

A Thematic Exegesis of The Qur'an on The Climate Crisis: An Analytical Study of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Ecological Philosophy

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Abstract: The global climate crisis poses a serious threat to human sustainability that cannot be solved by technology alone. This article explores how thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdū'i*) of the Qur'an can help raise ecological awareness and responsibility, focusing on the environmental philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Using a qualitative descriptive approach based on library research, the study analyses selected Qur'anic verses related to environmental ethics. It also reviews Nasr's critique of modernity and his call to re-sacralise nature. The findings show that the Qur'an encourages environmental stewardship and ethical responsibility, while Nasr's spiritual cosmology provides a strong theological basis for an ecological ethic grounded in the Qur'an. The study concludes that combining thematic Qur'anic interpretation with Nasr's insights offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the climate crisis within Islamic thought. Additionally, institutional support, academic traditions, and digital platforms are essential to effectively promote these ecological values in contemporary Muslim communities.

Keywords: Thematic exegesis; Qur'an; climate crisis; Seyyed Hossein Nasr; ecological ethics

Abstrak: Krisis iklim global menghadirkan tantangan serius bagi keberlanjutan kehidupan manusia, yang tidak dapat diselesaikan hanya melalui pendekatan teknokratis. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi kontribusi potensial interpretasi tematik (*tafsir mawdū'i*) Al-Qur'an dalam mengembangkan kesadaran dan tanggung jawab ekologis, dengan fokus pada pemikiran ekologis Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif-deskriptif melalui penelitian kepustakaan, studi ini menganalisis ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an terpilih yang terkait dengan etika lingkungan dan mengkaji kritik Nasr terhadap modernitas dan seruannya untuk mensakralisasikan kembali alam. Temuan-temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa Al-Qur'an mempromosikan pengelolaan lingkungan dan tanggung jawab etis, dan bahwa kosmologi spiritual Nasr menawarkan landasan teologis yang kuat bagi etika ekologis berbasis Al-Qur'an. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa mengintegrasikan interpretasi tematik Al-Qur'an dengan perspektif Nasr memberikan kerangka kerja holistik untuk mengatasi krisis iklim dalam wacana Islam. Selain itu, dukungan kelembagaan, tradisi akademis, dan penggunaan platform digital sangat penting untuk menyebarkan nilai-nilai ekologi ini secara efektif kepada masyarakat Muslim kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Tafsir Tematik; Al-Qur'an; krisis iklim; Seyyed Hossein Nasr; etika ekologi

1. Introduction

The global climate crisis has emerged as one of the most pressing threats to the sustainability of life on Earth. Human-induced phenomena such as global warming, pollution, deforestation, and environmental disasters have rapidly accelerated ecological decline. Scientific research and environmental policy alone have proven inadequate without a parallel shift in moral and spiritual consciousness (Rogelj & others, 2025, pp. 943–947). Islam, as a comprehensive worldview, offers

theological and ethical resources that are deeply ecological. The Qur'an, in particular, contains numerous references to the natural world—its balance, order, and sacredness. However, the Qur'an's potential as a source of ecological consciousness remains underutilised (Hutagalung, 2021, pp. 65–68).

Thematic interpretation (*tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*) provides a suitable framework for addressing contemporary issues such as climate change by synthesising Qur'anic verses related to a specific theme. From this methodology emerges the field of *ecological tafsir*—the interpretation of the Qur'an that highlights humanity's responsibility toward nature. This article seeks to analyse key environmental verses thematically and propose strategies for disseminating these insights through digital platforms. Islamic studies, when approached within the broader field of religious studies, can be divided into four key areas. First, the texts, which serve as sources of teachings and religious symbols. Second, the behavior and attitudes of followers, rulers, and religious leaders toward these teachings. Third, the rites and worship practices, including the institutions and places where worship takes place. Fourth, the tools and religious organisations that help bring followers together and facilitate their connections (Armstrong, 2018; Esposito, 1995; Lewis, 2002).

The first section focuses on religious texts, specifically the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as well as scholarly works that reflect experts' interpretations and responses to these primary sources. The second section examines different ways individuals, their personalities, and religious leaders incorporate sacred texts into their daily lives. The third section examines worship practices based on the opinions and *ijtihād* of prominent thinkers in Islamic history. Finally, the fourth section addresses Muslim communities, associations, and organisations, highlighting their role as driving forces in advancing the social dimensions of Islamic teachings (Mufid, 2019).

The current era is marked by the widespread and rapid use of computer technology among Muslim communities worldwide. Gadgets have become essential everyday tools for Muslim digital natives—a generation raised with technology all around them. With the help of search engines, for example, Muslims can easily access religious references at very low cost (Hosseini et al., 2014, pp. 135–141). This accessibility is made possible by the digitisation of religious materials, enabled by advancements in science and technology.

