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Contemporary Ecotheology in the Post-normal Times: Synergy of Religious Doctrine and Moral Philosophy from the Perspective of Ziauddin Sardar

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Abstract: The global ecological crisis in the Postnormal Times (PNT) era presents multidimensional challenges that cannot be resolved solely through technocratic, economic, and public policy approaches. Climate change, environmental degradation, the exploitation of natural resources, and future uncertainty underscore the need for a moral and spiritual reorientation in how we build human relations with nature. This study explores the synergy between religious doctrine and moral philosophy through the lens of Ziauddin Sardar's contemporary ecotheology, with the aim of formulating environmental ethics relevant to the complexities of the postnormal era. This study uses a qualitative approach and a library-based method. Data were obtained from Ziauddin Sardar's primary works, Islamic ecotheological literature, and various recent studies on the ecological crisis, environmental ethics, and futuristic thinking. Data analysis was conducted using content and critical discourse analyses to identify ideas, values, and ethical constructions related to the relationship among humans, religion, and the environment. The results of the study indicate that the synergy between the doctrine of the Caliphate and Sardar's futuristic moral philosophy can yield a comprehensive, reflective, and adaptive framework for environmental ethics. The concept of humans as caliphs is understood not solely as a legitimation of environmental management but as a moral mandate that demands responsibility, justice, balance, and ecological sustainability. Meanwhile, Sardar's thoughts on the future provide a critical perspective on the uncertainty, complexity, and long-term consequences of human actions. This synergy has the potential to transform passive theological discourse into proactive socio-religious action in response to the ecological chaos of the post-normal era. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of institutionalizing a holistic ecotheological paradigm in education, religious institutions, public policy, and social spaces to strengthen ecological justice and ensure the sustainability of civilization across generations.

Keywords: caliphate of the caliphate; ecological crisis; ecotheology; moral philosophy; post-normal times.

1. Introduction

Global civilization is currently facing an ecological crisis that is escalating out of control. Climate change, environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution, loss of biodiversity, and depletion of natural resources are no longer merely scientific and managerial issues, but rather manifestations of a profound moral and spiritual crisis for humanity. These various problems demonstrate that environmental damage is closely linked to how humans view themselves, nature, and God. When nature is positioned solely as an object of exploitation and an economic resource, the relationship between humans and the environment loses its ethical and spiritual dimensions. The modernist paradigm, heavily dominated by instrumental rationality, has proven unable to provide comprehensive solutions, as it actually sever the sacred relationship between humans and the universe (Sardar, 1998). Exploitation legitimized in the name of

progress has created a systemic imbalance between human needs, ecosystem sustainability, and nature's ability to regenerate. Therefore, handling the current environmental crisis demands a fundamental philosophical reorientation, namely a shift from mere technocratic mitigation to an environmental ethical transformation rooted in strong spirituality and theological awareness (Nahdi & Ghufron, 2006).

The ecological crisis also demonstrates that environmental issues are inseparable from civilizational issues. Production and consumption patterns oriented toward limitless growth, exploitation of natural resources, and the dominance of short-term economic interests have resulted in cumulative, transgenerational ecological consequences. In this context, humanity faces not only the challenge of repairing the damage that has occurred but also how to develop a new perspective on nature. Environmental ethics is needed to provide moral boundaries for human actions, while religion has the potential to provide a normative foundation that places human relations with nature as part of a spiritual responsibility (Ives & Kidwell, 2019). Thus, resolving the ecological crisis requires a multidimensional approach that integrates scientific knowledge, philosophical reflection, religious awareness, and social action.

In response to this crisis, the discourse of Islamic ecotheology has developed as an effort to rediscover the ethical foundations of religious texts. Ecotheology does not simply position religion as a source of legitimacy for environmental conservation movements, but also seeks to build a theological understanding of humanity's place as part of the whole of creation. Recent studies have positioned ecotheology as a crucial instrument for exploring and restoring the broken spiritual relationship between humans, nature, and God (Alfadhli et al., 2025). From an Islamic perspective, this relationship can be built through concepts such as khalifah (vicegerent), amanah (trust), mizan (balance), and the prohibition against causing damage (fasad) to the earth. These concepts provide a normative basis that the use of nature must be accompanied by responsibility, balance, justice, and respect for the continuity of life. Thus, Islamic ecotheology can serve as a reflective space for shifting humanity's orientation from domination over nature to a more responsible and sustainable relationship.

The reality of this environmental crisis is unfolding amid an era of disruption and uncertainty. Ecological change is occurring simultaneously with increasingly complex technological, social, economic, political, and cultural changes. This escalating condition is precisely conceptualized by Ziauddin Sardar as the Postnormal Times (PNT) era. Sardar defines PNT as a transitional period when old paradigms begin to collapse while new systems have not yet fully formed, marked by three main characteristics: complexity, chaos, and contradictions (Sardar, 2010). In a postnormal landscape, change does not occur linearly and predictably, so ecological issues can develop through intertwined cause-and-effect relationships. An environmental policy that resolves a particular problem, for example, can have new consequences for other social, economic, or ecological aspects. Therefore, approaching the ecological crisis in the PNT era requires the ability to understand uncertainty, consider various future possibilities, and develop ethical responsibilities that are not solely oriented towards the interests of the current generation.

