# A Quranic Approach to Sustainability: Stewardship, Balance, and Ecocentrism

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**Abstract:** The history of prolonged industrialization and business expansion has significantly contributed to climate change and its severe consequences. This global issue poses a serious threat to various sectors, potentially disrupting their functions and outcomes. As a result, global leaders, policymakers, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders have been actively exploring viable and holistic solutions. In a similar effort, ancient texts have been revisited to gain valuable insights, encouraging researchers to analyse the Quran for relevant guidance. Recognized as the sacred scripture of Islam, the Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over 23 years and contains numerous verses that stress the importance of conserving resources, preventing wastefulness, and maintaining ecological balance. Sustainability is essential in today's world, serving as a means to harmonize economic development, social well-being, and environmental conservation. Nations and corporate entities have embraced it as a strategy to sustain economic progress while safeguarding natural resources. The study objective is to explore the Quran's emphasis on sustainability and environmentally conscious practices. This study employs systematic data mining techniques by optimizing searches based on the key aspects of the paper's title. This qualitative research uses grounded theory to develop concepts inductively, leveraging existing literature to explore the connections between the Quran and sustainability. The research findings indicate that the Quran emphasizes the significance of sustainability and environmental conservation through various

verses, encouraging individuals to lead modest and balanced lives for the well-being of both humanity and the entire ecosystem. Stakeholders can incorporate the insights from this research into their strategies, decision-making processes, investments, and implementation efforts to promote eco-centric practices and contribute to mitigating climate change.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Centuries ago, commerce driven by profit and resource exploitation contributed to the emergence and intensification of climate change and its repercussions, obstructing nations in their pursuit of growth and development. Today, policymakers, international organizations, and major corporations are actively seeking solutions to address and alleviate the effects of climate change. In response to this challenge, ancient texts have been revisited, including the Quran, which offers valuable insights and potential solutions to this modern crisis. The Quran, considered the divine revelation of Islam, was conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over 23 years and serves as the primary religious scripture for over 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide, guiding their spiritual, social, and legal aspects of

life. It contains numerous verses that underscore the importance of environmental conservation, responsible resource management, the prohibition of extravagance and wastefulness, and the necessity of maintaining balance in daily life.

Worsening environmental degradation, shrinking natural resources, and growing social disparities have intensified the call for sustainable approaches, compelling governments, industries, and communities to reconsider conventional development pathways. Increasingly, organizations face the expectation to embed sustainability principles into both their strategic planning and daily operations, adopting innovations that enhance resource efficiency, minimize environmental impacts, and strengthen societal resilience. At the same time, policymakers and other stakeholders are placing greater emphasis on institutional mechanisms—such as legislation, regulatory frameworks, and governance systems—that establish the necessary foundation for advancing sustainable development. Hence, sustainability has become an essential aspect of the global economy, gaining significant recognition from governments, international organizations, legal frameworks, and businesses. According to the United Nations, sustainability refers to fulfilling present needs while ensuring that future generations are equally able to meet theirs. This principle is closely connected to ecological preservation, social justice, and economic stability. Attaining global sustainability necessitates strong legislative frameworks and considerable financial investments to facilitate the shift toward a climate-resilient, low-carbon economy.

The objective of this study is to explore the Quran's emphasis on sustainability and environmentally conscious practices. The findings provide meaningful insights and encourage stakeholders to integrate these principles into their strategic planning, decision-making, and implementation

processes. By contributing to the existing body of literature, this research seeks to influence both national policies and individual actions through the Quran's connection to sustainability.

## 2.0 Review of the Literature

### 2.1 Conceptualization of the Quran

The Quran is regarded as the divine message of Islam, disclosed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over 23 years (Rahman, 2009). It functions as the principal religious text for more than 1.8 billion Muslims globally, directing their spiritual, social, and legal dimensions of existence (Nasr, 2015). Researchers have examined its language complexity, structure, and argumentative style, highlighting its unmatched eloquence and divine provenance (Saeed, 2008).

Muslims regard the Holy Quran as the direct and literal revelation from God and the supreme source of spiritual and moral guidance for followers of Islam around the world. With its 114 chapters (Surahs) and numerous verses (Ayahs), the Quran stands as the foundational guide for leading an Islamic way of life. Prior studies (MacPhee, 2003; Laukas et al., 2010; Aboul-Enien, 2015; Hussain, 2013; Mahjoob et al., 2016; Iesazadeh & Salimi, 2014) have identified the Quran's positive influence across a range of areas, such as public health, maternity and child care, spiritual enrichment, mental health, cardiovascular function, and the promotion of nutritious food and sound dietary behaviours.

The Quran was initially conveyed orally and subsequently collated into a written format under Abu Bakr's (R.A.) caliphate, with the definitive standardized version formed under Caliph Uthman (R.A.) (Cook, 2000). Historical research substantiates that the preservation of the Quran is unmatched, with little textual alterations throughout the ages (Puin, 1996). Progress in manuscript examination, particularly about early Quranic codices, has bolstered the legitimacy and coherence of the text (Graham, 2000).

The Quran has significantly influenced Islamic culture, impacting religion, law, ethics, and social standards (Denny, 1989). Islamic scholars have produced comprehensive tafsir literature to elucidate its meanings, including linguistic and contextual studies (Ibn Kathir, 1373; Al-Tabari, 923). Furthermore, the Quran has catalyzed progress in calligraphy, art, and education throughout Islamic history (Blair, 2006).