Humans are facing global warming and a climate crisis, which are causing rapid damage to natural ecosystems and triggering ecological disasters around the world. Both are severely affecting the livelihoods of communities in developing countries. No one, not even a single country, can combat that crisis. Addressing global warming requires three simultaneous actions: mitigation, adaptation, and building resilience (Costal et al., 2022).

Given that the global climate crisis poses a long-term threat to the Earth, this paper seeks to explore the role of Islamic studies in addressing these challenges. It examines what Muslim scholars can contribute, how Islamic studies should be structured to raise awareness, and how they can help individuals and communities adapt to the climate crisis, build resilience, and take proactive measures against its threats. This study begins by reviewing recent scholarly works and findings on the challenges posed by the climate crisis, using them as a foundation for its arguments. This is followed by a discussion on how Islamic studies can help address the climate crisis, with a particular focus on recent Qur'anic studies that emphasise thematic interpretation (exegesis) of the Qur'an (Filthriyawan, 2019; Setiawan, 2012).

This research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach through library research. Primary data consists of selected Qur'anic verses related to environmental themes. Secondary sources include classical and contemporary tafsir literature, ecological theology texts, and relevant scholarly articles. The data are analysed thematically, focusing on the ethical and spiritual principles embedded in Qur'anic discourse. The study also highlights the digital era, emphasising the importance of strategic dissemination to Muslim digital natives.

The exegesis methodology employed is thematic interpretation (*tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*), following the framework developed by al-Farmawi and other *mufasssīrīn*. This method comprises several systematic steps (A H Al-Farmāwī, 1977; Hidayatulloh, 2018): 1) Identifying the Central Theme: The chosen theme is ecological ethics and climate crisis from the Qur'anic perspective, aiming to explore the ethical-spiritual dimension of humanity's relationship with nature. 2) Collecting Relevant Verses: Qur'anic

verses are selected across the entire mushaf that directly or indirectly pertain to the environment, ecological responsibility, and divine signs in nature. The selection process uses thematic indices, digital databases, and established tafsir references. 3) Analysing Intertextual Coherence (*munāsabah*) The coherence and semantic relationships among the selected verses are examined to ensure a holistic understanding of the ecological message within the Qur'anic framework. 4) Performing In-depth Exegesis; Each verse is interpreted by combining linguistic analysis, classical and modern tafsir (such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, al-Marāghī, and Quraish Shihab), relevant prophetic traditions (*hadith*), and interdisciplinary insights from environmental science and ethics. 5) Synthesising the Qur'anic Eco-Theology: A comprehensive synthesis is developed to highlight the Qur'anic vision on ecological stewardship, emphasising key concepts such as *khalīfah* (vicegerency), *mīzān* (balance), and *amānah* (trust), and addressing potential interpretive challenges such as the misuse of *taskhīr* verses for environmental exploitation.

This structure allows the researcher to critically and contextually engage with the Qur'anic texts, extracting theological principles that support a strong Islamic environmental ethic applicable to addressing contemporary ecological crises (Nasr, 1997; Quraish Syihab, 1996). Studies on the relationship between Islam and the environment have evolved significantly in recent decades under the banner of "Islamic Environmentalism" or "Green Islam". A foundational figure in this discourse is Seyyed Hossein Nasr, whose seminal work *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (1997) offers a strong critique of the desecralisation of nature in modern civilisation. Nasr argues that Islam possesses a solid metaphysical and ethical framework for building an ecological awareness rooted in divine revelation and sacred cosmology (Nasr, 1997).

Another key figure is Fazlun Khalid, a prominent environmental activist and founder of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES). Khalid has worked extensively to promote environmental education in Muslim communities, emphasising Qur'anic and Prophetic principles such as *tawhīd* (divine unity), *khalīfah* (stewardship), and *mīzān* (balance) as spiritual imperatives for environmental responsibility (Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (IFEES), n.d.). Ibrahim Ozdemir, a Turkish scholar, has contributed to the academic expansion of Islamic environmentalism by advocating for an ethical and spiritual response to the ecological crisis. In his writings, Ozdemir stresses that addressing climate change effectively necessitates moving beyond purely technical solutions. He advocates for the integration of Qur'an-based environmental ethics, which are grounded in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) (Ozdemir, n.d.). In the Indonesian context, M. Quraish Shihab has made notable contributions through his work *Membumikan al-Qur'an* (Grounding the Qur'an). Shihab highlights the Qur'anic recognition of the natural world as *āyāt kauniyyah* (cosmic signs), inviting humans to reflect on creation and act justly towards the environment (Quraish Syihab, 1996).

While the contributions of these figures are foundational, a significant gap in studies that explicitly integrate thematic exegesis (*tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī*) with a critical ecological reading of Qur'anic verses and that propose digital dissemination strategies tailored to contemporary Muslim audiences. This article seeks to address that gap by combining the classical and modern exegetical legacy, Islamic eco-theological thought, and digital communication strategies to provide a holistic Qur'anic response to the climate crisis.

