

From anthropocentric to ecocentric jurisprudence: A *maqasid*-based reconstruction of Islamic environmental ethics toward intergenerational equity

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Abstract

Contemporary ecological crises, including climate change, pollution, ecosystem degradation, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss, reveal that environmental damage is not merely a technical problem of resource management, but also an ethical, legal, and intergenerational concern. Existing studies on Islamic environmental ethics have developed through three main trajectories: moral-theological discussions of *tawhid*, *khalifah*, *amanah*, and *mizan*; eco-*maqasid* approaches that connect environmental protection with Islamic legal philosophy; and sustainability-oriented studies addressing biodiversity, bioethics, and future generations. However, these trajectories remain insufficiently integrated into a unified jurisprudential framework that links Islamic environmental ethics, *maqasid al-shariah*, and intergenerational equity. This article aims to reconstruct Islamic environmental ethics from anthropocentric-instrumental tendencies towards an ecocentric-oriented *maqasid* jurisprudence. Employing a normative-conceptual method through philosophical, *maqasidi*, and environmental ethical approaches, the article argues for a shift from human-centred *maslahah* to life-system-centred *maslahah*. The findings show that ecological integrity is not an additional object of sharia protection, but a structural prerequisite for the realisation of protection of religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property (*al-dharuriyyat*). The article concludes that ecocentric-oriented *maqasid* jurisprudence provides a normative framework for ecological justice, intergenerational responsibility, environmental fiqh, ecological fatwas, and *maqasid*-based public policy.

Keywords: Islamic environmental ethics; *maqasid al-shariah*; ecocentric jurisprudence; intergenerational equity; sustainability.

Introduction

Contemporary ecological crises have reduced the quality of life and threaten future generations' rights to a stable environment (Fletcher et al., 2024; Horton & Horton, 2019). These challenges extend beyond technical resource management and raise ethical, legal, and civilisational concerns regarding the sustainability of life across generations

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(Lumsden, 2021). Islamic environmental ethics provides a pertinent framework by linking human responsibility, the continuity of creation, and moral accountability to God. Shaleh and Islam (2024) contend that the ecological crisis constitutes an existential threat, necessitating a fundamental Islamic ethical response. El-Gammal and Abozaid (2021) demonstrate that, within Islam, environmental protection and sustainable development are intrinsically connected to human moral and social responsibility. Therefore, reinterpretation of Islamic environmental ethics and law is essential to reaffirm environmental conservation and to establish an ecocentric jurisprudence focused on intergenerational equity.

Studies on environmental ethics from an Islamic perspective have developed in three patterns or tendencies. First, studies analyse environmental ethics from an Islamic perspective through moral-theological concepts, emphasising that Islam provides a strong normative foundation for protecting nature (Abu Bakar et al., 2025; Kurbiyanto et al., 2024; Sayem, 2019). Second, studies connect environmental protection to *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly through *eco-maqasid*, environmental *fiqh*, and *maqasid*-based critiques of natural resource governance, illustrating how ecological degradation can threaten the order of life (Haris et al., 2024; Saged & Aly, 2025; Susana et al., 2025). Third, some studies position Islamic environmental ethics within broader discourses of sustainability, biodiversity, bioethics, and sustainable development (Ball, 2025; Bsoul et al., 2022; El-Gammal & Abozaid, 2021; Gulzar et al., 2021; Krawietz & Ghaly, 2025). However, few studies systematically integrate Islamic environmental ethics, the reconstruction of *maqasid al-shariah*, and intergenerational equity into a unified ecocentric jurisprudential framework that moves beyond anthropocentrism.

This study addresses significant gaps in existing research by examining the role of Islamic environmental ethics as a jurisprudential framework for ensuring ecological integrity across generations. Although the literature discusses Islamic ecological principles and the *eco-maqasid* approach, it does not comprehensively explain how Islamic legal reasoning can move beyond anthropocentrism or recognise ecological integrity as fundamental to the rights of future generations (Arzam & Kusnadi, 2025; Sargsyan et al., 2025). Therefore, this study investigates the following questions: (1) How does anthropocentrism manifest in Islamic legal reasoning on environmental issues? (2) What normative ecological foundations within Islamic ethics can underpin ecocentric jurisprudence? (3) How can *maqasid al-shariah* be reconstructed to establish ecological integrity as a prerequisite for indispensable necessities (*al-dharuriyyat*) and intergenerational equity?

