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Green Academia: Integrating Islamic Teachings in Education for a Sustainable Future

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Abstract

Environmental discourses in the twenty-first century actively engage with religious discourses, consciously attempting to bring religious texts as the centre of attention to suggest viable solutions for countering the current ecological crisis. Islam, too, offers an insight to assert that nature is a creation of Allah and, therefore, a constant reminder of His Will and Glory. Drawing references from the Our'an and the Hadith, this paper aims first to establish that Islamic value systems are pro-ecoconservative in principle—I draw from Islamic philosophy, namely, the Unity of Being (Tawhīd), Trusteeship (Khalifa) and Accountability (Akhirah), mentioned in Al-Our'ān to form the theoretical framework for my study. Secondly, a qualitative analysis of the primary data collected using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Primary data was collected from unstructured group interviews and observation of the researcher with a sample size of fifty students from Madrasah Education (Kolkata, India) and fifty students of English medium schools in Kolkata, respectively, to assess the participants' attitudes and practices, and how it aligns with the eco-conservative practices by posing open-ended questions. The study aims to ascertain if education systems with a religious background could contribute to developing eco-conservative practices and awareness. The study suggested that considering religious teachings in environmental education can naturally foster ecoethical practices. This study comprises a particular region, and since it included a small sample size, generalization of the result is not possible.

Keywords: climate justice, education, eco-ethics, Islamic value system, Islamic practices

Introduction

The global ecological crisis has immense philosophical significance.¹ It is no longer restricted to be a matter of concern for environmentalists only. Thus, the rising leaps and bounds calls for broader participation and inclusion from almost all disciplines, including religious intervention.² Additionally, religious environmentalism and eco-mysticism have emerged as promising enterprises in the contemporary discourses on eco-conservation as they aim to assign meaning, stimulate moral/ethical responses, and ascertain that individuals act within a framework that transcends the immediate and individual.³ Scholars like Beyer have pointed out that the discourse of treating 'Nature as holy' is highly significant as it propagates the identification of the planet as a single place, allowing



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¹Phillip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002).

²Mike Hulme, "Climate Change and the Significance of Religion," *Economic and Political Weekly* 52. No., 28 (2017): 14- 17; William Jenkins, Evan Berry and Luke Kreider, "Religion and Climate Change," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 43 (2018): 85-108; Christopher D. Ives and Jeremy Kidwell, "Religion and Social Values for Sustainability," *Sustainability Science*. 14 (2019): 1355-1362; Jens Koehrsen, "Muslim NGOs and the Quest for Environmental Sustainability," In Andreas Heuser and Jens Koehrsen (Eds), *Does Religion make a Difference? Religious NGOs in International Development Work* (NP: Nomos, 2020).

³Laurel Kearns, "Religion and Ecology in Context of Globalization," *Religion, Globalisation, and Culture* 6. (2007): 160-189.

religious interventions, connections, and advances.⁴ Moreover, the ecological crisis is a result of our denial of piety. With Nietzsche declaring the 'death of God,' the existence of morality, ethics, and righteousness was challenged. This deviation led to the collapse of European moral principles and ethics based on religion and faith.⁵ Darwin's theory of evolution further initiated the denial of human qualities like moral and ethical responsibilities, relegating them to be only historical derivatives.⁶ However, in the contemporary discourses on ecology, theological interventions and explorations into eco-mysticism and spirituality have gathered the world's attention to initiate an ethical approach toward nature.⁷

The inception of the modern world—the rise of Europe from the Dark Ages is believed to have emerged through a complex process of growth and maturity—the Age of Enlightenment. As a movement, Enlightenment shook the foundations of religion and faith, leading to a culture that placed 'Man' at the center, and nature was relegated to the margins. In this regard, historian Lynn White argued that Christianity was responsible for the desacralization of nature.⁸ Moreover, it greatly encouraged its exploitation and initiated an anthropocentric culture. Furthermore, he argued, "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen... Christianity, contrary to paganism, constructed a dualism of man and nature, insisting that it is God's Will that nature was created for man, and so it can be exploited to meet his proper ends."⁹ Modern science and technology, White claimed, "permeated with Christian arrogance towards nature."¹⁰ Thus, nature became profane as per the Western intellectual tradition focusing on 'Man.'¹¹ Recent achievements in the field of science and technology are also guided by the Western world constructing ideological frameworks—a set of attitudes, behavior, and standards—by which all the 'others' are judged and evaluated. These dominant frameworks have constructed views on human nature, theories of production and consumption, styles of governance, lifestyle, habits, and standards, declaring them to be 'universal.'¹²

Discourses on the environmental crisis are actively exploring all disciplines, and precisely, they are engaging with religious discourses to suggest alternative practices, bringing into focus sacred texts and religion to propose viable solutions for countering the current environmental crisis.¹³ Thus, this study argues that an inclination towards green academia will promote eco-conservative practices for a sustainable future. Furthermore, it strengthens the previous studies that have focused on including Islamic teachings in education from diverse countries like Malaysia, Singapore, and the USA to initiate eco-ethics among students.¹⁴ Drawing references from the Qur'ān and the Hadīth,

⁴Peter F. Beyer, *Religion and Globalisation* (London: Sage, 1994).