### 2.1.1 Depiction of nature in the Quran

Since ancient times, humans have sought to understand their surroundings through reasoning, debate, and traditional practices, such as creating fire by rubbing stones. In today's era, scientists use structured methods to study the environment, seeking to gain a clear, well-organized, and objective understanding of physical phenomena. Science explores the roles and functions of different life forms, the occurrence of natural events, and the laws and patterns that govern them (Rahman, 2007). Interestingly, the Quran also contains many general references to these phenomena. On numerous occasions, it calls upon humanity to explore the physical world and contemplate the signs of the universe (al-ayat al-kawniyah) with the guidance of knowledge.

The Quran makes frequent mention of natural elements—stars, rivers, mountains, plants, animals, birds, bees, and more—encouraging people to learn from them. For example, in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's (2001) translation, Allah asks:

"Do they not observe the camels, how they are created? And the sky, how it is elevated? And the mountains, how they are set firm? And the earth, how it is laid out?" (Qur'an 88:17-20)

According to Ozdemir (1998), many early Meccan chapters of the Quran invite reflection on the heavens, the earth, and the natural environment, transforming the pagan Arab view—which regarded

nature as lifeless and purposeless—into one rooted in meaning and divine creation. Iqbal (1958) similarly notes that the earliest revelations aimed to awaken in humans a deep awareness of their relationship with both God and the universe. This shows that the Quran offers a clear perspective on the human connection to the Creator and the natural world.

Through its repeated encouragement to study nature, the Quran seeks to cultivate an attentive and thoughtful individual who understands viewing natural phenomena through a divine lens. This is illustrated in the verse: "Our Lord! You have created all this not for nothing! Glory to You!" (Quran 3:191), which calls believers to contemplate creation, seek the true purpose of life, and worship Allah alone. Scientific inquiry, when guided by such principles, can also protect humans from Prejudice.

Fathi Osman points out that natural phenomena are a major theme in the Quran, which urges reflection and scientific observation to understand them. The Quran links the faith in God's Oneness (tawhid) to the study of the universe's physical and biological systems, their unchanging laws, and their harmony. From this balance, the Quran draws the argument for the Creator's unity, attributes, and relationship with creation (Osman, 1997).

The Quran teaches that the universe's order and biodiversity are not self-generated. Rather, Allah is the Creator and Sustainer of all life. Kamal Hassan (1994) emphasizes that existence itself is the product of the Creator's will and design. As stated in the Quran (7:54), Allah fashioned the heavens and the earth in six days, set His authority over them, alternates between night and day, and directs the sun, moon, and stars by His command. Sayyid Qutb (2001) explains that everything belongs to God alone and that those who reflect on His creation recognize His control over the universe, leading them to accept His authority and implement Islamic principles in life.

The Arabic term for creation, khalq, implies careful design and calculation (Izzi Dien, 2000). Allah's creative power is described in verses such as: "He created all things and has full knowledge of all things... He has power to dispose of all affairs" (Quran 6:101, 102). Ibn Kathir (1997) explains that badi' in this verse refers to Allah as the Originator who brings all things into existence without precedent. Worship, including the five daily prayers, strengthens a believer's awareness of God and deters them from actions that harm the environment. Ibn Kathir further connects divine guardianship (wakil) with attributes such as the Protector (Hafiz), the Watcher (Raqib), and the Organizer of all affairs (al-Muddabir)

Osman (1997) adds that the perfect order in creation reflects God's glory and should inspire Muslims to seek knowledge of their Creator through environmental reflection. Without religious guidance, however, people may overlook the divine significance of these signs. Rahman (2007) maintains that true Muslim scientists approach research with the principle of tawhid, seeing scientific inquiry not as an end in itself but as a way to recognize Allah's signs.

According to Nasr (1997a, b), the role of humans as God's vicegerents (khalifatullah) has divine purpose only when they submit to Allah's authority (al-'ubudiyyah). As servants of Allah ('abdullah), they receive His grace; as vicegerents, they are entrusted with spreading His blessings and caring for the environment in line with Islamic values. Those who reject this responsibility risk causing environmental harm.

From the Islamic perspective, the human–environment relationship is grounded in tawhid. Recognizing the Oneness of Allah unites human efforts under His command, extending worship beyond rituals to include environmental care (Izzi Dien, 2000). Osman critiques modern science for

its agnostic approach, which attributes the universe's order to natural law rather than divine will. Rahman stresses that Muslim scientists should aim to understand Allah through their study of nature. The Quran does not conflict with scientific explanations of natural laws but differs in attributing them to divine origin rather than self-sustaining nature (Masri, 1992). An example is the verse describing how Allah moves clouds, joins them, forms rain, and sends it where He wills (Quran 24:43). This process—evaporation, condensation, wind patterns—follows precise laws, revealing not randomness but divine wisdom. Osman (1997) observes that humans often take these phenomena for granted, failing to appreciate their harmony and order. The Quran, however, guides believers to reflect on such signs, leading to the belief in a single, all-powerful Creator whose wisdom governs the vast and coordinated universe.