The core argument of this study is that Islamic environmental ethics necessitates a shift from human-centred benefit (*maslahah*) to life-system-centred *maslahah*. This transition does not diminish the role of humans as bearers of *amanah*; instead, it redefines the relationship between humans and nature so that *maslahah* encompasses more than immediate human interests. In this context, according to Islamy et al. (2025) and Jumaah et al. (2025), the current ecological crisis requires a fundamental Islamic ethical response and, consequently, the reconstruction of Islamic legal norms based on *maqasid al-shariah* to critique resource policies that fail to support ecological sustainability. Building on this premise, this article advances Islamic legal thought by proposing an ecocentric jurisprudence rooted in *maqasid al-shariah*. The article's contribution lies in repositioning ecological integrity as a structural prerequisite for safeguarding religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property (indispensable necessities or *al-dharuriyyat*) across generations. In doing so, the article integrates Islamic environmental ethics, the reconstruction of *maqasid al-shariah*, and intergenerational equity within a unified conceptual framework for ecological justice.

Literature Review

Environmental ethics within the Islamic tradition is grounded in a robust moral-theological foundation, which is further developed through integration with *maqasid al-shariah* and engagement with sustainability discourse. This foundation originates from the Qur'an and Sunnah, which articulate the normative relationship among God, humans, and nature through key concepts such as oneness (*tawhid*), stewardship (*khalifah*), responsibility (*amanah*), cosmic balance (*mizan*), environmental degradation (*fasad*), and restoration (*islah*) (Sayem, 2023; Abu Bakar et al., 2025; Kurbiyanto et al., 2024). These principles establish that nature possesses intrinsic moral value and is not solely an object for human use; its balance must be preserved. The legal dimension of this foundation is articulated through its association with *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly via the development of eco-*maqasid*, environmental *fiqh*, and critiques of unsustainable resource management (Haris et al., 2024; Saged & Aly, 2025; Susana et al., 2025). Concurrently, discussions on sustainability, biodiversity, and intergenerational justice broaden the scope of Islamic environmental ethics, shifting the focus from immediate protection of nature to a broader ecological responsibility encompassing the web of life and future generations (El-Gammal & Abozaid, 2021; Ball, 2025; Krawietz & Ghaly, 2025).

This moral-theological foundation is anchored in ecological principles extensively articulated in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Nature is presented as a sign of God's greatness

and as an integral part of the created order, not merely a resource for material exploitation. The principle of *tawhid* affirms the ontological unity of all creation, precluding any interpretation of nature as neutral or value-free (Sayem, 2023). *Khalifah* and *amanah* designate humans as responsible stewards rather than absolute proprietors of nature (Abu Bakar et al., 2025). *Mizan* requires maintaining cosmic balance, while the prohibitions against *fasad* and the obligation of *islah* provide normative grounds for preventing harm and restoring ecological order (Kurbiyanto et al., 2024). Although this foundation has fostered ecological awareness within Islam, many studies remain focused on moral and spiritual values, without fully translating these ecological principles into an operational legal framework.

The integration of environmental ethics with *maqasid al-shariah* has facilitated a shift from a purely moral-theological perspective to a legal framework within Islam. The *eco-maqasid* approach enables environmental harm to be addressed as a matter of Islamic law, rather than solely as a moral or technical concern in resource management. Issues such as climate change, pollution, ecosystem degradation, and resource crises are thus recognised as threats to human welfare, impacting the core elements of necessities. Haris et al. (2024) argue that *eco-maqasid* incorporates ecological concerns into Islamic legal philosophy. Saged and Aly (2025) contend that ecological damage disrupts the order of life and must be legally prevented. Susana et al. (2025) highlight the need to reconstruct Islamic legal norms to critique resource governance that fails to align with ecological sustainability. Nevertheless, some studies employing the *eco-maqasid* approach continue to treat the environment as an additional object of sharia protection, rather than as a structural prerequisite for all necessities (*al-dharuriyyat*), secondary (*al-hajiyyat*), and tertiary (*al-tahsiniyyat*) objectives within *maqasid al-shariah*.

The sustainability discourse refines the trajectory of Islamic environmental ethics by emphasising biodiversity, bioethics, and intergenerational justice (Gulzar et al., 2021; Ball, 2025). This perspective illustrates that ecological harm affects not only present populations but also determines the conditions for future generations. In Islamic thought, environmental protection is inseparable from the moral and social responsibilities humans bear for the sustainability of creation (El-Gammal & Abozaid, 2021). Krawietz and Ghaly (2025) further demonstrate that the Islamic scholarly tradition offers conceptual tools for reconstructing environmental ethics through interdisciplinary engagement. This approach has expanded the intergenerational dimension of Islamic environmental ethics. However, the integration of sustainability, biodiversity, and the

rights of future generations into the *maqasid al-shariah* framework as a systematic jurisprudential structure remains incomplete.

