

## The Character of Ecological People in the Quran: A Thematic Interpretation Study

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### Abstrak

Hubungan yang selaras antara manusia (*insan*) dan lingkungannya dapat diibaratkan sebagai keterkaitan saling menguntungkan. Perspektif ini memandang manusia sebagai elemen tak terpisahkan dari lingkungannya, dengan penekanan pada kewajiban manusia untuk merawat serta memastikan kelangsungan hidup alam. Sebagai balasannya, alam akan menyediakan manfaat sebagai pemenuhan kebutuhan manusia. Tujuan dalam penelitian ini adalah mengaktualisasi ayat-ayat ekologi dalam kehidupan manusia dan menghasilkan proposisi insan teologis perspektif Alquran. Metode penelitian berikut adalah pendekatan kualitatif fokus pada studi kepustakaan (*library research*). Sebagai panduan dan referensinya menggunakan sumber data pustaka. Jika dilihat dari metode analisisnya, dapat diklasifikasikan sebagai penelitian deskriptif yang menguraikan informasi berdasarkan peristiwa dan fakta, serta mengaitkannya dengan penjelasan dari sumber-sumber terkait sesuai topik penelitian ini. pada konteks analisis penafsiran Alquran, berikut termasuk penelitian tafsir tematik atau *maudhûi*, dengan langkah yaitu mengumpulkan ayat-ayat Alquran yang berkaitan tentang manusia, lingkungan dan alam. Selanjutnya, memberikan interpretasi dan pemahaman yang terdapat dalam ayat-ayat yang dimaksud melalui penerapan berbagai sumber tafsir kontemporer yang disatukan dengan sumber-sumber lainnya. Penelitian ini menghasilkan sebuah proposisi karakter *insan* ekologis dalam Alquran yang meliputi *Khalifah*, *Hikmah* dan *Mizan*. Demikianlah tiga hal saling berkaitan untuk terciptanya karakter insan *rahmatan li al 'alamin*.

**Kata Kunci:** *Alquran; Insan Ekologis; Karakter; Konsep*

### Abstract

The harmonious relationship between humans and their environment can be likened to a mutually beneficial relationship. This perspective views humans as an inseparable element of their environment, with an emphasis on the human obligation to care for and ensure the survival of nature. In return, nature will provide benefits to fulfil human needs. This research aims to actualise ecological verses in human life and produce the proposition of theological insanity from the perspective of the Quran. The following research method is a qualitative approach focusing on library research. As a guide and reference, it uses library data sources. When viewed from the method of analysis, it can be classified as descriptive research that describes information based on events and facts and relates it to explanations from related sources according to the topic of this research. In analysing Quranic interpretation, the following includes thematic or *maudhûi* interpretation research, with steps, namely collecting Quranic verses related to humans, the environment and nature. Furthermore, it provides interpretation and understanding of the verses in question through the application of various contemporary interpretation sources combined with other sources. This research produces a proposition of ecological human character in the Quran, which includes *Khalifah*, *Hikmah*, and *Mizan*. Thus, three things are interrelated to create the character of the *rahmatan li al 'alamin* people.

**Keywords:** *Alquran; Character; Ecological Human*

## INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have been one of the long-standing problems faced by human civilisation. For a long time, humans have relied on natural resources for survival and progress. However, along with the advancement of science and technology, the negative impact on the environment is becoming greater due to the lack of utilisation and wise management, resulting in environmental damage. Environmental damage is caused by two main factors, namely natural events or events and human actions (Dinda Riskanita, 2019). Some of the causes of environmental damage caused by humans include forest destruction, forest conversion, mining activities, air, water, and soil pollution (Dinda Riskanita, 2019) (Kirkpatrick-Jung & Riches, 2020).

Humans (people) and the environment have a mutually beneficial relationship. This view sees humans as an inseparable element of their environment, emphasising the human obligation to care for and ensure nature's survival. In return, nature will provide benefits to fulfil human needs. The Qur'an provides a strict explanation for humans not to do damage on earth and maintain the balance of nature that He has created. Islam teaches that humans have the responsibility to protect and preserve the environment, not destroy it. Surah Al-A'raf (7:56) states:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ حَوْفًا وَقَطْمًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*“And you shall not make corruption in the earth after its reformation”* (Lajnah Pentashih Alquran Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2020)

This verse highlights humans' responsibility to maintain the earth's balance and harmony, avoiding actions that lead to corruption and destruction. Furthermore, the Quran promotes the concept of sustainable development, aiming to fulfil humanity's current needs without neglecting to provide for future generations. (Eka Mulyo Yunus, Andika Andika, Ahmad Yani, Muria Khusnun Nisa, 2021).

Maintaining a sustainable development environment based on environmentally friendly religious and ecological awareness can improve human social and economic welfare (Affandi et al., 2022). Therefore, it requires awareness and action from all parties, including the government, society, and the industrial sector.

