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Influence of Eco-Tafsir among Muslims on Environmental crisis

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Abstract
Environmental crisis is the pressing challenge of our contemporary time. Environmental scientists have tried their best to mitigate this crisis through different technical and policy-based solutions. But environmental science lacks an intrinsic ethics of nature within itself and this can be fulfilled through religions. This study is an attempt to explore how religious theories —particularly those derived from Quran and hadith on environment protection and sustainable resource use— influence Muslim's Environmental attitude and behaviors. We have study this aspect by employing descriptive-analytical approach on environmental crisis, qualitative content analysis for theories developed by Muslim scholars with a quantitative survey on snowball sampling. The data has been collected from 116 Muslims in the form of questionnaire and after analyzing the data it is shown that 1) Muslim audience are highly influenced by religious teaching on the protection and sustainable use of natural resources 2) there is considerable awareness of eco-Tafsir as a distinct interpretative framework among Muslims 3) There is very less program by Muslim organization and Madras to promote environmental ethics and Eco-Tafsir. The study conclude that while religious narrative hold strong potential to shape pro-environmental orientation among Muslims, Institution efforts to translate Eco-Tafsir into practical educational and community programs remains limited.

Keywords: Eco-Tafsir, Environment, Sustainable development.

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Introduction

The biggest crisis of our time is the unethical use of natural resources which leads to environmental degradation. This environmental degradation has jeopardized the earth, vulnerable plants, Animals, insects and other species. The paper primarily deals with the Islamic ethical teaching on environment as articulated in contemporary Islamic eco-Tafsir and its knowledge and influence on Muslim population. The paper is divided in three parts. First part draws the environment crisis in different area. Second part deals with Muslim scholar's development of theories for protection and sustainable use of natural resources based on Quran and hadith. Third part deals with survey based questionnaire among Muslims.

Method

This study adopts mixed-methods design which integrates qualitative textual analysis with quantitative survey research to examine the influence of Eco-Tafsir on Muslim environmental attitudes and behaviors. The design proceeds in three sequential phases. In the first phase we have documented environmental crisis across different area using descriptive-analytical approach. In the second phase we have employed qualitative content analysis for theories developed by Muslim scholars on protection and sustainable use of environment based on Quran and hadith. And in the third phase we have employed snowball survey design with a structured questionnaire administered to a representative sample of Muslims. We have designed questionnaire through Google form and collected data from 116 Muslims through online platform.

Air Pollution

Air pollution is a major global environmental and public-health challenge, with 99% of the world's population exposed to air exceeding WHO guideline levels (WHO, 2022). It contributes substantially to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, lung cancer, and premature mortality, with most deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2024**).** Fine particulate pollution also reduces life expectancy, particularly in highly polluted regions (EPIC, 2024**).** Beyond health, air pollution lowers labor productivity, increases healthcare costs, damages ecosystems, and creates significant economic losses (World Bank, 2022). It is also closely linked with climate change through pollutants such as black carbon, methane, and ozone (IPCC, 2023**).** Household air pollution remains widespread, affecting about 2.1 billion people using polluting cooking fuels and technologies (WHO, 2025).

Water pollution

Water pollution is the major global environmental challenges affecting both human and animal. Water pollution occurs when harmful chemicals, toxins, and other contaminants enter water bodies, degrading water quality and posing significant risks to aquatic ecosystems, biodiversity, and human health. Unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene remain major global health challenges. About 1.7 bil-

lion people use fecally contaminated drinking water, causing over 500,000 diarrheal deaths annually, prompting SDG 6 universal access targets (WHO, 2024; United Nations, 2015). Approximately 10% of the global population lives in countries experiencing high or critical water stress (FAO & UN-Water, 2024). Water pollution degrades aquatic ecosystem, causes biodiversity loss, disrupts food chain, and contaminates fisheries. Pollutants also reduced agricultural productivity, damage livelihood, and limits industrial and recreational water use.

