Toward a Faith-Based Model of CSR: Theoretical and Ethical Foundations from Islamic Perspectives

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Abstract

This article develops a faith-based model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) grounded in Islamic ethical principles. It addresses a critical gap in CSR literature, which predominantly relies on secular and Western moral paradigms, by introducing a normative framework derived from core Islamic concepts such as *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *khilāfah* (stewardship), *amānah* (trust), and *'adālah* (justice). Employing a conceptual-theoretical methodology, the study synthesizes classical Islamic sources and contemporary academic thought to articulate a holistic CSR model that emphasizes moral accountability to God and society. Key findings indicate that CSR in Islam is not discretionary but a religious and ethical imperative aimed at achieving the common good (*maṣlaḥah*) and sustainability. The study distinguishes faith-based CSR from conventional approaches by its spiritual motivation, metaphysical accountability, and expanded stakeholder framework. The model contributes to CSR theory by integrating non-Western epistemologies and offers practical implications for firms in Muslim-majority societies and globally. It calls for pluralistic, ethically grounded corporate governance that transcends regulatory compliance and aligns with universal moral values.

Keywords

Faith-based CSR; Islamic ethics; *tawḥīd*; *khilāfah*; moral accountability

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a philanthropic initiative to a strategic imperative in modern business practices. In the global arena, firms are increasingly expected to uphold ethical standards and contribute to social well-being beyond profit maximization (Carroll, 1999).

This expectation has led to diverse CSR frameworks grounded in ethical theories, stakeholder expectations, and institutional pressures (Freeman, 1984; Matten & Moon, 2008). However, dominant models of CSR have primarily been shaped by Western ethical paradigms, emphasizing utilitarian and deontological frameworks with limited engagement from religious or faith-based perspectives.

This absence of religiously grounded ethics in CSR theory presents a critical gap, especially in Muslim-majority societies where *dīn* (religion) plays a central role in shaping moral and economic behavior. Islamic ethical systems, rooted in divine revelation and prophetic traditions, offer a holistic vision of human responsibility and justice (*ʿadālah*) in economic life (Chapra, 1992, p. 35; Nasr, 1987). Unlike secular CSR approaches, Islam conceives responsibility as a moral and spiritual obligation to both God and society, integrating accountability (*tawḥīd*), trust (*amānah*), and social harmony (*ukhuwwah*) into business conduct (Beekun, 1997, p. 55). This provides a robust ontological foundation for a faith-based CSR model.

Several empirical studies have explored CSR practices in Islamic institutions, particularly within Islamic finance (Wilson, 2001; Farook, 2007). However, most of these studies are descriptive, focusing on compliance with *sharīʿah* or philanthropic activities such as *zakāt*. There is limited theoretical integration between Islamic ethical principles and the broader philosophical discourse on CSR. This paper aims to fill this lacuna by proposing a conceptual framework grounded in Islamic moral philosophy that can guide corporate behavior ethically and strategically.

The central research questions addressed in this paper are: (1) How can Islamic ethical principles be systematically integrated into a CSR framework? (2) What distinguishes faith-based CSR from conventional approaches? (3) How does this model contribute to existing CSR theory and practice? These questions guide the theoretical inquiry, positioning Islamic CSR not merely as an alternative but as a transformative approach rooted in universal ethical values.

This study's objective is to develop a faith-based model of CSR derived from Islamic moral theology and jurisprudence, using conceptual analysis of classical texts and scholarly interpretations. The relevance of this research lies in its potential to expand CSR theory beyond secular boundaries and offer culturally resonant alternatives in Muslim-majority contexts. It also contributes to the pluralization of global business ethics by integrating non-Western epistemologies and values into CSR discourses (Rice, 1999; Warde, 2000).

Literature Review

The discourse on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has developed significantly since the 20th century, with early conceptualizations focused on the voluntary obligations of corporations toward society (Bowen, 1953). Over time, the CSR construct has evolved to include dimensions such as stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), corporate citizenship (Wood, 1991), and triple bottom line reporting (Elkington, 1997). Scholars have debated whether CSR should be viewed through instrumental, political, ethical, or integrative lenses (Garriga & Melé, 2004), often leaning on Western moral philosophy such as utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. These dominant paradigms, while structurally sound, often disregard non-Western ethical systems, particularly those rooted in religion.

Within Islamic scholarship, ethical business practices are inherently tied to concepts of justice (*'adālah*), trust (*amānah*), and stewardship (*khilāfah*). Islamic economics, developed as an alternative to secular capitalism, emphasizes the ethical and spiritual dimensions of economic behavior (Chapra, 1992, p. 34; Siddiqi, 1981, p. 21). Although there is a growing body of literature examining CSR in Islamic finance (e.g., Lewis, 2001; Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007), much of it remains descriptive rather than conceptual or theoretical. Moreover, limited effort has been made to synthesize Islamic ethical principles with CSR theories from global academic discourse. This has resulted in a fragmented understanding of CSR from an Islamic perspective.

The lack of a robust, theory-driven model of Islamic CSR highlights a critical research gap. Existing frameworks either mimic Western CSR structures or narrowly apply *sharīʿah* compliance without deeper theological integration. Thus, the field requires a conceptual model that articulates CSR as a divine-moral obligation rather than a mere corporate strategy. A faith-based model that draws from Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and ethics can enrich CSR scholarship and provide a coherent framework for ethical business conduct in Muslim societies and beyond.

Theoretical Framework

1. Tawḥīd (Divine Unity) and Moral Accountability

The cornerstone of Islamic ethical theory is *tawḥīd*, the belief in the oneness of God, which establishes the moral order of the universe. This principle implies that all human actions, including economic behavior, are subject to divine accountability (Nasr, 1987, p. 15). In the context of CSR, *tawḥīd* reorients corporate responsibility from secular objectives to transcendental purposes. This ethical teleology positions the firm not as an autonomous entity driven by profit but as a moral actor accountable to God and society. As Sardar (1998, p. 88) explains, Islamic ethics are derived from the will of God as expressed in the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*, demanding that businesses operate within a

moral universe governed by divine law. Therefore, CSR under *tawḥīd* is a form of worship (*'ibādah*), integrating spiritual consciousness into corporate decision-making.

2. Khilāfah (Stewardship) and Social Responsibility

The concept of *khilāfah* underscores the human role as stewards or trustees on Earth, tasked with maintaining justice and ecological balance (Siddiqi, 1981, p. 44). This principle expands CSR from voluntary philanthropy to obligatory ethical stewardship. The firm, as a collective entity composed of individuals, inherits this duty to promote the common good (*maṣlaḥah*) and prevent harm (*mafsadah*). As Chapra (1992, p. 54) argues, Islamic economics views wealth as a trust from God, to be managed responsibly for the benefit of all stakeholders. This theological foundation challenges the narrow shareholder-centric model and aligns corporate objectives with distributive justice and environmental sustainability, critical issues in contemporary CSR debates.

3. 'Adālah (Justice) and Equity in Corporate Conduct

Justice (*'adālah*) is a foundational value in Islam that governs all aspects of human interaction, including commerce. In Islamic CSR, *'adālah* demands fair treatment of employees, ethical labor practices, and equitable resource distribution. It also rejects exploitative profit-making and monopolistic behavior (Beekun, 1997, p. 79). This aligns with broader CSR goals such as human rights, gender equality, and corporate transparency. Unlike Western justice theories that may emphasize procedural fairness or distributive efficiency, Islamic *'adālah* combines legal, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. As explained by Kamali (1998, p. 91), justice in Islam is not merely a social construct but a divine command, making ethical behavior an inseparable part of faith-based CSR.

4. Amānah (Trust) and Ethical Corporate Governance

The principle of *amānah* reinforces the moral imperative of trustworthiness in all dealings, emphasizing integrity, transparency, and reliability. In a corporate setting, *amānah* governs fiduciary responsibility, stakeholder relations, and corporate governance. As Lewis (2001) points out, Islamic finance and CSR frameworks are rooted in the assumption that individuals and institutions are morally bound to honor their trusts. This contrasts with agency theory in Western governance, which assumes self-interest and necessitates control mechanisms. The Islamic view, grounded in *amānah*, assumes moral agency and accountability to God. This provides a normative basis for ethical decision-making and long-term stakeholder engagement, reinforcing CSR as a duty, not a discretionary act.

Previous Research

Bowen (1953) is widely regarded as the pioneer of modern CSR, defining it as the obligation of businessmen to pursue policies desirable in terms of societal objectives. His normative approach emphasized moral leadership in corporate decision-making.

However, Bowen's model lacks engagement with non-Western ethical systems or religious frameworks, making it limited in its universal applicability. This study departs from Bowen's secular orientation by introducing a divine-moral basis for CSR grounded in Islamic theology.

Siddiqi (1981), in his foundational work on Islamic economics, argued that ethical conduct in economic affairs is a religious obligation. He proposed that business ethics must be guided by *sharī'ah* and the concept of *khilāfah*. Siddiqi's insights are significant in laying the groundwork for Islamic CSR, though his focus remained within the boundaries of economic systems rather than developing a comprehensive CSR framework. The present study builds on Siddiqi's foundations by constructing a systematic model of CSR that extends beyond economic parameters.

Chapra (1992, pp. 30–61) emphasized the integration of moral values into economic systems, proposing that the Islamic worldview can rectify the ethical deficiencies of capitalism. He introduced the concept of *maṣlaḥah* as a guiding principle in resource allocation and wealth distribution. While Chapra's work is comprehensive in Islamic economics, it does not directly address CSR. This article extrapolates his moral arguments to create a theoretical framework for corporate ethical conduct.

Lewis (2001) examined CSR practices within Islamic financial institutions, highlighting their adherence to ethical investment and *zakāt*. His study was among the first to correlate CSR and Islamic finance, yet it lacked a theoretical synthesis of Islamic ethics with CSR literature. This current study addresses that gap by offering a normative structure for CSR derived from broader Islamic principles such as *amānah* and *tawḥīd*.

Dusuki and Abdullah (2007) conducted empirical research on CSR practices among Islamic banks in Malaysia, identifying philanthropy and community development as core activities. Although insightful, their research was largely descriptive and did not theorize the ethical foundations underlying these practices. This study complements theirs by developing a conceptual model that connects practice with theology and philosophy.

Farook (2007) analyzed the CSR disclosure practices of Islamic banks, concluding that religiosity significantly influences transparency and ethical reporting. His study provided statistical evidence of the link between Islamic values and CSR but stopped short of offering a comprehensive faith-based framework. The present research extends his findings by systematizing those ethical imperatives into a cohesive model applicable to both Islamic and conventional firms.

In conclusion, while previous research has made significant contributions to understanding CSR within Islamic contexts, most have been limited in theoretical depth or scope. A clear gap remains in integrating Islamic moral philosophy into a systematic, faith-based CSR framework. This study addresses that gap by constructing a model rooted in divine accountability, stewardship, justice, and trust, offering both theoretical innovation and practical relevance.