Understanding the character of an ecological person requires a comprehensive analysis of the teachings of the Quran. Interpretations of the Quran on the environment and the role of

humans as guardians of the earth can enrich academic discussions on the relationship between religion and the environment, contributing to sustainability solutions based on theological principles.

Research by Ahmad Zainal Abidin and Fahmi Muhammad (2020) on Ecological Interpretation and Environmental Problematics (Comparative Study of Mujiyono Abdillah and Mudhofir Abdullah's Interpretation of Verses on the Environment) concluded that ecological interpretation is used by Mujiyono Abdillah as a basis for building the concept of eco-theology as a solution to environmental problems (Abidin & Muhammad, 2020). Mudhofir Abdullah also uses ecological interpretation to build the concept of eco-syariah as a solution to environmental problems.

Research by Febri Hijroh Mukhlis (2022) on the Ecological Paradigm in Quranic Interpretation: A Thematic-Contextual Study concluded that the Quran is very concerned about the balance of nature. First, the verses in the Quran describe how the universe was created. Second, the Quran explains that human intervention is needed to maintain the balance of nature. Therefore, the Quran says humans should care for and preserve their environment (Mukhlis, 2022).

Umami Bashyroh and Abdullah Mahmud (2021), in a study, explain Ecological Balance in Tafsir Al-Misbah (Analytical Study of Man's Role in the Environment) that according to Quraysh Shihab, ecological balance means enforcing justice in all aspects, such as the preparation of regulations and sources of law; prohibiting unjust acts, such as unbalanced scales, taking property that does not belong to him in the wrong way, and using natural resources excessively, to maintain harmony and avoid Israf (excessive use of natural resources) (Umami Bashyroh, 2021).

More specifically, this research will provide an essential description of the character of ecological people by paying attention to various views of the mufassir. In the relationship between humans, nature, and the environment, there are essential roles that humans must own to realise better survival and be friendly to nature and the environment. The purpose of this research is to actualise ecological verses in human life and produce a proposition of the character of ecological people in the Quran that can contribute to realising a life that is *Rahmatul lil 'alamin*.

## METHOD

In this research, the author uses a qualitative library research method, with library data sources as guides and references (Sugiyono, 2016). In the context of analyzing the interpretation of the Qur'an, this type of research belongs to the category of *maudhûi* interpretation, which is carried out by collecting verses of the Qur'an related to humans, nature, and the environment. Furthermore, it provides interpretations and explanations in these verses by using various contemporary interpretation sources combined with other sources.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An ecological person is a character that describes humans as part of an integral ecosystem and has a mandate to maintain the balance and sustainability of the environment. In the literal sense, ecology is defined as the study of the life of organisms in their environment or the study of the living environment of organisms (Soeryo Adi Wibowo, 2007). In this context, an ecological person refers to a human character who lives in an interdependent relationship with the environment in which he lives. According to the Islamic ecological perspective, humans are considered *khalifahs* or representatives of God who are responsible for the welfare of all life on earth (Watsiqotul, Sunardi, 2018). The relationship between humans and the environment is seen as a bond determined and regulated by God (Watsiqotul, Sunardi, 2018). Humans must protect and preserve nature (ecosystems) in their character as ecological beings. Human activities that are not environmentally friendly, such as intensive exploitation of natural resources, can cause global temperature rise, ecosystem degradation, and overexploitation of natural resources (Suansar Khatib, 2020).

Within the framework of Indonesian environmental law, environmental management aims to achieve harmony and balance between humans and the environment (Muhammad Alrizky Ekiawan, 2023). The expected goal is to be an environmental person who has the attitude and action to protect and improve the environment. As conveyed in the Indonesian Environmental Law Number 23 of 1997, humans have the most significant ethical obligations and responsibilities towards the environment compared to other creatures, including the obligation to improve the welfare of living things and themselves.

The Quran describes the Islamic view of human character as an ecological person, stating that humans have a role and function on this earth to recognise the values of nature and maintain the balance of the ecosystem. In the Islamic view, human wisdom and understanding

of the universe is a prerequisite for being an ecological person responsible for the environment. The character of an ecological person in the Quran is described as follows:

### Khalifah Character

The responsibility for the sustainability of ecosystems lies with humans, who were created as God's representatives on earth, or as "khalifah" in the context of the Quran. Allah has equipped humans with the intellectual and spiritual potential to fulfill this role. The bond between humans and the environment is established and regulated by Allah. Humans have an essential position in the universe, and they must serve everything under their authority well and have a moral responsibility to protect it and sustain it. (Andini, 2022). Based on the ecological understanding and appreciation of "Khalifah", the relationship between humans and the environment is one of care, love, support and nurturing that allows all life to grow and flourish. As the Quran surah al Baqarah verse 30 explains:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً ۗ قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ اِنِّيْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