Deforestation

Forests are essential for maintaining biodiversity, regulating climate, protecting water resources, and supporting human well-being (FAO, 2020). However, increasing deforestation and forest degradation are driven by agricultural expansion, logging, grazing, infrastructure development, and fires. Tropical forests remain particularly vulnerable, with cattle ranching contributing substantially to Amazonian forest loss (WWF, 2024)**.** The expansion of cropland, soybean cultivation, and palm-oil production further accelerates forest conversion (FAO & UNEP, 2020**).** Forest fires and deforestation release greenhouse gases, weaken ecosystem resilience, and destroy habitats. Consequently, continued forest loss threatens biodiversity, climate stability, ecosystem services, and sustainable development worldwide.

Plastic Pollution

Plastic pollution is a growing global environmental problem that threatens aquatic ecosystems, biodiversity, climate stability, and freshwater and land resources (UNEP). Millions of tonnes of plastic waste enter rivers, lakes, and oceans annually, increasing environmental contamination. Rapid growth in plastic production has generated billions of tonnes of waste, creating serious challenges for effective waste management (Geyer et al., 2017). Microplastics are widely distributed pollutants that can enter the human body through ingestion, inhalation, and other exposure pathways (Wright et al., 2017). Therefore, plastic pollution poses significant risks to ecosystems, environmental sustainability, and human health**.**

Plastic Waste Generated in India (2016–17 to 2020–21)

Financial Year	Plastic Waste Generated (Tonnes per Annum, TPA)
2016–17	1,568,714
2017–18	660,787
2018–19	3,360,043
2019–20	3,469,780
2020–21	4,126,997

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Global plastic production increased from 2 million metric tonnes in 1950 to 413.8 million metric tonnes in 2023. Meanwhile, 353 million metric tonnes of plastic

waste were generated in 2019, with only 9% recycled, contributing to widespread environmental pollution and ecosystem degradation (OECD, 2022; Plastics Europe, 2024).

Electric vehicles waste material

Although electric vehicles (EVs) generally emit fewer greenhouse gases over their lifetime than conventional internal combustion engine vehicles, they are associated with significant environmental challenges across their life cycle. The extraction of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel contributes to deforestation, habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, groundwater depletion, soil degradation, and heavy metal contamination (International Energy Agency (Feng et al., 2018). [IEA], 2024). Battery manufacturing is energy-intensive and generates substantial carbon emissions, while inadequate recycling infrastructure, hazardous waste, electrolyte leakage, and limited end-of-life management pose additional environmental risks. Furthermore, EV fires caused by thermal runaway can release toxic gases and heavy metals, creating serious health and environmental hazards (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2024; IEA, 2024).

Radioactive waste material

Radioactive waste from nuclear, medical, industrial, and research activities contains long-lived radionuclides that emit harmful ionizing radiation. Improper management can contaminate soil, water, and ecosystems, damaging biodiversity. Human exposure may cause DNA damage, genetic mutations, reproductive problems, and cancer, emphasizing the need for secure long-term storage and disposal (IAEA, 2024; WHO, 2024).

Melting Ice Caps and Sea Level Rise

Indicator	Latest Data
Global mean sea-level rise (1901–2018)	Approximately **0.20 m (20 cm)**
Current rate of sea-level rise (2014–2023)	Approximately **4.7 mm/year** (record high)
Average rate of sea-level rise (1901–1971)	**1.3 mm/year**
Average rate of sea-level rise (1971–2006)	**1.9 mm/year**
Average rate of sea-level rise (2006–2018)	**3.7 mm/year**
Greenland Ice Sheet mass loss	Approximately **270 Gt/year** (2002–2023 average)
Antarctic Ice Sheet mass loss	Approximately **150 Gt/year** (2002–2023 average)
Global glacier mass loss	Approximately **273 Gt/year** (2000–2023 average)

Indicator	Latest Data
Arctic sea ice decline	Approximately **13% per decade** (September minimum since 1979)
Mountain glaciers	Nearly all monitored glaciers worldwide are retreating.

Source: World Meteorological Organization. (2024). ***State of the Global Climate 2024***. Geneva: World Meteorological Organization; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2023). ***Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report***.