Despite advancements in moral-theological foundations, the development of *maqasid al-shariah*, and the expansion through sustainability discourse, Islamic environmental ethics continues to exhibit jurisprudential fragmentation. While the moral-theological foundations affirm the depth of Islamic ecological principles, they often fail to translate them into actionable legal frameworks. The eco-*maqasid* approach facilitates ecological considerations within Islamic law but often treats the environment as an additional object of protection rather than a foundational element underpinning the necessities. Although the sustainability discourse extends Islamic concern to the broader system of life, its integration with intergenerational justice and the reconstruction of *maqasid al-shariah* remains limited (El-Gammal & Abozaid, 2021; Ball, 2025; Krawietz & Ghaly, 2025). This fragmentation leads to an incomplete synthesis, as current scholarship has yet to connect Islamic ethical foundations, *maqasid al-shariah*, and intergenerational responsibility within a unified jurisprudential framework. Addressing this theoretical gap requires reconstructing *maqasid al-shariah* to position ecological integrity as a structural prerequisite for all fundamental objectives of Islamic law across generations.

To address this jurisprudential fragmentation, this study proposes life-system-centred *maslahah* as an integrative framework that unites the moral-theological foundations of Islam, the reconstruction of *maqasid al-shariah*, and intergenerational justice within a cohesive conceptual structure. This framework draws upon the concept of eco-*maqasid* (Haris et al., 2024), critiques of *maqasid al-shariah* in resource management (Susana et al., 2025), and interpretations of the Qur'an regarding ecological damage (Saged & Aly, 2025) to assert that ecological integrity constitutes a structural prerequisite for the realisation of necessities and other dimensions of *maqasid al-shariah* across generations. Through life-system-centred *maslahah*, compliance with Islamic environmental law is reframed as an essential component of the fundamental structure of life, necessary for achieving justice for future generations. Accordingly, this article aims to reconstruct Islamic jurisprudence so that all objectives of sharia are contingent upon the integrity of the ecosystem as a foundational element.

Method

This article adopts a normative-conceptual research design that integrates philosophical, *maqasidi*, and environmental ethical approaches. This methodology facilitates the reconstruction of legal concepts, normative principles, and ethical

foundations within Islamic environmental thought. The philosophical approach critically interrogates the anthropocentric assumptions underlying certain Islamic legal reasoning. The *maqasidi* approach redefines the objectives of Islamic law by establishing ecological integrity as a prerequisite for fulfilling sharia's objectives. The environmental ethics approach reevaluates the human-nature relationship through Islamic normative concepts. Collectively, this framework supports a transition in Islamic environmental ethics from anthropocentric reasoning to an ecocentric-oriented *maqasid* jurisprudence.

The article examines five interrelated concepts: anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, Islamic environmental ethics, *maqasid al-shariah*, and intergenerational equity. These concepts are used to construct a framework that demonstrates how ecological integrity is essential for safeguarding religion, life, reason, progeny, and property across generations. The analysis critiques anthropocentrism, introduces ecocentrism as a new orientation, establishes Islamic environmental ethics as the moral foundation, defines *maqasid al-shariah* as the legal guide, and identifies intergenerational equity as the long-term ethical objective, highlighting their interconnections and collective significance.

The data and information for this article are drawn from academic literature on Islamic environmental ethics, environmental *fiqh*, Islamic legal philosophy, *maqasid al-shariah*, sustainability, and intergenerational equity. Sources were selected for their conceptual relevance to the analysis of connections between Islamic teachings, ecological responsibility, and the rights of future generations. The literature reviewed includes journal articles, academic books, book chapters, and recent studies addressing *eco-maqasid*, environmental ethics from an Islamic perspective, sustainability, biodiversity, ecological governance, and Islamic legal responses to environmental harm. As a normative-conceptual study, these materials serve as the conceptual and normative foundation for the article's argument.

Data collection was conducted through a purposive literature review. Sources were selected based on their relevance to three analytical objectives: critiquing anthropocentric-instrumental reasoning, identifying ecological foundations within Islamic ethics, and reconstructing *maqasid al-shariah* to address sustainability and intergenerational equity. The selected materials were organised into thematic categories: Islamic environmental ethics, *eco-maqasid*, ecological damage, sustainability, and intergenerational equity. This thematic organisation facilitates a conceptual dialogue among the sources and supports the reconstruction of an ecocentric jurisprudence.

The data were analysed using a conceptual-normative approach in three stages. First, the article delineates the limitations of anthropocentric reasoning by demonstrating that nature is frequently regarded solely as a resource for human use, rather than as an integral part of the normative order of creation. Second, it reconstructs the ecological foundations of Islamic ethics by analysing *tawhid*, *mizan*, *amanah*, *fasad*, and *islah* as guiding principles for ecological responsibility. Third, it reinterprets *maqasid al-shariah* within the context of intergenerational equity, establishing ecological integrity as an essential component of necessities. Through these stages, the article develops the concept of life-system-centred *maslahah*, which safeguards both present well-being and the ecological needs of future generations.