*"(Remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I want to make a caliph on earth." They said, "Do you intend to make one who will destroy and shed blood therein while we praise and sanctify your name?" He said, "I know what you do not know." (Lajnah Pentashih Alquran kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2020)*

Ibn Katsir argues that the term "khalifah" does not directly refer to the Prophet Adam but to the category of creatures called humans. Furthermore, it is explained in the book of his interpretation:

يَخْلُقْنِيْ فِى الْحُكْمِ بَيْنَ خَلْقِيْ, وَاِنَّ ذٰلِكَ الْخَلِيْفَةُ هُوَ اَدَمُ وَمَنْ قَامَ مَقَامَهُ فِى طَاعَةِ اللّٰهِ وَالْحُكْمِ وَ بِالْعَدْلِ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ

This means that the role assumed by humans as caliphs is as an extension of God to uphold justice and eliminate injustices that occur in the world. The relevance of this leadership task lies in the social nature of humans, where the goal is to realise justice in human life as a whole (Ibnu Katsir, 2000). Whereas in the book of interpretation, Mafatih al-ghaib interprets the word Caliph as an individual who takes over the responsibilities and roles previously carried

out by others, especially in replacing God's role in the world to uphold justice among intelligent beings (Fahrudin ar-Razy, 1981). Tafsir al-Maraghi interprets the term “Khalifah” by referring to Prophet Adam as a representation of the type of creature called human, who was responsible for replacing the previous creatures who inhabited the earth. Furthermore, Musthafa al-Maraghi explains that the caliphate given to humans is not limited to upholding law and justice among fellow human beings by selected people. However, the caliphate also includes the concept of individuals who are God's representatives to promote and manage the earth and its contents, including animals, plants, and the environment. This means that as a form of responsibility and service to God, humans are expected to use all the potential of nature or the cosmos for the purpose of filial piety (Musthafa Al-Maraghi, 1946). Based on some of the mufassir's interpretations above, it can be understood that the role of humans is as representatives of God on this earth to be able to uphold justice, balance and prosper the earth and its contents as a form of *Kidhmat* to God.

### Hikmah Character

Al Qurthubi explains that wisdom means a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and the ability to apply them correctly. Alqur'an letter al Baqaroh verse 129 explains:

رَبَّنَا وَإِنْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“Our Lord, send among them a Messenger from among them, who will recite to them Your verses, teach them the Book and Wisdom, and purify them. Indeed, You are the Mighty, the Wise.”

In the context of the environment, Hikmah can be interpreted as understanding and taking lessons from the universe that can be used as guidelines for maintaining and preserving the environment (Masturi, 2023). The concept of Tadabbur nature in Islam teaches humans to contemplate and understand the indications of Allah's glory manifested in all aspects of His creation (Encep, 2022). By engaging in nature Tadabbur, Muslims are expected to experience growth in gratitude, awe, humility and a more profound love for the power of God's creation. According to the Quranic perspective, environmental conservation holds deep meaning, reminding humans to maintain and preserve the environment (Karim, 2018). In this discussion, wisdom can be used to take appropriate action to prevent environmental damage. As the Quran Surah al Qasas verse 77 explains:



وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“And seek in what Allah has bestowed upon you (the reward) of the Hereafter, but do not forget your share in the world. And do unto others as Allah has done unto you, and do not cause corruption in the earth; for Allah loves not those who cause corruption” (Lajnah Pentashih Alquran Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2020).

Tafsir An-Nur explains that 'do good to Allah's creatures, as Allah has done good to you'. Therefore, support others with your wealth and deeds, face them with a clean face and interact with them well (Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000). According to the interpretation in tafsir Misbah, do not do damage in any form or any part of this earth. Indeed, Allah swt does not like the makers of damage (M. Quraish Shihab, 2012). Whereas in the interpretation of al Marāgī is do not fulfil all your desires by destroying the earth and doing harm to Allah's creation (Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāgī, n.d.). Another description explains not to let your zeal only contribute to causing destruction on earth and adversely affecting Allah's creation. Remember, Allah dislikes such destructive behaviour (Abdullah bin Muhammad bin ‘Abdurrahmān bin Ishāq Alu Syaikh., 2013).

The interpretation of the verse above shows that humans must have sufficient understanding and be able to learn lessons from all events that can cause damage on earth.

### Mizan Characters

The word Mizan is balance or scales, as 218 tis known that on the last day, humans will be shown their deeds while living in the world, and weighing good and bad deeds is called Yaumul Mizan.