The accelerating rise in global sea level, increasing ice-sheet and glacier mass loss, and rapid decline in Arctic sea ice demonstrate the intensifying impacts of climate change on the Earth's cryosphere. These changes threaten coastal ecosystems, freshwater resources, biodiversity, and human settlements, highlighting the urgent need for climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Soil Degradation

Soil degradation reduces fertility, organic matter, biodiversity, and soil structure through erosion, salinization, contamination, compaction, and surface sealing. It weakens carbon storage, disrupts water regulation, and increases vulnerability to climate hazards (FAO & ITPS, 2015)**.** Globally, about 30% of soils are degraded, threatening agriculture, ecosystems, food security, and livelihoods (FAO & ITPS, 2015).

Biodiversity Loss

Biodiversity loss is a major global environmental challenge, threatening ecosystems, livelihoods, and human well-being. Around one million plant and animal species face extinction, driven by habitat destruction, land-use change, overexploitation, pollution, invasive species, and climate change (IPBES, 2019). Declining biodiversity weakens ecosystem resilience and essential services, including food, water, and climate regulation (CBD, 2024).

Theories developed by Muslim scholars

In the above sections we have dealt with serious environmental crisis. Efforts are being made regarding conservation of environment and sustainable development around the world. In this conservation movement Muslim scholars have also tried to contribute for this cause. Muslim scholars on one hand have tried to develop ecological based understanding of Quran, hadith and fiqh in order to abate environment crises. And on the other hand they have tried to develop an integrated picture of metaphysics, Nature and human. Nomanul puts it in this way "With regard to the question of the cosmos and its relationship to human beings, one notes that the Quran moves at three levels simultaneously—metaphysical, naturalistic, and human. But when one examines these levels in the totality of the Quran, they turn out to interdigitate: on the one hand, the Quranic notion of the natural world and the natural environment is semantically and logically bound up with the very concept of God; on the other hand, this notion is linked with the general principle of the very creation of humanity. The three levels of Quranic discourse, therefore,

do not manifest any independent conceptual self-sufficiency of, or a conceptual discontinuity between, the three realms of the divine, of nature, and of humanity (Haq 2001, 6) i.e. Nature in its Quranic conception is anchored in the divine.
Kamali (Kamali 2012, 27-29) says Environmental discussions became important during a period of rapid expansion, heavy industrial activity, rising carbon emissions, and harmful uses of technology. According to some scholar this is the root cause for environment crises (Islam 2012, 2 & Bakar 2006, 1), The Industrial Revolution and modernity have created a troublesome relationship between human beings and the ecosystem, which in the language of Taylor called as "exploitative capitalist paradigm" (ECP) (Taylor 2000, 21). Seyyed Hossein Nasr is seen as one of the first scholars to point out the religious and spiritual side of the environmental crisis in the 1960s In the Islamic world (Rahman 2022, 7). Nasr criticized the modern scientific world view of nature. Says, he "Today, almost everyone living in the urbanized centers of the Western world feels intuitively a lack of something in life. This is due directly to the creation of an artificial environment from which nature has been excluded to the greatest possible extent. Nasr further says even the religious man in such circumstances has lost the sense of the spiritual significance of nature" (Nasr 1968, 17). In a very similar way Mawil Izzi-Dien, a former Professor in Islamic Studies at the University of Wales, has dealt with the subject of environmental ethics from the Islamic perspective. He in the third chapter of his book, the environment dimension of Islam, discusses the theological concepts, notably the idea of the Unicity or Oneness of God (توحيد / tawhid) which "leads to the unification of all human energies to act under the command of [the] Creator. This unity includes all the forces in the universe, which work together as one force moving in the same direction to carry out God's order. He further says that the natural environment is an integral part of the existence that God intends humans to maintain, and to refrain from destroying, for their own benefit (Baker 2003, 1). Mawil Izzi-Dien employed another concept of khalafa (Responsible Trusteeship) to argue that humans are not owners of nature but trustees of God's creation, so environmental care is a religious responsibility rather than a purely utilitarian choice (Haleem 2000, 2). In chapter 5 of his book, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*, Mawil Izzi-Dien looks at Islamic law and its foundation in the Quran, Sunnah and other sources and concludes that "Islamic law" is a religious ethical law which considers environmental protection as one of its objectives (Baker 2003, 1). Fazlun has invoked different concepts of sharia, al-tawḥīd / التوحيد (The Unity Principle), fiṭra / فطرة (The Creation Principle), al-mīzān / الميزان (The Balance Principle) and Khalifa (The Responsibility Principle) for providing the basis for Islamic conservation practice (Khalid 2005 , 2). Like Fazlun Ozdemir also emphasis the importance of balance he quotes Q 55: 5-9