Sardar's thinking is relevant because his critique of modern civilization extends beyond technological issues to epistemological, ethical, and future-oriented dimensions. For Sardar, progress should not be understood solely in terms of humanity's ability to control nature and develop technology. Progress must be assessed by its values, goals, and impact on humans and the environment. This perspective opens space for integrating moral philosophy with theological principles to build a new ecological paradigm. In the context of the PNT, humans need a moral framework capable of operating in conditions of uncertainty without losing their orientation toward fundamental values. Ecotheology developed through dialogue with Sardar's thinking, therefore, has the potential to present a perspective that is not only normative, but also reflective, critical, and adaptive to changing times (Sardar, 2010).

Several scholars have begun to explore the ecological thinking of Ziauddin Sardar. Previous research has mapped a new ecological matrix within Sardar's thought as a critique of the crisis of

civilization (Assya'bani, 2019). This study demonstrates that Sardar's thought is relevant in critiquing the paradigm of modern civilization that produces inequality and ecological damage. However, there is a significant gap in the existing literature. Various ecotheological studies still operate separately from the epistemological framework of Postnormal Times, while Sardar's thoughts on the environment have not been fully synthesized with the foundations of pragmatic moral philosophy and its futuristic orientation. Consequently, there is still room for academic development of a framework that connects religious doctrine with moral ideas about the future in the face of increasingly complex ecological conditions.

This gap is crucial because religious doctrine has normative and spiritual power, while moral philosophy provides reflective tools for considering the consequences of human actions. The concept of Khalifah fi al-Ard, for example, can be understood not as legitimizing human domination over nature, but rather as a mandate to maintain the balance of life. Meanwhile, Sardar's thinking about the future can broaden this understanding by placing the consequences of ecological actions within a multigenerational horizon. The intersection of the two allows for the formation of an environmental ethics paradigm that connects belief, moral responsibility, ecological awareness, and social action. Thus, religion does not stop at conveying norms, while moral philosophy is inseparable from transcendental sources of value. This research builds on several previous studies that have partially discussed ecotheology and the environmental crisis. A study by Amiruddin et al. examined environmental theology in the Qur'an, which showed that the sacred text has provided comprehensive ethical prescriptions for nature (Amiruddin et al., 2024). In line with this, Asila and Atsila dissect the concept of Khalifah fi al-Ard through a comparative study of the thoughts of Muslim figures in responding to the ecological crisis in Indonesia, which proves the relevance of classical doctrine in responding to contemporary issues (Asila & Atsila, 2026).

At the practical level, previous research also shows that ecotheological ideas have transformed into social action. Wijsen and Anshori found that the idea of stewardship (caregiving leadership) has been internalized by Islamic community organizations in Indonesia as a form of environmental ethics (Wijsen & Anshori, 2023). This is reinforced by Budiman et al., who formulated ecotheology within the framework of regionally conscious ethics as a concrete alternative to address environmental degradation (Budiman et al., 2025), and Muntaha and Ramadon, who documented a shift in Muslim understanding from merely memorizing religious texts to ecologically informed socio-religious action (Muntaha & Ramadon, 2026). In fact, ecotheological dialogue has been expanded into the realm of multidimensional justice, including its relationship with ecofeminism (Iswahyudi et al., 2026).

Although various previous studies have succeeded in grounding environmental doctrine in social action, these studies have not placed the ecological crisis into a matrix of extreme global uncertainty. Departing from this theoretical landscape, this study rests on one basic assumption (implicit hypothesis): that synergizing the doctrine of Khalifah fi al-Ard with futuristic moral philosophy within the framework of Postnormal Times will not only give birth to a reactive-local environmental ethic, but also be able to construct a comprehensive, adaptive, and relevant contemporary ecotheological paradigm to navigate the complexity of future global ecological threats.

The novelty of this research lies in its systematic effort to synergize sacred religious doctrine with the foundations of Sardar's futuristic moral philosophy to create an adaptive contemporary ecotheology. This synergy is aimed at addressing the characteristics of the PNT era, which is characterized by complexity, chaos, and contradiction. This chaotic era requires a new moral compass, and Sardar's thinking offers the right foundation to bridge the gap between faith and environmental conservation practices (Zagonari, 2020). Within this framework, religious values serve not only as a basis for individual belief but can be transformed into a social ethic that encourages collective responsibility for the environment. At the same time, a futuristic perspective helps broaden moral orientation so that it is not only centered on current human interests but also considers the sustainability of the lives of future generations.

Based on the mapping of the gap and urgency, this journal article aims to explore and formulate a synergy between religious doctrine and moral philosophy through a contemporary ecotheological perspective in facing the environmental crisis in the Postnormal Times era. More specifically, this research seeks to dissect Ziauddin Sardar's framework of thought in order to construct a complete ethical paradigm, capable of guiding humanity to take the highest moral responsibility in restoring and maintaining the balance of the ecological system for the sustainability of civilization. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of contemporary Islamic ecotheology while expanding the discourse on the relationship between religion, moral philosophy, the future, and ecological sustainability. At the practical level, the formulated paradigm is expected to serve as a reflective foundation for religious institutions, education, communities, and public spaces in building ecological awareness oriented towards responsibility, justice, sustainability, and the continuity of life across generations.

2. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative research design with a library research approach. Referring to Sugiyono, qualitative methods are used to explore and understand philosophical meanings in depth based on the natural conditions of objects, with the researcher acting as a key instrument. This approach was chosen because the research object is not directly observed behavior or social phenomena, but rather ideas, concepts, and constructs of thought found in various literary sources (Sugiyono, 2020). The research is directed at critically understanding the relationship between the concept of Postnormal Times, Ziauddin Sardar's futuristic moral philosophy, and religious doctrine in the development of the contemporary ecotheological paradigm. Because this research is a study of thought, the elements of the population and research sample are replaced by a classification of data sources based on their relevance and academic authority. Primary data sources include Ziauddin Sardar's original works that contain ideas about Postnormal Times, the philosophy of the future, critiques of modern civilization, and ecological issues. Meanwhile, secondary data sources consist of articles from recent national and international scientific journals discussing issues of ecotheology, environmental theology, moral philosophy, Islamic ethics, the ecological crisis, and environmental sustainability.

The data collection technique used was documentation, through a process of searching, inventorying, selecting, and categorizing literature relevant to the research focus. The obtained literature was then grouped based on main themes, namely the characteristics of Postnormal Times, the concept of humans and nature from a religious perspective, Sardar's moral philosophy, and the construction of environmental ethics. The data collection instrument in this study was the researcher herself, who conducted critical reading, interpretation, recording, and comparison of the texts used as research sources. This process was carried out systematically to identify key concepts, relationships between ideas, and their relevance to the development of contemporary ecotheology (Poth & Creswell, 2024).

The data analysis tools used were content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Content analysis was used to identify, classify, and interpret the main ideas contained in Sardar's works and ecotheological literature. Meanwhile, critical discourse analysis was used to examine the philosophical context, the relationship of ideas, and critique the modern paradigms that underlie the construction of these thoughts. The analysis process was carried out inductively and deductively by examining the philosophical content of Sardar's works, reducing irrelevant ideas, organizing findings based on themes, presenting a conceptual synthesis, and drawing conclusions regarding their relationship to ecotheology (Sugiyono, 2019). To fulfill the validity aspect of qualitative data, this study used source triangulation and theory triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing various primary works and secondary literature, while theory triangulation was carried out by comparing Sardar's thoughts with the perspectives of ecotheology and environmental ethics from various thinkers. The credibility of the interpretation results was strengthened through the process of comparison and cross-

fertilization of ideas to produce a consistent synthesis. The research model focuses on a conceptual flow of non-mathematical causality: Postnormal Times conditions serve as the problem context, and religious doctrine and moral philosophy serve as the approach instruments, which then produce a synthesis in the form of a contemporary ecotheological paradigm. The interrelationships between these components are not represented through symbols or statistical formulas, but are fully elaborated and narrated through rational argumentation in the research description (Miles et al., 2020).

3. Research Results

Islamic Ecotheology and the Concept of Khalifah fi al-Ard

The primary theory underlying this research is Islamic ecotheology, a discipline that examines the interaction between theological beliefs and ecology. Conceptually, Islamic ecotheology seeks to explore and reconstruct the integral spiritual relationship between humans, the universe, and God. This perspective stems from the view that nature is not simply an object to be exploited to fulfill human needs, but rather a part of God's creation with its own value and order (Fazlhashemi, 2025). Therefore, the relationship between humans and nature contains moral and spiritual dimensions that demand responsibility in every action toward the environment.

From an Islamic perspective, this relationship can be explained through a number of theological concepts, including: caliph, trust, balance, and the prohibition of causing damage (facade) on the face of the earth. The concept of the caliph places humans as trustees to manage the earth responsibly, while balance emphasizes the importance of maintaining order in life. Thus, Islamic ecotheology not only provides a normative basis for the obligation to protect the environment but also offers a paradigm shift from an exploitative orientation to an ethical, balanced, and sustainable relationship. In this study, Islamic ecotheology serves as a foundation for analyzing Ziauddin Sardar's thought and connecting it to the ecological challenges of the modern era. Postnormal Times, so that an environmental ethics paradigm can be formulated that is responsive to complexity, uncertainty, and the need for sustainability across generations (Alfadhli et al., 2025).

At the heart of this theory lies the doctrine of Khalifah fi al-Ard (Vicegerency on Earth), which asserts that the human position is not that of an absolute ruler entitled to exploit the earth, but rather that of God’s representative bearing a mandate for preservation. The concept of *khalifah* entails the ethical obligation to manage and utilize nature while simultaneously safeguarding its continuity in a balanced manner. Nature is viewed as a trust (*amanah*) to be nurtured, rather than merely a resource subject to limitless exploitation. Within the framework of Islamic eco-theology, this mandate of vicegerency is inextricably linked to the principles of *amanah* (trust), *mizan* (balance), and the prohibition against *fasad* (corruption or ecological destruction) on earth. These three principles establish a moral foundation that guides human behavior and compels individuals to consider the ecological impact of their actions. Thus, the doctrine of Khalifah fi al-Ard shifts the paradigm of the human-nature relationship from one of domination to one characterized by responsibility, stewardship, and sustainability. This perspective is crucial in addressing the ecological crisis, as it positions environmental responsibility as an integral component of practicing religious values (Atikawati et al., 2019).