2. Climate and Environmental Crisis

The threat of climate change and environmental crisis is rapidly destroying natural resources and the earth's ecosystems. It spreads widely, from global to national, up to local and grassroots community levels. It creates negative impacts on all sectors, geographical areas, people, and segments of life. It cannot be prevented or stopped by government policies, state regulations, market mechanisms, or law enforcement, which means that relying on top-down state policies and bureaucratic approaches is ineffective (*Climate Crisis: Race We Can Win*, n.d.). The root causes of the climate crisis and environmental disasters are mostly due to human attitudes and behaviour in their relationship with nature. The human demand for exploiting nature is disrupting the balance and

harmony between people and the environment, and is decreasing the earth's ability to support life. They become a damaging threat to humanity (*Facts about the Nature Crisis*, n.d.).

Global issues regarding the environment that are causing the climate crisis are: i] the greenhouse effect, ii] non-renewable energy, iii] forest and land fires, iv] over-exploitation and natural imbalance, as well as v] human behaviour (*Causes and Effects of Climate Change*, n.d.). The primary role of the greenhouse effect is to keep earth's air temperature at a comfortable level suitable for life. Without the greenhouse effect, the earth's temperature would drop to freezing levels, threatening human survival (Aldrian & others, 2011, p. 27). The greenhouse effect is essential for all life on earth. However, if greenhouse gases accumulate excessively in the atmosphere, they can cause global warming (*Penanganan Global Warming*, n.d.).

Non-renewable energy sources include coal, natural gas, fossil fuels, and oil. Once they are used, they cannot be replaced. The main problem is that people depend heavily on this energy source to fulfil their daily needs. The Industrial Revolution in the 18th century led to a significant increase in the use of fossil fuels. Meanwhile, this energy was formed over millions of years and makes the earth balanced. Excessive use of this energy will have an impact on the imbalance of the earth's ecosystems (Chu & Kerr, 2013, pp. 278–279). Climate change increases the number of forest and land fires and the damage they cause. The area of forest and land fires in Indonesia throughout 2021 increased compared to 2020. Based on data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia (KLHK), forests and land burned in Indonesia reached 354,582 hectares (ha) or an increase of 19.4% compared to 296,942 ha in 2020 (*Luas Kebakaran Hutan Dan Lahan RI Bertambah 19% Pada 2021*, n.d.).

Several global issues related to the climate crisis have a serious impact on environmental problems at the local level in Indonesia. There are at least three impacts that need special attention, namely: i] rise of sea levels, ii] changes in seasons, and iii] harvest failure. The phenomenon that arises from sea level rise is tidal floods, which occur more frequently when sea water levels rise. By 2065, it is predicted that sea levels will increase by almost 40 cm. This is a warning as well as an anomaly that occurred in Jakarta. This also happens in several locations, including a mosque in Karawang, West Java; coastal settlements in Pekalongan, Central Java; and Gresik, East Java.

Seasonal changes are no less negative, whether caused by internal or external factors (*Penyebab Terjadinya Perubahan Musim*, n.d.). Internal factors include rainfall intensity, wind direction, and the geographical location of the area. The greenhouse effect, for several gases in the atmosphere, is also the effect of seasonal changes. Meanwhile, the external factor is the earth's revolution. The large potential for hot temperatures causes the season to run abnormally.

Meanwhile, seasonal changes greatly affect livestock and plant life. Animal feed becomes abundant in the rainy season because plants grow. On the other hand, plants become infertile in the dry season. Livestock health is also greatly influenced by the season. During the rainy season, livestock diseases and parasites can spread. Insects, rodents, and disease-spreading microorganisms are sensitive to seasonal changes (*Penyebab Terjadinya Perubahan Musim*, n.d.). As a result, harvest failure and livestock failure are often found in areas of Indonesia, such as Kampar, Riau Province, vegetable farmers on the eastern prairies of Slamet Mountain, Central Java, vegetable centres in Malang, East Java, including in NTB and NTT as livestock centres (*Dampak Fenomena Perubahan Iklim*, n.d.).

3. New Paradigm in Islamic Studies: A Case in Qur'anic Studies

The new generation of digital natives has become a new community, including Muslims in Indonesia. In a press release, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology said that at least 30 million children and young people in Indonesia were internet users in 2014 and that digital media is currently the main channel of communication they use (*Number of Internet Users in Indonesia (2017-2022) with Forecast to 2028*, n.d.). The results of the study revealed that 80% of respondents were internet users, with evidence of a severe digital divide between those living in urban areas, who are

wealthier in Indonesia, and those living in rural areas (*Riset Kominfo dan UNICEF Mengenai Perilaku Anak Dan Remaja Dalam Menggunakan Internet*, n.d.).