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, conceptual methodology grounded in the analysis of normative Islamic texts and classical scholarship. Unlike empirical studies, conceptual research aims to construct theoretical frameworks through analytical reasoning and philosophical inquiry (Chalmers, 1982). The data utilized consists of canonical Islamic sources such as the *Qur'ān*, *Sunnah*, and major works of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), alongside scholarly interpretations from contemporary thinkers. These sources provide the ethical foundation necessary to develop a faith-based model of CSR that is both theologically sound and theoretically rigorous.

Data sources were selected based on their theological authority, relevance to Islamic ethics, and influence on Islamic economic thought. Primary sources include classical jurists like Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and contemporary economists such as Chapra (1992) and Siddiqi (1981). Secondary data was extracted from peer-reviewed journals, monographs, and edited volumes in Islamic studies and business ethics, ensuring adherence to scholarly credibility (Beekun, 1997; Kamali, 1998). All sources were limited to those published before or in 2010, following the study's historical scope and citation criteria.

The technique of data collection employed is document analysis, which allows for thematic interpretation and synthesis of existing knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Texts were reviewed using a hermeneutic approach to uncover embedded ethical principles relevant to corporate behavior. Attention was given to both semantic content and underlying metaphysical assumptions, particularly those involving divine-human relationships. This interpretive process was critical in aligning classical Islamic ethics with contemporary CSR discourse.

The analytical method applied was inductive conceptualization. This involved identifying recurring ethical themes—such as *tawḥīd*, *amānah*, *'adālah*, and *khilāfah*—and abstracting them into a coherent theoretical framework. These concepts were then critically compared to CSR constructs found in Western literature, revealing both parallels and divergences. The aim was not merely to contrast traditions, but to construct a normative model that can function independently or be integrated into pluralist ethical frameworks.

Conclusions were drawn through iterative reasoning, beginning with textual analysis and followed by synthesis into broader CSR theory. The validity of the model was ensured by cross-referencing interpretations among scholars and aligning findings with universally accepted Islamic ethical objectives (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*). This methodological approach ensures that the resulting framework is not only academically robust but also culturally and theologically consistent with Islamic values, thereby offering a credible alternative to secular CSR models.

Results and Discussion

The theoretical integration of Islamic ethical principles into the CSR framework has yielded a multidimensional model that expands the current understanding of corporate responsibility. The key finding is that CSR in Islam is not an optional activity driven by reputation or market advantage but a religious duty embedded in a divine moral order. Concepts like *tawḥīd*, *amānah*, *khilāfah*, and *'adālah* provide a robust ontological foundation that transcends legal compliance or stakeholder management (Beekun, 1997; Chapra, 1992, p. 34). This model emphasizes that all business practices are subject to divine accountability and must aim for social justice and the common good (*maṣlaḥah*). In linking ethical conduct to religious obligation, this framework bridges a significant gap in conventional CSR literature, which tends to secularize ethical discourse and overlook metaphysical motivations.

Moreover, the proposed model contributes new theoretical depth by reinterpreting CSR through the lens of Islamic metaphysics and jurisprudence. It challenges dominant CSR paradigms that treat responsibility as context-dependent or transactional. The model suggests that firms in Muslim-majority societies—and even global firms seeking ethical universality—can benefit from embedding spiritual principles into governance and strategy. The contribution also includes a reconceptualization of corporate stakeholders to include the environment and future generations, a concept deeply rooted in *khilāfah*. While Western CSR has moved toward broader inclusivity, the Islamic model offers a theologically coherent rationale for such inclusiveness. This faith-based model also resonates with broader religious ethics, inviting comparative CSR studies across Abrahamic traditions and beyond (Rice, 1999; Lewis, 2001).

Research Question 1: "How can Islamic ethical principles be systematically integrated into a CSR framework?"

Integration of Tawḥīd in CSR Theory

The principle of *tawḥīd*, or divine unity, is the foundational tenet of Islamic theology and cosmology, affirming the oneness of God as the source of all moral, spiritual, and legal authority. Within the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), *tawḥīd* functions not only as a metaphysical axiom but also as an ethical framework that redefines the purpose and conduct of economic activity. Integrating *tawḥīd* into CSR theory fundamentally reorients corporate behavior away from self-serving objectives toward spiritual accountability and transcendental responsibility (Nasr, 1987, p. 15). It implies that all actions—personal or institutional—must align with the divine order, reflecting God's will in human affairs. Consequently, firms are not autonomous agents operating under secular motivations but are accountable actors within a divinely structured moral system.

Unlike conventional CSR models, which often derive ethical principles from humanistic, utilitarian, or relativist sources, a CSR model based on *tawḥīd* emphasizes absoluteness in moral values. In secular CSR, ethical behavior is typically driven by societal consensus, regulatory pressure, or reputational calculus (Carroll, 1999). These models tend to shift with changing societal norms, lacking an immutable ethical foundation. In contrast, *tawḥīd* anchors corporate ethics in the permanence of divine revelation, thereby offering a stable moral compass regardless of external circumstances. The implications of this are significant: corporations must internalize ethical standards that are not contingent upon market demand, legal enforcement, or stakeholder persuasion but are obligatory by virtue of divine decree.

In practical terms, the integration of *tawḥīd* into CSR ensures that corporate policies and strategies are evaluated through the lens of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and *murāqabah* (divine oversight). Business decisions, therefore, are not merely judged by economic outcomes but by their alignment with sacred ethical imperatives. This spiritual framing transforms CSR from a discretionary act of benevolence into a necessary extension of religious duty (*'ibādah*), where business itself becomes a vehicle for fulfilling divine commandments. As such, profit generation is not condemned but is seen as legitimate only when it is pursued within the boundaries of ethical behavior that upholds justice (*'adālah*), avoids harm (*ḍarar*), and promotes the common good (*maṣlaḥah*).

Theologically, *tawḥīd* also negates the compartmentalization of ethics in business—a tendency observable in many modern corporations where CSR is treated as a separate department or branding tool. From an Islamic perspective, ethical integrity must permeate all aspects of organizational life, from leadership decision-making and employee relations to supply chain practices and environmental responsibility. This holistic view affirms that since God is one, human actions—whether spiritual or economic—must reflect this unity by embodying consistency, justice, and compassion across all domains of life (Siddiqi, 1981, p. 32). The organizational culture, therefore, must reflect a commitment to divine values not only in formal policies but also in informal interactions, internal accountability mechanisms, and long-term strategic planning.

Moreover, the epistemological consequences of *tawḥīd* challenge the anthropocentric assumptions embedded in mainstream CSR. In Western ethical frameworks, human reason or collective will often serves as the final arbiter of morality. In contrast, Islamic ethics views revelation as the ultimate source of knowledge and legitimacy. This means that even when human reasoning appears to justify certain actions—such as maximizing shareholder value at the expense of environmental degradation—Islamic CSR demands deference to divine guidance. This reinforces a non-negotiable stance on ethical matters, encouraging firms to resist moral compromise even when it may be economically advantageous.

In summary, the integration of *tawḥīd* into CSR theory does more than append spirituality to business ethics—it revolutionizes the ontological, epistemological, and

normative underpinnings of corporate conduct. By re-centering God as the ultimate source of authority and accountability, *tawḥīd* transforms CSR into a sacred mandate that governs corporate life with integrity, purpose, and transcendental responsibility. This model offers not only a corrective to the deficiencies of secular CSR but also a path toward ethical universality rooted in divine unity.

Khilāfah and Stakeholder Expansion

The concept of *khilāfah*, or stewardship, is a pivotal ethical construct in Islamic theology and law, defining the human role as a vicegerent of God on Earth. In the Qur'ānic worldview, human beings are entrusted with moral responsibility over creation, not as owners but as caretakers accountable to the Creator (Siddiqi, 1981, p. 42). When applied to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), *khilāfah* fundamentally transforms the firm's identity from a private, profit-driven enterprise to a communal agent of justice, sustainability, and intergenerational responsibility. This paradigm mandates that corporations operate within the framework of divine trusteeship, where economic activities are not ends in themselves but means to fulfill moral obligations toward society, the environment, and future generations.

Traditional CSR models, particularly those rooted in shareholder theory, often emphasize fiduciary duties limited to capital providers (Friedman, 1970). Even stakeholder-oriented models, such as that proposed by Freeman (1984), expand the circle of concern to include employees, customers, and communities, but do so from a contractual, utilitarian, or reputational logic. In contrast, the Islamic concept of *khilāfah* imposes a theologically grounded expansion of stakeholders that includes not only living human beings but also natural ecosystems, non-human creatures, and posterity. This is because God's trust (*amānah*) is comprehensive, encompassing all creation as part of the moral order to be preserved and nurtured (Beekun, 1997, p. 77).

From a governance perspective, integrating *khilāfah* into CSR implies that corporate policies must consider long-term environmental sustainability and social equity as divine imperatives, not just optional strategic advantages. Firms become ethically bound to assess the broader impact of their operations on ecological systems, income distribution, and community well-being. The theological weight behind *khilāfah* discourages exploitative practices, such as environmental degradation or labor injustice, by framing them as betrayals of divine trust. This perspective not only aligns with emerging global concerns—such as climate change, inequality, and ethical consumption—but also provides a spiritual motivation for addressing them proactively.

Moreover, *khilāfah* calls for a paradigm shift in how wealth and resources are understood and utilized. In Islamic economics, wealth is viewed as a trust that must circulate fairly within society to prevent concentration and social exclusion (Chapra, 1992, pp. 41–47). A firm operating under *khilāfah* must prioritize inclusive growth and distributive justice, channeling profits not solely toward shareholders but toward social investment, charitable giving (*ṣadaqah*), and empowerment of the marginalized. This

differs from corporate philanthropy in Western CSR, which is often discretionary and image-driven; under *khilāfah*, such redistribution is obligatory and spiritually consequential.

Additionally, *khilāfah* introduces a dynamic ethical feedback loop within the organization. Because every decision made by executives or stakeholders is part of a larger moral ecosystem, internal stakeholders must be empowered to raise ethical concerns and evaluate corporate actions against religious principles. This nurtures a culture of moral introspection, participatory governance, and collective responsibility. It also necessitates ethical training and *sharī'ah*-compliant auditing mechanisms that ensure the firm remains aligned with its divine mandate, not just its financial targets.

In terms of intergenerational justice, *khilāfah* imposes a duty to preserve resources and moral institutions for future communities. Unlike short-termism in modern capitalism, which prioritizes quarterly profits, the Islamic concept demands long-term ethical vision. This perspective can significantly inform sustainability strategies and climate risk mitigation policies within CSR frameworks. Because the future is viewed not merely as an economic projection but as a moral legacy, decisions must be made with foresight, humility, and moral restraint. Firms must ask not only "Is this profitable?" but "Is this responsible in the eyes of God and future generations?"