### 2.2 Sustainability: Balancing People, Planet, and Progress

The inaugural worldwide United Nations Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm in 1972, the first meeting focused on the environmental effects of human actions and represented an initial effort to balance economic development with environmental sustainability, which was traditionally seen as conflicting (Caldwell, 1984). A key consequence of this meeting was the introduction of the idea of "environmentally sound development," which, by 1973, had evolved into the term "eco-development" (Mebratu, 1998; Clinton, 1977). In 1978, Ignacy Sachs introduced the concept of "eco-development" as a strategy aimed at harmonizing social and economic objectives with environmentally sustainable practices, all while upholding a commitment to future generations. It also emphasized the need for a transition toward "another kind of qualitative growth" (Glaeser, 1984, p. 25).

A prominent definition of sustainability was provided by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, describing it as an advancement that satisfies current needs without threatening the capacity of subsequent generations to fulfil their demands. Although the concept was initially rooted in environmental concerns, sustainable development has since expanded to encompass diverse expectations for progress. As noted by Kates et al. (2008), the challenges associated with sustainable development are as multifaceted and intricate as the wide-ranging diversity found within human societies and natural ecosystems.

The term "to sustain" generally implies maintaining certain aspects over time, while "development" is subject to numerous meanings influenced by values, interests, and disciplinary perspectives. Despite these variations, the concept of sustainable development universally conveys notions of desirability and responsibility, encouraging reflection on shared obligations and potential pathways for progress (Stirling, 2009). A key factor in the widespread adoption and modern interpretation of sustainability is the notion of the triple bottom line, propounded by Elkington (1997), which encompasses three fundamental pillars: people, profit, and planet. Following the 2002 World Summit, this framework came to represent the balanced integration of economic, environmental, and social performance. These three dimensions are inherently interconnected, continuously influencing one another through mutual causality and positive feedback (McKelvey, 2002). Essentially, they serve as "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" (UN General Assembly, 2005) capable of being implemented in diverse settings and over different periods (Wise, 2016).

According to Brown et al. (1987), sustainability is gaining growing recognition as a central goal in both development and environmental management. However, they point out that its meaning varies across disciplines and contexts, whether the focus is social, economic, or ecological. Over recent

decades, numerous definitions of "sustainability" and "sustainable development" have emerged, with the concepts often described as complex, debated, and at times even contradictory (Lozano, 2008; Hussey et al., 2001; Baker, 2006).

Following the Brundtland Report (1987), the concept of sustainability has expanded to encompass multiple dimensions, placing pressure on organizations to change not only their operations but also how they report their activities, shifting attention beyond purely economic outcomes (Delai & Takahashi, 2011; Choi & Ng, 2011). This broader perspective is often described as the "triple bottom line," which incorporates economic, environmental, and social dimensions (Choi & Ng, 2011; Vos, 2007). These three pillars remain a primary concern for policymakers and analysts working toward regional development (Galdeano-Gomez et al., 2013).

Likewise, these dimensions, Brundtland (1987) also identified the institutional aspect as a vital component of sustainable development. This study considers all four dimensions—environmental, economic, social, and institutional—when examining the link between sustainability and investment in, as well as the adoption of, green innovations. While the institutional dimension overlaps with the others, it is treated separately here due to its crucial role in enabling and supporting long-term sustainable development (Pfahl, 2005).

Sustainable business practices have gained significant attention from both current and future stakeholders because they contribute to the long-term stability and prosperity of businesses, along with their related economic, social, and environmental systems (Landrum & Edwards, 2009). However, many organizations struggle to transition from a conventional emphasis on financial success to a greater extent comprehensive strategy that integrates societal and ecological sustainability (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). To achieve business sustainability, three key performance

criteria must be taken into account. The first is financial sustainability, which reflects a company's ability to fulfill its current and future commitments. The second, social sustainability, involves meeting human needs and maintaining strong social relationships over time (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017). The third is environmental sustainability, which focuses on protecting and restoring the natural environment for future generations.

The institutional dimension of sustainability is closely linked to the governmental side of sustainable development, encompassing factors such as political frameworks and regulatory measures. Within the broader discussion of how to put sustainable development into practice, this aspect has received comparatively less attention in research (Pfahl, 2005). Institutional sustainability covers elements such as relevant laws, local community policies, and governmental support for development projects (Mamede & Gomez, 2014; Lozano, 2015; Hacatoglu et al., 2013). Businesses that are grounded in strong conceptual frameworks often begin to incorporate social and environmental sustainability principles progressively, influenced by institutional factors like legislative changes, evolving business models, and the creation of indirect employment opportunities.

The 1972 Stockholm conference marked the first global gathering to address the environmental consequences of human activity and represented a pioneering effort to reconcile economic growth with environmental protection—two objectives often seen as conflicting (Caldwell, 1984). One of the key outcomes of this conference was the introduction of the idea of "environmentally sound development," which by 1973 evolved into the term "eco-development" (Clinton, 1977; Mebratu, 1998). In 1978, Ignacy Sachs defined "Eco-development" as a development approach that aims to harmonize social and economic objectives with environmentally responsible management, driven by concern for future generations, and promoting "a new form of qualitative growth" (Glaeser, 1984).