Engkus Kuswarno supported this claim, reporting demographic findings of gender, the online society in Indonesia is known to be 51.5% male and 48.4% female. Although almost the same, the male population is larger than the female population. The same number applies to people living in urban and rural areas. Internet users in urban areas represent 51% and in rural areas 49%. Interestingly, rural communities have almost caught up with urban communities in internet use (Kuswanto, 2015, pp. 47–54). Data indicates that Indonesia's digital society has experienced rapid growth and development. Given the country's demographic composition, it is inevitable that the majority of this digital society consists of Muslims. Therefore, it is crucial to verify and ensure the accuracy of Islamic studies materials and content, particularly in Islamic universities, to meet the needs of this digitally oriented generation.

A special study on the impact of computers on muslim society was conducted by Seyed Ebrahim Hossaini. It focuses on expanding knowledge of Islamic sciences on online Islamic literature, variant readings, translations, interpretations and prophetic hadiths. He also discussed Islamic websites, such as www.islamonline.com and free downloadable software. Information technology offers Muslims the opportunity to receive religious education from home through virtual classrooms, as well as video games for children to learn Islam (Hosseini, 2014, p. 139).

As briefly stated, the four main segments of Islamic studies have their academic character and uniqueness. *The first*, as a textual study, requires written sources that must be in digital form. Important texts in various types of Islamic sciences, such as interpretation, hadith, fiqh, usul al-fiqh, theology, mysticism, and history, are no longer relevant when they are written only in printed books. They should be digitised to facilitate easy access. *The second* presents different approaches to studying how people and religious leaders react. Their reception of the Quran and the Sunnah as the sources of Islam gave rise to various works, illustrating three forms of reception of religious texts. They are hermeneutical, cultural and aesthetic receptions. The hermeneutics referred to here is the method by which experts and thinkers interpret the text of the Quran and Sunnah to create a comprehensive work of interpretation. The existence of various works on the Qur'anic understanding and explanation (*syarh*) of the *hadiths* is a true manifestation of their hermeneutic reception of religious texts.

Cultural reception is how Muslims' response to Islamic sources creates a new culture in a community. An example is the tradition of regular reading of *Yāsīn* (one of the chapters in the Quran) by some communities. Reading one of the chapters of the Quran has an impact on creating a culture of togetherness (Fathurrosyid, 2015; Nurfadilah, 2017). Aesthetic reception is how the Quran gives a beautiful effect to its receivers. When a calligrapher writes a name in beautiful letters, the aesthetic dimension naturally remains within reasonable limits. However, when he wrote the verses of the Quran, the outpouring of ability for the beauty of writing became very optimal. The Quran provide a strong boost to a calligrapher's sense of beauty. In short, hermeneutical, cultural, and aesthetic receptions are better known today as a phenomenon of the living Quran (Hasbullah, 2020).

The third type focuses on rites and cult practices, including their places of worship. The approaches in this study draw heavily on contemporary social sciences, reflecting multiple dimensions of analysis. Muslim worship practices exhibit significant diversity, shaped by varying interpretations and schools of thought. The fourth type pertains to tools, specifically religious organisations that unite followers. Islamic organisations and public forums represent an essential segment of Islamic studies. These mass organisations, with their diverse forms and missions, serve as social instruments of religion, integrating religious values into social life.

Returning to the three models of Qur'anic reception by the Muslim community and the three additional segments of Islamic studies, all are currently facing challenges posed by the modern era. The reception of the Qur'an will change according to the change of generation. Meanwhile, the segments of Islamic studies will also be challenged by the habits of the digital natives. For example, the young Muslim generation, as digital natives, tends to have their understanding of Islamic

teachings through social media. Muslim scholars should address this trend by providing appropriate interpretations of Islam on social media. Other emerging topics in Islamic studies today include online *fatwas*, digital Quran recitation, the use of Quran apps on smartphones, and the commercialisation of Islam.

For these reasons, Qur'anic studies must undergo reform to ensure greater flexibility and alignment with the literacy and needs of the younger Muslim generation. These studies should not focus solely on classical and medieval intellectual traditions but must also incorporate contemporary methodologies and relevant substance. Furthermore, Qur'anic studies should extend beyond the interpretation and understanding of the Quran to emphasise the dissemination of its teachings through various online media platforms, effectively engaging the so-called digital natives.

4. Thematic Exegesis: Examples on Verses Related to the Environment

The latest method of understanding the Qur'an is the so-called thematic interpretation, *al-tafsir al-mawdu'i*. This model is based on continuous and dynamic social realities that need Qur'anic answers. Many researchers prefer a thematic exegesis of the Qur'an because it focuses on explaining the meaning of specific themes mentioned in the text. Several studies explain what and how thematic interpretation works, and then what contribution can be expected within the discourse of Qur'anic studies (Abu Hayy Al-Farmāwi, 1977; Hannafi, 2001; Muslim, 1989; Sa'id, 1991).