Allah’s word in surah Ar-Rahman verse 7:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ

“ And He has exalted the heavens and created balance” (Kementerian Agama R.I, 2015)

Muhammad Husain Thabathaba’i’s interpretation explains that the meaning of lafadz mizan means balance and justice. The word balance means the middle between two opposing sides and does not tend to be one of them. Justice is an action that treats something in a balanced manner without taking sides or weighing 218 tis218 party.

In ecology, the concept of mizan shows that success in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem and using natural resources intelligently has a significant value. This can be done by taking actions that support the environment, such as reducing the use of plastic, conserving Indonesia, and sorting waste. By understanding the concept of Mizan in the context of nature, humans can play their role as Khalifah on earth with full awareness of their responsibilities to God, fellow humans and nature. When taking advantage of natural resources, humans must consider maintaining the balance of nature, environment and habitat without causing damage. This is in accordance with Allah's words in Q.S. al-Mulk verse 3:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفْوُتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ

(He also) created the seven heavens in layers. You will not see the slightest imbalance in the creation of the Merciful God. So, look once more! Do you see any flaws?(Lajnah Pentashih Alquran Indonesia Agama Republik Indonesia, 2020)

Based on this verse, it can be concluded that nature was created in harmony and balance to achieve its creation's purpose. Imbalance in the creation of nature can cause difficulties for the planet's inhabitants and can even lead to collisions between planets. In tafsir al misbah, 219 tis explained that living beings have a relationship of mutual influence between one entity and another, such as between humans and other living things, such as plants and animals, in the process of photosynthesis, can contribute to and influence the happiness of life on this planet (M. Quraish Shihab, 2005).

Therefore, how humans consume natural resources should not exceed reasonable needs, considering the sustainability of life, nature conservation, and ecosystem balance. In maintaining this natural balance, humans must also adopt a fair and moderate attitude and avoid hyperbolic behaviour. When a person behaves excessively, he tends to deviate, neglect, and be destructive. A fair, moderate and balanced attitude will help overcome various material and non-material challenges, including environmental issues and aspects of human life as a whole (Munawarah, Taufik Warman Mahfuzh, 2020). Therefore, how humans consume natural resources should not exceed reasonable needs, considering the sustainability of life, nature conservation, and ecosystem balance. In maintaining this natural balance, humans must adopt a fair and moderate attitude and avoid hyperbolic behaviour. When a person behaves excessively, he tends to deviate, neglect, and be destructive. A fair, moderate and balanced attitude will help overcome various material and non-material challenges, including environmental issues and aspects of human life as a whole (Yusuf Qardhawi, 2002). By



practising fairness and moderation, the balance Allah has established in an environment, life will be harmonious and ongoing.

This explanation aligns with Nelson Bock's view of doing justice to the environment, which he calls eco-justice. Llewellyn Leonard states similarly that justice is not only for humans and their needs for natural resources but also for nature by considering all risks of damage and preservation efforts. Social movements that support social justice can help the struggle to formulate forms of environmental justice and its applications. This aligns with the meaning of environmental justice, which emphasises the right to a safe and healthy environment for all people. (Llewellyn Leonard, 2018).

In thematic interpretations, the characters of man, such as Khalifah, Hikmah, and Mizan, have great relevance in contemporary life. These three concepts act as moral and ethical guidelines that can answer today's global challenges, ranging from environmental crises and social injustice to the demands of modernity. The implementation of these concepts requires us always to be aware of our responsibilities as caliphs on earth, act with wisdom (Hikmah), and maintain balance (Mizan) in all aspects of life.

Overall, the concepts of Khalifah, wisdom (Hikmah), and balance (Mizan) support each other in shaping character and guiding human behavior towards nature. Practicing these values daily is a form of worship and religious responsibility significant for Muslims.

## CONCLUSION

Tafsir Quran explains that ecological people are humans who are integral to the ecosystem and have a mandate to maintain its balance and sustainability. Human activities that are not environmentally friendly, such as intensive exploitation of natural resources, can cause a rise in the earth's surface temperature, damage to ecosystems, and overexploitation of natural resources.

The Quran provides a clear explanation regarding this matter so that a proposition can be made that the character of ecological people in the Quran includes the character of Khalifah, Hikmah, and Mizan. In the Khalifah character, humans are responsible for utilizing natural resources intelligently, maintaining the sustainability of the ecosystem, and preventing unnecessary damage. The character of wisdom shows the need for humans to have a high understanding and awareness of the use of nature. Moreover, the character of Mizan means maintaining a balance between human needs and the obligation to protect the environment and natural resources.

The study's limitations lie in the data collected from only a few verses, and mufassir is a study of interpretation that focuses on one method of interpretation, namely Thematic or Maudhui. Indeed, this research will be further developed in providing human ecological insights with further research that further explores the study of the Koran related to environmental verses, which are still rarely done for cooperation with scientists from the sciences related to ecology, cosmology, and biology to explore the dimensions of science in the verses of Kauniyah.

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