The concept of the caliphate serves as the primary foundation of Islamic environmental ethics, which demands a balance between fulfilling human needs and the rights of nature. Humanity's position as caliph does not provide legitimacy to freely exploit nature, but rather carries a mandate to manage resources wisely, fairly, and responsibly. From this perspective, human needs are still recognized as part of life, but their fulfillment must be guided by the ecosystem's carrying capacity and sustainability. This principle aligns with the concept of *mizan*, which emphasizes balance and order in God's creation. Furthermore, the prohibition on committing *fasad fi al-ard* provides a moral boundary for actions that cause environmental damage. Thus, the ethics of the caliphate directs humans to build harmonious relationships with nature,

rather than exploitative ones. This framework places environmental preservation as both a moral and religious responsibility, so that human decisions regarding nature must consider ecological, social, and sustainable interests for future generations (Nahdi & Ghufron, 2006).

Theoretically, internalizing the doctrine of the caliphate is believed to shape practical awareness, encouraging people to translate religious values into concrete ecological behavior. This awareness does not stop at understanding that nature is God's creation, but develops into an awareness of human moral responsibility in maintaining the continuity of life. In the context of environmental management, the internalization of the caliphate's values can be reflected in the economical, proportional, and responsible use of energy and natural resources. Humans are encouraged to consider the ecological consequences of every action, including consumption patterns, resource utilization, and waste management. Thus, the principles of trust, balance, and prohibition can serve as a guideline for developing more sustainable behavior. This practical awareness also broadens human moral orientation from individual interests to collective responsibility. Ultimately, internalizing the doctrine of the caliphate has the potential to strengthen an ecological culture that places environmental sustainability and the interests of future generations as part of religious responsibility (Irhamullah et al., 2025).

Postnormal Times Theory (Ziauddin Sardar)

As a contextual analysis tool, this study uses the theory of Postnormal Times (PNT), which was developed by Ziauddin Sardar, to understand the changing conditions of civilization and the complexity of the contemporary ecological crisis. This theory starts from the assumption that modern society has moved away from a relatively stable or "normal" condition and into a transitional phase characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and rapid change. In Sardar's view, the PNT era emerges when old paradigms, structures, and systems begin to lose their ability to provide adequate responses to various new problems, while a more stable alternative paradigm has not yet fully formed. This condition creates a space filled with tension, contradictions, and the possibility of unpredictable change (Pino, 2023).

The characteristics of PNT become relevant in analyzing the ecological crisis because environmental issues can no longer be understood as a single problem with a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Climate change, ecosystem degradation, resource exploitation, and ecological inequality are intertwined with economic, political, technological, cultural, and moral issues. In such situations, an approach that relies solely on technical solutions may overlook the dimensions of human values and responsibilities. PNT theory enables this research to view the ecological crisis as part of a civilizational problem requiring a new ethical orientation. Thus, PNT is used not to replace the normative principles of Islamic ecotheology, but rather as a contextual framework for explaining why values such as caliph, trust, balance, and prohibition need to be interpreted adaptively. This perspective opens space for dialogue between religious doctrine and futuristic moral philosophy to formulate an ecological ethics responsive to the uncertainties and changes of the times (Sardar, 2010).

The Postnormal Times (PNT) theory has three main characteristics known as the 3Cs: complexity, chaos, and contradictions. These three characteristics describe the state of contemporary civilization, which is increasingly difficult to understand through linear paradigms and simplistic problem-solving approaches. Complexity demonstrates that various global issues are closely interconnected and form a mutually influencing network of causes and effects. The ecological crisis, for example, is not only related to environmental damage but also to economic activity, technological development, political policies, consumption patterns, and social and cultural change (Bourgeois et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, chaos refers to the emergence of various phenomena that are difficult to predict because change occurs rapidly and involves many variables. In an ecological context, the uncertainty of climate change and the emergence of various forms of environmental disasters demonstrate humanity's limitations in predicting the full consequences of its actions. Contradictions, on the other

hand, illustrate the conflict within the development of civilization, particularly when technological and economic progress occurs alongside increasing environmental degradation and moral issues. Within this framework, conventional scientific and regulatory approaches are not always adequate when used alone. Therefore, the global crisis requires an approach that integrates scientific knowledge with ethical, moral, spiritual, and social considerations to make responses to change more adaptive and sustainable (Sardar, 2015). Therefore, this theory requires an anticipatory ethical and moral reorientation toward the future to navigate this uncertainty.

Ecological Disruption in the Characteristics of Postnormal Times

The contemporary ecological crisis can no longer be understood merely as a localized cycle of environmental destruction or a managerial issue solvable solely through technological intervention. Climate change, ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, and the exploitation of natural resources have become multidimensional issues that involve the interplay of ecological, economic, social, political, technological, and moral dimensions. This complexity demonstrates that environmental degradation stems not only from the limitations of human capacity to manage nature but is also linked to development paradigms and the patterns of the human-environment relationship. In this context, humanity faces a phase of change conceptualized by Ziauddin Sardar as "Postnormal Times" (PNT). Sardar explains that contemporary civilization is entering a state where old systems and paradigms are increasingly unable to provide certainty in the face of change, while stable alternative systems have yet to fully emerge. PNT is characterized by escalating uncertainty, complexity, chaos, and contradictions, rendering the relationship between cause and effect increasingly unpredictable (Jones et al., 2021). In such conditions, past experience cannot always serve as an adequate basis for predicting future developments, while linear approaches to problem-solving increasingly face limitations.