In summary, the integration of *khilāfah* into CSR challenges the firm to reconceive its role in society and the cosmos. It mandates a broad and sacred view of stakeholders, underlining the theological imperative to protect, uplift, and sustain all forms of life under human influence. Unlike secular theories that justify stakeholder inclusion through strategic or contractual means, *khilāfah* offers a non-negotiable divine rationale for ethical stewardship. This principle can serve as a transformative force in corporate ethics, inviting organizations to embed moral consciousness into every layer of decision-making, from the boardroom to the supply chain.

Amānah and Corporate Governance

The principle of *amānah*, or trust, is a foundational value in Islamic moral philosophy that governs all interpersonal and institutional relationships. In the Qur'ānic and prophetic traditions, *amānah* is understood as a divinely mandated duty to fulfill one's obligations with integrity, sincerity, and transparency. It represents not merely a transactional commitment but a moral and spiritual responsibility bestowed by God upon humanity (Siddiqi, 1981, p. 48). When applied to corporate governance, *amānah* transforms the ethical landscape of business operations by framing all corporate roles—whether executive, managerial, or stakeholder—as trusts that must be honored with uncompromising fidelity to ethical standards and divine accountability.

Corporate governance in the conventional sense is often guided by agency theory, which posits an inherent conflict of interest between principals (shareholders) and agents (managers). In this framework, mechanisms such as audits, boards of directors, and legal compliance systems are designed to align the agent's behavior with the interests of the principal (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). While this model has been

effective in certain contexts, it is predicated on an assumption of self-interest and adversarial relations. The Islamic principle of *amānah*, however, replaces this assumption with a model of trust-based accountability, wherein each corporate actor is viewed as a moral agent obligated to fulfill their duties not just to stakeholders, but to God (Beekun, 1997, p. 71).

In practical terms, integrating *amānah* into corporate governance demands that business leaders embody ethical leadership characterized by honesty, humility, and reliability. Decision-making must be guided by sincerity of purpose (*ikhlāṣ*), and all commitments—whether contractual or implied—must be executed in good faith. This means that falsifying reports, manipulating financial disclosures, or exploiting legal loopholes is not only professionally irresponsible but spiritually reprehensible. The Qur'ān repeatedly condemns betrayal of trust (*khiyānah*) as a grave sin (Qur'ān 8:27), establishing the seriousness of ethical breaches in both public and private dealings. As such, *amānah* serves as a deterrent against corruption and encourages a proactive culture of transparency and ethical discipline.

Furthermore, *amānah* introduces a communal dimension to corporate ethics. Employees, shareholders, suppliers, and even regulators are not merely transactional counterparts but co-trustees in a shared moral ecosystem. This collective responsibility fosters a participatory governance culture in which whistleblowing, ethical consultation (*shūrā*), and open dialogue are institutionalized as part of organizational life. A firm that operates under the guidance of *amānah* cannot isolate ethics in a single department but must integrate it across its hierarchy, supply chains, and stakeholder networks. The objective is to institutionalize trust as both a cultural value and a governance practice.

In terms of financial ethics, *amānah* requires robust systems for internal controls, fair accounting, and equitable profit-sharing. Financial stewardship is viewed as a sacred trust, and thus, misappropriation of funds, insider trading, or unjust enrichment are seen as violations not only of fiduciary duty but of religious obligation. This has practical relevance for industries such as Islamic finance, where *sharī'ah*-compliant operations are expected to align with both regulatory frameworks and spiritual principles (Lewis, 2001). A governance model based on *amānah* demands ethical audits in addition to financial ones, ensuring that business activities are in harmony with divine expectations.

Critically, *amānah* also addresses the often-overlooked dimension of leadership character. Islamic governance theory emphasizes that those in positions of authority must possess moral virtues (*akhlāq*), including truthfulness (*ṣidq*), justice (*'adālah*), and humility (*tawāḍu'*). These are not optional traits but essential qualifications for entrustment. A corporate leader who lacks *amānah* fails not just in duty to shareholders, but in fulfilling a spiritual mandate. This contrasts with modern corporate cultures where leadership is often evaluated solely on performance metrics, profitability, or strategic execution. Islamic governance insists that ethical character be at the heart of corporate leadership.

In conclusion, *amānah* reframes corporate governance from a system of control and compliance to a paradigm of ethical trust and divine responsibility. It calls for a governance architecture that prioritizes sincerity, transparency, and collective trustworthiness over mere legal conformity. In an era marked by corporate scandals, financial fraud, and growing public distrust, *amānah* offers a spiritually grounded alternative that strengthens organizational integrity and fosters stakeholder confidence. This principle not only enhances CSR practices but also builds morally resilient organizations aligned with both divine guidance and public trust.

'Adālah and Business Ethics

The concept of *'adālah*, or justice, occupies a central position in Islamic moral and legal thought, constituting both an individual virtue and a societal imperative. In the Qur'ānic paradigm, *'adālah* is not merely a procedural ideal but a divine command, mandated as the basis of all human interactions, including economic and commercial affairs. The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of upholding justice—even against oneself or one's kin (Qur'ān 4:135)—establishing *'adālah* as a non-negotiable standard in ethical conduct. Within the domain of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the integration of *'adālah* requires firms to align their operations with the principles of fairness, equity, and moral balance across all levels of decision-making (Kamali, 1998, p. 91).

Unlike Western theories of justice, such as Rawlsian procedural fairness or distributive utilitarianism, Islamic *'adālah* is comprehensive, combining legal compliance, ethical virtue, and divine accountability. It transcends mere rule-following to include the spiritual and social consequences of unjust behavior. Therefore, business ethics grounded in *'adālah* must go beyond corporate codes of conduct or legal obligations to embrace justice as an act of faith and a means of fulfilling divine trust (*amānah*) (Beekun, 1997, p. 79). This model insists on ethical sincerity in all dealings—emphasizing intentions (*niyyah*), process integrity, and outcome equity.

In the realm of labor ethics, *'adālah* requires fair wages, safe working conditions, and the elimination of exploitation. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized paying workers promptly and justly, warning of divine judgment for employers who betray this trust. In modern CSR terms, this translates into just employment practices, non-discriminatory hiring, gender equity, and meaningful employee participation in governance structures. The firm must be a space where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, not merely for the sake of reputation but as a sacred obligation to honor their humanity, as derived from their status as *ashraf al-makhlūqāt* (the noblest of creation) (Siddiqi, 1981, p. 37).

Moreover, *'adālah* has direct implications for consumer protection and fair trade. A business that adulterates its products, deceives its customers, or engages in monopolistic behavior (*iḥtikār*) is in violation of Islamic commercial ethics. Islamic jurisprudence historically developed mechanisms such as market inspectors (*muḥtasib*) to ensure fair pricing, accurate measurements, and ethical advertising. In today's

context, this necessitates transparent labeling, honest marketing, and ethical supply chains. Firms guided by *'adālah* must be vigilant against exploitative sourcing, particularly in industries such as fast fashion, agriculture, and electronics, where labor abuses and environmental degradation are rampant.

Environmental ethics is another domain where *'adālah* extends its relevance. Justice in Islam is not restricted to human beings but encompasses the entire creation (*kawn*), which is considered a sign (*āyah*) of God. Environmental degradation, therefore, is a violation of both divine trust and cosmic harmony. CSR models rooted in *'adālah* are obliged to pursue ecological sustainability, reduce waste, and adopt policies that preserve biodiversity and protect future generations. This principle aligns with contemporary concerns about climate justice but offers a deeper theological rationale rooted in stewardship and sacred responsibility (Chapra, 1992, p. 59).

Additionally, *'adālah* applies to financial transactions and macroeconomic behavior. Predatory lending, interest-based profiteering (*ribā*), and speculative trading (*gharar*) are prohibited in Islamic finance because they violate distributive justice and economic balance. Firms engaging in such practices, even under legal cover, undermine societal equity and moral trust. Ethical business, under Islamic jurisprudence, must be free from elements that cause unjust enrichment or social harm. Thus, a just company is not one that merely complies with the law but one that actively promotes moral equity across all its financial dealings (Lewis, 2001).

Finally, the implementation of *'adālah* must be embedded in corporate governance structures and performance metrics. It should be a criterion for evaluating executive decisions, organizational culture, and stakeholder engagement. Islamic CSR grounded in *'adālah* would, for example, assess whether the benefits and burdens of a business activity are fairly distributed among all parties, whether marginalized voices are heard, and whether policies are revised to rectify structural inequalities. It promotes a model of continuous ethical auditing, ensuring that justice is not a static declaration but a dynamic, operationalized principle guiding corporate life.

In conclusion, *'adālah* transforms business ethics from a strategic function into a theological imperative. It demands equity not only in outcomes but also in processes, motivations, and structural designs. By integrating this principle into CSR, businesses are not simply promoting fairness—they are fulfilling a sacred duty to uphold the moral order decreed by God. This shift from procedural justice to transcendental justice redefines the very essence of corporate responsibility, making ethical business not a luxury or add-on, but a divine necessity.

Maṣlaḥah as Strategic Orientation

The principle of *maṣlaḥah*, broadly translated as "public interest" or "common good," occupies a vital position in Islamic legal and ethical reasoning. Originating in classical Islamic jurisprudence, *maṣlaḥah* functions as a mechanism for deducing rulings and ethical prescriptions in situations where direct scriptural guidance is either absent or ambiguous. Jurists such as al-Ghazālī and al-Shāṭibī emphasized that the *sharī'ah* was

revealed to secure the welfare of humanity by preserving essential values—life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), religion (*dīn*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*māl*)—known collectively as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (Kamali, 1998, pp. 191–197). In the realm of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), *maṣlaḥah* provides a normative strategy for aligning business goals with ethical imperatives and societal well-being.

Unlike conventional CSR initiatives often driven by market incentives, branding concerns, or reputational risk management, the pursuit of *maṣlaḥah* requires intrinsic moral commitment. It mandates that businesses actively seek to benefit society, prevent harm (*mafsadah*), and promote equitable development—not merely as strategic options, but as religious obligations. This shifts the ethical paradigm from one of instrumentalism to one of principled intentionality (*niyyah*). Corporate actions are not evaluated solely by their financial efficiency or market responsiveness but by their contribution to the holistic good of individuals, communities, and ecosystems (Chapra, 1992, p. 54). Thus, *maṣlaḥah* becomes the strategic anchor that redefines the purpose of the firm in Islamic CSR.