Recognized as one of the early pioneers of ecological economics, Sachs, in his role as an adviser to the UNEP, played a significant role in advancing this growth-critical perspective within policy debates during the 1970s (Martinez-Alier, 2015; Gomez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015). Economic sustainability involves the actions taken by societies and organizations to manage their impact—and that of their business networks—on the planet and its ecosystems (Warner & Svensson, 2014; Svensson & Wagner, 2015). Similarly, Sheth et al. (2011) highlighted that the economic dimension of sustainability is outlined through two main aspects: one focused on traditional financial performance, such as cost reduction, and the other addressing the concerns of external stakeholders, including enhancements in economic well-being and living standards.

Environmental sustainability is a core principle of overall sustainability. It emphasizes that meeting our present needs should not undermine the well-being of the ecology. It advocates for the conservation of ecosystems to ensure that they remain viable for future generations (Kaswan et al., 2019). The continuous rise in pollution and the depletion of natural resources have made environmental protection a critical necessity, demanding the full commitment of both businesses and governments (Song et al., 2018). As a result, market forces and stakeholders are exerting growing pressure to implement environmentally sustainable practices (Neutzling et al., 2018; Aron & Molina, 2019; Tariq et al., 2017). From an environmental perspective on sustainable development, significant advancements have occurred in technologies and services designed to minimize harmful ecological effects. These include improvements in waste management, the utilization of natural ecological processes such as the reuse of nutrients, and a wider commitment to safeguarding nature (Delai & Takahashi, 2011; Pretty et al., 2011; Galdeano-Gomez et al., 2013). Since the 1980s, environmental sustainability has gained increasing prominence among societies and organizations,

leading to heightened awareness and action on environmental issues. In response, organizations are encouraged to invest in, develop, and adopt eco-technologies and innovations that promote optimum resource usage while enhancing ecological performance and overall productivity (Khan et al., 2016; Galdeano-Gomez et al., 2013).

The social aspect focuses on the well-being of individuals, organizations, and communities. One of the key challenges in this dimension is achieving an equilibrium of social and individual human requirements, the environment's capabilities, and economic flourishing (Khan et al., 2016; Choi & Ng, 2001; Delai & Takahashi). It is also linked to an organization's economic productivity and competitiveness, environmental responsibility, and socio-economic dynamics, prioritizing human capital enhancement, employment generation, and advancements in Well-being and protection (Khan et al., 2016; Galdeano-Gomez et al., 2013).

Ensuring the protection of natural resources is essential for sustaining their availability while promoting growth. Prophet Muhammad emphasized the importance of sustainable agricultural practices, ethical treatment of animals, conservation of natural resources, and overall environmental protection (Musa 2002). His teachings encourage environmental responsibility, as reflected in one of his sayings: When a Muslim plants a tree or scatters seeds, and it provides food for a bird, human, or animal, it is considered an act of charity (Ibn Kathir, 2012). Prophet Muhammad stressed the significance of conserving natural resources, promoting moderation, and avoiding wastefulness or excess. Additionally, he regarded activities such as afforestation, river purification, well excavation, and other advantageous activities as continuous acts of charity (Morsi 1999).

Prophet Muhammad is believed to have designated preservation areas south of Medina, where the Prophet enforced restrictions on hunting during a specific period within a four-mile area, and the

removal of trees and vegetation was banned within a 12-mile circumference. Creating these safeguarded zones highlights the Prophet's commitment to managing natural resources sustainably, safeguarding the ecology, and preserving farming territories (Shihadah 2005; Safa, 2010). Islam prohibits the ecologically irresponsible and overly exploitative practices, even during wartime. As God's Messenger, Prophet Muhammad consistently gathered his followers for a final assembly before entering battle, emphasizing these principles: "Do not kill women, children, or the elderly, and do not destroy palm trees or agricultural produce" (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr 2000 & al-Buyhaqi, 1994).

Islamic teachings emphasize ecological preservation through principles such as moderation in consumption, balance across all activities, and contributing to overall sustainability. The Qur'an encourages responsible use of resources, stating: O descendants of Adam, wear appropriate clothing when going to worship. Eat and drink in moderation, but avoid excess, for God does not favor those who are wasteful. (Qur'an 7:31).

Similarly, the Qur'an highlights the blessings of nature, mentioning both tended and natural gardens filled with palm trees, diverse crops, olives, and pomegranates, alike in form but differing in flavor. It warns against excess and urges believers to pay their harvest dues while avoiding profligacy:

He is the One who produces both trellised and untended gardens, along with date palms, a variety of crops with differing forms and tastes, as well as olives and pomegranates—some alike, others distinct. Eat of their fruits when they ripen, and give what is due at harvest time. Do not be wasteful, for He does not love those who squander. (Qur'an 6:141).

Islamic teachings emphasize that all forms of life, not only humans, are composed of the fundamental components of nature, such as soil, water, fire, forests, and light. The faith strongly advocates for the preservation of ecology, and careful & responsible application of natural assets. Scholars, including

Samira Idllalène, have suggested that by employing ijtihād (independent legal reasoning) to address contemporary challenges like ecological challenges, Islam can offer effective and holistic solutions to many of humanity's current environmental concerns (Shihatah, 2001; Idllalene, 2021; Hasan, 2020; Ignatow, 2007).