The ecological crisis is an important manifestation of the post-normal condition because environmental issues demonstrate the interconnectedness of various factors that cannot be simply separated. Ecosystem damage, climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and natural resource exploitation do not exist as isolated phenomena, but interact with economic, political, technological, social, and cultural systems. Economic policies, for example, can influence the intensity of resource exploitation, while technological developments can both benefit life and create new ecological risks (Cole, 2011). Similarly, societal production and consumption patterns can increase pressure on environmental carrying capacity. These conditions demonstrate that the ecological crisis is a multidimensional issue that requires an interdisciplinary perspective.

From a Postnormal Times (PNT) perspective, this complexity demonstrates the limitations of approaches that rely solely on technical rationality and conventional science. Scientific knowledge remains crucial in understanding ecological change, but environmental issues also address questions of values, responsibility, justice, and development goals. Therefore, responses to the ecological crisis require integrating scientific knowledge with ethical, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions. PNT opens space for the search for an ecological paradigm that focuses not only on human risk management but also on the development of a moral orientation in the face of future uncertainty. Within the PNT framework, ecological disruption can be analyzed through three main characteristics, or 3Cs: complexity, chaos, and contradictions (Sardar, 2015).

First, the complexity of the environmental crisis is evident in the interconnectedness of various ecological and social systems. Changes in one environmental component can have consequences for other components through a long chain of relationships that are not always easily mapped. Second, chaos demonstrates the uncertainty and limitations in accurately predicting the development of various ecological phenomena. Changing weather patterns, more extreme events, and emerging environmental impacts across regions demonstrate that ecological dynamics do not always proceed linearly. Third, contradictions are evident in the paradox of modern development: technological advances and ecological innovations develop simultaneously with patterns of

production, consumption, and resource exploitation that continue to exert significant pressure on the environment (Howard, 2011).

These characteristics demonstrate that ecological problems cannot be solved solely through technological innovation. More fundamental issues lie in how technology is used, to what ends development is directed, and what values underlie decision-making. Thus, the ethical dimension is crucial because it provides normative guidance for human actions in relation to nature and limited resources. In this context, religion can provide a source of values that strengthen orientations of responsibility, trustworthiness, justice, balance, and sustainability. The relevance of PNT as an analytical framework is also evident in its use in various multidisciplinary studies to understand social, technological, and value change. This framework allows researchers to interpret change not as a linear process, but as a condition full of uncertainty, interconnectedness, and conflict. This approach is relevant when applied to the ecological crisis because environmental issues also bring together often conflicting interests, such as economic growth and conservation, energy needs and ecosystem protection, and the interests of present and future generations (Munawar-Rachman, 2025).

Therefore, navigating ecological disruption in the post-normal era requires more than just technical instruments. Science and technology remain essential as a basis for identifying problems and developing solutions, but both need to be situated within an ethical framework that guides their use. In the context of this research, this need creates a space for dialogue between Islamic Non-Profit (PNT) and Islamic ecotheology. The principles of caliphate, trustworthiness, the balance of power (*mizan*), and the prohibition of falsehood can be positioned as sources of moral orientation to guide humanity in facing ecological uncertainty (Sardar & Sweeney, 2016). Thus, PNT does not replace normative religious principles but serves as a contextual analytical tool that explains the nature of the crisis, while ecotheology provides a value foundation for formulating responsible ecological responses oriented toward intergenerational sustainability.

The Doctrine of the Caliphate as the Foundation of Ecotheology

In the face of ecological turbulence and disruption in the era of "Postnormal Times," Islamic eco-theology offers an ethical foundation that frames the relationship between humanity and nature in terms of moral responsibility rather than mere exploitation of resources. A key pillar of this approach is the doctrine of *Khalifah fi al-Ard* (stewardship of the earth), which views human beings as bearers of a divine trust to manage and preserve the planet. This concept must be distinguished from interpretations of the caliphate that position humans as absolute rulers over nature. From the perspective of Islamic eco-theology, the status of *khalifah* entails ethical obligations to maintain balance, prevent environmental degradation, and remain accountable for every action affecting the environment. Rakhmat, for instance, demonstrates that the concept of the *khalifah* should not be understood as legitimizing total human domination over nature, but rather as a form of responsibility that must be manifested through an ethical relationship with the environment (Rakhmat, 1989).

This interpretation becomes increasingly relevant when the ecological crisis is understood as a multidimensional issue involving social, economic, technological, moral, and spiritual aspects. In this context, the concept of Khalifah fi al-Ard (steward of the earth) can serve as a normative framework to correct the anthropocentric tendency that places human interests as the sole focus of ecological consideration. Principles such as amanah (trust/stewardship), mīzān (balance), the prohibition of fasād (corruption/harm), and intergenerational responsibility shape an ethical orientation that encourages the proportional and sustainable use of resources. Recent studies also indicate that the concept of khalifah can be reinterpreted as a principle of ecological stewardship relevant to the challenges of climate change and sustainability (Asila & Atsila, 2026). Thus, the doctrine of Khalifah fi al-Ard does not stop at a theological concept but can be developed into an ecological-ethical paradigm that links spiritual awareness, social responsibility, and sustainability practices in the face of the contemporary environmental crisis.