Operationalizing *maṣlaḥah* in business strategy entails integrating ethical impact assessments into all levels of decision-making. Strategic planning must consider how products, services, and operations affect the moral and material fabric of society. For instance, a company guided by *maṣlaḥah* would not only comply with environmental regulations but would proactively invest in renewable energy, circular economies, and conservation initiatives. Similarly, supply chain policies would emphasize fair wages, humane working conditions, and the empowerment of small-scale producers. In marketing and product development, truthfulness, utility, and societal value would override mere profit margins or consumer manipulation. These approaches are not only ethically sound but foster long-term trust, sustainability, and legitimacy.

Moreover, the principle of *maṣlaḥah* encourages firms to anticipate and address the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups. In contrast to conventional business strategies that prioritize the preferences of high-return markets, an Islamic CSR model driven by *maṣlaḥah* mandates inclusive development. This includes support for underserved communities through capacity-building programs, social entrepreneurship, microfinance, and access to education and healthcare. Such interventions are seen not as acts of corporate generosity but as ethical imperatives grounded in divine accountability. This perspective mirrors the Qur'ānic injunctions to feed the hungry, assist the orphan, and uplift the oppressed—actions that are core to social justice in Islam (Qur'ān 76:8–9).

Strategically, *maṣlaḥah* also serves as a safeguard against short-termism and ethical erosion in business decision-making. It demands that corporate leaders weigh the long-term consequences of their actions on social stability, moral norms, and environmental balance. A project that brings short-term financial gain but erodes family structures, exacerbates inequality, or destroys natural habitats would be rejected under this principle. Instead, *maṣlaḥah* fosters resilience, risk mitigation, and sustainability by promoting strategies that are aligned with enduring human values.

This foresight is critical in an era of global instability, where trust in corporations increasingly depends on their ethical and societal contributions.

Finally, *maṣlaḥah* provides a unifying moral compass that bridges diverse stakeholder interests. It offers a shared ethical language grounded in universally recognizable values such as justice, compassion, and well-being, while being rooted in Islamic theology. This makes it particularly suitable for guiding CSR in Muslim-majority contexts and among faith-informed enterprises. It also enhances the possibility of cross-cultural dialogue in global CSR practices, fostering ethical pluralism and deeper engagement with local moral frameworks (Rice, 1999). As a strategic principle, *maṣlaḥah* thus transforms CSR from a peripheral concern to a core business objective, harmonizing profitability with public good under a sacred moral canopy.

In conclusion, integrating *maṣlaḥah* into CSR strategy offers both ethical depth and practical viability. It obligates businesses to transcend transactional goals and to embrace a holistic vision of social responsibility rooted in the preservation and promotion of human dignity, environmental harmony, and collective well-being. As such, *maṣlaḥah* becomes not just a legal or philosophical tool, but a strategic orientation that redefines the identity and purpose of the ethical corporation in an Islamic framework.

Comparative Applicability and Pluralism

The integration of Islamic ethical principles into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) does not imply the formation of an isolated or exclusionary model. Instead, it serves as a valuable contribution to global CSR theory by presenting a spiritually grounded, non-Western framework that complements existing paradigms. As globalization continues to challenge the cultural and moral assumptions of mainstream business ethics, the emergence of faith-based models offers a timely corrective to the often secular and culturally homogenized nature of conventional CSR (Rice, 1999). The Islamic CSR model, rooted in values such as *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *amānah* (trust), *khilāfah* (stewardship), and *'adālah* (justice), enriches the pluralistic fabric of ethical discourse by providing a coherent theological foundation for responsible corporate conduct.

At its core, the Islamic CSR model is built upon universal ethical values that transcend religious and cultural boundaries. Justice, trust, responsibility, compassion, and sustainability are principles not confined to Islamic moral philosophy but are shared across many spiritual and ethical traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and indigenous belief systems. This convergence offers a powerful basis for comparative ethics and interreligious dialogue in the corporate domain. The model, therefore, possesses a dual character: while it is theologically particular in its source, it is ethically universal in its application. This duality enables it to serve not only Muslim-majority markets but also multicultural, interfaith corporate environments where moral pluralism is a practical reality.

Furthermore, adopting a pluralistic CSR approach grounded in religious ethics responds to increasing calls for moral legitimacy and cultural sensitivity in international business. Multinational corporations operating in the Global South, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, often encounter societies where religion is a dominant moral force. Implementing CSR strategies that resonate with local ethical expectations—rather than imposing Western secular models—can enhance authenticity, community engagement, and legitimacy. The Islamic CSR model thus becomes a bridge between global standards and local values, enabling culturally congruent ethical engagement that avoids the pitfalls of ethical imperialism (Warde, 2000).

From an epistemological standpoint, the Islamic approach challenges the dominance of Enlightenment-based rationalism in business ethics, advocating instead for an integrated model that harmonizes reason with revelation. This philosophical rebalancing contributes to the decolonization of CSR theory by validating non-Western knowledge systems and legitimizing religious reasoning in corporate governance. It invites scholars and practitioners to recognize the diversity of moral epistemologies that inform business behavior around the world. In doing so, it creates intellectual space for contributions from African ethics, Confucian thought, Hindu dharma, and other civilizational frameworks, fostering a more inclusive and respectful global ethics landscape (Beekun, 1997, p. 83).

Importantly, the Islamic CSR model can also function as a dialogical platform for shared values and cooperative action. Faith-based CSR initiatives can unite corporations across religious divides around common moral concerns such as poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, and human rights. Interfaith business alliances, ethical trade networks, and joint philanthropic ventures become viable when moral frameworks, though distinct in doctrine, are aligned in ethical intent. For instance, Islamic concepts like *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) and Christian notions of the common good can jointly inform development-focused CSR in underserved regions. In this sense, the model encourages the formation of global CSR coalitions rooted in shared human dignity and ethical responsibility.

Finally, the adaptability of Islamic CSR principles allows them to be translated into various regulatory and corporate contexts without losing their ethical essence. Concepts such as *amānah* and *'adālah* can be integrated into governance frameworks, corporate codes of ethics, and sustainability reports in both faith-based and secular organizations. This flexibility supports the operationalization of Islamic ethics in diverse settings, including international finance, non-profit management, and corporate governance. By offering a spiritually infused yet universally resonant framework, the Islamic CSR model exemplifies how religious moral systems can constructively contribute to global conversations on corporate ethics, accountability, and sustainability.

In conclusion, the Islamic approach to CSR enhances ethical pluralism in global business by introducing a morally robust and culturally grounded framework that

resonates across traditions. It supports the development of a more inclusive, dialogical, and ethically enriched CSR landscape, where diversity of belief is not an obstacle but a resource for moral innovation and corporate integrity.

Research Question 2: "What distinguishes faith-based CSR from conventional approaches?"

Ontological Foundations and Moral Authority

The ontological foundation of faith-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is rooted in the belief that ethical imperatives emanate from divine will rather than human convention. This distinguishes faith-based CSR, particularly in the Islamic context, from secular ethical frameworks that derive legitimacy from social contracts, democratic consensus, or consequentialist calculations (Freeman, 1984; Garriga & Melé, 2004). In Islamic theology, moral obligations are not constructed through negotiation or utility, but are embedded in the metaphysical order of the universe as decreed by God. This theological orientation fundamentally alters the purpose, motivation, and methodology of CSR by grounding corporate ethics in revelation (*waḥy*) and divine ontology rather than in evolving socio-economic expectations.

In this paradigm, businesses are not autonomous entities accountable solely to shareholders, regulators, or society, but are moral agents entrusted by God with a sacred mission. Every commercial action—from production and trade to labor management and environmental impact—is viewed as an extension of one's spiritual duty (*'ibādah*). The Qur'ānic perspective does not bifurcate the sacred from the secular; rather, it integrates economic activity into the continuum of worship and moral conduct. As such, faith-based CSR becomes a spiritual endeavor whereby business practices are assessed not only by their legality or profitability but by their conformity to divine principles (Beekun, 1997, p. 55). This alignment infuses economic life with transcendental meaning, elevating ethics from optional best practices to compulsory moral responsibilities.

This ontological foundation has significant implications for the structure and intent of CSR initiatives. Conventional models, particularly those influenced by stakeholder theory or utilitarian logic, often focus on balancing interests or maximizing net benefits. While valuable in fostering inclusion and dialogue, these frameworks are vulnerable to relativism, where ethics shift according to public opinion, economic trends, or corporate branding strategies. In contrast, a CSR framework based on divine ontology is immutable in its moral standards. It is not susceptible to market fluctuations, regulatory changes, or reputational pressures. Ethical conduct is mandated by God and is constant across time, context, and profitability. This creates a firm foundation for ethical consistency and resilience, especially in environments where legal systems may be weak or compromised.

Moreover, the metaphysical grounding of CSR in Islamic thought introduces the concept of *ḥisāb* (accountability before God) and *ākhirah* (afterlife), which add a unique

motivational dimension to business ethics. Corporate actors are reminded that their actions are not only audited by financial authorities or consumer watchdogs but will ultimately be judged in the hereafter. This belief serves as a powerful internal regulator, reinforcing ethical behavior through spiritual consciousness (*taqwā*) and divine surveillance (*murāqabah*) (Sardar, 1998, p. 87). As such, ethical conduct is not merely externally incentivized but internally compelled by a sense of eternal accountability. This internal moral compass helps reduce the likelihood of ethical lapses in situations where external monitoring is absent or ineffective.

The notion of divine moral authority also influences how responsibility is distributed within the organization. Unlike secular models that focus heavily on compliance departments or corporate social impact officers, a faith-based CSR model assumes that all individuals within the firm—from executives and managers to workers and shareholders—are morally responsible for upholding divine ethics in their spheres of influence. This democratization of moral responsibility ensures that CSR is not an isolated department or public relations tool but a pervasive ethos that shapes the firm's culture, decisions, and long-term strategies.

Furthermore, the ontological commitment to divine command ethics in Islam allows for moral clarity in complex and ambiguous situations. For example, where secular frameworks may struggle to reach consensus on emerging ethical dilemmas—such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, or data privacy—the Islamic model offers a stable evaluative framework rooted in overarching divine principles like justice (*'adālah*), public interest (*maṣlaḥah*), and non-maleficence (*lā ḍarar*). This ensures that CSR does not become reactive or ad hoc but remains proactive, principled, and rooted in a higher moral order.

In conclusion, faith-based CSR, particularly as formulated within Islamic theology, is anchored in a divinely revealed ontology that fundamentally redefines corporate ethics. By treating business conduct as an extension of *'ibādah*, it establishes a comprehensive moral system that transcends cultural relativism, regulatory volatility, and market pragmatism. The motivation for ethical behavior shifts from external compliance to internal spiritual accountability, offering a stable and universal foundation for corporate ethics in a pluralistic and rapidly changing world. This ontological grounding not only elevates the moral ambition of CSR but also contributes a vital non-Western voice to global ethical discourse.

