintaining ecological balance as the foundation of sustainable life. Meanwhile, the concept of *khalifah* positions human beings as trustees responsible for environmental stewardship through responsible consumption, resource conservation, and biodiversity protection.

Theory and Practical Implications - These findings strengthen the theocentric perspective in environmental studies by positioning environmental preservation as an expression of devotion to Allah SWT. Environmental policies should integrate spiritual values, ecological ethics, and sustainable development principles.

Novelty - This study integrates the concepts of *al-fasad*, *mizan*, and *khalifah* into a unified paradigm of Tawhidic Ecology, explaining the interrelationship among environmental degradation, ecological balance, and human responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Global environmental crises have become one of the most serious challenges facing humanity in the twenty-first century. Climate change, rising global temperatures, water and air pollution, deforestation, and the loss of biodiversity indicate that human activities have exerted enormous pressure on the sustainability of the world's ecosystems. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms that much of the environmental degradation occurring today is largely driven by uncontrolled anthropogenic activities (IPCC, 2023). Numerous studies have also shown that ecological crises are not merely technical problems but are closely related to crises of morality, ethics, and development paradigms that place humans at the center of nature's exploitation (Folke et al., 2021; Steffen et al., 2018). In this context, religion is viewed as having a strategic role in fostering ecological awareness within society. Islam, through the Qur'an, offers a set of values and principles that position human beings as guardians of environmental balance rather than rulers who are free to exploit nature. Therefore, studies on the Qur'anic perspective of the environment have become increasingly relevant as an effort to identify moral and spiritual foundations for addressing contemporary environmental crises.

Scholarly attention to the relationship between Islam and the environment has developed considerably in previous studies. Mangunjaya and McKay (2012) explain that Islamic teachings possess significant potential to promote environmental conservation movements through religious

values embedded within Muslim communities. Similarly, the study by Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin (2003) demonstrates that Islamic concepts such as *amanah* (trust), responsibility, and justice are closely associated with environmental preservation efforts. Nevertheless, most of these studies emphasize Islamic environmental ethics in general and have not specifically examined the interrelationship among key ecological concepts in the Qur'an, such as *al-fasad* (corruption or environmental degradation), *mizan* (balance), and *khalifah* (human stewardship), within a comprehensive conceptual framework. Consequently, the understanding of the Qur'anic ecological paradigm remains fragmented and has not fully addressed the complexity of modern environmental crises.

A further research gap can be observed in the dominance of anthropocentric approaches in environmental studies, including within some Islamic literature. This paradigm places humans at the center of concern, leading nature to be understood merely as an instrument for fulfilling human needs. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1997) criticized this paradigm and proposed a theocentric approach that views nature as a manifestation of the signs of Allah, which must be respected and protected. This perspective is consistent with the following verse of the Qur'an:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمَلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's hands have earned, so that He may let them taste some of the consequences of their deeds, that perhaps they may return [to the right path]" (Qur'an, Ar-Rum [30]: 41).

This verse indicates that environmental degradation is viewed by the Qur'an as a consequence of human deviation from the guidance of Allah. However, studies that examine the ecological verses of the Qur'an through a thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) approach and relate them to contemporary environmental issues remain relatively limited. Therefore, a more comprehensive study is needed to reconstruct the Qur'anic ecological paradigm as an alternative to the paradigm of environmental exploitation that prevails today.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to integrate the concepts of *al-fasad*, *mizan*, and *khalifah* as the foundation for constructing a paradigm of "Tawhidic Ecology" from the Qur'anic perspective. Unlike previous studies, which generally discuss these concepts separately, this research seeks to establish a comprehensive conceptual relationship among the causes of environmental degradation, the principles of ecological balance, and human responsibility as *khalifah* on earth. Through a thematic exegesis approach, this study not only explains the theological dimensions of environmental issues in the Qur'an but also reveals their relevance to modern ecological concerns, including climate change, natural resource conservation, water management, and sustainable consumption patterns.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the Qur'anic perspective on the environment through a thematic exegesis of verses related to environmental degradation, ecological balance, and the role of human beings as *khalifah*. In addition, this study seeks to identify practical principles that can be applied as solutions to modern ecological crises. The limitation of this research lies in its use of a library research method focusing on the analysis of Qur'anic texts and exegetical literature. Consequently, the findings emphasize conceptual and normative dimensions rather than empirical verification of the implementation of Islamic ecological values in society.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design. The qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand, interpret, and explain the meanings of Qur'anic verses related to environmental issues through an in-depth analysis of relevant texts and literature. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore the theological, philosophical, and ethical dimensions embedded in the Qur'an's ecological verses, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of contemporary environmental degradation. Similar approaches have been adopted in various international studies on Islamic ecology and Qur'anic studies, such as the work of Mangunjaya and McKay (2012), which examined environmental conservation based on Islamic values in Indonesia, and Abdullah (2017), who analyzed the contribution of Islamic teachings to

sustainable development. The findings of these studies indicate that religious values exert a significant influence on fostering ecological awareness within society. Therefore, a qualitative library-based approach is considered appropriate for examining the Qur'anic perspective on the environment, as it facilitates a profound understanding of the ecological messages contained within the sacred text.