The choice of thematic interpretation as a Qur'anic method of interpreting verses is because it makes it possible to arrive at a holistic understanding of a particular theme. Most *tafsir* works that follow the arrangement of Uthman's *mushaf* are considered to capture only part of the meaning of the verses. To address this limitation, the thematic method has been developed. The majority of scholarly interpretations—whether classical, medieval, or modern—follow the *mushaf's* order, interpreting the verses one by one according to the Uthmanic sequence (Setiawan, 2012, p. 11).

The thematic interpretation allows the Qur'an to speak about itself through the verses and vocabulary it uses regarding certain issues. "Invite the Qur'an to speak" (*istanṭiq al-qur'āna*) is a phrase often put forward by scholars who support and develop thematic interpretation. With this method, interpreters who live amidst the realities allow them to have a dialogue with several problems to find answers (Setiawan, 2012, p. 12).

The thematic method can be utilised to explore how the Qur'an addresses environmental issues and the role of human beings as stewards of the Earth (*khalīfa fī al-arḍ*), emphasising their duty to care for and protect the environment. This approach also facilitates an understanding of the conceptual relationship between humans and nature, ensuring its continued utility and sustainability.

The word environment specifically does not appear in the Qur'an. The Qur'an provides indirect instruction related to important components of the environment. For example, the terms sky, earth, sun and various kinds of living creatures. Some verses that can be referred to are *Al-Jātsiyah* [45]: 13, *al-Ra'd* [12], and *Ibrāhīm* [14]: 32-34.

Chapter *Ibrāhīm* [14]: 32-34 as follows:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفَلَكَ
لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْهَارَ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۚ وَاتَّكُمُ
مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعَدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ۚ

It is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you. He has subjected the ships for your service, sailing through the sea by His command, and has subjected the rivers for you. He has 'also' subjected for you the sun and the moon, both constantly orbiting, and has subjected the day and night for you. And He has granted you all that you asked Him for. If you tried to count Allah's blessings, you would never be able to number them. Indeed, humankind is truly unfair, 'totally' ungrateful

In discussing *taskhīr* (subjugation), al-Ṭabarī views it as a divine favour and test; the resources provided must not be exploited heedlessly (al-Ṭabarī, 2001). Al-Rāzī emphasises spiritual responsibility and gratitude in benefiting from nature (al-Rāzī, 2000). Quraish Shihab argues that *taskhīr* does not imply absolute domination but rather a trust (*amānah*) to be preserved and managed responsibly (Quraish Shihab, 1998).

These three groups of verses emphasise that the one who has the right to control and regulate the universe is God, the All-Creator and the All-Manager. The right of control rests with God, while humans are obliged to maintain the trust given to them by God.

This brief description of the three groups of verses shows the irrelevance of an opinion that states that religion does not provide enough motivation for its followers to care about the environment. On the contrary, religion encourages its followers to maintain its sustainability (Quraish Shihab, 1998, p. 184). In fact, in the context of the Qur'an, Islam does not recognise the conquest of nature, and as a result, the relationship between humans and nature is not a relationship between conquerors and those who are conquered, but rather a relationship of togetherness and submission to God (M Quraish Shihab, 1998, p. 295). The term "conqueror of nature" derives from Greek mythology, which described natural elements as gods hostile to humans, and thus something that needed to be overcome or conquered (Quraish Shihab, 1998, p. 296).

These verses use the word "you". According to commentators, this word is addressed to all mankind, whenever and wherever they are. This means that the universe, especially the earth and its content, was created by God not only for one particular society or one generation, but for all societies and generations of all time (M. Quraish Shihab, 2000, p. 272). In other words, the earth and nature, apart from being created to benefit mankind, are also a deposit so that the next generation can also make use of them. Each generation has the same opportunity to enjoy and benefit from the universe (Setiawan, 2012, p. 184).

In line with the three groups of verses above, humans' position with the environment is a leader. Good leadership involves preserving nature's balance, caring for the environment, and using its resources responsibly. This behaviour also implies a sense of responsibility to avoid damages that threaten the balance of nature and its ecosystem.

Among the verses of the Qur'an that touch on several important points regarding the relation between humans and nature are: i] damage caused by human hands: ar-Rum [30]: 41; ii] prohibition against doing damage: *al-Baqarah* [2]: 11, 60, 205; *al-A'raf* [7]: 56; 74; iii] prohibition on following people who exceed the limits and do damage: *Al-Syu'arā'* [26]: 151-152; iv] humans as leaders have responsibilities: *al-Baqarah* [2]: 30.

One of the verses that indicates the damage caused by the hands of people is chapter *al-Rūm* [30]: 41, as follows:

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

Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people's hands have done, so that Allah may cause them to taste 'the consequences of' some of their deeds and perhaps they might return 'to the Right Path

In *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabarī interprets *fasād* (corruption) as injustice and oppression resulting in social and environmental disorder. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, connects this corruption with humanity's failure to uphold divine law and the reckless exploitation of resources (al-Rāzī, 2000). Sayyid Qutb, in *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, views the verse as a warning against living in ways that contradict the spiritual balance of creation (Qutb, 2000). Quraish Shihab interprets the verse ethically, warning against repeating exploitative behaviour that disturbs ecological harmony (M Quraish Shihab, 1998).