⁵Phillip Goodchild, Capitalism and Religion (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁶Steve Stewart Williams, *Darwin, God, and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁷Roger S. Gottlieb, *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Willis Jenkins, and Christopher Key Chapple, "Religion and Environment," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 36 (2011): 123-34; Ralph Tanner, and Colin Mitchell, *Religion and the Environment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁸George Sessions, *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995), xi. ⁹Ibid., xi.

¹⁰Ibid., xi.

¹¹Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge, and the Sacred* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

¹²For detailed, inquiry refer to Jason W. Moore. "Introduction," *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature History and the Crisis of Capitalism.* (Oakland: PM Press, 2016).

¹³Lyn Parker and Kelsie Prabawa-Sear, *Environmental Education in Indonesia Creating Responsible Citizens in the Global South* (London: Routledge, 2020).

¹⁴Shazny Ramlan, "Implementing Islamic Law to Protect the Environment: Insights from Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law* 23 (2020): 202-

this paper aims to first establish Islamic value systems, which are pro-eco-conservative in principle—that has been drawn from Islamic philosophy, namely, the Unity of Being ($Tawh\bar{t}d$), Trusteeship (*Khalifa*), and Accountability (*Akhirah*), mentioned in Qur'ān to form the theoretical framework for this study. Secondly, a qualitative analysis of the primary data collected by taking up the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach is done to establish the role of Islamic teachings in developing eco-ethics. Primary data was collected from conducting sixteen unstructured interviews in groups and the researcher's observation with a sample size of around seven/eight students in a group and a total of 50 students from Madrasah Education (Kolkata, India) and 50 from English medium school in Kolkata, respectively to assess the participants' attitudes and practices, and how it aligns with the eco-conservative practices. Open-ended questions were asked, and the researcher documented their responses. The study aims to ascertain if education systems with a religious base could contribute to developing eco-conservative practices and awareness among students. This study adds to the previous research to date, no comparative study between the education system with a religious base (Madrasahs) and the secular English medium schools has been conducted in India further to study the gaps in the capitalist models of education systems.

2. Review of Literature

Green Academia has emerged recently as a movement within education systems that strongly advocates curriculum revision to promote eco-ethics among students for a sustainable future. In his recent book, *Green Academia: Towards Eco-Friendly Education Systems* (2023), Sayan Dey highlighted the need to replace capitalist models of education systems with eco-friendlier models that focus on intersections of science and technology, and sustainable futures. Several studies have indicated that the role of religion in combating environmental damage is highly significant. According to Dinata et al. (2013), Islam has suggested environmental preservation guidelines. This study draws references from Islamic teachings to suggest three ways of protecting the environment. The first is *ihya*—judicious land usage by individuals; secondly, by *iqta*— the government takes charge of land and distributes the ownership to selected ones; thirdly, by *hima*—the government provides the land for all benefit.¹⁵ Studies have also indicated that human engagement with activities to promote civilization involves deforestation, rising carbon footprints, extinction of species, increasing environmental calamities, and COVID-19-like pandemics leading to the contemporary ecological crisis.¹⁶ The aim of considering religion in environmental studies is to contribute to desirable changes in human behavior. Therefore, studies have indicated an interrelation between



^{30;} Smith Gar, "Islam and Environment." *Earth Island Journal* 172 (2002): 123-34; Masood Rab, "US Muslims and the Environment," *Muslim Media Network* (2008): 34-39; Jens Koehrsen, "Muslims and Climate change: How Islam, Muslim Organizations, and Religious Leaders Influence Climate Change Perceptions and Mitigation Activities," *WIREs Climate Change* (2021): 1-19; Md. Saidul Islam, "Old Philosophy, New Movement: The Rise of Islamic Ecological Paradigm in the Discourse of Environmentalism," *Nature and Culture* 7.1. (2012): 72-94.

¹⁵Yoan Dinata et al., "Integrating Religion within Conservation: Islamic Beliefs and Sumatran Forest Management." Jeanne E. Mckay (ed.) *Integrating Religion within Conservation: Islamic Beliefs and Sumatran Forest Management A Darwin Initiative Case Study.* (Kent: Canterbury, 2013).

¹⁶Xiaolong Feng, Huanguang Qiu, Jie Pan, Jianjun Tang, "The Impact of Climate Change on Livestock Production in Pastoral Areas of China," *Science of the Total Environment*, 770 (2021): 590-610; Ramchandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York: Longman, 2000); Ramchandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essay North and South* (London: Earthscan, 1997); Paul Harrison, *Third Revolution: Population, Environment and a Sustainable World* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1993); Dipesh Chakraborty, *The Climate of History in Planetary Age* (Delhi: Primus, 2021).