Data were collected through a documentation study of various literature sources relevant to the research theme. The primary data consisted of Qur'anic verses related to environmental issues, particularly those addressing the concepts of *al-fasad* (environmental degradation or corruption), *mizān* (balance), *khalifah* (human stewardship), natural resource conservation, and consumption ethics. Secondary data were obtained from classical and contemporary Qur'anic commentaries (*tafsir*), books on Islamic ecology, reputable national and international journal articles, and scholarly documents discussing the relationship between Islam and the environment. Data collection was conducted systematically through the identification, selection, classification, and documentation of sources relevant to the research focus. The documentation technique was chosen because it is considered capable of generating valid and meaningful data in text-based research (Bowen, 2009). Furthermore, to enhance data credibility, source triangulation was employed by comparing the perspectives of various Qur'anic exegetes and findings from previous studies concerning environmental issues from an Islamic perspective.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis integrated with the thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) method. Content analysis was employed to identify, categorize, and interpret the ecological themes embedded within Qur'anic verses, while thematic exegesis was used to compile all environment-related verses into a coherent conceptual framework. The analytical process consisted of several stages: (1) identifying Qur'anic verses related to environmental issues; (2) classifying the verses according to ecological themes; (3) analyzing the meanings of the verses using various exegetical references; (4) synthesizing the Qur'an's ecological concepts; and (5) interpreting the relevance of these concepts to contemporary environmental crises. Through these stages, the study develops a conceptual framework that explains the relationship among environmental degradation (*al-fasad*), ecological balance (*mizān*), and human responsibility as *khalifah* in maintaining environmental sustainability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Qur'anic Theological Perspective on Environmental Degradation and the Human Role as Khalifah in Maintaining Ecological Balance (*Mizan*). The results of the thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses related to environmental issues indicate that the Qur'an views environmental degradation as a consequence of human behavior that deviates from the commands of Allah SWT. Environmental destruction is not perceived merely as a natural phenomenon but rather as the result of human actions that exceed the limits in utilizing natural resources. This perspective is emphasized in the following verse of the Qur'an (Qur'an, Ar-Rum [30]: 41):

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's hands have earned, so that He may let them taste some of the consequences of their deeds, that perhaps they may return [to the right path]."

Based on the analysis of various exegetical sources, the term *al-fasad* in this verse encompasses all forms of destruction that undermine the functions and balance of nature as established by Allah SWT. Such degradation includes not only environmental pollution, floods, droughts, and climate change but also moral corruption that encourages exploitative behavior toward nature (Shihab, 2002). Thus, the Qur'an directly links the moral quality of human beings to the quality of the environment in which they live. This finding suggests that environmental crises are fundamentally spiritual crises rooted in humanity's loss of awareness of its responsibilities as servants of God.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the Qur'an constructs the concept of ecological balance through the principle of *mizān*. The universe was created within a harmonious and interconnected system in which every element serves a function that supports the continuity of life. This principle is emphasized in Qur'an, Ar-Rahman [55]: 7–9:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ
"And the heaven He raised, and He established the balance. So that you may not transgress the balance. Therefore, uphold the balance with justice and do not diminish the balance."

Analysis of these verses demonstrates that the concept of *mizan* extends beyond the physical balance of nature to encompass social, economic, and spiritual equilibrium. In the environmental context, this balance requires human beings to utilize natural resources proportionately without impairing nature's capacity for regeneration. Excessive deforestation, river pollution, and the destruction of marine ecosystems constitute violations of the principle of *mizan* established by Allah SWT. Therefore, environmental stewardship from the Qur'anic perspective is an integral part of establishing ecological justice (Abdillah, 2001).

The findings further indicate that human existence on Earth is inseparable from the function of *kehalifah* (stewardship) entrusted by Allah SWT. This concept is articulated in Qur'an, Al-Baqarah [2]: 30:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً
"And [remember] when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will place a *kehalifah* on Earth.'"

Based on the analysis, the term *kehalifah* implies that human beings are representatives of Allah entrusted with the responsibility of cultivating and preserving the Earth. Stewardship does not legitimize unrestricted exploitation of nature; rather, it constitutes a moral obligation to ensure the sustainability of life for all creatures. Consequently, any form of environmental destruction may be regarded as a betrayal of the trust (*amanah*) bestowed upon humanity by Allah (Al-Qardhawi, 2002). This finding demonstrates that the relationship between humans and nature in Islam is fundamentally ethical and spiritual rather than one of domination, as commonly found in modern anthropocentric paradigms.

The analysis also reveals that the Qur'an regards all components of nature as creatures possessing a spiritual relationship with Allah SWT. This view is affirmed in Qur'an, Al-Isra [17]: 44, which explains that the heavens, the Earth, and all that they contain continuously glorify Allah. Such a perspective gives rise to the understanding that nature possesses not only economic value but also spiritual significance. Therefore, environmental destruction causes not only ecological damage but also disrupts the cosmic harmony established by Allah SWT. This finding is consistent with Nasr's (1997) argument that the root of the modern environmental crisis lies in the loss of the sacred dimension of nature within contemporary human life.