Results and Discussion

Anthropocentric-Instrumental Tendencies in Islamic Environmental Legal Reasoning

In environmental philosophy, anthropocentrism prioritises human interests and well-being within moral and legal frameworks, interpreting nature primarily in terms of its utility to humans (Rigley et al., 2023). Biocentrism shifts moral consideration to individual living beings (Mesfin, 2022). In contrast, ecocentrism emphasises the integrity of entire ecological systems as the primary standard for evaluating human actions toward nature (Saha, 2025). In Islamic law, ecocentrism is reflected in a legal orientation grounded in the *maqasid al-shariah*. This framework stresses balance, the sustainability of life systems, and ecological responsibility as essential aspects of God's creation that must be preserved for both present and future generations (Wani & Azhar, 2024).

Anthropocentric-instrumental tendencies in certain formulations of Islamic legal reasoning become evident when the environment is primarily viewed as an object for human benefit, management, and responsibility, rather than as an integral component of the created order possessing normative status within the framework of *maslahah*. Both classical and contemporary interpretations often define *taskhir* as the subjugation of nature for human benefit, while *khalifah* is interpreted as a mandate of stewardship that positions humanity at the centre of cosmic responsibility. The Qur'an, although it provides a strong foundation for ecological ethics, in its readings and interpretations of the relationship between humans and nature often positions humans as the primary subjects in the management of creation (Sayem, 2023). In fact, ethically, as the Qur'an demands, Islam requires humans to protect nature, but its articulation often remains centred on human obligations and the benefits it returns to human life (Baharuddin & Musa, 2017). This tendency does not imply that Islam disregards nature; rather, it

indicates that, within specific legal and ethical frameworks, nature is more often treated as an object of human responsibility than as an internal normative consideration within the structure of *maslahah*.

This trend results in an environmental protection approach that is predominantly reactive and focused on human interests. Legal urgency for environmental issues typically arises only when ecological harm affects human safety, public health, economic stability, or the sustainability of social systems. While the Qur'an has discussed many themes related to the conservation and protection of nature, and serves as an important foundation for ecological responsibility, its interpretation still focuses on the moral obligation of humans to manage nature appropriately (Abu Bakar et al., 2025). Although human-centred reasoning can support arguments for environmental protection, it does not sufficiently establish ecological integrity as a structural criterion within *maqasid*-based reasoning. As a result, environmental degradation is often recognised as a legal issue only when it threatens human welfare, rather than being identified from the outset as a violation of *mizan*, *amanah*, and the order of creation.

The epistemological limitation of the anthropocentric-instrumental approach lies in its tendency to treat the environment solely as an external condition for human well-being, rather than as a structural condition within *maqasid*-based reasoning. This perspective is insufficient for addressing contemporary ecological crises, which unfold over extended timescales and affect future generations. In this case, Susana et al. (2025) emphasise the need to reconstruct Islamic legal norms for environmental management based on *maqasid al-shariah*, as resource policies often do not yet reflect a sustainable ecological orientation. Therefore, critiques of anthropocentric tendencies in Islamic legal reasoning do not reject the concept of human stewardship but instead seek to broaden the scope of legal reasoning to incorporate ecological integrity, natural balance, and the rights of future generations into the normative framework of *maqasid al-shariah*.

Normative Ecological Foundations in Islamic Ethics

The ecological normative foundation in Islam is articulated through the concepts of *tawhid*, *mizan*, and *amanah*, which collectively establish the ethical relationship among humanity, nature, and God. The concept of *tawhid* holds that all creation exists within a unified divine order emanating from God, thereby precluding treating nature as a neutral or value-free entity (Sayem, 2023). The concept of *mizan* requires preserving the balance of creation, framing actions that disrupt ecological equilibrium as violations of the divine order. The concept of *amanah*, in turn, designates humans not as absolute proprietors of nature, but as stewards entrusted with moral and legal responsibility to safeguard the

sustainability of creation (Saged & Aly, 2025). These concepts affirm that nature possesses a normative status within Islamic ethics and *maqasid*-based legal reasoning and cannot be reduced to a mere object of human utility.

These foundational concepts are further reinforced by the principles of preventing *fasad* and advocating *islah*. In environmental contexts, the prevention of *fasad* encompasses ecological damage that disrupts the balance of life (Nasir et al., 2022). In contrast, *islah* refers to the recovery, repair, and restoration of a disrupted order. As noted by Kurbiyanto et al. (2024), Islamic teachings incorporate ethical principles that emphasise environmental protection and preservation. The principles of *fasad* and *islah* complement *tawhid*, *mizan*, and *amanah* by outlining proactive measures to prevent ecological damage and to restore balance when disruption occurs. These ecological foundations do not diminish human responsibility; instead, they redefine humans from rulers over nature to bearers of *amanah* within an interconnected system of life (Mohamed, 2025).