religion and socially desirable behavior toward ecological conservation practices.¹⁷ In another study, it was found that religion affects an individual's self-control in responding to nature. The study further posited the influence of religion on an individual's attitude in European culture that is often divided into two views: the positive (emphasizing a caring attitude towards nature) and the negative that strips nature for human consumption.¹⁸ Furthermore, a similar positive approach toward the treatment of nature was documented by Zeenat Abdul Hag et al. (2020). In the article, "Environment, Islam, and Women: A Study of Eco-Feminist Environmental Activism in Pakistan," the proenvironment attitude was showcased by female activists in Pakistan, where environmental conditions have resulted in severe issues like poverty, deprivation, and women's disempowerment. The study engages with eco-feminist perspectives in developing an understanding of sustainable futures.¹⁹ Another study on Indonesian Muslims' action for eco-conservation highlights the 'ecological habitus' and sacred capital. The article suggested active engagement of Indonesian youth with green Islamemerging as a global youth imperative. The study mentions 'Man as *Khalifa*' in the Our'anic verses, interpreted as insan to be, "God's lieutenants on earth; the need to take upon oneself the sacred task of stewardship of the natural world."²⁰ In her study, Rosemary Hancock argued that integrating environmental and religious knowledge has resulted in constructing a 'critical community' within Islam that aims to transmute Islamic knowledge and practice to demonstrate social movements based on religiously grounded theory, leading to political changes.²¹ Just as religion regulates and guides the relationship between humans and god, between humans and other humans, and humans and other non-human entities, it also serves as a way to balance and manage nature from excessive and rampant usage. Hidavat (2015), proposed the establishment of 'Adiwivata Madrasah' as one way to achieve this balance.22

Lahmar (2020), supported the view that the local wisdom of Islamic teachings can go a long way in developing a wisdom-based culture.²³ The Islamic jurisdiction of the caliphate is inspired by the *Qur'ān*, which proposed Allah's will of having humans appointed as '*Khalifa'* leaders or caliphs.²⁴ The earliest instructions on protecting the environment and safeguarding resources come

¹⁷Zainal Abidin Bagir, "The Importance of Religion and Ecology in Indonesia," *Worldviews* 19, no, 2 (2015): 1-17; Ibrahim Abdul Matin, *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* (San Francisco: Berret Koehler Publishers, 2010); Mathew B. Arbuckle and David M. Konisky, "The Role of Religion in Environmental Attitudes," *Social Science Quarterly* 95, No. 5, (2015): 1244-1263.

¹⁸Antonio Munoz Garcia, "Religion and Environmental Concern in Europe," *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 36, no. 3 (2014): 1-19.

¹⁹Zeenat Abdul Haq, Shabbir Ahmad and Umer Farooq, "Environment, Islam, and Women: A Study of Eco-Feminist Environmental Activism in Pakistan," *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education* 23. (2020): 275-291.

²⁰Pam Nilan, "Muslim Youth Environmentalists in Indonesia," *Journal of Youth Studies* 27, no. 7 (2021): 925-40.

²¹Rosemary Hancock, "Environmental Conversions and Muslim Activists: Constructing Knowledge at the Intersection of Religion and Politics," *Social Movement Studies* 19, no. 3 (2020): 287-302.

²²Ara Hidayat, "Pendidikan Islam dan Linkungan Hidup," [Islamic Education and the Environment]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* [Journal of Islamic Education] 4, no. 2 (2015): 373-89.

²³Fella Lahmar, "Islamic Education: An Islamic "Wisdom-Based Cultural Environment" in a Western Context," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (2020): 1-15.

²⁴Robin McTaggart, *Action Research: A Short Modern History* (Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1991).

from Prophet Mohammed (*SAW*). ²⁵ Many educational systems are focusing on introducing Islamic teaching for value dissemination. For instance, Hancock (2019), studies the role of Islamic teachings in Islamic eco-school in California. The school teaches children ecological values and bonding by promoting practices, which include gardening, tending to animals, and others.²⁶ Muslim communities adopt various practices to align ecology with Islamic values. Many studies have indicated that Muslim communities often use prayer and fasting to address immediate environmental calamities like droughts, desertification, and others.²⁷ Islamic education in contemporary politics is visualized to house terrorism and radicalize youth, subject of international scrutiny; it needs to be defended as Islam is misrepresented and often manipulated for various political causes.²⁸ All these studies reiterate that Islamic teachings mentioned in the Hadīth and the Qur'ān have emphasized on ecoconservative practices, thus, they can be instrumental in developing eco-ethics for a sustainable future among students.

3. Theoretical Framework: *Tawhid, Khalifa, and Akhira* Three Pillars of Islamic Philosophy

Islam is founded on monotheistic foundations that emphasize the philosophy of $Tawh\bar{\iota}d$ —the unity of God.²⁹ In simple terms, the profound doctrine can be summarized as—the belief that "there is no God but He, the Creator of all things."³⁰ Islamic scholars believe that the theory asserts that God is Ultimate, Absolute, and a core of normativeness. By this, this means to suggest that God as a normative, is the Being Who commands, and His movements, ideas, and workings are all realities beyond doubt.³¹ At the core of Islamic intellectual tradition lies the doctrine of $Tawh\bar{\iota}d$ —suggesting that Allah is Absolute, Unique, and Self-Sufficient, and His Will guides all humans. There are ample references in the *Qur'ān* articulating the philosophy of $Tawh\bar{\iota}d$, "Praise be to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made light and darkness."³² Furthermore, "The seven heavens and the earth and all therein declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise..." is mentioned as a reference.³³ Thus, the doctrine of $Tawh\bar{\iota}d$ suggests that Allah's command created the universe and this creation is not a generative act.