"The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed. The herbs and the trees-both (alike) bow in adoration. And the Firmament has He raised high and He has set up the balance (of Justice) In order that you may not transgress (due) balance so establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance". Arguing from these verses he says it is reasonable to argue that these verses alone would be enough for developing an environmental ethic from the Quran itself. For they establish firstly that justice and balance are universal, secondly that this universal balance is created by God, and thirdly that man must both attempt to comprehend this universal balance and to follow it in his social life as well as in his interaction with the environment (Ozdemir 2003, 8-9). Ibrahim Abu Bakar too allude to balance, says he, the word wasaṭan / وسطا and mūzūn /موزون in Q 2: 143 and Q 15: 18 describe about the concept of equilibrium i.e. natural or ecological balance (Bakar 2012, 4-5). He also talks about the concept of ḥasana / حسنة, Q 16: 30, he says the Arabic noun hasana has many meanings namely charity, alms, benefaction, handout, dole, good deed, good turn, favor, kind act, advantage, merit, virtue, amenity, good quality, good point, good feature. He further quotes Q 40: 64 (including other verses) فأحسن صوركم و رزقكم من الطيبات i.e. Allah has improved or beautified your shapes and provided you with pure and good sustenance. By "provided you with pure and good sustenance" it means pure fruits, river water, fountain water, vegetables, animal and fish meats, and etc. if human beings have polluted the water and the air, they get the polluted water, fruits, meats etc for their food and drink. This is supported by Q 17: 7 (Bakar 2012, 4-5).

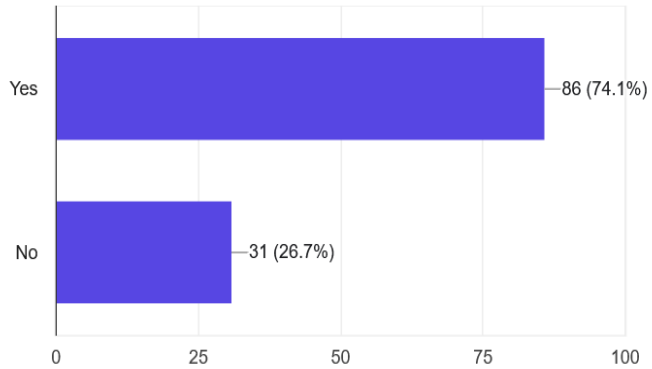
Ozdemir talks about protection of Animal, he brings Q 6: 38 "There is not an animal [that lives] on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but [forms part of] communities (umamun / أمم) like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they [all] shall be gathered to their Sustainer in the end". Here Ozdemir emphasizes about the word communities (umamun / أمم) one of the striking expressions which the Quran uses in referring to animals is that they constitute a "community" just like humans (Ozdemir 2003, 16). This verse can also be understood as just like humans have every right to live and taken care of themselves so are the Animals.