Motivation and Intention (Niyyah)

One of the most distinguishing features of faith-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), particularly within the Islamic ethical framework, is the centrality of *niyyah*—the intention behind an action. In Islamic moral theology, the value of a deed is determined not solely by its external appearance or outcome, but by the sincerity and moral purpose with which it is undertaken. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "Verily actions are judged by intentions," establishing *niyyah* as the cornerstone of all ethical and legal evaluations in Islam. Thus, in the context of CSR, the intention

behind corporate conduct becomes as significant—if not more so—than the conduct itself (Nasr, 1987, p. 28).

This principle marks a profound divergence from dominant CSR paradigms in the secular West, which often assess corporate virtue through the lens of impact, efficiency, and outcomes. While such models emphasize measurable results—such as carbon reduction, philanthropy, or diversity metrics—they rarely interrogate the underlying motives behind those outcomes. For example, a firm that donates to environmental causes primarily to gain positive media attention or market access may still be lauded as a responsible company under conventional frameworks. However, within a faith-based CSR model grounded in *niyyah*, such actions may be ethically deficient if their primary motivation is self-promotion rather than genuine concern for ecological justice.

In Islamic ethics, *niyyah* functions not only as a spiritual condition but as a moral filter that purifies or corrupts human behavior. A business act that conforms externally to ethical standards but is internally driven by vanity (*riyā'*) or hypocrisy (*nifāq*) is considered spiritually void and morally compromised. In CSR practice, this means that ethical initiatives must originate from a sincere commitment to fulfilling moral duties and pleasing God—not from pressure to appease regulators, customers, or shareholders. This sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) is the key to transforming CSR from a performative tool into a transformative moral practice (Beekun, 1997, p. 61). Such an approach nurtures ethical authenticity and fosters long-term trust between corporations and stakeholders.

Furthermore, the emphasis on *niyyah* introduces a self-reflective dimension into corporate decision-making. It requires that executives, managers, and employees consciously evaluate the purpose of their CSR activities: Are we doing this because it is right and pleasing to God, or because it is profitable and fashionable? This question invites a culture of moral introspection and accountability that cannot be mandated by compliance checklists or performance indicators. It fosters a spiritually informed organizational ethos where ethical decision-making is not just a strategic choice but a reflection of personal and collective moral integrity.

The significance of *niyyah* also extends to the evaluation of corporate failure. In conventional ethics, outcomes often determine moral value, with failure sometimes equated with irresponsibility or incompetence. However, Islamic ethics, informed by the doctrine of *niyyah*, recognizes that an ethically motivated act that fails to achieve its material goal may still be morally commendable and spiritually rewarded. For instance, a CSR initiative aimed at alleviating poverty that does not reach its quantitative targets but was driven by sincere concern for human dignity would still carry moral worth in Islamic thought. This reorients CSR performance metrics from purely instrumentalist benchmarks to include spiritual and ethical dimensions.

Moreover, by foregrounding *niyyah*, Islamic CSR establishes a moral safeguard against instrumentalization and ethical tokenism. Many CSR programs have been criticized for

being cosmetic or reactive, intended more for public relations than for genuine social transformation. A CSR approach that prioritizes *niyyah* disrupts this pattern by ensuring that ethical actions are rooted in internal moral conviction rather than external validation. This not only enhances the credibility of CSR programs but also aligns corporate values with the lived religious and ethical beliefs of employees and communities, particularly in Muslim-majority societies.

Finally, *niyyah* serves as an internal governance mechanism, fostering self-regulation and reducing dependence on external surveillance. When employees and leaders are trained to evaluate their intentions regularly, the organization is more likely to act ethically even in unmonitored contexts. This has significant implications for corporate culture, especially in environments where formal institutions are weak or corruption is endemic. By cultivating a spiritually driven moral consciousness, *niyyah* fortifies the ethical foundation of the firm from within.

In conclusion, the principle of *niyyah* infuses CSR with moral authenticity and spiritual depth. It calls for sincerity of purpose in all corporate engagements and insists that ethical excellence is measured not only by what is done, but by why it is done. By elevating intention to a moral criterion, Islamic CSR challenges corporations to align their actions with inner conviction and divine accountability. In doing so, it offers a powerful corrective to superficial or opportunistic CSR practices, transforming corporate ethics from a marketing tool into a profound act of moral and spiritual responsibility.

Accountability Structures

A central pillar that distinguishes faith-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from secular models is the nature and structure of accountability. In conventional CSR frameworks, accountability is largely external and institutional—rooted in legal compliance, stakeholder expectations, social audits, and regulatory mechanisms. While these tools are vital for transparency and ethical enforcement, they are often reactive and limited in scope, functioning best in environments where governance is strong and civil society vigilant. However, Islamic CSR introduces an ontological redefinition of accountability: one that is primarily internal, transcendental, and perpetual, grounded in the awareness of divine oversight (*murāqabah*) and the eschatological certainty of judgment (*ḥisāb*) (Kamali, 1998, p. 75).

In the Islamic worldview, ethical responsibility does not depend on the presence of observers or the existence of sanctions. Rather, it is embedded within the moral consciousness of the believer, who recognizes that all actions are recorded and subject to divine evaluation in the afterlife (*ākhirah*). This belief instills a sense of intrinsic accountability that far surpasses legal obligation. A corporate leader guided by this principle understands that ethical lapses are not just business risks but spiritual liabilities. This generates a moral environment where CSR is not enforced merely by regulation but enacted through personal piety (*taqwā*) and sincere devotion to God (Lewis, 2001).

The Qur'ān frequently reminds believers of God's omnipresence and all-seeing nature: "He is with you wherever you are, and God sees all that you do" (Qur'ān 57:4). Such verses shape a spiritual consciousness that permeates organizational behavior at every level. In an Islamic CSR model, this metaphysical framework becomes an internal accountability structure that complements and strengthens formal oversight mechanisms. It cultivates what can be termed a "God-centric governance ethos," where ethical behavior is expected even when it is not monitored externally. This is particularly relevant in contexts with weak institutional enforcement, where corruption and ethical violations often go unchecked. Here, spiritual accountability acts as a moral anchor, promoting ethical consistency regardless of surveillance or consequence.

Moreover, Islamic accountability is holistic and multidirectional. It includes not only upward accountability to God but also horizontal accountability to fellow humans and environmental systems entrusted to human stewardship (*khilāfah*). This multidimensional accountability widens the scope of corporate responsibility, compelling firms to consider how their decisions affect not just shareholders and regulators, but also workers, consumers, future generations, and the natural world. Thus, a company guided by Islamic ethics cannot limit its reporting and audits to financial indicators; it must also account for its environmental footprint, social equity practices, and cultural impacts—viewed through a theological lens of trust (*amānah*) and justice (*'adālah*) (Siddiqi, 1981, p. 44).

Practically, this principle can be institutionalized through mechanisms such as internal *sharī'ah* boards, ethical review committees, and stakeholder dialogues grounded in values-based performance metrics. These tools reflect an Islamic sense of *muḥāsabah* (self-accounting), encouraging organizations to evaluate their conduct continuously in light of divine expectations. Unlike external audits that occur periodically, *muḥāsabah* is a daily practice, reinforcing ethical vigilance and humility. This moral self-regulation can be more powerful than punitive deterrents, as it is internally motivated and spiritually consequential.

In addition to self-accountability, Islamic CSR supports communal accountability (*shūrā*), encouraging consultative governance that includes diverse voices in ethical deliberation. Employees, customers, local communities, and marginalized groups are not simply stakeholders but ethical co-trustees of corporate behavior. Their feedback and moral concerns must be integrated into decision-making processes, creating a participatory culture of accountability that reflects the Qur'ānic injunction to "consult with them in matters" (Qur'ān 3:159). This reinforces the principle that corporate decisions must be transparent, inclusive, and responsive to those affected.

Finally, eschatological accountability adds a powerful dimension that reshapes temporal considerations in corporate planning. While secular firms often operate on quarterly timelines and shareholder returns, faith-based corporations must also evaluate long-term moral consequences. A project that is profitable in the short term but harms social cohesion or environmental integrity would be deemed a spiritual failure, regardless of its financial success. This long-term ethical vision fosters a culture

of moral foresight and strategic patience—essential traits for sustainable development and ethical resilience (Chapra, 1992, p. 51).

In summary, the Islamic model of accountability reorients CSR from a structure of external compliance to one of internal moral governance. By embedding divine accountability into the heart of corporate operations, it ensures that ethical conduct is sustained not only by policies but by piety. This shift offers a robust alternative to contemporary CSR practices, especially in ethically fragile contexts, and affirms the relevance of spiritual traditions in constructing morally sustainable business cultures.

Temporal Orientation and Afterlife Ethics

A unique and transformative dimension of faith-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), particularly within Islamic thought, is its temporal orientation and connection to afterlife ethics. Unlike conventional CSR models that are anchored in temporal outcomes—such as short-term impact assessments, annual sustainability reports, or quarterly profit metrics—Islamic CSR expands the horizon of ethical evaluation to include eschatological accountability. Business activities are not merely judged in this world (*dunyā*) but are ultimately assessed in the hereafter (*ākhirah*), where every action will be subject to divine judgment (*ḥisāb*) (Chapra, 1992, p. 47). This spiritual extension of accountability significantly influences how corporate actors conceptualize responsibility, success, and sustainability.

In secular CSR frameworks, ethical decisions are frequently guided by present-focused considerations: reputation management, consumer preferences, investor pressure, or regulatory compliance. While these may yield measurable benefits, they are also susceptible to temporal volatility and moral relativism. By contrast, Islamic CSR introduces a metaphysical structure that anchors business ethics in the permanence of the afterlife. The Qur'ān consistently reminds believers that "whatever is with God is better and more lasting" (Qur'ān 16:96), encouraging individuals and institutions alike to pursue actions with enduring moral value, even when such actions may appear costly or unpopular in the short term.

This temporal reorientation cultivates a profound sense of moral foresight. Decisions are no longer limited to their immediate commercial implications but are evaluated for their long-term societal, environmental, and spiritual consequences. For example, a corporation might forgo a lucrative investment in fossil fuels not only because of environmental regulation, but because it views the act as a betrayal of its divine duty to act as *khalīfah*—a trustee of the Earth. In this way, afterlife ethics serve as a moral compass, guiding corporations toward sustainability and intergenerational justice. The firm must ask: not only "What will this yield?" but "Will this please God, and what will it cost in the next life?"

Furthermore, the concept of *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (ongoing charity) is particularly relevant to CSR in this context. Islamic teachings hold that certain good deeds, such as building schools, hospitals, or clean water systems, continue to generate spiritual reward after a person's death. When applied to corporate initiatives, this idea inspires CSR

programs that prioritize long-term social infrastructure and systemic change over ephemeral public relations campaigns. Investments in education, community development, and environmental restoration are not just strategic projects but spiritual legacies that transcend the material lifecycle of the corporation itself.