²⁵Safrilsyah, "Agama Dan Kesadaran Menjagalinkkungan Hidup," [Religion and Awareness of Protecting the Environment]. *Subtantia* 16, no. 1 (2014): 23-29.

²⁶Rosemary Hancock, "Environmental Conversions and Muslim Activists: Constructing Knowledge at the Intersection of Religion and Politics," *Social Movement Studies* 26, no. 3 (2019):287-302.

²⁷Albert Ayorinde Abegunde, "Local Communities' Belief in Climate Change in a Rural Region of Sub-Saharan Africa," *Environment, Development, and Sustainability* 19, no. 4 (2017): 1489-1522; Dianna Bell, "Understanding a 'Broken World': Islam, Ritual, and Climate Change in Mali West Africa," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture.* 8. No. 3 (2014): 287-304.

²⁸Ann Marie Wainscott, "Defending Islamic Education: War on Terror Discourse and Religious Education in Twenty-First-Century Morocco," *The Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 4 (2015): 635-53; Edward W. Said, "The Politics of Interpreting Islam: Orthodox and Antithetical Knowledge," *How the Media and the Experts Determine, How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Vintage, 1997).

²⁵Muhammad Abdul Haq, "The Perspective of At-Tawhīd," *Islamic Studies* 22, no. 3 (1983): 1-19.

³⁰Isma'il Raji Faruqi, *Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Maryland: International Institute Islamic Thought, 1992).1.

³¹Ibid.,

³²Al-Ana'am 6:1, Translations of the *Qur'ān* Used for this Essay are *The Holy Qur'ān*, Trans. Abdullah Y. Ali (Brentwood, Md.: Amana Corporation, 1989).

³³Bani Israeil 17:44.

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Islam embraces the philosophy of *Tawhīd* that renders the creation of the universe and all animate and inanimate things by the Will of God, as the *Qur'ānic* verse quotes, "Say, Allah, the One and Only. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none unto Him."³⁴ There is only one eternal and absolute truth, that is—Allah. The creation of nature is also because Allah wanted so, and nothing emerged without His Will. The ontological point is that the existence of Nature in historical time is a flowing process of a cosmic observance of God's command [*amr*].³⁵

The doctrine of *Tawhīd* also focuses on the point of connectedness between all creations. Man and all the other organisms have the same essential element—water. The following *Qur'ānic* verse categorically posits the interconnectedness with all beings on Earth, "We made from water every living thing."³⁶ Furthermore, the *Surah* asserts, "And God has created every animal from the water of them there are some that creep on their bellies; some that walk on two legs; and some that walk on four... It is He who has created humans from water."³⁷ This is interpreted as a point of unity where all creatures living on Earth have the same biological composition, and Man is part of this whole community. Thus, the unity of God, along with His creation and the relationship between all the communities, indicate that there is a connectedness between all creatures, including man—a holistic view.

The second pillar of Islamic ecological teachings is the reference to ---Man as the vicegerent---the *Khalifa*. The most specific reference to 'Man as vicegerent' appointed by Allah appears in the Our'an as, "And when God said to the Angels, I shall appoint a Khalifa on earth."³⁸ This reference has been explored, interpreted, and has been contested. Islamic scholars like Jaafar Idris, in his article "Is Man the Vicegerent of God?" explore the early and contemporary interpretations and present a comprehensive view. He quotes Al-Tabari's opinions that there can be four views to explain what it means for 'Man as khalifa. 'Idris analyses views by other scholars like Al-Zamakshari (1075-1143). Al-Razi (1150-1210), Al-Ourtubi (1214-1273), and Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), and all of them emphasize Khalifa as the 'one who succeeds another,' more often utilized in the context of a ruler or terms of the head of a state; Adam and all generations of humankind may be termed as *khulafa*; or *Khalifa* may be interpreted as Adam and his progeny after him who assume the responsibility in implementing the Divine laws. Noted Islamic Scholar Ibn Arabi in Fusus al-Hikam, too, elucidates the meaning of 'Man as *khalifa*' concerning Adam and his successive generations. He explains that God created Adam according to His Will and desire to envision His attributes in mortals. The Universe, including the Angels, existed before the advent of this new being, like a blurred mirror, a form without life. He was the polisher of that mirror, the spirit that sparked life. This new being was declared insān and Khalifa because of his nature and similarities with God, just like the pupil to the eye.³⁹ The interpretation of Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) is equally significant in understanding how Man is entitled to the 'khalifa of God.' He suggests that all creations other than humans, like plants and inanimate things, including angels, have limitations—the faculty of reasoning is missing in them, and Man is blessed to have this ability, which sets him apart from everyone else. This faculty in 'Man' allows him to connect with His plans and secrets of his creation.⁴⁰ Another contemporary thinker who explains 'Man as *khalifa*' is Savvid Outb (1906-1966) in the context of humankind. He asserts that it is by the command of Supreme Will that new beings [Man] are given the reins of the

³⁴Ibid., 112:1-4.