Within the paradigm of Islamic eco-theology, the human role as Khalifah fi al-Ard (steward on earth) cannot be interpreted as a prerogative to dominate and exploit nature without restraint. Instead, this stewardship constitutes a divine trust that charges humans with the moral responsibility to sustain life and preserve the order of creation. This understanding shifts the human-nature relationship from one of domination to one grounded in responsibility, balance, and respect for all creation. Rakhmat emphasizes that the concept of *khalifah* should not be viewed as legitimizing total human dominion over nature, but rather as a responsibility that must be manifested through concrete actions regarding the environment. Within this framework, the principle of mīzān (balance) serves as a crucial foundation, guiding humans to maintain ecological equilibrium and avoid actions that cause harm. Excessive exploitation, the squandering of resources, pollution, and the destruction of ecosystems can be seen as deviations from the trust inherent in stewardship. Studies on Islamic eco-theology demonstrate that the interplay between khalifah, mīzān, and maṣlaḥah (public interest/well-being) creates an ethical framework capable of addressing environmental crises caused by unsustainable resource exploitation (Atikawati et al., 2019).

Thus, preserving nature is not merely an ecological practice, but rather part of human spiritual appreciation of God. Ecological awareness in Islam ideally encourages a shift from mere normative awareness to concrete behaviors, such as wise resource use, reduced waste, ecosystem protection, and concern for the sustainability of future generations. From this perspective, devotion to the Creator is not only manifested through religious rituals but also through active responsibility in caring for the earth as His trust.

The theological foundation of the relationship between humans and the environment is deeply rooted in Islamic sacred texts, particularly the Quran. The ecological teachings of the Quran not only illustrate nature's place as part of God's creation, but also contain normative principles governing how humans should treat and interact with the environment. A study of Quranic verses shows that the relationship between humans and nature is built on the principles of responsibility, balance, trust, and the prohibition of causing harm. Studies of environmental ethics based on the Quran identify several key concepts, such ascaliph, trust, balance, facade, iḥsan, And ‘adl, which together form a moral framework for environmental management (Amiruddin et al., 2024).

Within this framework, nature is not positioned merely as an object to be exploited without limit, but rather as part of a created order characterized by inherent harmony and value. The Qur’an establishes ethical boundaries for human conduct by prohibiting *fasād* (corruption or destructive behavior) and emphasizing the importance of maintaining *mīzān* (balance). Consequently, environmental issues from an Islamic perspective are not solely a matter of material and technical aspects; they also encompass moral and spiritual dimensions. These Qur’anic principles provide a normative foundation for fostering an ecological consciousness that requires humans to manage resources responsibly, prevent environmental degradation, and consider the sustainability of life for future generations (Fikri & Colombijn, 2021).

From the perspective of Islamic eco-theology, the universe is not understood merely as a collection of material resources to be utilized for human interests, but rather as an integral part of God's creation, possessing spiritual value and significance. The Qur’an depicts all of creation as part of a cosmic order that constantly demonstrates submission to the Creator. This understanding affirms that the human relationship with nature is not mechanistic or exploitative; instead, it encompasses ethical, spiritual, and theological dimensions. Studies on Islamic environmental ethics indicate that the principles of tawḥīd, khalīfah, amānah, and *mīzān* form a moral framework guiding humans to treat nature responsibly (Wijsen, 2025).

Awareness of the sacredness of nature has become increasingly vital amidst the escalating climate crisis and ecological degradation. Addressing the environmental crisis requires not only technical responses—such as technological innovations and policy measures—but also a transformation in the moral and spiritual consciousness of society. In this context, religious thought and authority hold a strategic position to foster religious discourse that is more responsive to ecological issues. Religion can contribute through the reinterpretation of teachings, the strengthening

of ecological education, and the development of religious guidelines that encourage environmental protection (Testriono & Billahi, 2025). Studies on Muslim environmentalisms indicate that contemporary Islamic ethics increasingly intersect with issues of environmental justice, the rights of nature, conservation, and ecological advocacy. Consequently, religious responses to the climate crisis need to shift from mere normative discourse toward concrete ecological praxis, including through the strengthening of fatwas and religious guidelines regarding environmental protection (Darlis et al., 2026). Therefore, Islamic ecotheology is not merely passive dogma, but rather an ecological liberation theology that rejects all forms of destruction of the earth in the name of blind modernization.

The fundamental distinction of the Khalifah fi al-Ard (Vicegerent on Earth) doctrine lies in its ability to link theological principles with concrete ecological actions. The concept of vicegerency does not remain merely a normative idea regarding humanity's status as God's representative on earth; rather, it entails a mandate to embody these values in daily conduct. Understanding humanity's role as vicegerent fosters the awareness that every decision concerning the use of natural resources carries moral consequences for the sustainability of life (Bagir, 2025). Thus, internalizing the values of *Khalifah fi al-Ard* (stewardship of the earth) can shift perspectives from a utilization pattern driven by short-term interests toward management practices that prioritize ecological sustainability. Studies on this concept demonstrate that it can be translated into a pro-environmental movement and serve as a foundation for protecting and preserving the earth from degradation.

At a practical level, this awareness can be manifested through simple yet impactful actions—such as conserving energy, minimizing the waste of water and resources, moderating consumption, managing waste responsibly, and supporting the use of more sustainable energy sources. Energy management serves as a concrete example, given the close link between energy consumption, resource utilization, and ecological impact. From this perspective, energy efficiency is not merely a technical matter but an integral part of fulfilling the mandate of khilāfah (stewardship). This principle aligns with contemporary studies that position khilāfah, amānah (trust/responsibility), and sustainability as the foundations of human ecological responsibility. Thus, internalizing the concept of Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ (Steward on Earth) has the potential to foster an ecological consciousness reflected in the habits, consumption choices, and collective actions of society (Irhamullah et al., 2025).