Rather than merely asserting that the Qur'an forbids corruption, a more nuanced interpretation arises through comparative analysis of how classical and contemporary exegetes explain the term *fasād* in this verse.

Al-Ṭabarī understands *fasād* as various kinds of injustice and violations of divine law that cause real harm to both human societies and the natural world. His approach focuses on the consequences

of human transgression, including droughts, famine, and conflict, which are seen as both divine signs and natural outcomes of imbalance (al-Ṭabarī, 2001).

Al-Rāzī, in *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, argues that *fasād* involves both physical and moral deterioration. He links the corruption mentioned in the verse to human behaviours that exceed appropriate limits, suggesting that exceeding divine boundaries—especially in the use of natural resources—leads inevitably to imbalance (*khilāl*) in the created order (al-Rāzī, 2000).

Sayyid Qutb, through his lens of socio-spiritual reform, interprets *fasād* as the inevitable consequence of a materialistic worldview. He understood modern manifestations of environmental degradation as symptoms of deeper spiritual malaise—an estrangement from the divine purpose of stewardship (Qutb, 2000).

Quraish Shihab interprets *fasād* in this verse not only as social or political injustice, but as a systemic disruption—including ecological degradation—resulting from irresponsible consumption, exploitation, and disregard for the interconnectedness of all creation (Quraish Shihab, 1998).

Taken together, these interpretations suggest that:

The Qur'an's discussion of *fasād* in QS *al-Rūm* :41 refers not only to moral corruption but also has profound ecological implications. The term captures the consequences of human excess (*isrāf*) and the breakdown of natural balance (*mīzān*), caused by a failure to fulfil the Qur'anic mandate of stewardship (*khilāfah*).

This understanding is particularly resonant in the age of the climate crisis, where deforestation, pollution, and carbon emissions can be seen as modern manifestations of the Qur'anic *fasād*.

Thus, the verse can be read as both a warning and a theological diagnosis of ecological collapse, with human behaviour at the centre of moral and environmental disruption. In this sense, the Qur'an is not silent on the climate crisis—it frames it as part of a broader ethical and spiritual failure that demands reflection, repentance, and systemic reform.

Meanwhile, the verse that strictly prohibits causing damage is chapter *al-A'rāf* [7]: 56, namely:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set in order. And call upon Him with hope and fear. Indeed, Allah's mercy is always close to the good-doers.

The *mufasssīrūn* agree that this verse conveys a clear prohibition against environmental destruction. Al-Ṭabarī defines *islāh* as divine restoration and cosmic order. Al-Rāzī expands *fasād* to include both physical harm and moral-spiritual degradation (al-Rāzī, 2000). Quraish Shihab highlights the relevance of this verse to modern crises such as pollution and resource abuse, interpreting *fasād* as systemic injustice against both humans and nature (Quraish Shihab, 1998).

In addition, verses 151-152 of chapter *al-Syu'arā'* prohibit someone from following people who cross the line/wasteful and do damage, as follows:

وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ۚ الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ

And do not follow the command of the transgressors, who spread corruption throughout the land, never setting things right.

The term *fasād* (corruption or mischief) in the Qur'an, as referenced in the verses above, is identified as a primary cause of environmental degradation and pollution. Contemporary experts have identified at least seven critical forms of environmental damage that threaten the future of the earth and its inhabitants: (i) depletion of natural resources, (ii) atmospheric warming, (iii) scarcity of clean water, (iv) depletion of the ozone layer, (v) increasing resilience of pests, and (vi) the expansion of deserts; and environmental poisoning (M. Quralilsh Shihab, 2000, pp. 279–280).

Al-Ṭabarī describes the *khalīfah* (vicegerent) as one entrusted by God to administer the earth following divine will (Tabari, 2000). Al-Rāzī emphasises the knowledge and reasoning capacity granted to humans that underlie this responsibility (al-Rāzī, 2000). Sayyid Qutb presents *khilāfah* as a

spiritual mandate to uphold justice and cosmic harmony (Qutb, 2000). Quraish Shihab interprets the vicegerency as an ethical and theological foundation for environmental stewardship (Tabari, 2000).

The term *fasād* (فساد) derives from the Arabic root f-s-d, meaning corruption, decay, disorder, or ruin. Classical Arabic lexicons, such as *Lisān al-‘Arab* and *al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī’s al-Mufradāt fī Ḥarīb al-Qur’ān*, define *fasād* as any deviation from natural order, justice, and proper function (Al-Aṣḥānī, n.d.).