Othman Abd-ar-Rahman Llewellyn in his paper "The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law" first talks about environment crisis and then goes on to point that Muslim jurists have lagged far behind in contributing any solution to the crisis (Llewellyn 2003, 12). He then defines meaning of the word sharīʿa / الشريعة literally, the Way, the path to water, the source of life. He then define the scope of sharīʿa / الشريعة, he says, sharīʿa / الشريعة embraces in its scope every human act, including religious devotions and purely ethical issues, as well as the

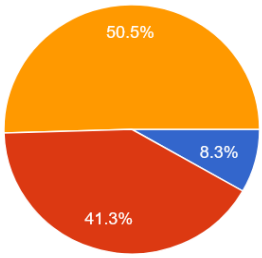
various fields of law known to the modern world, such as constitutional and international law, family law, penal law, law of contracts, law of property and environmental law. He discussed many concepts of sharīʿa / الشريعة we point to only one. Maṣāliḥ al-khalq / مصالح الخلق: the universal common good i.e. the ultimate objective of the shariah is defined as the welfare of God's creatures under this he discussed the concept of maṣāliḥ al-khalq kāffah / مصالح الخلق كافة It means that both material and nonmaterial dimensions must be taken into account, and second, that the welfare of humans and of nonhuman sentient beings must be considered in the course of planning and administration. No species or generation may be excluded from consideration, for every atom's weight of good and every atom's weight of harm that has resulted from our actions will be weighed on the Day of Judgment (Llewellyn 2003, 8).

From above passages it is evident that Muslim scholars have, since the 1960s, sought to develop theories of environmental protection from an Islamic perspective. However, practical implementation of these theories remains limited, and the extent to which they have influenced Muslims in fostering environmental responsibility is still unclear. In this context, we conducted a survey among Muslim audience, asking whether respondents were aware of ecological interpretations of the Quran, the Islamic perspective on environmental protection, and whether any Muslim community or Muslim organization in their area had ever organized an environmental protection campaign. The survey received 116 responses, and the data are presented below.

1. Have you ever read or listened to a Quranic Tafsir (Exegesis) or hadith explanation that directly discusses environmental issues (such as pollution, climate change, deforestation, water conservation)?

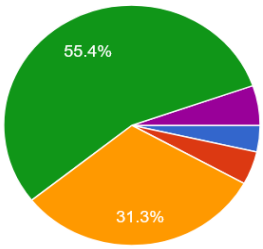


2. To what extent do you find Islamic teachings about caring for the environment (as explained in Quran and hadith-based Tafsir) to be clear and relevant to today's Environment problems?



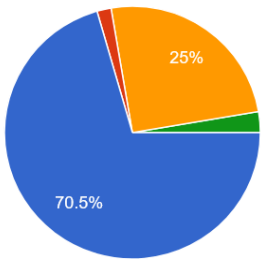
Orange: Extremely clear/relevant.
Red: Moderately clear/relevant.
Blue: Not clear or relevant.

3. Do you believe environmental protection is part of the objectives of Shariah (maqaṣid al-shariah), for example under preserving life (hifz al-nafs) or resources?



Green: Strongly agree
Orange: Agree
Violet: Neutral (5.4%)
Red: Disagree (4.5%)
Blue: Strongly disagree (3.6%)

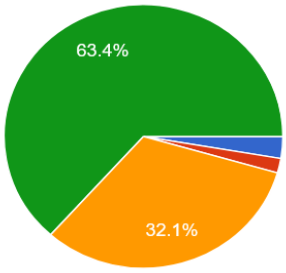
4. When you think about protecting the environment (for example: reducing waste, saving water, avoiding harm to animals), which of the following motivates you?



Blue: Islamic teachings
Orange: Scientific information about Environment
Green: social pressure or community norms (2.7%)

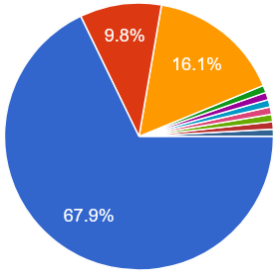
Red: Government laws and policies (1.8%)

5. Do you consider environmentally harmful actions (e.g. wasting clean water, throwing plastic in rivers, destroying trees without need) to be acts for which a Muslim will be accountable before Allah on the Day of Judgment?