Understanding that energy, water, and various natural resources are part of a trust that must be accounted for before God can shape a new orientation in human consumption behavior. This awareness positions resource use activities not merely as economic actions or the fulfillment of material needs, but as moral actions with ecological and spiritual consequences. In the context of contemporary life characterized by increasing consumption, materialism, and the pressure to meet ever-growing needs, the principle of the caliphate can serve as a guideline to limit the tendency to overuse resources. Studies on the relationship between the concept of the caliphate and modern consumption patterns indicate a tension between the principles of sustainability in Islamic teachings and consumption practices that are still influenced by materialism, market pressures, and lifestyles (Meiguang et al., 2026).

Within the framework of Postnormal Times, the doctrine of the caliphate is increasingly important because it can act as a moral anchor amidst rapid, complex, and uncertain social and ecological change. The values of trust, mizān, simplicity, and the prohibition of isrāf direct humans to consider ecological limits in every decision regarding resource use (Keshavarzi, 2022). Thus, humans are positioned not as mufsid, the party causing damage, but as guardians of the continuity of life. The function of the caliphate is then realized through energy-saving behavior, reducing waste, wise water use, responsible consumption, and concern for the needs of future generations.

Synergy of Religious Doctrine and Moral Philosophy of Ziauddin Sardar

The synergy between religious doctrine and moral philosophy can be positioned as a crucial epistemological approach for both understanding and responding to the complexities of life in the era of "Postnormal Times." This postnormal condition—characterized by uncertainty, complexity,

chaos, and contradiction—demands a framework of thought capable not only of explaining change but also of providing a normative orientation for human action. In this context, knowledge should not merely serve as an instrument for descriptively understanding reality; rather, it must be linked to questions regarding values, responsibilities, purposes, and the moral consequences of every action (Khalid, 2017).

Ziauddin Sardar's thought provides significant scope for this type of approach. In his analysis of "Postnormal Times," Sardar emphasizes that the situation in which the old order is weakening while the new one has yet to emerge creates a need for an ethical orientation capable of helping humanity navigate uncertainty. Consequently, the response to this civilizational crisis is not directed merely toward the passive acceptance of value relativity or nihilism, but rather toward the search for moral principles that can serve as a guide in determining the direction of change. From an Islamic perspective, such an orientation can be grounded in values derived from revelation, which position human beings as moral and responsible agents. The integration of religion and moral philosophy thus enables an interpretation of Postnormal Times that is not only critical of civilizational challenges but also constructive in formulating a path of life that is just, sustainable, and oriented toward the common good (Sardar, 2003).

Ziauddin Sardar's moral philosophy is strongly future-oriented, situating ethical issues not merely within the context of present-day human needs and interests, but also in relation to the long-term consequences of every decision. This perspective is crucial for navigating "Postnormal Times"—an era characterized by rapid change and escalating uncertainty—where decisions made today can yield impacts that transcend the boundaries of space and time. Under these conditions, moral considerations cannot rely solely on economic gain or short-term utility; instead, they must account for the ecological, social, and humanitarian risks that may be bequeathed to future generations (Koehrsen, 2021).

This futuristic orientation places sustainability as part of ethical responsibility. Humans have a moral obligation to ensure that resources, environmental quality, and decent living conditions are not sacrificed for the benefit of the present generation. This principle broadens the scope of justice from present-day human relations to intergenerational relations. Studies of Islamic ecotheology also demonstrate that the issue of future generations is a crucial aspect of climate ethics and sustainability, as today's ecological decisions can determine the living conditions of groups of people who are not yet present (Gade, 2023). Thus, Sardar's thinking encourages the formation of a prospective ethics, one that requires humans to consider long-term consequences, maintain ecological sustainability, and ensure that current development does not diminish the rights of future generations to a decent environment (Sardar, 2014). In the context of contemporary ecotheology, Sardar's futuristic orientation synergizes perfectly with the mandate of the Caliph fi al-Ard. Preserving ecological systems is not merely interpreted as a cosmetic effort to protect nature, but as a transcendental moral obligation that binds across generations to ensure a civilized future.

The intersection of Islamic eco-theology and Ziauddin Sardar's moral philosophy can be realized by operationalizing the principle of tawāzun (balance) as a philosophical bridge connecting religious values with the need for sustainable environmental management. From an Islamic perspective, tawāzun is understood not merely as a state of equilibrium between humanity and nature, but also as an ethical principle guiding humans to maintain proportionality between resource utilization and ecological responsibility. This principle becomes particularly relevant when human activities generate complex, long-term ecological pressures. Research on the tawāzun approach to post-mining land management indicates that ecological balance can be achieved through the obligation to restore land and water functions, improve land quality, carry out reclamation, and rehabilitate damaged ecosystems.