This normative foundation conceptually enables the development of Islamic ecocentric jurisprudence that moves beyond instrumental anthropocentrism. *Tawhid* affirms the unity of creation; *mizan* requires balance; *amanah* restricts human domination; the prevention of *fasad* condemns destruction; and *islah* demands recovery. Consequently, environmental protection is not solely a moral exhortation but constitutes an integral component of the normative structure of Islamic law. Therefore, Islam provides an internal framework for constructing an ecocentric jurisprudence that protects humans from environmental harm and upholds ecological integrity as essential to the sustainability of life and to justice for future generations (Sargsyan et al., 2025).

Maqasid Reconstruction through Ecological Integrity and Intergenerational Equity

The reconstruction of *maqasid al-shariah* in environmental issues rests on the premise that ecological stability is fundamental to the realisation of sharia's core objectives (Abu-Rayash, 2025). This premise derives from Islamic ecological principles of *tawhid*, *mizan* and *amanah*. When consistently applied, these principles make ecological governance an essential legal obligation within the *maqasid al-shariah* framework (Arzam & Kusnadi, 2025). Ecological integrity, therefore, should not be treated as an additional object of protection alongside *al-dharuriyyat*, but as a structural condition for their realisation. The protection of life, progeny, reason, property, and religion depends on clean water, healthy air, food security, sustainable resources, viable communities, and socio-ecological stability. Thus, environmental protection (*hifdz al-bi'ah*) functions not

as a separate sixth objective, but as an internal prerequisite for the whole structure of *maqasid al-shariah* (El-Gammal & Abozaid, 2021; Nurholis, 2025).

Reconstructing the five elements of *al-dharuriyyat* within an ecological framework involves two interrelated dimensions. The first, ecological reconstruction, examines how each fundamental objective of sharia depends on a stable and functioning ecosystem as a prerequisite for life. The second, the intergenerational dimension, asserts that the responsibility to protect ecological conditions extends beyond the present generation to future generations, who will inherit the consequences of current ecological decisions. These dimensions are inseparable: ecological reconstruction without an intergenerational perspective results in short-term, reactive measures, while intergenerational commitment without ecological reconstruction lacks substantive normative guidance. The following table illustrates the concurrent operation of these dimensions within each element of *al-dharuriyyat*.

Table 1

Reconstructing Maqasid al-Shariah through Ecological Integrity and Intergenerational Equity

Maqasid al-Shariah	Ecological Reconstruction	Intergenerational Dimension
Protection of religion and religious practice (<i>hifdz al-din</i>)	Preserving living spaces, water, land, and communities so that religious practice can continue	Future generations have the right to an environment that supports spiritual and socio-religious life
Protection of life (<i>hifdz al-nafs</i>)	Protecting air, water, food, ecological health, and environmental security	Future generations have the right to healthy and decent living conditions
Protection of intellect (<i>hifdz al-'aql</i>)	A healthy environment supports intellectual development, education, and mental health	Future generations have the right to an ecosystem that supports their capacity to learn and think
Protection of progeny/lineage (<i>hifdz al-nasl</i>)	Protecting the ecological quality inherited by future generations	Future generations have the right to inherit an environment that has not been damaged by the present generation
Protection of property/wealth (<i>hifdz al-mal</i>)	Protecting natural resources, the ecological economy, and the sustainability of public assets	Future generations have the right to fair and non-depleted resources

Note. This table conceptualises ecological integrity as a structural prerequisite for the realisation of *al-dharuriyyat* in *maqasid al-shariah*. The ecological reconstruction column shows how each fundamental objective of sharia depends on stable environmental conditions, while the intergenerational dimension highlights the normative responsibility of the present generation to safeguard ecological rights and welfare for future generations.

Table 1 demonstrates that each element of *al-dharuriyyat*, when analysed through ecological and intergenerational perspectives, reveals a structural dependency that has not

previously been articulated in mainstream Islamic legal reasoning. This interdependence is foundational, as the integrity of ecological systems is a prerequisite for *al-dharuriyyat*. Moreover, this interpretation suggests that current ecological degradation not only endangers the welfare of the present generation but also constitutes an injustice toward future generations, who lack representation in decisions affecting their ecological inheritance. In this context, intergenerational equity emerges as a necessary normative outcome of the ecological reconstruction of *al-dharuriyyat*, rather than a supplementary ethical consideration (Ball, 2025; Krawietz & Ghaly, 2025).