The eschatological dimension also redefines corporate risk. In conventional business models, risk is calculated in financial terms—loss of capital, market volatility, or legal penalties. Islamic ethics introduces *moral risk*—the risk of divine displeasure and spiritual loss. This recalibration shifts ethical decision-making from a purely economic calculus to a dual framework that includes metaphysical accountability. For instance, engaging in exploitative labor practices may not immediately harm a firm's brand or bottom line, but it incurs spiritual consequences that may manifest in the afterlife. This dual-layered risk model encourages prudence, restraint, and ethical diligence even in environments where legal systems are permissive or ineffective.

Additionally, this afterlife-oriented perspective contributes to the development of a corporate culture that values humility, stewardship, and moral continuity. Leaders and stakeholders are reminded of their finite existence and ultimate accountability before God. The Qur'ān warns against arrogance in wealth accumulation, stating: "Woe to every slanderer and backbiter who amasses wealth and counts it repeatedly, thinking that his wealth will make him immortal" (Qur'ān 104:1–3). Such verses provide a sobering counter-narrative to capitalist triumphalism and underscore the need for ethical boundaries in wealth creation and resource allocation.

Importantly, afterlife ethics promote intergenerational thinking—a concept largely echoed in modern sustainability discourse. In Islamic CSR, future generations are not hypothetical stakeholders but real moral subjects whose rights must be protected as part of the divine trust (*amānah*). This aligns closely with the Qur'ānic principle of preserving *maṣlaḥah* (public good) across generations and avoiding *mafsadah* (harm). Business decisions are thus filtered through the question of legacy: Will this decision contribute to a just, sustainable world that reflects divine will, or will it perpetuate injustice and ecological decline?

In conclusion, the temporal and eschatological orientation of Islamic CSR adds profound depth to the ethical evaluation of corporate conduct. It invites firms to move beyond quarterly results and embrace a moral timeline that spans this life and the next. By integrating afterlife ethics into business practice, Islamic CSR offers a framework that elevates responsibility from a strategic tool to a sacred duty—one that honors God, protects creation, and prepares for ultimate accountability in the life to come.

Holistic View of Stakeholders

A key differentiator of faith-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), particularly from an Islamic perspective, is its holistic and spiritually grounded conception of stakeholders. Conventional stakeholder theory, as articulated by Freeman (1984), expands the scope of corporate accountability beyond shareholders to include employees, customers, suppliers, and communities. While this marks a significant

evolution from the narrow shareholder-centric model of capitalism, it remains largely rooted in social contract theory and utilitarian calculations of interest and influence. In contrast, the Islamic model redefines stakeholder engagement through a metaphysical lens, incorporating not only material beings but also divine accountability and environmental stewardship as integral parts of the stakeholder web.

In Islam, every human being is considered a *khalīfah* (steward or trustee) of God on Earth (Siddiqi, 1981, p. 44). This theological foundation implies that human activity—including business and trade—carries moral consequences that extend beyond immediate economic relationships. A corporation, as a collective moral agent, is therefore responsible not only to its shareholders and contractual partners but also to the broader creation (*khalq*) entrusted to its care. Stakeholders in this framework include future generations, non-human life, natural ecosystems, and ultimately, God as the supreme witness and judge of all actions. This expanded moral map significantly reshapes the parameters of ethical business conduct.

The Qur'ānic imperative to "walk not on the Earth with arrogance" (Qur'ān 17:37) and to "maintain the balance" (Qur'ān 55:7–9) reinforces the idea that ethical responsibility in Islam is cosmological, not just contractual. It affirms that business actions are embedded in a divine order where every transaction must be weighed not only by market logic but by its impact on the harmony of creation. Therefore, pollution, resource depletion, and labor exploitation are not merely technical or regulatory issues; they are violations of *amānah* (trust) and *'adālah* (justice), breaching the covenant between humanity and the Creator. Under this vision, CSR becomes an act of spiritual stewardship, and the corporation a trustee rather than a sovereign agent.

From an operational perspective, this holistic stakeholder model demands that corporations proactively consider the well-being of invisible and voiceless entities. Future generations, for instance, are often omitted from corporate planning due to their lack of present purchasing power or legal representation. Yet Islamic ethics mandates their inclusion through the lens of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (unrestricted public interest), which obliges decision-makers to preserve resources, institutions, and moral standards for those yet to come (Chapra, 1992, p. 59). Similarly, the natural environment is not treated as an externality or passive resource, but as a stakeholder with intrinsic value, deserving of care, respect, and protection.

This moral inclusion reshapes corporate priorities. Profit maximization is subordinated to ethical preservation, and success is redefined to include social harmony, ecological balance, and spiritual accountability. For example, a firm involved in the agriculture sector must not only ensure profitability but also protect soil fertility, conserve water, and respect biodiversity as part of its covenant with creation. In financial services, investment strategies must exclude industries that promote harm or injustice, regardless of potential returns, thereby reflecting the Qur'ānic prohibition against *maysir* (speculation), *gharar* (excessive uncertainty), and *ḥarām* (prohibited) industries (Lewis, 2001).

Furthermore, this expanded stakeholder view encourages a culture of inclusivity, compassion, and equity. It promotes attention to marginalized groups, such as the poor, orphans, refugees, and people with disabilities—individuals often overlooked by market-driven models due to their limited economic power. Islamic CSR mandates their inclusion as beneficiaries of corporate benevolence and justice. The Qurʾān repeatedly calls upon believers to support the *mustaḍʿafīn* (oppressed), signaling that ethical business must be socially integrative and not merely profit-oriented. Programs focused on financial inclusion, affordable housing, education, and healthcare for the underserved thus become not optional extensions of CSR, but central pillars of the firm's moral identity.

The holistic stakeholder view also influences internal corporate culture and leadership. Employees are not just labor units or "human capital" but moral partners in the ethical mission of the firm. Their spiritual, psychological, and familial well-being must be respected and nurtured. A corporation that implements fair labor policies, fosters work-life balance, and promotes ethical leadership embodies this stakeholder vision internally. Governance structures must reflect participatory ethics, ensuring that stakeholders' voices—especially those who are most affected by corporate policies— are meaningfully heard and integrated through consultative mechanisms (*shūrā*).

In conclusion, the Islamic approach to stakeholder theory transcends conventional boundaries by incorporating a comprehensive moral ecology into CSR. It acknowledges God, the environment, future generations, and marginalized communities as essential stakeholders whose rights must be safeguarded. This vision not only expands the ethical horizon of CSR but also elevates it into a spiritually grounded practice of justice, mercy, and stewardship. In doing so, it challenges corporations to rethink the essence of responsibility—not as a strategic obligation to visible others, but as a sacred trust owed to all of creation and the Creator.

Normative vs. Instrumental Ethics

A critical distinction between faith-based and conventional models of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) lies in their underlying ethical orientation—namely, the contrast between normative ethics and instrumental ethics. In mainstream CSR practice, ethical behavior is frequently justified through an instrumentalist logic: firms act responsibly insofar as it serves strategic objectives, mitigates reputational risk, attracts talent, or aligns with stakeholder expectations (Carroll, 1999; Garriga & Melé, 2004). This results in a transactional approach to ethics, where moral action is evaluated based on its capacity to generate tangible business benefits. While such a framework has undoubtedly contributed to the institutionalization of CSR in corporate strategy, it also raises concerns about superficiality, inconsistency, and ethical opportunism.

By contrast, faith-based CSR—particularly within Islamic moral philosophy—is grounded in normative ethics, where ethical behavior is valued intrinsically and mandated by divine authority. The obligation to act justly, truthfully, and benevolently is not contingent upon its profitability or social recognition, but arises from moral

principles revealed by God. Islamic ethics draws its authority from divine revelation (*waḥy*), which provides an objective and absolute moral order. In this framework, ethical duties are binding regardless of outcomes, rooted in theological commitments to *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *'adālah* (justice), and *amānah* (trust) (Beekun, 1997, p. 55). Thus, the motivation for CSR is not utilitarian advantage but spiritual obedience and moral integrity.

This divergence has profound implications for how firms prioritize and implement CSR initiatives. In an instrumentalist model, CSR programs are often reactive—developed in response to scandals, consumer backlash, or regulatory mandates. Ethical behavior is selectively applied, often abandoned during economic downturns or competitive crises. In contrast, a normative, faith-based approach fosters moral consistency. Ethical values are embedded into the firm's identity and operationalized through daily conduct, irrespective of external pressures. For instance, a company operating under Islamic CSR would maintain fair labor practices and environmental stewardship even when such actions yield no immediate return, because they are religiously and morally obligatory.

The instrumental orientation also tends to encourage symbolic CSR—efforts that project ethical commitment without substantial structural change. Examples include one-time charitable donations, marketing campaigns promoting sustainability, or participation in CSR awards. These actions may enhance public image but lack long-term transformative impact. Faith-based CSR, anchored in normative ethics, resists this superficiality. It insists that ethical practice be substantive, enduring, and theologically grounded. Corporate zakāt, environmental conservation rooted in *khilāfah* (stewardship), and social equity derived from *'adālah* are not optional philanthropic gestures but sacred duties. They must be planned, institutionalized, and continuously assessed for alignment with divine commands.

Moreover, normative ethics challenge the "cost-benefit" logic that pervades instrumentalist CSR. In Islamic thought, moral principles are not subject to cost-efficiency analysis. For example, if telling the truth harms a company's short-term interests, truthfulness must still prevail. The Qur'ān declares: "And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just: that is nearer to piety" (Qur'ān 5:8). Such verses reaffirm that justice and ethical conduct are absolute imperatives, not relative to convenience or context. This stance fortifies moral courage and ethical resilience in the face of adversity, corruption, or pressure to conform to unethical industry norms.

The normative approach also shapes internal culture. Employees in an organization governed by faith-based ethics are taught to act rightly not because it will be rewarded externally, but because it is the correct and divinely commanded course of action. This cultivates intrinsic motivation and moral self-regulation, reducing dependence on surveillance and enforcement. Ethical leadership, transparent reporting, and fair stakeholder engagement become expressions of *'ibādah* (worship), transforming the workplace into a space of spiritual accountability and moral excellence.

Importantly, normative ethics foster intergenerational responsibility. While instrumental ethics may prioritize short-term gains, the Islamic framework encourages long-term ethical vision—safeguarding the interests of future communities, ecosystems, and moral legacies. This is reflected in the principle of *maṣlaḥah* (public good), which mandates sustainable, inclusive, and justice-oriented corporate practices, even when they may conflict with current market trends.

In conclusion, the contrast between normative and instrumental ethics highlights a fundamental philosophical divergence in CSR theory and practice. Faith-based CSR, anchored in Islamic ethical norms, transcends the limitations of strategic utilitarianism by asserting that corporate ethics must be rooted in divine obligation, not commercial calculation. This approach nurtures authenticity, consistency, and depth in ethical practice, offering a spiritually grounded alternative to CSR models that risk becoming transactional, reactive, or image-driven. It reframes CSR not as a tool for reputation, but as a covenant of trust between corporations, society, and the Creator.