The foundational principle guiding Islamic principles of environmental sustainability emphasizes the role of humans as guardians of the Earth. As a caliph or steward, an individual is responsible for utilizing God's creation without excess, recognizing that these resources are not solely for personal use but must also serve society and future generations. It is his duty to take all necessary measures to protect and maintain these resources and ensure they are passed down in optimal condition. This concept is in harmony with Brundtland's definition of sustainable development, which stresses fulfilling current needs while preserving assets for subsequent generations (Purvis & Grainger, 2004, p. 6; Afgan, 2011, p. 459; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

### 2.2.1 Weak and Strong Sustainability: A Comparative Perspective.

Sustainability ultimately concerns the legacy we leave to future generations—our natural resources, environmental quality, and capital assets. While some depletion of natural resources is unavoidable, economists such as Robert Solow argue that this can be offset by growth in other forms of capital. In contrast, other scholars reject the notion that capital can replace essential natural resources, insisting instead that sustainability requires the preservation of those resources critical to human survival (Daly, 1997).

Pearce et al. (1989) present these two perspectives clearly:

(i) Future generations should inherit a combined stock of man-made and environmental assets at

least equal to that received by the previous generation; (ii) Future generations should inherit an undiminished stock of environmental assets.

These have come to be known as "weak" and "strong" sustainability, respectively (Ayres et al., 1998). Although the distinction has fuelled considerable debate (Solow,1997; Stiglitz, 1997), both concepts have merit. Certain resources should be protected under strong sustainability, while others may fall under weak sustainability, depending on the extent to which they can be replaced by capital. For instance, the depletion of fossil fuels is often treated as an issue of weak sustainability—if alternative energy sources are developed, it is not necessary to pass on the same stock of petroleum to future generations. However, species extinction is irreversible with current scientific capabilities, making it a strong sustainability concern.

Strong sustainability is often conceptualized as a set of thresholds that must not be crossed. In environmental impact assessments, any proposed activity must remain within these limits. Setting such thresholds depends partly on societal and political preferences, but also on ecological resilience—how well a system, such as an ecosystem, can recover from shocks or stress. Within this "safe operating space" defined by strong sustainability, weak sustainability serves as a way to evaluate and compare policy outcomes. If strong sustainability conditions are satisfied, the most desirable outcome would be one that maximizes both natural and human-made assets, such as environmental resources, scenic landscapes, cultural heritage, technological innovation, and infrastructure.

Economists are familiar with this layered approach: in economic modelling, agents operate under fixed legal constraints, and strong sustainability can be considered one such rule. Both weak and strong sustainability have a place in environmental assessment, though disagreements persist over

substitutability. Ecologists and other natural scientists typically advocate for strong sustainability, highlighting the irreplaceable functions of ecosystems, while economists tend to favour weak sustainability, as it offers greater flexibility for economic modelling. As critics sometimes point out, strong sustainability limits the range of economic trade-offs, while proponents of weak sustainability stress its ability to weigh costs against benefits.

For example, if the costs of mitigating climate change were extremely high—hypothetically, reducing global economic growth by 1 percentage point annually to prevent a 0.05°C rise in temperature over 50 years—policymakers might choose instead to invest in land purchases for nature conservation. The most critical factors in assessing sustainability are the thresholds for strong sustainability, the social discount rate applied, and the balance between material benefits and intrinsic values.

The case for strong sustainability rests on two main principles: ecosystem services and stewardship. From the ecosystem services perspective, human survival depends on nature's provision of vital processes, and disrupting these systems carries grave risks (De Groot et al., 2002). The stewardship argument is ethical, asserting that humans have no right to destroy the life-support systems of other species and should safeguard the beauty and diversity of the natural world for present and future enjoyment. Although no policy can entirely halt species extinction, habitat loss, or the disappearance of valued landscapes, the aim of strong sustainability is different—it is to ensure that any proposed action is evaluated in advance for its impact on natural resources. Policymakers can determine which impacts are unacceptable, and where some degradation is permitted, ensure that gains in overall well-being offset it.

**2.3 Quran and Sustainability: Spiritual Principles for Environmental Stewardship**

The modern concept of sustainability has faced various criticisms, including inconsistencies in its interpretation, intellectual contradictions, lack of comprehensiveness and clarity (Hilary, n.d.; Lippert, 2004; Odeh, 1991). Some scholars, however, argue that sustainability should not be defined too rigidly. Its strength, to some extent, lies in its broad and flexible nature, which enables people with opposing views within the environment–development discourse to reach mutual understanding without feeling that their stances have been compromised (Arndt, 1981, cited in Sarachchandra, 1991).

The Islamic worldview offers a clearer and more grounded approach, as it is built upon two fundamental sources — the Al-Qur'an and the Al-Sunnah (Al-Quran, 5:3; 6:38). As Kamali (1991) notes, compared to its Western counterpart, Islamic jurisprudence shows stronger stability and continuity in its values, principles, and institutions. Conversely, Western legal systems are primarily built on rationality, tradition, judicial precedent, morality, and, to a lesser extent, religion. In conventional sustainability models, the three pillars — social, economic, and environmental — are typically viewed about each other. The Islamic perspective, however, integrates these pillars within a broader framework that emphasizes the inseparable link between religious and worldly affairs. Here, the environment is understood holistically, encompassing human social well-being and economic activities. Central to this view is the role of human beings, who, as khalifah (stewards) on earth, hold the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the balance and sustainability of life.