³⁵S. Nomanul Haq, "Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction," *Daedalus* 130 no. 4 (2001): 141-178.

 ³⁶12: 30. *The Holy Qur'an*, trans. Abdullah Y. Ali (Brentwood, Md.: Amana Corporation, 1989).
³⁷Ibid., 24:45.

³⁸Ibid., 2:30.

³⁹Ibid., 105.

⁴⁰Muhammad 'Abduh, *Tafsir Al-Manar*. Ed. Muhhamad Rashid Rida. (Cairo: NP, 1972).

world/earth. They are entrusted with the responsibility to and also a free hand. Because of their latent powers and potentialities.⁴¹ Thus, a shift can be seen in the views of early thinkers who focussed on Adam and his successors as *Khalifa* of the Earth— the later thinkers rationalized the idea by suggesting that Man is a microcosm of God. The faculty of reasoning and intellect separates Man from all other beings.

The third pillar of the Islamic eco-mystical approach is the—*Akhirah*, which encourages Muslims to reflect and ponder over their accountability hereafter. It allows man to be cautious in their dealings, including towards the environment and all the other beings—animate and inanimate. The Day of Judgment is a powerful reminder that they were placed on the Earth as vicegerent, and did they perform their duties towards the environment, including inanimate objects? The Hadīth mentions Prophet Muhammad's (*SAW*) teachings emphasizing kindness and humility towards humans and animals. Harming or killing them for sport/amusement was despised by him. Two of them are often quoted; firstly, when Ibn 'Umar, a companion of the Prophet (*SAW*) (narrated by Al-Bukhari), reported that the Prophet (*SAW*) said: "A woman who tied a cat will go to hellfire; she neither fed it nor allowed it to find food on its own."⁴² Islamic practices are deeply influenced by *the* Qur'ān and the Hadīth, which have controlled human behavior in maintaining a balance by reminding us that humans have the rights and privileges of living on Earth. Still, at the same time, they also have duties and accountability to be just and humble towards all creation of Allah.⁴³



Figure 1. The Figure Represents the Three Pillars of Islamic Philosophy Based on Al-Qur'an

Thus, the doctrine of *Tawhīd*, Man as the vicegerent (*Khalifa*), and the fear of the hereafter the *Akhirah*— establish that the Islamic values inscribed within *the* Qur'ān are largely pro-eco conservative. However, the devaluation of education due to the exclusion of religion and emphasis on capitalist education models has contributed to a highly unsympathetic and hostile attitude towards non-humans, leading to the ecological crisis. Moreover, the Western education system is deeply



⁴¹Sayyid Qutb, Fi Dhilal al- Qu'ran. (Cairo: NP, 1407/1987). 56-7.

⁴²Muhammad b. Ismail Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, Beginning of Creation," 3318; Arthur Saniotis, "Muslims and Ecology: Fostering Islamic Environmental Ethics," *Contemporary Islam* 6 (2012): 155-171.

⁴³Iqtidar H. Zaidi, "On Ethics of Man's Interaction with the Environment: An Islamic Approach. Environmental Ethics," 3, no. 1 (1981): 35-47; *Islamic Thought and Culture*. Isma'il R. al Faruqi (Ed.) (Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam, 1980).

interlinked with the colonial history. In the contemporary neo-liberal economies, fast fashion has facilitated a culture of mass consumerism, leading to a decline in eco-ethical practices.⁴⁴

Based on the Qur'ānic teachings and references from the Hadīth, the following Islamic Ecological Values (IEVs)⁴⁵ were selected to be included in the discussions with the participants:

3.1. Water Conservation Practices

In Islam, water conservation practices form a significant part of following Islamic practice. The Hadīth mentions Abdullah ibn Amr who reported that once Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) passed by Sa'd, while he was performing ablution for prayer. The Prophet strongly advised him to be judicious in using water, even for ablution for prayer, and from a running stream, "Yes, even if you were on the banks of a flowing river."⁴⁶ Thus, water in Islam has socio-religious significance—acting as a cleansing agent before offering prayers, and at the same time it is equally essential for the sustenance of life. There are approximately 63 references of water in the Qur'ān. Allah says: And it is He Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy (rain); And We send down pure water from the sky."⁴⁷

3.2. Biocentrism or General Compassion towards Animals and Other species

The bio-centric view places nature as having an intrinsic value and man is a part of it like any other form of life, in opposition to the anthropocentric views that focus primarily on man, nature is placed in a subservient position to serve Man.⁴⁸ However, the Islamic view offers a third alternative, which renders nature as an independent value and does so on the ground that it is the creation of God—a theocentric view.⁴⁹

3.3. Haram or Sanctuary

Harams are spaces declared safe zones or areas set apart from rampant human utilization and consumption in Islam. They included spaces used for ritualized behavior and restrictions on activities, such as deforestation, bloodshed or violence, hunting, pollution, or any other destructive activities prohibited in Islam as they are responsible for disturbing the sanctity of the place.