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Research Question 3: "How does this model contribute to existing CSR theory and practice?"

Enriching CSR Theory with Non-Western Epistemologies

The incorporation of Islamic epistemology into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theory represents a significant contribution to the diversification and decolonization of global business ethics. Traditionally, CSR theory has been dominated by Western philosophical paradigms such as utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, Rawlsian justice, and stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Garriga & Melé, 2004). While these frameworks have provided valuable ethical insights, they reflect specific historical, cultural, and secular foundations that do not fully capture the moral landscapes of non-Western or religious societies. The faith-based Islamic CSR model challenges this epistemological monoculture by offering a theocentric worldview rooted in divine revelation, ethical transcendence, and moral absolutism (Rice, 1999).

At the heart of Islamic epistemology is the belief that knowledge (*ʿilm*) and moral guidance derive not solely from human reason or empirical observation, but from divine revelation (*waḥy*), preserved in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This foundational premise reconfigures the ontological status of ethics in business, making morality an objective reality established by God rather than a social construct subject to change. Ethical principles such as *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *amānah* (trust), *khilāfah* (stewardship), and *ʿadālah* (justice) are not flexible guidelines, but immutable commands that define the moral fabric of economic life (Beekun, 1997, p. 83). These principles collectively form a comprehensive framework for CSR that is not only spiritually grounded but also systematically structured to guide corporate governance, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement.

The integration of these Islamic values into CSR theory offers a new epistemological lens through which to view human agency, responsibility, and the purpose of business.

In contrast to secular models that often reduce human beings to rational actors pursuing utility or contractual agents balancing interests, the Islamic framework regards humans as moral trustees (*khalīfah*) of God on Earth. This theological anthropology redefines the role of the corporation as an ethical institution tasked with upholding divine trust, promoting public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), and avoiding harm (*mafsadah*). Business is not merely an economic activity but a moral vocation that contributes to the realization of God's will in the world.

This epistemological enrichment enhances CSR theory by making it more inclusive of diverse cultural and spiritual perspectives. It recognizes that ethical behavior cannot be universally dictated by secular liberalism or economic rationality alone, particularly in regions where religion plays a central role in public and private life. For example, in many Muslim-majority societies, ethical decisions are deeply intertwined with religious values, and any CSR framework that neglects this moral reality risks being seen as irrelevant or externally imposed. The Islamic CSR model, by aligning corporate behavior with culturally embedded ethical norms, offers greater legitimacy, resonance, and effectiveness in these contexts (Lewis, 2001).

Furthermore, the inclusion of Islamic epistemology in CSR discourse contributes to the intellectual decolonization of business ethics. Postcolonial scholars have long argued that global academic and policy frameworks often marginalize or exclude non-Western knowledge systems, perpetuating epistemic injustice and cultural hegemony. By foregrounding Islamic moral philosophy, the faith-based CSR model asserts the validity of alternative epistemologies and reclaims space for religious ethics in global business theory. It invites scholars, policymakers, and corporate leaders to engage with diverse moral traditions on equal terms, fostering a more pluralistic and dialogical approach to corporate responsibility (Rice, 1999).

This epistemological broadening also opens new avenues for interdisciplinary research and comparative ethics. The Islamic CSR model can be fruitfully compared with Christian social thought (e.g., Catholic social teaching), Jewish business ethics, Buddhist notions of right livelihood, or African communalist ethics. Such comparisons not only enrich CSR theory but also facilitate interfaith dialogue and ethical innovation. They reveal that while doctrinal differences exist, many religious traditions converge on key moral values—justice, stewardship, compassion, and human dignity—that can serve as the foundation for a global CSR ethic grounded in shared humanity.

In conclusion, the integration of Islamic epistemology into CSR theory represents a vital step toward intellectual inclusivity and ethical pluralism. It expands the moral and philosophical foundations of CSR beyond the confines of Western secularism, offering a coherent, spiritually grounded, and culturally resonant framework. This contribution strengthens the theoretical robustness of CSR, enhances its global applicability, and affirms the importance of diverse moral voices in shaping the future of ethical business.

Advancing Theological Integration in CSR Practice

The integration of theology into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practice, particularly through an Islamic lens, represents a significant departure from secular ethical frameworks that dominate global business environments. Most conventional CSR practices derive their legitimacy from legal mandates, market expectations, or philosophical humanism, often treating religion as a private matter unrelated to corporate conduct. However, in many societies—especially in the Muslim world—religion is not a peripheral identity marker but a foundational source of ethical guidance. The faith-based CSR model, grounded in Islamic theology, therefore seeks to reintegrate spirituality into business ethics by advancing the idea that moral responsibility stems from divine command, not merely human consensus or strategic calculation (Rice, 1999).

Theological integration in CSR practice entails embedding religious principles into all aspects of corporate governance, decision-making, and stakeholder relationships. Core Islamic values such as *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *amānah* (trust), *khilāfah* (stewardship), and *'adālah* (justice) are not abstract theological constructs but practical imperatives that shape how businesses operate on a day-to-day basis. For example, *amānah* demands that fiduciary responsibilities be fulfilled with honesty and transparency, extending to financial disclosures, employee treatment, and environmental sustainability. *Khilāfah* requires that firms act as stewards of natural and social resources, avoiding harm (*ḍarar*) and promoting long-term well-being. These principles are operationalized through ethical policies, faith-consistent investment strategies, and socially conscious business models that reflect both compliance with *sharī'ah* and spiritual integrity (Beekun, 1997, p. 55).

This approach is particularly relevant to industries that are already influenced by Islamic values, such as Islamic finance, halal food and pharmaceuticals, and modest fashion. For these sectors, CSR becomes not a peripheral public relations exercise, but a central component of their value proposition and theological identity. Faith-based CSR reinforces market authenticity, consumer trust, and employee engagement by aligning business practice with moral convictions. In Islamic finance, for instance, CSR manifests through the prohibition of interest (*ribā*), speculative transactions (*gharar*), and unethical investments. It also includes obligatory forms of social redistribution, such as *zakāt*, *waqf* (endowment), and *qard al-ḥasan* (benevolent loans), which are institutionalized mechanisms of corporate compassion and justice (Lewis, 2001).

Advancing theological integration also involves building corporate cultures that reflect spiritual awareness and moral discipline. This can be achieved through ethical training based on Islamic values, the appointment of *sharī'ah* compliance officers, and the incorporation of religious holidays, prayer accommodations, and modest dress policies into workplace structures. Such practices do not merely accommodate faith—they affirm it as a source of moral authority and organizational coherence. They foster environments where employees can align personal faith with professional responsibilities, resulting in higher job satisfaction, lower turnover, and stronger ethical

engagement. This internal alignment between personal belief and corporate ethos is a hallmark of spiritually integrated CSR.

Moreover, the theological framework challenges CSR practitioners to move beyond surface-level compliance toward deeper ethical transformation. It critiques the phenomenon of "greenwashing" or "virtue signaling" and calls for authentic moral commitments rooted in divine accountability (*murāqabah*). In this sense, the theological model acts as a moral compass, ensuring that CSR is not co-opted by commercial interests or diluted by superficial initiatives. Faith-based CSR emphasizes that ethical action is a form of worship (*'ibādah*), and therefore must be pursued with sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), consistency, and a sense of sacred responsibility. This spiritualization of ethics reinforces moral behavior not only in regulated contexts but also in unmonitored spaces where formal oversight may be absent or ineffective.

Importantly, theological integration enables organizations to communicate ethical commitments in culturally resonant and spiritually meaningful terms. In Muslim-majority contexts, CSR strategies that are articulated through Qur'ānic principles, prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), and classical jurisprudence (*fiqh*) are more likely to gain public trust and stakeholder legitimacy. They reflect not only ethical intent but cultural fluency and theological alignment with the values of consumers, employees, and the broader community. This form of CSR also supports ethical pluralism, allowing religious values to inform global CSR debates without imposing a singular worldview.

In conclusion, advancing theological integration in CSR practice strengthens the moral infrastructure of corporations by reconnecting ethics with transcendence. It transforms CSR from a managerial function into a spiritual mission, rooted in divine accountability and aimed at holistic well-being. By institutionalizing Islamic theological principles into business operations, this model affirms that economic life is inseparable from moral responsibility. It invites firms to operate not only legally and efficiently, but righteously and reverently, guided by the enduring light of sacred values.

Introducing a Metaphysical Framework for Sustainability

The global discourse on sustainability has largely evolved through secular environmental ethics, scientific assessments, and economic rationalism. While this has fostered essential awareness of planetary limits and ecological risks, it often lacks a deeper metaphysical grounding that can inspire long-term moral commitment and transformative action. The Islamic CSR model fills this philosophical void by introducing a metaphysical framework for sustainability—one rooted not in human-centered utilitarianism, but in a spiritually grounded vision of creation, purpose, and accountability (Chapra, 1992, p. 54). This framework reframes sustainability as not only a managerial responsibility or legal mandate but as a sacred duty embedded in the divine order of the universe.

In Islamic theology, the natural world is not merely a resource base or external stakeholder, but a manifestation of God's will—a set of divine signs (āyāt) entrusted to human stewardship. The Qur'ān repeatedly calls attention to the heavens, the Earth,

and the ecological systems as signs for those who reflect (Qur'ān 2:164, 30:41). These signs are to be respected, preserved, and honored, not commodified or exploited. Sustainability, therefore, is a religious imperative grounded in the belief that humans are *khalīfah*—vicegerents of God—charged with maintaining balance (*mīzān*) and avoiding corruption (*fasād*) in the land (Qur'ān 55:7–9; 7:56). This transcends the anthropocentric models of sustainability and offers a theocentric ethic that connects environmental responsibility to spiritual accountability.

This metaphysical approach transforms how corporations perceive their environmental impact. A firm guided by Islamic ethics does not seek sustainability solely to comply with environmental regulations, enhance its brand, or reduce operational costs. Instead, it pursues sustainability as an act of worship (*'ibādah*) and a fulfillment of divine trust (*amānah*). Pollution, deforestation, and wastefulness are not just ecological concerns but moral failings that betray the sacred covenant between humans and creation. This perspective instills a profound sense of humility, reminding corporate actors that they are caretakers, not owners, of the Earth.

Such a worldview has practical implications for corporate behavior. Sustainability policies must be proactive and rooted in the principle of prevention (*dar' al-mafāsid*) rather than mere mitigation. This implies a commitment to renewable energy, water conservation, ethical sourcing, waste reduction, and biodiversity protection—not just as strategies for competitive advantage, but as theological obligations. For instance, the use of clean technology is framed not only as innovation but as alignment with *ḥalāl* environmental practice. Similarly, carbon offsetting or zero-waste initiatives are perceived as acts of *taqwā* (God-consciousness), motivated by a desire to fulfill the divine command to "not transgress in the Earth after it has been set in order" (Qur'ān 7:56).