The integration of the concepts of *al-fasad*, *mizan*, and *kehalifah* demonstrates that the Qur'an constructs an ecological paradigm centered on *tawhid* (the Oneness of God). Within this paradigm, humans are not positioned as owners of nature but as guardians responsible for preserving the continuity of life for all creatures. Consequently, environmental conservation constitutes an expression of faith and devotion to Allah SWT. This paradigm can serve as an ethical foundation for addressing increasingly complex global environmental challenges in the modern era.

Practical Qur'anic Principles as Solutions to the Modern Ecological Crisis. The findings indicate that the Qur'an not only explains the causes of environmental degradation but also offers practical principles that can be implemented to address contemporary ecological crises. One of the primary principles identified is the prohibition of *israf* (excessiveness) and *tabdzir* (wastefulness). In Qur'an, Al-A'raf [7]: 31, Allah SWT commands human beings to fulfill their needs in moderation and not exceed proper limits. This principle bears strong relevance to contemporary environmental problems driven by consumerism and the excessive exploitation of natural resources.

The analysis reveals that consumerist behavior in modern society has contributed to increased waste generation, excessive energy consumption, and the exploitation of natural resources beyond the environment's carrying capacity. From the Qur'anic perspective, such actions represent a form of imbalance that threatens the sustainability of life. Therefore, the implementation of moderation and responsible consumption constitutes an important solution for reducing pressure on the environment (Mangunjaya, 2010).

In addition, the findings demonstrate that the Qur'an places particular emphasis on water conservation as the source of life for all living beings. This principle is highlighted in Qur'an, Al-Anbiya [21]: 30:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ
"And We made from water every living thing."

Analysis of this verse indicates that water occupies a central position in sustaining life and therefore must be utilized wisely. From the Qur'anic perspective, water pollution and wastefulness are actions that contradict the principle of sustainability. Consequently, water conservation possesses not only ecological value but also spiritual significance because it reflects gratitude for the blessings granted by Allah SWT (Shihab, 2002).

The findings further reveal that the Qur'an encourages environmental restoration and greening initiatives through activities that support the continuity of life. Qur'anic descriptions of rain nurturing plants and trees provide inspiration for the importance of reforestation and land rehabilitation as part of humanity's responsibility toward the Earth (Al-Qardhawi, 2002). Greening activities not only generate ecological benefits through carbon sequestration and biodiversity protection but also possess spiritual merit because they contribute to the well-being of other living creatures.

Moreover, the analysis indicates that the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of preserving all living beings as members of an interconnected community of life. Awareness of this ecological interdependence forms the basis for biodiversity protection and ecosystem conservation. In the modern context, this principle may be implemented through the protection of endangered species, the management of conservation areas, and the development of policies that maintain a balance between economic and environmental considerations (Mangunjaya, 2005).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Qur'an offers a comprehensive ecological paradigm through the integration of the values of *tawhid*, balance, responsibility, and sustainability. These principles provide a strong moral foundation for addressing modern environmental crises. Therefore, solutions to environmental degradation cannot rely solely on technological and regulatory approaches; they also require a transformation of spiritual consciousness that positions human beings as *khalifah* entrusted with preserving ecological balance as an *amanah* from Allah SWT.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the Qur'an offers a comprehensive perspective on the environment through the integration of the concepts of *al-fasad* (environmental degradation), *mizan* (balance), and *khalifah* (human stewardship and responsibility). The analysis of Qur'anic verses reveals that environmental degradation is viewed as a consequence of human behavior that deviates from divine values and the principles of balance established by Allah SWT. From the Qur'anic perspective, human beings are not positioned as absolute rulers over nature but rather as *khalifah* entrusted with the responsibility of preserving, cultivating, and sustaining life on Earth. Furthermore, the Qur'an provides practical principles for environmental conservation, including water conservation, the prohibition of excessive behavior (*israf*), the wise utilization of natural resources, and the protection of all living beings as integral components of an interconnected system of life.

The findings further demonstrate that the Qur'an's ecological perspective functions not only as a normative religious guide but also as a relevant ethical foundation for addressing contemporary environmental crises. Unlike previous studies, which have generally examined the concepts of *al-fasad*, *mizan*, or *khalifah* separately (Nasr, 1997; Mangunjaya & McKay, 2012; Al-Qardhawi, 2002), this study identifies a conceptual interrelationship among these three concepts in the construction of a paradigm referred to as Tawhidic Ecology. This paradigm emphasizes that environmental conservation constitutes a manifestation of faith and an act of devotion to Allah SWT, expressed through humanity's ecological responsibility. Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in its integrative framework that combines the theological, ethical, and ecological dimensions of the Qur'an into a coherent paradigm capable of serving as an alternative approach for fostering

environmental awareness and promoting sustainable conservation practices amid the escalating global ecological crisis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author extends sincere gratitude to the leadership of Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar for their support, facilities, and opportunities that enabled this research to be conducted successfully.

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