3.4. Fasad or Destruction/Mischief/Corruption

In the Qur'ān, the term *fasād* appears several times, as the following verse indicated, "Mischief (*fasād*) has appeared on land and sea because of the deeds that the hands of men have earned that Allah may give them a taste of some of their deeds in order that they may turn back from evil."⁵⁰ It also indicates any form of evil committed by man. On land, it may include activities like the destruction of flora and fauna, and in the sea, it is responsible for the damage caused to the marine

⁴⁴Verity Jones and Tess Podpadec, "Young People, Climate Change and Fast Fashion Futures," *Environmental Education Research* (2023): 1-17;

 $^{^{45}}$ I am using Islamic Ecological Values (IEVs) as a term to suggest that within *Al Qur'ān* and *Hadīth*, there are ample of practices that have naturally initiated in principle ways to safeguard and preserve Nature from any form of damage. However, to keep my study focused, I have selected only five common IEVs that are strongly eco-ethical. (fig. 2)

⁴⁶ Sahih al-Bukhari. Book 4, Hadīth 179.

⁴⁷al-Furqan 25:48.

⁴⁸Lars J. Lundgren, *Views of Nature* (Stockholm: Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research and Swedish Environmental Pollution Protection Agency, 1993).

⁴⁹Pernilla Soumaya Ouis, "Islamic Ecotheology Based on the Qur'ān," *Islamic Studies* 37, no. 2 (1998): 151-181.

⁵⁰Ar- Rūm 30:41.

life or ecosystem. Other forms of *fasād* may consist of robbery, piracy, murder, rebellion, and so on. However, in the present, it is also interpreted to include any human activity that destroys the environment and its resources.⁵¹

3.5. Zakat

The word 'Zakat' denotes charity or donations above surplus material wealth for the sake of Allah, leading to the purification of the soul 'Qad aflaha man zakkaha' (he is indeed successful and purified himself) and promoting an egalitarian society. In Islamic practices, Zakat holds a significant place after salat (prayer). Giving away material and wealth to the underprivileged and the needy for Allah's sake purifies man's soul and encourages humility and brotherhood. Zakat is not voluntary but an obligatory act encompassing religious and spiritual motives resulting in economic considerations.



Figure 2. The Figure Represents the Selected IEVs Derived from The *Qur'ān* and the *Hadīth*, Forming the Basis of Discussion During Group Interviews

4. Research Methodology

This study employed Participatory Action Research (PAR), which aims to study how the curriculum to which the participants are exposed in their school/madrasah aided their understanding of the contemporary ecological crisis. PAR aims to raise critical awareness of the participants by interrogating their habits, daily activities, and perceptions about the environment. Additionally, the researcher encouraged the participants to be more active in initiating eco-conservative programs for a sustainable future. The researcher's observations and interaction with the participants (comprising 5-7 in one group in the age group of 10-14 yrs) formed the primary data. To maintain the confidentiality, the names of participants and particularities of educational institutes remain undisclosed. Furthermore, as the students do not qualify to be adults, due consent was obtained from their parents/guardians. No specific technique was followed to collect data; the participants were observed without making them conscious. Sixteen unstructured group interviews were conducted in four months to collect primary data. Emphasis was on documenting their natural, creative, and participatory efforts. Manual qualitative data analysis was conducted based on the transcripts, threestep process of qualitative data analysis was followed⁵²; and a hybrid approach was deployed both for the inductive and deductive methods, and the contents of the primary data were coded, after which the following four themes were identified to conduct the thematic analysis that is stated as followed:



⁵¹Pernilla Soumaya Ouis, "Islamic Ecotheology Based on the Qur'ān," 151-181.

⁵²Mathew B. Miles, and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).



Figure 3. Qualitative Data Analysis was Coded, and Four Themes were Identified

5. Results and Discussion

The current study focused first on the young stakeholders already know about climate change, who they think is responsible for the present ecological crisis, and who can contribute to controlling the environmental crisis. It is estimated that climate change will most affect young people forming the next generation.⁵³ Also, it was found that in all countries and communities, earnest attempts have been made to provide young people with the knowledge and skills, which are essentially needed to address and understand climate change. It has been a critical objective for environmental education.⁵⁴ However, it has also been pointed out in Jurek et al. (2022), study that knowledge can be understood in different ways, while discussing climate change, there needs to be a greater understanding of factual knowledge and how to utilize that knowledge in practice.⁵⁵ At the outset, around 90% of students of both groups were aware of the commonly used terminologies regarding environmental crises, such as ecological imbalance, water crisis, and extinction of species, global warming, alternate sources of energy, and those who are responsible for the crisis.

5.1. Observations of Interaction with Group I (Madrasah Education)

The discussions with the participants of Group I indicated that they were aware of the teachings of the Hadīth, which to a certain extent, guided them to be careful when utilizing natural resources

⁵³Maria Ojala, "Hope and Climate Change: The Importance of Hope for Environmental Engagement among Young People," *Environmental Education Research* 18, no. 5 (2012): 625-642.