The metaphysical framework also extends the time horizon of sustainability. While secular models often focus on generational responsibility, Islamic sustainability is framed through eschatological continuity. The afterlife (*ākhirah*) serves as the ultimate moral reference point, where individuals and institutions will be held accountable for their treatment of creation. This sense of cosmic justice promotes intergenerational ethics that are deeply embedded in theological consciousness. Decisions made today—about energy, infrastructure, and corporate growth—are evaluated not just in terms of their social ROI (return on investment), but in terms of their spiritual and eschatological consequences.

Moreover, the metaphysical model promotes a symbiotic relationship between social and environmental ethics. In Islam, social justice and environmental justice are intertwined. Exploiting labor to drive unsustainable production, or degrading the environment in ways that disproportionately harm the poor, is doubly unethical. A spiritually guided CSR strategy cannot separate ecological responsibility from economic equity. Thus, a faith-based sustainability framework supports inclusive green growth, fair trade, and socio-environmental resilience in ways that align business performance with both moral integrity and systemic well-being.

In addition, the Qur'ānic call to "eat and drink, but waste not" (Qur'ān 7:31) offers a concise yet powerful mandate for responsible consumption and production. It discourages excess (*isrāf*) and extravagance (*tabdhīr*), guiding firms to avoid overproduction, reduce environmental footprints, and adopt circular economy models. These are not optional strategies but spiritual obligations rooted in Qur'ānic ethics.

In conclusion, introducing a metaphysical framework for sustainability enriches CSR by reconnecting environmental responsibility to sacred cosmology and divine accountability. It empowers firms to view ecological care not as an externality or branding tactic, but as a moral act within a broader spiritual mission. This model contributes a theologically coherent and philosophically robust alternative to secular sustainability paradigms, fostering a more holistic, ethical, and enduring corporate response to the environmental challenges of our time.

Ethical Motivation Beyond Compliance

One of the most compelling contributions of faith-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), particularly in Islamic ethical thought, is its emphasis on internal ethical motivation—a dimension that transcends mere compliance with laws or adherence to external codes of conduct. While conventional CSR frameworks often rely on regulatory structures, contractual obligations, or reputational incentives to encourage ethical behavior, the Islamic approach situates morality within the inner conscience of individuals and institutions, inspired by their awareness of divine accountability (*taqwā*) and the ultimate judgment in the hereafter (*ākhirah*) (Kamali, 1998, p. 88). This results in a CSR model that is not reactive or externally enforced, but proactive, sincere, and spiritually self-regulated.

Compliance-based models assume that ethical behavior must be externally monitored and incentivized, often operating under the assumption that actors are primarily motivated by self-interest. Mechanisms such as audits, environmental impact assessments, and transparency reporting are valuable, but they can also lead to performative or box-checking behavior, especially in contexts where enforcement is weak or regulatory capture is common. The Islamic faith-based model, by contrast, grounds ethical behavior in *niyyah* (intention) and *murāqabah* (constant awareness of God), cultivating intrinsic moral motivation that drives ethical conduct regardless of surveillance or scrutiny (Nasr, 1987, p. 28).

In this model, corporate actors—whether CEOs, managers, or employees—are not merely professionals fulfilling contractual roles but moral agents entrusted with divine obligations. Ethical excellence is pursued not because it is required by law or demanded by public opinion, but because it is inherently right and spiritually rewarding. A Muslim business executive, for instance, may choose to reject environmentally harmful but legal practices not to comply with state regulation, but because they understand such actions as violations of their covenant with God and His creation. This internalization of ethics leads to a self-policing culture, where moral

vigilance is maintained even in unregulated spaces and during moments of institutional weakness.

This approach is particularly effective in environments where formal governance structures may be underdeveloped or corrupted. In such contexts, reliance on external enforcement alone is insufficient to ensure ethical behavior. The Islamic CSR model's emphasis on internal virtue ethics, shaped by *akhlāq* (moral character) and *ḥayā'* (modesty), fosters ethical behavior that is resilient to loopholes, bribery, and manipulation. Employees are more likely to resist unethical instructions, and leaders are more inclined to exercise moral courage, even when financial or political costs are high.

Faith-based CSR also instills a long-term ethical orientation that contrasts with short-term compliance models. In the Qur'ānic view, the consequences of one's actions are not limited to worldly outcomes but continue into the afterlife. This eschatological accountability reshapes decision-making frameworks. Corporate leaders must consider not only their legal exposure or shareholder approval but also their spiritual standing before God. This fosters deep ethical foresight, encouraging companies to pursue sustainability, social justice, and truthfulness not only when these align with market incentives, but also when they require sacrifice, restraint, or countercultural action (Chapra, 1992, p. 51).

In practice, this can manifest in a range of corporate behaviors: refusing to participate in exploitative supply chains, voluntarily exceeding environmental standards, implementing fair wage policies in contexts where minimum wage laws are lax, and ensuring product honesty in advertising, even when exaggeration is legally permissible. These are not strategies for image management, but acts of moral sincerity grounded in the belief that "God is watching" (Qur'ān 96:14). Such spiritually driven integrity enhances stakeholder trust, corporate credibility, and internal morale, laying the foundation for a genuinely ethical organizational culture.

Importantly, ethical motivation beyond compliance helps firms avoid the trap of selective morality, where CSR is pursued only in areas that are visible, fashionable, or profitable. Faith-based CSR, rooted in theological commitment, demands moral consistency across all areas of operation—whether or not the public is watching. This minimizes the risk of hypocrisy (*nifāq*) and ethical dualism, which can erode trust and damage reputations when inconsistencies are exposed. The firm becomes not just a performer of ethics but a genuine embodiment of moral values.

In conclusion, the Islamic CSR model's emphasis on internal ethical motivation offers a powerful corrective to externally driven, compliance-oriented CSR paradigms. By cultivating a spiritually informed conscience among business actors, it encourages behavior that is sincere, consistent, and resilient to ethical compromise. This internalization of ethics reinforces CSR as a moral calling, not just a managerial task, transforming the corporation into a moral community accountable not only to markets and governments but to God and humanity.

Bridging Interfaith and Cross-Cultural Dialogue

The Islamic faith-based model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) not only enriches ethical practice within Muslim communities but also holds profound potential for bridging interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue in the global business environment. In an era of increasing interconnectedness, multicultural workforces, and transnational corporate operations, ethical pluralism has become both a moral necessity and a strategic imperative. Yet, conventional CSR frameworks—rooted predominantly in Western liberal ethics—often lack the theological language or moral architecture to engage meaningfully with religious traditions outside the secular domain (Rice, 1999). The Islamic CSR model, by foregrounding universal moral values grounded in divine command, offers a spiritually resonant and dialogical framework that fosters cooperation, shared ethics, and cultural mutuality across religious and civilizational boundaries.

At its core, the Islamic CSR model draws upon principles such as *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *amānah* (trust), *'adālah* (justice), *rahmah* (compassion), and *khilāfah* (stewardship)—values that are not exclusive to Islam but are deeply echoed in other Abrahamic and world religions. Christianity, for example, upholds stewardship, justice, and love for neighbor as central moral commitments; Judaism emphasizes covenantal responsibility and ethical obligation; Buddhism advocates compassion and mindfulness in economic conduct. These shared values provide a common ethical vocabulary that can be used to initiate interfaith dialogue on CSR, facilitating cooperation across firms, faith-based organizations, and communities that differ in doctrine but converge in moral vision (Beekun & Badawi, 2005).

Such dialogue can take many forms: collaborative social impact projects, ethical investment coalitions, joint declarations on sustainability, and multifaith forums on responsible leadership. For example, Muslim and Christian business leaders can co-sponsor fair trade initiatives that benefit underprivileged communities, or Islamic and Jewish firms can partner in halal/kosher certification schemes that enhance consumer trust and transparency. These engagements foster not only business innovation but intercultural understanding, countering stereotypes and fostering peaceful coexistence. CSR thus becomes a platform for practical theology—where shared values are lived out in corporate decisions, governance models, and community outreach efforts.

Core Findings and Pathways Forward

This study has established a faith-based model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) grounded in Islamic ethical principles, offering a normative framework that extends beyond secular or instrumental approaches. Each research question was addressed through the integration of key concepts—tawḥīd, amānah, khilāfah, 'adālah, and maṣlaḥah—into the CSR discourse. These principles transform CSR from a voluntary

business strategy into a divine moral duty, enhancing its ethical depth and cultural resonance, particularly in Muslim-majority societies. The first research question revealed how these values could be systematically incorporated into corporate governance and stakeholder relationships. The second question highlighted the distinctiveness of faith-based CSR, notably its spiritual motivation, divine accountability, and holistic stakeholder scope. The third question affirmed the model's theoretical contribution by enriching global CSR theory with non-Western, religious epistemologies.

The novelty of this contribution lies in its systematic synthesis of Islamic theology with CSR theory, addressing a critical gap in both domains. Theologically, it presents CSR as an act of worship ('ibādah) and moral stewardship. Theoretically, it offers a pluralistic alternative to secular paradigms, thereby enhancing the inclusivity and universality of CSR discourse. Practically, the model serves as a moral compass for firms operating in religious contexts, especially where formal regulatory systems are limited. It provides actionable guidance for Islamic financial institutions, halal businesses, and multinationals seeking to align CSR with diverse ethical expectations. Furthermore, the model encourages future interdisciplinary research, bridging theology, business ethics, and sustainability science in the evolving landscape of global corporate responsibility.

Conclusion

This article has introduced a faith-based model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) grounded in Islamic ethical thought, offering a comprehensive and normative alternative to prevailing CSR paradigms. Anchored in core principles such as *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *amānah* (trust), *khilāfah* (stewardship), and *'adālah* (justice), the model redefines corporate responsibility not as a voluntary, strategic, or philanthropic endeavor, but as a spiritual and moral imperative. By embedding divine accountability at the heart of business ethics, it transforms CSR into a sacred trust (*amānah*) that cultivates ethical behavior motivated intrinsically and directed toward the common good.

The study contributes to the CSR literature by broadening its epistemological horizons and integrating a theologically grounded moral framework that resonates deeply in Muslim-majority contexts. It also provides actionable insights for institutions seeking to align their ethical commitments with Islamic values. Beyond its contextual application, the model invites comparative inquiry across religious and cultural traditions, opening pathways for pluralistic engagement with global ethical challenges. Ultimately, it urges corporations to transcend legal compliance and transactional ethics, embracing CSR as a divinely inspired obligation rooted in justice, trust, and sustainable development for the benefit of both humanity and creation.

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