Within Sardar's conceptual framework, this orientation can be understood as a form of ethical responsibility in the face of "Postnormal Times"—a period characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and contradiction. Tawāzun provides a normative foundation ensuring that resource utilization does not stop at short-term economic gain but instead takes into account ecological sustainability, social

justice, and the interests of future generations. Thus, tawāzun serves as a transformative principle that translates spiritual values into concrete ecological praxis, while simultaneously reinforcing a moral orientation capable of adapting to the changes and uncertainties of the future. (Untung et al., 2021). The ethical balance represented by the principle of tawāzun can be positioned as a normative response to the contradictions, uncertainty, and chaos that characterize "Postnormal Times" (PNT). In this context, balance should not be understood merely as a static state, but rather as a dynamic process of maintaining proportional relationships among humanity, nature, economic interests, and social responsibility. Consequently, moral philosophy demands that the principle of balance be applied multidimensionally, encompassing ecological, social, and economic dimensions as well as intergenerational justice. This perspective enables Islamic eco-theology to evolve from a purely normative discourse into an ethical framework capable of responding to the complexities of contemporary ecological issues.

The development of contemporary Islamic eco-theology also reflects an increasingly open space for dialogue with ecofeminist perspectives. This approach links issues of environmental degradation with gender injustice, particularly where specific groups bear a disproportionate share of ecological impacts. Studies on Qur'anic ecofeminism position tawḥīd (divine oneness) and balance as the foundation for rejecting dichotomies—whether between humans and nature or between men and women. Thus, the integration of eco-theology and ecofeminism expands the meaning of tawāzun (balance) into a principle of ecological justice that simultaneously addresses power dynamics, equality, the protection of vulnerable groups, and the sustainability of life (Iswahyudi et al., 2026). This flexibility demonstrates that the synergy between theological doctrine and ethical moral philosophy is capable of responding to the complexities of systemic injustice in a sharp and comprehensive manner.

The culmination of the synergy between Islamic theology and moral philosophy lies not merely in the formation of normative awareness, but in the capacity to translate that awareness into tangible action within the public sphere. In this context, the concept of stewardship—rooted in the doctrine of khalifah fi al-ard (vicegerency on earth)—provides an ethical foundation for viewing the management of the natural world as a sacred trust (amanah), rather than simply an act of resource exploitation. This principle enables religious values to evolve into practical orientations that foster conservation, the mitigation of environmental degradation, ecological education, and advocacy for sustainability-related policies.

The development of the Islamic-based environmental movement in Indonesia demonstrates that the values of khalifah (stewardship), amanah (trust/responsibility), and ecological justice are increasingly being articulated through various forms of institutional and community-based activities. Studies on the "Green Islam" network in Indonesia identify a range of Islamic organizations and groups engaged in conservation, community mobilization, environmental education, disaster mitigation, behavioral change, and policy advocacy. Many of these networks are linked to major organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Research also indicates that Muhammadiyah has cultivated an ecological focus through theological reform, fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) regarding water, education, and environmental policy advocacy (Testriono et al., 2026).

Stewardship functions not merely as an individual moral concept but has evolved into a collective ethical framework linking spirituality, social responsibility, public policy, and ecological sustainability. This transformation demonstrates that Islamic eco-theology holds the potential to shift from the doctrinal realm toward a social praxis capable of adapting to the complexities of contemporary environmental issues (Wijsen & Anshori, 2023). This confirms a significant paradigm shift, wherein the ethical consciousness of the faith community has moved beyond mere passive religious adherence to textuality toward organized socio-religious praxis at the grassroots level (Muntaha & Ramadon, 2026). Ultimately, Sardar's concept regarding the urgent need for a moral compass amidst the turbulence of the post-normal era has materialized in the formulation of an eco-theology that frames a region-conscious ethic, offering ethical solutions and empirical alternatives to address increasingly massive environmental degradation (Budiman et al., 2025).

4. Conclusion

The global ecological crisis in the Postnormal Times (PNT) era, characterized by escalating complexity, chaos, and contradictions, cannot be resolved solely by a linear scientific approach. This study concludes that the synergy between the doctrine of the Caliphate of the World, which mandates the responsibility for cosmic maintenance and balance (tawāzun), and the futuristic moral philosophy of Ziauddin Sardar, has succeeded in formulating an adaptive and comprehensive contemporary ecotheological framework. The basic assumption of this study is proven that the integration of these two epistemologies is able to transform environmental theology from merely passive textual discourse into proactive socio-religious action. This is confirmed through the manifestation of ecotheological practices at the grassroots, such as the application of regionally conscious ethics, strengthening stewardship leadership, and expanding ecofeminist advocacy, which together serve as an essential moral compass in navigating the uncertainties of civilization. Based on these conclusions, this study recommends that religious institutions, public policymakers, and Islamic community organizations begin to integrate this contemporary ecotheological paradigm more fully into formal educational curricula and environmental advocacy strategies. Addressing the climate crisis demands collaborative action that consciously positions the ethics of environmental conservation as a cross-generational moral responsibility, and no longer views it merely as an adjunct to technocratic policies. This moral reorientation must be institutionalized immediately to become a massive, structured environmental conservation movement. As a conceptual study, this research has limitations because it relies purely on library research and conceptual discourse analysis. This study does not yet present empirical data to quantitatively measure the direct effectiveness of implementing Sardar's philosophy at the level of ecological restoration in the field. Therefore, it is recommended that future research conduct empirical field studies (such as ethnography or action research) to directly capture the implementation of this ecotheological practice in specific communities. Furthermore, further comparative studies involving interfaith ecotheological perspectives are highly recommended to enrich the discourse on global environmental ethics with a more holistic approach in responding to the Postnormal Times era.

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