⁵⁴Alina Kuthe, Lars Keller, Annemarie Korrfgen, Hans Stotter, Anna Oberrauch, and Karl-Michael Hoferl, "How Many Young Generations Are There? -A Typology of Teenagers' Climate Change Awareness in Germany and Austria," *Journal of Environmental Education* 50, no. 3 (2019): 172-82; Martha C. Monroe, Richard R. Plate, Annie Oxarart, Alison Bowers, and Willandia A. Chaves, "Identifying Effective Climate Change Education Strategies: A Systematic Review of the Research," *Environmental Education Research* 25. No. 6 (2019): 791-812; Nurit Carmi, Sara Arnon and Nir Orion, "Transforming Environmental Knowledge into Behavior. The Mediating Role of Environmental Emotions," *The Journal of Environmental Education* 46. No. 3. (2015): 183-201.

⁵⁵Martin Jurek, Jindrich Frajer, David Fiedor, Jana Brhelova, Jan Hercik, Martin Jac, and Michal Lehnert, "Knowledge of Global Climate Change among Czech Students and Its Influence on their Beliefs in the Efficacy of Mitigation Action," *Environment Education Research* 28, no. 8 (2022): 1126-1143.

like food and water. On further scrutiny, a young student of around 13 years pointed out how in his early years, Maulvi sahib (teacher) reprimanded him for wasting food and constantly reminded them of *Dozakh* (Hell) and *Qabr ke Azaab* to instill morality. The constant reminder of the punishments one has to face after death, as in *Dozakh* or the grave, was a forceful way that their character was instilled and fortified. They were aware of the water conservation practices suggested by Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) and the frugal lifestyle that the Prophet himself followed and advocated. Most referred to the Day of Judgment (*Akhirah*), when everyone will be answerable for their deeds, either good or bad. It included the excessive use or misuse of resources like food, water, and even money *the hisaab kitaab* (accountability) *after death*. It was observed that for most Muslim students belonging to both groups, the Day of Judgment and hereafter was a constant reminder to perform good deeds. Interestingly, many of them narrated fascinating anecdotes from Prophet Muhammad's (*SAW*) life to explain how Islam has constantly encouraged them to follow eco-conservative practices mentioned in the Hadīth and the Qur'ān in principle.

Another student about how his teacher once told him about a Hadith that encourages planting/sowing fruit-bearing trees. He said, "A Muslim is bestowed with sawaab (Allah's grace) who plants a tree or sows seeds; from it, a bird, a human, or any animal eats. It is considered a Sunnah, and all Muslims should practice it." Regarding the select IEVs mentioned above, since all students were Muslims and of Madrasah, they were aware of the Our'an and Hadīth teachings. With the modernization of the Madrasahs, they are introduced to various courses, including 'Environmental Sciences.' Among all, 80% admitted that they had been taught reading of the Our'an and were introduced to Hadīth and the history of Islam in their schools. Their teachers often spoke to them of the teachings from the Our'an and the Hadīth when they were to be corrected for any wrongdoings and instructed them to follow the teachings of the religious text. Overall, 95% knew the Islamic teachings about Nature and the environment. Only 5% of students could not explain the aforementioned IEVs. Most were fully aware of terms like zakat and fitra with their implications and significance for Muslims. 40% of the students knew of the mention of 'Man as Khalifa' in the Qur'ān or the responsibility given to Man as the vicegerent. All of them could explain in detail the meaning of Akhirah—the hereafter and why everyone needs to perform good deeds. However, 50 percent of students pointed out that with the influence of media, the internet, and other consumerist cultures, their morality is strictly compromised and often negotiated for not being 'modern' as per popular trends and fast fashion. One of them pointed out: "Whatever we learn in school does not apply to the world we are living in. There is constant pressure from our friends studying in English medium schools to follow the current trends, and Islamic values do not fit the modern culture."

However, close interaction with the young participants indicated that the religious teachings that they adopted due to an education system based on religious teachings indicated that they followed practices mentioned in the Hadīth that align with the eco-ethical

5.2. Observations of Interaction with Group II (English Medium Students)

The interviews and group discussions conducted with the English Medium students suggested that the students had been taught about the ecological crisis and climate change right from the primary classes. They had studied courses on 'Environmental Sciences' from an elementary age, yet it was incapable of bringing about any behavioral/attitudinal change. For better results, approximately more than 80% of the people accepted that the approach has been more theoretical and they intend to study it to attain good grades to acquire an overall percentage. Additionally, they cited the reason for this apathy towards the courses since most of them were preparing for competitive exams; hence, they were unable to get enough time to ponder or reflect on such issues. Many of them believed that they were too young to bring any significant impact on the contemporary ecological crisis. The good part of the discussion indicated that around 50% of the students were quite aware of activists like Greta Thunberg and the recent efforts to tackle the ecological crisis. However, 80% of them admitted that they were unable to feel motivated and to bring any significant change. They stressed several reasons



for this; as one of the students confidently asserted that the present education system believes in good grades and our focus is to score well; meeting the educational standards. He said: "We get so much homework that we are hardly in a state of mind to think about these issues. Our teachers have told us about environmental degradation, but we are so young; what can we do? Besides, it is only the report card that matters."