Like air and water, soil is essential for the survival of humans and all other beings created by Allah. The Almighty designed the earth to provide sustenance for all living beings, making the soil fertile so that plants — the primary food source for many animals—could grow. He also created mountains to collect and hold rainwater, as mentioned in the Qur'an: "Did We not make the earth a container for the

living and the dead? We placed towering mountains upon it and gave you fresh water to drink" (Surah 77:19-20). Similarly, Allah says: "A sign for them is the dead land — We revive it and bring forth from it grain, which they eat. We have placed in it gardens of date palms and grapevines, and caused springs to gush forth, so they may eat of its fruit and enjoy what their hands have made. Will they not then be grateful?" (Surah 36:33 35).

As Bagader et al. (1994) note, gratitude to Allah should be shown by safeguarding His blessings, including maintaining soil fertility and protecting it from erosion. Therefore, in activities such as farming, grazing, forestry, and mining, it is essential to avoid practices that degrade the soil and instead adopt methods that preserve and enhance its productivity. Damaging this divine provision, upon which countless living beings depend, amounts to denying Allah's favor. Since any harm to the soil's integrity or quality can lead to the loss of life, such acts are strictly prohibited.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) emphasized the importance of keeping the earth clean in his Hadith: "When one of you urinates, let him seek a place where it can be easily absorbed" (Abu Dawud) — meaning to choose a spot where traces can be quickly removed to prevent pollution. In another narration, he warned: "Beware of the three causes of curse: relieving oneself in watering places, along pathways, or in shaded areas" (Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah). The Messenger of Allah also taught that the entire earth has been made a pure place of worship, and therefore must be treated with the same respect as a mosque, free from impurity or contamination.

These Islamic teachings demonstrate that Islam is inherently eco-conscious, advocating the sustainable use of natural resources to achieve environmental balance. By applying these principles, societies can contribute significantly to both adapting to and mitigating today's environmental challenges, as highlighted by Flower (2014).

Zafar (2019) emphasized key elements within Islam's rich heritage that stress the significance of protecting the environment and conserving natural resources. One of the core ideas discussed is "taskheer," which refers to the human responsibility to utilize natural resources wisely and without causing harm. The study also explored the principle of istikhlaf (trusteeship), addressing various forms of environmental corruption as referenced in the Quran. Additionally, the research examined prophetic teachings that discourage the excessive use and misuse of natural resources.

Smith (2002) offered a comprehensive review of literature related to Islam's role in promoting sustainable development, environmental responsibility, and conservation ethics. Similarly, Daud et al. (2015) examined the Islamic perspective on the environment, highlighting that all elements of creation have been made to serve humanity. However, Islam also calls on its followers to manage and use nature responsibly and moderately, ensuring its benefits are preserved for human use. Ultimately, safeguarding the environment is not only a religious obligation in Islam but also an economic, political, and developmental necessity. Al Jayyousi (2013) introduced an innovative and holistic Islamic framework for understanding the environment and sustainability, centered around four foundational principles: wisdom (hikma), justice (adl), public welfare (maslaha), and innovation (ijtihad). His model views sustainability not as a fixed outcome or product, but as an ongoing process and a lifestyle aimed at preserving ecological balance. He argues for a re-evaluation of the notion of sustainability, emphasizing the requirement for new ways to measure progress that go beyond Gross National Product (GNP). This includes tackling issues such as poverty and environmental preservation. According to Al Jayyousi, the Islamic worldview offers valuable insights and a viable framework for addressing these global challenges.

### 2.3.1 Quranic Principles for Preserving the Environment

The environment refers to the intricate combination of physical, chemical, and biological elements that affect an organism or an ecological community, shaping its structure and determining its survival (Homar & Thomas, as cited in Muinal, 2004). This encompasses essential natural resources like soil, plants, animals, water, air, and sunlight, all of which influence living beings

From an Islamic perspective, these resources were created by Allah with a clear objective (Al-Quran, 38:27) — primarily to sustain human life on earth (Al-Quran, 2:60) and to serve as a test of humanity's moral responsibility in fulfilling its role as a trustee. Unfortunately, the current state of the biosphere signals severe distress, struggling with issues such as resource depletion, ozone layer damage, acid rain, biodiversity loss, and the toxicity of air, land, rivers, and oceans (Brunckhorst, 2000, as cited in Muinul, 2004).

Islam strongly warns against corruption and wrongdoing on earth (Al-Quran, 7:56), emphasizing that such actions will ultimately harm humankind itself. As the Qur'an states, "Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people's hands have wrought, so that Allah may let them experience a portion of what they have done, in hopes that they will turn back" (Al-Quran, 30:41). This "experience of their deeds" often takes the shape of environmental disasters and natural calamities.

The Holy Qur'an states that every creature in the universe—whether familiar to us or beyond our knowledge—fulfills two main purposes: a spiritual one, as a sign of the Creator's existence, wisdom, power, and mercy, and a social one, by serving humanity and other living beings (Nana, 2019). In His wisdom, Allah has arranged creation so that all beings support and serve one another. This divine order, in which each element fulfills its assigned function and holds its value, forms the foundation of the ecological balance that sustains life. Any form of the misuse, depletion, destruction, or contamination of natural resources is thus a breach of this divine balance. Since human greed and

short-term interests often lead to actions that disrupt this order, protecting these resources from misuse becomes a moral and religious obligation (Bagader et al., 1994).