This reconstruction affirms that *maqasid al-shariah* should not be regarded solely as an abstract doctrine concerning the ideal objectives of Islamic law, but as a normative framework that requires proactive measures to prevent significant threats to the viability of future generations. The legal obligations arising from this reconstruction—environmental protection, equitable development, and resource sustainability—are not merely moral appeals, but normative mandates that can be translated into operational legal instruments (Alslamah, 2025). In this framework, cumulative and intergenerational environmental degradation can no longer be treated as an externality beyond the scope of Islamic legal consideration; it becomes a direct object of obligations based on the *maqasid al-shariah*, binding every individual, institution, and state with the capacity to prevent or exacerbate it (Susana et al., 2025).

Toward an Ecocentric *Maqasid* Jurisprudence for Intergenerational Equity

Based on the three previous analyses—criticism of the anthropocentric-instrumental tendencies in Islamic legal reasoning, the ecological normative foundations available within Islamic ethics, and the reconstruction of *maqasid al-shariah* towards ecological integrity and intergenerational equity—it is important to project an ecocentric jurisprudence that positions the integrity of the life system as an inherent part of the objectives of sharia, rather than merely an add-on on the periphery of its normative framework. This projection demands a shift from anthropocentric-instrumental patterns of reasoning towards a legal framework that recognises the normative value of nature and the ecological rights of future generations. The environment is no longer positioned as an external prerequisite for human welfare, but rather as an ontological foundation underpinning all *al-dharuriyyat*. Consequently, every legal action, public policy, and religious fatwa that impacts ecosystems must be assessed not only in terms of its direct benefits to present-day humanity but also in terms of its ability to safeguard the sustainability of life systems for future generations (Karimullah, 2024).

This paradigm shift is based on the concept of life-system-centred *maslahah* as an integrative framework that distinguishes it substantially from human-centred *maslahah*. In human-centred *maslahah*, the public good is measured by the direct benefits felt by people living today; nature has value only insofar as it serves human needs, and ecological damage becomes a legal issue only when it disrupts human interests in a measurable and immediate way. Conversely, life-system-centred *maslahah* places the integrity and sustainability of ecological systems as structural conditions for the realisation of the protection of religion, life, reason, progeny, and property—not only for the present generation, but also for future generations yet to be born. The standard for measuring *maslahah* shifts from short-term benefits for present-day humans to the long-term resilience of life systems, which will constitute an ecological legacy for future generations. This shift does not negate humanity’s position as the custodian and primary moral subject in Islamic law; rather, it changes the very logic of legal assessment itself (Elmahjub, 2021). The structural differences between these two orientations of *maslahah* can be systematically mapped out in Table 2 below.

Table 2

From Human-Centred to Life-System-Centred Maslahah

Aspect	Human-Centred <i>Maslahah</i>	Life-System-Centred <i>Maslahah</i>
Value orientation	Human interests and welfare	The integrity of the life system as a condition for <i>maslahah</i>
Position of nature	An object of human use and responsibility	Part of the order of creation with normative standing
Model of protection	Reactive, responding when damage affects humans	Preventive and anticipatory toward ecological damage
Temporal horizon	The welfare of the present generation	Intergenerational welfare
<i>Maqasid</i> basis	The environment as a support for the objectives of Sharia	The environment as a structural prerequisite for <i>al-dharuriyyat</i>
Legal implications	Conservation as a moral obligation	Environmental <i>fiqh</i> , ecological fatwas, and <i>maqasid</i> -based public policy

Note. This table contrasts two orientations of *maslahah* in Islamic environmental legal reasoning. Human-centred *maslahah* tends to position the environment as significant insofar as it supports present human welfare, whereas life-system-centred *maslahah* places ecological integrity as a structural condition for the realisation of *maqasid al-shariah* and the protection of future generations.

Table 2 shows that the difference between the two orientations of *maslahah* does not lie in the presence or absence of concern for the environment, but rather in the position of ecology within Islam’s legal architecture. In human-centred *maslahah*, the environment is an external factor that receives legal attention only reactively once

ecological damage has already impacted humans. In life-system-centred *maslahah*, ecology is a structural prerequisite that determines whether *al-dharuriyyat* can be realised, for both the present and future generations. This shift alters not only the substance of Islamic law but also its epistemology, namely that long-term ecological assessment becomes an integral part of the legal deduction process, rather than merely an optional additional consideration.