On the contrary, one significant researcher pointed out that schools give too many assignments and homework to students, which leaves them with no time to engage in discussions: "We have a lot to cover in school. The assignments and projects are so dull and time-consuming that we need more free time for other activities. Plus, if we do not do our regular tasks and study hard for good grades. We will have to face the wrath of parents as well as teachers."

One significant student pointed out another prime reason for students' disinterest and lack of active engagement. He asserted that excess time spent on screens—television, social media, or the internet is creating a demotivated environment for students, which is consuming most of their time. Given that approximately 90% among all admitted that the school strives to celebrate events like World Earth Day (22 April), World Water Day (22 March), and World Environment Day (5 June) annually, holding essay writing competitions, debates, and discussions; however, such activities did not contribute much to motivate or engage students actively in eco-conservation. Whereas more than 50% of students complained that their teachers were equally indifferent to these activities, and they only focused on teaching without any motive of asserting practical applicability.

Despite the fact that all the students were Muslims, none of them were aware of the selected teachings of the Qur'ān and *the* Hadīth as indicated above in the specific IEVs. Indeed, 80% of them admitted that they had been taught merely only the reading of the Qur'ān at home and they never read any Hadīth. Some of their elders had spoken of Hadīth when they needed to be corrected for any wrongdoings. Overall, 95% of the students were unaware of Islamic teachings related to nature and the environment. Whereas 5% of students could narrate anecdotes mentioned in the Hadīth. Some of them were also aware of significant terms like *Zakat;* nonetheless all this information was passed on to them by their elders based on what they saw being performed at home. No one knew anything regarding 'Man as *Khalifa'* in the Qur'ān or the responsibility given to Man as the vicegerent. All of them were aware of *Akhirah*—the hereafter—and why everyone is required to perform good deeds.



Figure 4. The Diagram Represents the Responses of Students from Madrasah



Figure 5. The Diagram Represents Students' Responses from English Medium Schools

The current study exposed the accountabilities in our education system that fails to address issues pertaining to ecological crisis because of a theoretical approach. H.S. Cantell et al. (2019), studied the frames of a 'bicycle model,' which asserted that climate change cannot be tackled by only delivering knowledge.⁵⁶ The bicycle's front wheel represents scientific knowledge, and the authors show that there are other factors that are equally significant for educating students about climate change, such as skills, motivation, future orientation, identity, emotions, and perspectives about the world's future, including, hope. However, what constitutes effective climate education has yet to be clarified.⁵⁷ Both groups in the study have been studying 'Environmental Sciences as a part of their curriculum, yet the course outcomes do not bring any desirable changes in their behavior or motivation to adopt serious measures and to bring environmental justice. The select IEVs discussed with the students suggested that the students exposed to the Islamic Education System (IES) practiced Islamic values, naturally reflecting that Islamic values are eco-ethical. Their practices are motivated by the Islamic teachings as mentioned in the *Qur'ān* and the *Hadīth*, such as conservation of natural resources, primarily water, kindness towards animals, and other non-human forms, such as; planting of trees, avoiding *fasād* (pollution of any kind), practicing *Zakat*, and *fitrah* compulsorily—for promoting equal distribution of wealth. The researcher's consistent interaction with the students helped them to understand that the environmental crisis needs to be tackled with collective action and many activities were conducted to initiate eco-conservative practices.

6. Conclusion

Indicatively, Islamic values have been instilled in our day-to-day activities, especially in the education sector where a large number of teachers are Muslims and are practicing followers of Islam,

⁵⁷Alan Reid, "Climate Change Education and Research: Possibilities and Potentials versus Problems and Perils?" *Environment Education Research* 25, no. 6 (2019): 767-790. DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION



⁵⁶Hannele Cantell, Sakari Tolppanen, Essi Aarnio-Linnanvuori, and Anna Lehtonen, "Bicycle Model on Climate Change Education: Presenting and Evaluating a Model," *Environmental Education Research* 25, no. 5 (2019): 717-731.

which constantly bring and refer to Islamic religious texts to substantiate their arguments, and aim to inculcate Islamic values in students and young scholars. Several modernized educational institutes have preferred to sideline religious texts altogether, and their instrumental goal was to promote a secular and liberal education system, which is still considered necessary for a diverse country with different religious affiliations. Such schools are based on capitalist models to promote materialism and apathy towards the environment. Though the study does not give any new conceptual framework or claim generalization of results because the sample size was small, yet, it suggested that a larger area can be considered to conduct a survey methodology to proceed with the current study that can be an extension of this research. Moreover, further studies with larger sample sizes would help to fill in the research gaps, which were identified in this study. The present study strengthened the previous research, which argued that considering religious knowledge instills moral conduct to treat the environment with reverence. Therefore, encouraging green academia and reframing pedagogical structures that allow the inclusion of religious knowledge or texts in classrooms is highly recommended for a sustainable future.

Conflict of Interest

Author(s) declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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