In this divine arrangement, while creatures are meant to benefit humanity, the Qur'an does not state that their sole purpose is to serve humans. Some Muslim scholars emphasize that their existence has value beyond human benefit (Kader et al., 1984). This understanding is reflected in the Qur'anic verses: "He has placed at your service the ships that sail the seas by His command, the rivers for your benefit, the sun and the moon, each following its course, and has made the day and night work for you. He has bestowed upon you all that you have asked of Him. If you were to try to count the blessings of Allah, you could not number them. Yet man is unjust and ungrateful" (Surah 14: 32–34).

Protecting the environment should not be driven solely by human needs, because many of the benefits it provides are beyond our understanding. If we only safeguard what appears useful to us, we risk disturbing the ecological balance established by Allah, degrading creation, losing countless blessings, and overlooking numerous signs of His greatness (Bagader et al., 1994). However, when preservation is based on recognizing the intrinsic value of the environment as a divine sign, no part of creation is neglected. Every creature, in its way, glorifies the Creator and reflects His wisdom, mercy, and power. Therefore, no species or element of the universe should be destroyed. Humans and animals alike share an equal right to benefit from the earth's resources, and humans are forbidden from depleting or damaging them. Instead, they are entrusted to use these resources wisely. In Islam, key environmental components that are to be protected include water, air, animals, plants, and soil.

### 2.3.2 Social Sustainability in the Light of the Quran

Human beings lie at the heart of all development efforts. Socially, they are created as collective beings — comprising males and females, organized into tribes and nations — to foster mutual

understanding. However, Islam teaches that the true measure of a person's worth is their piety and devotion to Allah Almighty (Al-Quran, 49:13). This principle forms the foundation of the Islamic social framework, which also shapes human interaction with the ecology.

As Omar (1988) notes, by granting humanity unique blessings and authority, Allah has elevated human beings above all other creatures, and this honour carries with it a corresponding responsibility. In the context of social sustainability, Islam nurtures a Muslim's character in stages — starting with the individual through the guidance of fiqh al-ibadah (Islamic personal law), then extending to the family unit under fiqh al-munakahat (Islamic family law), and further into the sphere of economic transactions via fiqh al-muamalat (Islamic commercial law). In addition, Islam addresses the administration of justice by prescribing punishments for offenses under fiqh al-jinayat (Islamic criminal law). Together, these interconnected aspects form a holistic approach through which Islam.

### 2.3.3 Quranic Perspectives on Economic Sustainability

Islam encourages both social and economic growth (Al-Quran, 8:53) and firmly opposes poverty, viewing it as a condition close to disbelief (kufr). To address socio-economic challenges, Islam offers effective mechanisms such as waqf (endowment) and zakat (almsgiving), which are rooted in the principles of sharing and compassion in wealth distribution. These values also extend to all forms of trade and commercial transactions in Islam. Such economic activities generally take place within cities, spaces shaped by land-use planning and the constructed environment.

As Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1991) observes, the four meanings of din — indebtedness, submission, the exercise of sound judgment, and natural inclination — can only be fully realized within organized societies engaged in commercial life, typically in towns and cities. Cities not only

provide space but also supply raw materials and infrastructure, such as housing, parks, and transportation, to facilitate economic activities. However, the environmental outcomes of such activities depend heavily on human behavior. Overexploitation of natural resources can lead to serious consequences like ozone depletion, ice-cap melting, global warming, rising sea levels, and deforestation. Socially, it can result in reduced quality of life and increased inequality.

The interconnection between the environment, society, and economy is therefore undeniable. From a sustainability perspective, economic development involves utilizing natural resources in a balanced manner to fulfill human needs and enhance well-being. These activities should be conducted with strong moral values and Islamic principles, as they involve managing Allah's creations. Humanity's role is that of a trustee, entrusted with this responsibility as outlined in the Qur'an (Al-Quran, 33:72). Recognizing this helps guide our thinking and actions toward economic sustainability, which is not merely about material gains, but also about fulfilling spiritual and non-material needs, while ensuring long-term well-being for all.