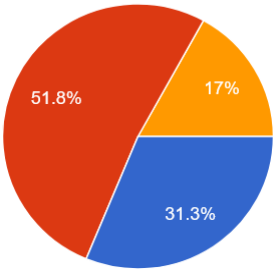
Green: Strongly Agree
Orange: Agree
Red: Disagree (1.8%)
Blue: Strongly disagree (2.7%)

6. Have explanations of Quranic verses or hadith about nature and the environment ever led you to change a specific behavior (for example, starting recycling, using less plastic, protecting animals, planting trees)?
If yes, please describe the behavior change and the religious teaching that influenced it



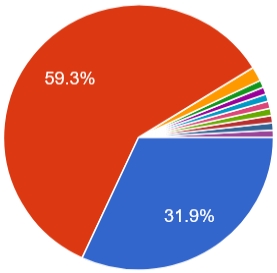
Blue: Yes
Orange: Not sure
Red: No
Other small wedges are response of single person regarding behavioral change after they were taught about protection of environment. which we give below:
Waste management, Afforestation and others are similar responses.

7. In your local religious context (masjid, madrasa, Islamic classes, Friday khuṭbah), how often do you hear imams or teachers directly connect environmental issues with Qur'an and hadith?



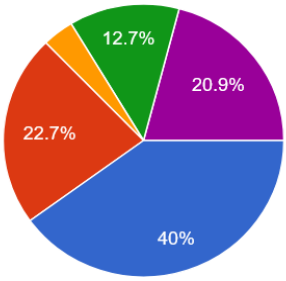
Red: Sometimes (a few times a year)
Blue: Never
Orange: Very often (almost every week)

8. Has your mosque, Islamic organization, or madrasa ever organized specific activities for environmental protection (e.g. tree-planting, clean-up campaigns, awareness programs) explicitly framed as Islamic duties based on Quran and hadith?
If yes, please mention one activity in which you participated.



Red: No
Blue: Yes
Other small wedges are response of single person regarding behavioral change after they were taught about protection of environment. Which we give below:
Some Muslim organization started drive for plantation, waste management, awareness regarding environment protection other are similar answer.

9. What do you think are the main reasons why Islamic environmental teachings remain mostly theoretical and are not widely practiced?



Blue: Lack of awareness of eco-Tafsir among Muslims
Red: Weak integration of environmental topics in religious education
Violet: Lack of role models and leadership from scholars or Imams
Green: Belief that environmental issues are scientific and not religious

Orange: Economic and social pressures (Poverty) (3.6%)

10. In your view, what practical steps should scholars, imams, and Islamic institutions take so that Quran- and hadith-based environmental teachings (Tafsir ecology) become part of Muslims' daily life and real environmental protection efforts.

Regarding this question Respondents emphasized that scholars, imams, and Islamic institutions should systematically integrate Quranic and hadith-based environmental teachings into Friday sermons, madrasah curricula, and community study circles, highlighting specific texts such as the Prophet's instruction to conserve water in wudu and to plant even if the Hour is imminent. They called for a dedicated eco-tafsir that focuses exclusively on verses and traditions concerning water, waste, trees, animals, and sustainable resource use, and for mosques to model these values through practical initiatives like tree-planting drives, cleanliness campaigns, water-saving measures during ablution, recycling, and reduced plastic use. Many stressed that change must begin at home by teaching children basic environmental values—saving electricity and water, keeping surroundings clean—and that imams should act as role models by organizing weekly community activities, engaging youth in skill-based environmental education, and installing dustbins in public spaces. Overall, the vision is to present environmental care as a religious duty and act of worship, linking theological guidance with concrete, recurring practices so that Muslims internalize ecological responsibility as part of their daily faith-life and contribute tangibly to real environmental protection.

Conclusion

This study begins by examining the contemporary environmental crisis, followed by a critical discussion of ecological theories advanced by Muslim scholars drawing on the Qur'an and Hadith. Employing snowball sampling, the research then investigates the influence of Eco-tafsir (ecological exegesis) among Muslim audiences. Data were collected from 116 Muslim participants. The findings indicate that ecological interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith significantly encourage Muslims to care for the environment and have engendered behavioral changes oriented toward environmental protection and sustainable development. However, the study also reveals that such ecological teachings remain relatively uncommon, with only a meager amount of work undertaken by Muslim organizations, schools and madrasas in this domain.

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