The term *fasād* and its derivatives appear in the Qur’an more than 50 times in various contexts, including: 1) Physical destruction: e.g., QS *al-Rūm* [30]: 41 — “Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned.” 2) Political and social injustice: e.g., QS *al-Qaṣaṣ* [28]: 4 and QS *al-Baqarah* [2]: 205 — referring to tyrants or exploiters who cause societal chaos. 3) Moral and spiritual deviation: e.g., QS *al-A‘rāf* [7]: 56 — warning against corrupting the earth after it has been reformed (*iṣlāh*).

Al-Ṭabarī explains *fasād* as the result of human transgression, injustice, and disobedience leading to imbalance and suffering on Earth (Tabari, 2000). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī interprets *fasād* more broadly to include moral, environmental, and spiritual corruption (al-Rāzī, 2000). Sayyid Qutb, in *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, associates *fasād* with social systems that deviate from Islamic principles of unity and justice, leading to environmental exploitation and spiritual decay (Qutb, 2000). M. Quraish Shihab views *fasād* as any form of systemic imbalance — whether environmental, ethical, or institutional — especially relevant to modern ecological degradation (M Quraish Shihab, 1998).

In the Qur’anic worldview, *fasād* refers not only to physical environmental damage but also encompasses moral, spiritual, and structural corruption. This multidimensional concept aligns closely with contemporary ecological crises, which are rooted not only in technology or economics but also in ethical failures and a loss of spiritual consciousness. By interpreting *fasād* through an environmental lens, it becomes clear that the Qur’an condemns the reckless destruction of the earth and calls for a restoration of balance (*mīzān*) and harmony as a sacred duty. The Qur’anic concept of *fasād* offers a robust ethical and theological framework for understanding the spiritual roots of environmental degradation. It encourages Muslims to see ecological destruction as a form of moral failure and a breach of their role as *khalīfah* (stewards) of the Earth. This deeper semantic understanding strengthens the development of an Islamic ecological ethic rooted in revelation.

In line with the message of several verses above, Seyyed Hossein Nasr stated that the quantitative, secular, materialistic and profane view of modern science has eroded the symbolic meanings of spiritual messages contained in the universe. Nature has been exploited irresponsibly. For Nasr, the environmental crisis is caused by humans' refusal to see God as a real "environment", which surrounds humans and sustains their lives. For Nasr, there is no choice but to carry out what he calls the desacralisation of the universe. Furthermore, Nasr emphasised the need to build a new cosmology based on religious spirituality that is meaningful and has strong wisdom (Nasr, 1997; Setiawan, 2012).

Understanding the verses of the Qur’an utilising a thematic method makes it possible to obtain a comprehensive and holistic view of the Qur’an regarding the universe. In the view of the Qur’an, nature should not be treated as an exploitative object, but rather as an inseparable part of living creatures whose preservation must be considered. Sustainable nature will provide benefits to living creatures, especially humans, from generation to generation. From this point, the environmental crisis is inevitably the responsibility of all parties. Every single member of the community has to change his/her view regarding the nature, namely from previously being all objects to becoming all partners, so that it can continue to provide benefits in life.

5. Specialists as Agents of Environmental Awareness

Scientists play an important role in improving society. In the context of Islamic scholarship, scholars have responsibilities not only to maintain their scholarly authority but also to contribute significantly to adaptation and resilience in response to the climate crisis. Discussions on environmental and climate issues often involve three key concepts: mitigation, adaptation, and

resilience. Mitigation is generally not feasible within Islamic studies because it typically requires state-level policies and authority. However, scholars can make valuable contributions to the other two areas — adaptation and resilience. Their role is to help people understand how to adapt to environmental and climate challenges and build resilience in their lives (Hancock, 2019).

With such a role for scholars, strategic steps are needed to ensure that the message of the Qur'an can be effectively conveyed to digital natives. This generation should develop an awareness of the importance of preserving nature for the future of humanity. The so-called digital natives are today's generation, whose ways of learning and thinking differ from those of their predecessors. Several characteristics define digital natives: "Hungry" for new information; Dare to innovate; Like to collaborate; Mindset changing; Dare to take risks; Familiar with technology; and Feel not satisfied (*Psikolog UGM: Orang Tua Harus Tahu 8 Karakteristik Generasi Digital*, n.d.)

Being "hungry" for new information means that someone follows various social changes. This sensitivity helps boost their courage to innovate. In pursuing and innovating something, a person usually cannot work alone. On the contrary, they need to collaborate with others, especially when the scope and scale of a task are broad and large.

Mindset changing also means having flexibility in facing problems. A known, challenges are dynamic. To overcome these challenges, someone must have the flexibility to change their mindset while applying suitable strategies. With this change in mindset, some will more easily make important decisions to take risks (Lee, n.d.).

Thematic interpretation in Qur'anic studies, as previously described, will be ineffective if dissemination strategies are not adapted to the needs of digital natives. It is essential to leverage specific digital platforms to ensure that Qur'anic interpretations on environmental issues are accessible, understandable, and engaging for this audience. Therefore, relying solely on conventional methods of delivery is insufficient. Instead, these interpretations must be strategically presented on social media platforms to maximise reach and accessibility. Ultimately, such efforts will enable digital natives to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Qur'an's message regarding environmental issues (Basri & Damis, 2023).