To illustrate how this difference in orientation works in practice, the cases of permits for clearing tropical forests for large-scale plantations and mining permits in protected forest areas within water catchment zones can be presented as thought experiments. Within a human-centred *maslahah*, both permits could be justified provided they generate economic benefits for local communities and do not cause any directly measurable health impacts on people today. However, within a life-system-centred *maslahah*, the question shifts fundamentally to whether this conversion of ecosystems damages the capacity of the life-supporting systems that will be bequeathed to future generations to enjoy air quality, clean water, food security (*hifdz al-nafs*), ecological conditions worthy of inheritance (*hifdz al-nasl*), and ecosystems that support the capacity for thought and development (*hifdz al-‘aql*)? If a long-term ecological assessment answers in the affirmative, then within this ecocentric jurisprudence, these two permits are not merely a matter of environmental regulation or economic calculation, but rather a breach of the intergenerational ecological trust, and therefore carry direct legal implications within the framework of the *maqasid al-shariah*.

The Islamic legal maxim (*qawaid fiqhiyyah*) and Islamic legal methodology (*ushul fiqh*) within Islamic law can be directly applied within the framework of a life-system-centred *maslahah* without requiring reconstruction from scratch. The legal maxim “no harm shall be inflicted upon oneself or others” (*la darar wa la dirar*), for example, within this framework, is no longer limited to harm felt by people living today, but is extended to include ecological damage that will only be felt by future generations (Jalili et al., 2025). This temporal extension of the legal maxim is normatively justifiable because the concept of “others” (*al-ghayr*) is not limited to physical presence in the present, but encompasses all parties affected by an action, including those not yet born who will inherit the ecological conditions left behind by the current generation. Thus, any policy scientifically proven to reduce the capacity of future ecosystems—such as cumulative carbon emissions, the depletion of groundwater aquifers, or the extinction of keystone species within the ecosystem—can be categorised as intergenerational harm that must be prevented under Islamic law (Nasir et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the method of blocking the means to harm (*sadd al-dzari'ah*) provides a highly relevant normative instrument for responding to cumulative, intergenerational ecological crises. In ecocentric jurisprudence, *sadd al-dzari'ah* can serve as the basis for a preventive ban on activities that cumulatively damage life-supporting systems, even if their effects are not yet directly felt by a particular generation. This means that actions scientifically proven to contribute to long-term ecosystem degradation, even if their short-term economic benefits are evident, can be categorised as pathways to intergenerational harm that must be blocked. Furthermore, the legal maxim that “harm must be removed” (*al-darar yuzal*) can be applied as the basis for the obligation of ecological restoration; that is, when an ecosystem has suffered damage that threatens the capacity for life of future generations, there is a legal obligation to restore it as part of fulfilling the ecological trust. Through this operationalisation, the methods within *ushul fiqh* and existing Islamic legal maxim become anticipatory and restorative legal instruments, rather than merely reactive to harm that has already occurred.

The most fundamental implication of this ecological jurisprudence for fatwa institutions lies in the shift in the fundamental question, not merely in the answer. Environmental fatwas based on human-centred *maslahah* typically ask: “Does this action harm present-day humans or not?” This question directs the process of extracting Islamic legal rulings from their primary sources (*istinbath*) toward calculating short-term benefits and harms for present-day humans, who are the sole subjects of assessment. Fatwas based on life-system-centred *maslahah* ask a different question: “Does this action damage the capacity of the ecological system that will be bequeathed to future generations to fulfil their essential needs or not?” This shift in the question directly alters the methodology of *istinbath*, making long-term scientific ecological assessment an integral part of the legal derivation process, rather than merely optional background information (Islamy et al., 2025; Jumaah et al., 2025).

In practice, this means that fatwa institutions need to integrate input from experts in ecology, climatology, and conservation biology into the process of *ijtihad*, not merely as supplementary information, but as normative data that determines whether an action violates ecological imperatives. Such an approach is not unfamiliar within the tradition of *ijtihad*. Classical Islamic scholars also integrated empirical knowledge from medicine, astronomy, and earth sciences into their legal reasoning when such knowledge was relevant to determining the legal status of an action (Rasyid et al., 2023). What is different is the complexity and temporal scale of contemporary ecological knowledge, which demands a more structured collaboration between jurists and environmental scientists,

moving from a monodisciplinary approach to *fiqh* to a collective *ijtihad* that involves ecological expertise as a normative partner (Krawietz & Ghaly, 2025).

Compared to theories of intergenerational equity in secular legal philosophy, ecocentric jurisprudence grounded in *maqasid al-shariah* offers a more comprehensive foundation, integrating legal, ethical, spiritual, and cosmological dimensions. Secular sustainability theories generally rest on an intergenerational social contract, in which the obligations of the present generation towards future generations are grounded in the principles of equal access to resources and distributive justice (Weiss, 2025). Whilst this is important, such theories often rely on instrumental rationality and human interests as the sole reference points in their considerations. Conversely, the Islamic perspective views the obligation towards future generations not merely as a social contract, but as a responsibility before God inherent in the concept of *tawhid*, which emphasises that ecological damage that bequeaths suffering to unborn generations constitutes a breach of the cosmic trust, not merely distributive injustice (Abu Bakar et al., 2025; Sayem, 2023). This theological dimension does not weaken the legal argument but rather provides a deeper motivational foundation for normative compliance.