**2.3.4 Quran verses with citations relating to sustainability**

| Topic | Citation | Verse |
|---|---|---|
| **Management of water resources/Conservation of water** | Surah Al-Mu'minun (The Believers) 23:18 | We have provided precipitation from the sky in precise quantities and allowed it to be absorbed and stored within the Earth. |
| | | He has made the earth a |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Biodiversity/Plant conservation/Conservation biology** | Surah Al-Rahman (The Most Merciful) 55:10<br><br>Surah Al-An'am (The Livestock) 6:38 | home for all living creatures.<br><br>All living organisms on Earth, even every bird that soars with its wings, are part of communities like yours. |
| **Environmental justice/Earth jurisprudence** | Surah Hud (Hud the Prophet) 11:85<br><br>Surah An-Nisa (The Women) 4:8 | O my people, provide accurate measurements and weights with justice, and do not withhold what is rightfully due to others. Do not cause harm or spread corruption on the earth.<br>When distributing possessions in the presence |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | of relatives, orphans, and the needy, make sure to provide for them and treat them with generosity and justice. |
| **Environmental stewardship** | Surah Al-An'am (The Livestock) 6:165<br>Surah Al-A'raf (The Heights) 7:74 | It is He who has made you vicegerent over the earth.<br>Remember His blessings and do not cause harm or spread corruption on the earth. |
| **Waste minimization/Overconsumption** | Surah Al-A'raf (The Heights) 7:31 | Consume food and drink in moderation, and avoid wastefulness, as the Lord does not approve of those who waste resources. |
| **Stable ecosystem** | Surah Al-Qamar (The Moon) 54:49<br>Surah Al-A'raf (The Heights) 7:85 | Truly, we have fashioned all things with exact balance and precise measure.<br>Do not propagate evil on the planet after it has been established, set in order, and perfected. This is for your benefit, and it will be best for |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | you if you have faith. |
| **Systems ecology/Planetary homeostasis** | Surah Ghafir (The Forgiver) 40:57 | The formation of the cosmos and the terrestrial realm is undoubtedly considerably more significant than the creation of humanity, but most people do not realize this. |

**Source: (Aboul-Enein, 2018)**

### 3.0 Research Methodology

This research employed a qualitative methodology to explore the relationship between the Quran and its verses with sustainability. Employing a grounded theory approach, it gathered in-depth data and developed concepts through an inductive process. As an exploratory study, its objective was to highlight the Quran's emphasis on sustainable practices by a thorough analysis of the current body of literature. The inductive approach facilitated a deeper theoretical understanding of the topic. To construct a theoretical framework, secondary data was analyzed, incorporating an extensive literature review from scholarly journals, the Quran, and hadith related to sustainability. The study focused on the terminology and conceptual foundations of both the Quran and sustainability, along with their

contributions to economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Relevant literature was sourced from databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using keywords including "Quran," "Hadith," "Sustainability," and "Sustainable Development." The research identified commonalities and homogeneity to derive meaningful conclusions. Nevertheless, similar to other studies, this research has certain limitations, such as its qualitative nature, the absence of hypothesis testing, and the exclusion of other critical factors. Future research should address these limitations by incorporating additional aspects into its analyses.

**4.0 Findings:** The reviewed literature highlighted probable findings and provided valuable insights for future research.

- The research revealed that historical studies confirm that the Quran has been remarkably well-preserved, with minimal textual changes. Advances in manuscript analysis, especially concerning early Quranic codices, have further strengthened the text's authenticity and consistency.
- This study disclosed that the notion of the triple bottom line, including three core elements—people, profit, and the planet—serves as an essential part in the broad acceptance and contemporary understanding of sustainability. These three aspects are deeply interrelated, constantly shaping each other through reciprocal influence and positive reinforcement.
- This study determined that sustainability is centered on three essential components. The first, financial sustainability, represents a company's capacity to meet both present and future obligations. The second, social sustainability, pertains to addressing human needs and fostering lasting social

| |
|---|
| connections. The third, environmental sustainability, emphasizes the preservation and restoration of the natural environment for future generations. |
| • The literature emphasized that Prophet Muhammad advocated for the preservation of natural resources, encouraged moderation, and discouraged wastefulness or excess. Furthermore, he viewed actions like tree planting, river cleaning, well digging, and other beneficial efforts as ongoing forms of charity. |
| • The literature review revealed that Islam prohibits unethical and excessive environmental exploitation, even in times of conflict. Its teachings promote environmental conservation by advocating for moderation in consumption, balance in all activities, and a commitment to sustainability. |
| • The review highlighted that the core principle underpinning Islamic teachings on environmental sustainability is guardianship. As a steward or caliph, an individual is entrusted with the responsible use of God's creation, making sure resources are used responsibly and conserved for both current society and future generations. |
| • The study found that the Quran stresses the human responsibility to take all necessary actions to safeguard and sustain natural resources, ensuring they are preserved in the best possible condition for future generations. This principle corresponds with Brundtland's sustainable development emphasizes satisfying present requirements without compromising the ability to succeed generations to fulfill their own. |

## 5.0 Conclusion

This review paper examined the Quran's emphasis on sustainability and environmental responsibility. The findings indicated that the Quran underscores the significance of sustainability, advocates for eco-friendly practices, and promotes a balanced and modest way of life. By incorporating these principles, nations, corporations, and individuals can play a vital role in enhancing sustainability efforts and tackling climate change. Likewise, sustainability is a pressing necessity and has been a key topic of discussion at various significant international and national forums. It is recognized as a fundamental approach to addressing climate challenges while also fostering economic growth. The idea of sustainability encompasses societal, economic, and ecological dimensions, striving to integrate these elements harmoniously to maximize benefits and promote long-term prosperity. The relationship between Quranic commentary and sustainability is crucial for embracing and implementing eco-centric practices, which contribute to holistic development. Furthermore, the involvement of governments, international organizations, and Islamic scholars is vital in advocating for sustainability and spreading the Quran's teachings to cultivate environmental consciousness and a balanced way of life. These lessons should be promoted on a broad scale to enhance public awareness and drive meaningful change. The successful integration of the Quran's commentary and sustainability depends on the collaborative endeavours of all stakeholders, including governments, businesses, and consumers. Through collaboration, it is possible to create a sustainable future that harmonizes economic growth with responsible environmental care.

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