Scholars in Qur'anic studies must undertake three interrelated steps to disseminate interpretations on environmental issues effectively. The first is the institutionalisation of movements; the second is fostering ongoing traditions; and the third is establishing updated and persistent agencies. These three steps form an inseparable framework, each playing a central role in the success of the overall strategy. Moreover, the sequence of these steps must be maintained, as their effectiveness depends on their interconnected and progressive implementation (Jamal, 2024).

Institutionalisation is a strong move to implement policies through a top-down approach by those in authority. In the history of Islamic civilisation, many just rulers established strong financial institutions, notably the Bayt al-Mal (Hitti, n.d., pp. 24–35). This institution was a key pillar supporting policies in research and science. The pro-scientific policies pursued by leaders became crucial in building a civilisation grounded in scientific knowledge within Islamic history. Leaders were known to reward scientists and encourage the translation of scientific works from various fields into Arabic. This had a significant impact on research and various scientific activities carried out by experts in many disciplines.

In the context of institutionalisation today, Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic universities, continue to play a leading role in disseminating environmental interpretations to the next generation. These efforts include both academic and non-academic activities to ensure students have sufficient awareness about the environment and natural balance.

Academic tradition remains the second most important step. Knowledge cultivation can be achieved to enrich Islamic studies. During the classical Islamic civilisation, the culture of knowledge fostered critical and productive scholars. The large number of scholarly works produced was a clear manifestation of the dynamic relationship between science and its challenges.

The culture of science in Islamic civilisation was also able to preserve the noble legacies of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the collection of hadiths. These collections

represent the scientific documentation of oral traditions that are academically reliable. Without a mature scientific tradition, it would be impossible to conclusively verify *hadiths*, including their transmitters and content, which were rigorously authenticated.

Therefore, scientific tradition plays an essential role in Islamic civilisation. It can also serve as a guarantee for the continued development of civilisation in the future (Purwanto, Istiani, Hilda, Marazi, & Nudin, 2022).

Institutionalisation and scientific tradition give birth to reliable actors. Scientists are the actors who take positions as agents of change. The active role of Islamic scientists specialising in environmental issues created the catchphrase "preservation of the environment, *hifdh al-bi'ah*," which is one of the six principles in Islamic jurisprudence. Their participation shows that they are active agents in the campaign for ecosystem balance.

As mentioned, Islamic scientists also play a role in aspects of adaptation and resilience to climate crises. Adaptation to climate change and crises is carried out through community movements. They engage in reforestation and other efforts to ensure that clean air and clean water can be regained. When people can adapt to climate change, they will automatically have sufficient resistance and resilience to climate challenges and crises (Beni, 2024). Therefore, resilience is the result of successful adaptation by society.

Scientists, as driving forces and agents of change, have a strategic role in the resilience framework. For this reason, as explained, these three steps constitute one integrated package that is interconnected, and the order cannot be reversed.

Pro-environmental policies through authoritative institutions support scientific traditions and make it possible for scholars in Qur'anic studies to participate as agents for environmental awareness.

In other words, three key components play a vital role: 1) Institutions that hold authority and create a positive environment for the advancement of knowledge; 2) Academic culture, including research, scientific platforms, and fields, forms the foundation for the development of high-quality scientific work; and 3) Scientists themselves who are essentially creators of civilisation and agents of change.

6. Conclusion

Islamic studies play a strategic role in addressing environmental crises by interpreting the Qur'an through thematic analysis. Although the Qur'an does not explicitly mention the word "environment" it contains many verses related to important elements of nature, such as the earth, sky, water, sun, and living beings. Using thematic interpretation, the Qur'an emphasises that humans have a responsibility to preserve nature. The relationship between humans and nature is not a subject-object dynamic where humans exploit nature, but rather an equal relationship as fellow creatures of God. Humans are responsible for the environment by: Avoiding harmful deeds; Preventing wastefulness; Not exceeding limits; and Maintaining sustainability for the benefit of humanity.

The message of the Qur'an should be widely disseminated, especially among digital natives, to raise awareness of environmental damage and its increasing impact on the climate crisis. This dissemination should align with the digital generation's way of thinking, making it essential that Qur'anic studies be packaged on digital platforms. Experts in this field have a high responsibility to revitalise their research on the Qur'an related to environmental and climate issues.

To build a society capable of adapting to and being resilient in the face of climate crises, three simultaneous steps are needed: institutionalisation, tradition, and agency. These steps are interdependent and complement each other. Institutionalisation leads to pro-environment and pro-Qur'anic study policies. Tradition is the cultural knowledge that has developed within Islamic civilisation, producing experts competent in this knowledge. Meanwhile, agency refers to active scientists who advocate for pro-environmental interpretations of the Qur'an, serving as references for current and future digital natives.

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