In a broader context, ecocentric jurisprudence can serve as a normative benchmark for assessing the ecological validity of various policy instruments and regulations. Spatial planning policies, mining licences, agricultural regulations, and international agreements on climate change can all be tested against the same question: “Do these instruments preserve or undermine the capacity of the ecological system that will be bequeathed to future generations?” In the Indonesian context, where Islamic religious authorities wield significant social influence, ecological fatwas grounded in a life-system-centred concept of *maslahah* can serve as an effective policy advocacy tool by reinforcing demands for environmental protection through religious normative authority recognised by the wider public (Susana et al., 2025). Thus, ecocentric jurisprudence is not merely an internal reform within Islamic legal thought, but also Islam’s contribution to global ecological governance.

Ecocentric jurisprudence grounded in the *maqasid al-shariah* positions humans as stewards responsible for the sustainability of the entire system of life. The concept of *amanah* limits human domination over nature, whilst *mizan* stipulates that the utilisation of resources must maintain balance so that future generations may inherit a functional and just ecosystem (Abu Bakar et al., 2025; Sargsyan et al., 2025). Within this framework, ecological damage is not merely a managerial error or a regulatory violation, but a breach of the trust and balance commanded by God, with legal consequences that can be

enforced through ecocentric jurisprudence, ecological fatwas, and public policy based on *maqasid al-shariah*. By positioning the integrity of the life system as a structural prerequisite for intergenerational necessities, ecocentric jurisprudence establishes ecological equity not merely as an Islamic moral aspiration, but as a legal obligation possessing a foundation, methodology, and normative implications that can be operationalised.

Conclusion

Reconstructing Islamic environmental ethics requires a fundamental shift from anthropocentric, instrumental reasoning to an ecocentric jurisprudence grounded in *maqasid al-shariah*. This article advances three principal findings. First, prevailing approaches to Islamic environmental legal reasoning often continue to regard nature primarily as an object for human use, management, and responsibility, rather than as an integral component of the created order with normative status within the *maslahah* framework. Second, Islam offers a robust ecological foundation through the concepts of *tawhid*, *mizan*, *amanah*, *fasad*, and *islah*, which collectively establish environmental protection as a central aspect of humanity's obligation to preserve the order of God's creation. Third, *maqasid al-shariah* may be reconstructed by recognising ecological integrity as a structural prerequisite for the realisation of *al-dharuriyyat*, thereby linking the protection of religion, life, reason, lineage, and property to the sustainability of intergenerational life systems.

The contribution of this article is the development of the life-system-centred *maslahah* concept as an alternative to the human-centred *maslahah*. This framework maintains the role of humans as stewards while restructuring legal reasoning to ensure that public interest encompasses more than immediate human concerns. Within this paradigm, ecological harm is conceptualised not only as a technical issue, managerial failure, or regulatory breach, but as an ecological corruption (*mafsadah*) that may threaten *al-dharuriyyat* and generate injustice for future generations. Consequently, *qawaid fihiyyah* and *ushul fiqh* such as *la darar wa la dirar*, *al-darar yuzal*, and *sadd al-dzari'ah* serve as preventive, anticipatory, and restorative legal mechanisms for addressing cumulative, transgenerational ecological crises. Moreover, this approach necessitates reformulating the epistemology of fatwas by incorporating long-term ecological assessments into the normative data used in *istinbath* and *ijtihad jama'i*.

This article is limited by its normative and conceptual focus and does not empirically assess the implementation of ecocentric jurisprudence grounded in *maqasid al-shariah*.

within fatwa institutions, environmental regulation, ecological litigation, or natural resource governance. Future research should investigate the practical application of life-system-centred *maslahah* in areas such as deforestation, mining, water crises, climate change, biodiversity protection, and energy transition policies. Further studies may propose institutional models for ecological fatwas that facilitate collaboration among jurists, environmental experts, climatologists, conservation biologists, and policymakers. These efforts can support the development of ecocentric-oriented *maqasid* jurisprudence as both a theoretical advancement in Islamic legal thought and a normative and operational framework for ecological equity and the protection of future generations.

Author Contribution Statement

Author contributions to this article: Achmad Alfian Kurniawan contributed as the initiator and drafter of the article, as well as the data analyst and interpreter; Istiqomah Fadlillah contributed as a validator of the data and analysis results, collected the data, and critically revised the article. All authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of this work.

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