



Humans as Caliphs on Earth Environmental Responsibility in Islamic Perspective

Avif Alfiyah¹, Sri Yuliyawati^{1*}, Firda Utami²

¹ Tarbiyatut Tholabah Islamic Institute, Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia.

² Study of Qur'an and Tafsir, Postgraduate Islamic University of Mataram, Lombok, Indonesia.

Received: February 15, 2024

Revised: July 25, 2024

Accepted: August 20, 2024

Published: August 31, 2024

Corresponding Author:

Sri Yuliyawati

190601006.mhs@uinmataram.ac.id

DOI: [10.56566/jks.v1i2.243](https://doi.org/10.56566/jks.v1i2.243)

© 2024 The Authors. This open access article is distributed under a (CC-BY License)



Abstract: Human beings as caliphs (vicegerents) on earth is a concept derived from Islamic teachings. "Caliph" literally means "successor" or "representative." In this context, humans are seen as God's representatives on earth, entrusted with the responsibility to protect, care for, and wisely utilize natural resources and other living beings. As caliphs, humans have a moral and ethical responsibility to maintain ecosystem balance, preserve the environment, and sustainably manage natural resources. This includes protecting biodiversity, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and using natural resources responsibly for the common good and for future generations. This study uses a literature review (library research) method to explore and analyze the concept of caliphate in Islamic literature and its application in the context of environmental responsibility. The sources include the Qur'an, hadiths, and scholarly works related to ecology and environmental ethics from an Islamic perspective. In Islam, humans are given the freedom to use and benefit from everything on earth. However, this freedom must be exercised with full responsibility and awareness of its impact on nature and other living beings. Awareness of their role as caliphs also encourages moral and spiritual development, as humans are expected to act justly, wisely, and with full responsibility in carrying out this role. By understanding themselves as caliphs on earth, humans are expected to create harmony between personal interests, social interests, and environmental sustainability, thus achieving balance and continuity of life on this planet.

Keywords: Caliph; Earth environmental; Humans; Islamic perspective

Introduction

In Islamic teachings, the importance of preserving nature is highly encouraged and emphasized. Many verses in the Qur'an instruct humans to conserve and manage the environment for the sake of sustaining life. Therefore, humans must be sensitive to environmental issues. According to Nasr, the relationship between Islam and the concept of ecology shows that the environmental crisis faced by humanity is largely caused by modern humans' tendency to neglect their spirituality (Abidin & Muhammad, 2020).

The rapid advancement of technology has made it easier for modern humans to exploit nature without considering its spiritual aspects. According to Nasr, spirituality plays a crucial role in human life in preserving the earth and its contents. Environmental

degradation and worsening natural conditions are not caused by the aging of natural processes, but rather by human actions that often justify exploitation, yet in reality, frequently neglect the environmental damage caused (Fadjar, 2005).

Humans were created by Allah SWT on earth as caliphs (leaders), giving them a central role in every effort of development. This has been widely proven and can be observed in every organizational step. Leadership plays a crucial role and often becomes the benchmark in determining the success or failure of an organization. In understanding the meaning and essence of leadership, the dimension of leadership is, in fact, very broad and involves various components that influence each other (Sidiq, 2014).

Humans, as one of God's creations on earth, play an important role in fulfilling their function as caliphs on

How to Cite:

Alfyah, A., Utami, F., & Utami, F. (2024). Humans as Caliphs on Earth Environmental Responsibility in Islamic Perspective. *Jurnal Kajian Islam*, 1(2), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.56566/jks.v1i2.243>

earth. Allah SWT not only regulates aspects of life related to worship of Him but also guides how humans should carry out their role as caliphs on earth, with the aim of achieving both worldly and eternal salvation (Haron et al., 2020).

Method

Based on the issues raised, this research falls under qualitative research and, in terms of the data collected, is classified as library research. All data used comes from written materials such as books, manuscripts, documents, and the Qur'an. The materials reviewed are related to Qur'anic sciences and exegesis, particularly concerning brotherhood.

The data analysis techniques used by the researchers to obtain accurate data include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Thus, brotherhood from the perspective of the Qur'an, examined through Qur'anic verses, can be identified as precise and objective research findings (Sugiyono, 2010).

Result and Discussion

Concept and Definition of Leadership

The concept of leadership involves a range of characteristics, actions, and traits required to guide, motivate, and inspire others to achieve common goals. It is a broad and complex area within the study of management and psychology, with various definitions evolving over time. However, generally, some key concepts related to leadership include:

Vision and Goals: A leader must have a clear vision of the direction they want to achieve and the goals they wish to attain. This vision should be able to inspire and motivate others to work towards a common objective (Northouse, 2021). **Ability to Influence:** Leaders must have the ability to influence others, whether through effective communication, a charismatic personality, or adequate knowledge and skills (Yukl, 2006). **Fair and Ethical Leadership:** Good leadership should be based on principles of ethics and fairness. Leaders must act with integrity and honesty, treat everyone fairly, and be accountable for their decisions and actions (Kartono, 2015). **Skills in Building Relationships:** Effective leaders must have the skills to build strong relationships with others. This includes the ability to listen well, understand others' needs and concerns, and provide the necessary support and recognition (Siagian, 1991).

Ability to Manage Conflict: Conflict is a natural part of organizational life, and good leaders must have the ability to manage conflicts wisely and effectively so that it does not disrupt progress toward common goals (Kartono, 2015). **Ability to Take Risks and Make Decisions:** Leaders are often faced with situations that

require taking risks and making difficult decisions. The ability to evaluate risks, analyze information carefully, and make the right decisions is an important aspect of leadership (Siagian, 1991).

Definition of Leadership: The definition of leadership can vary depending on the context and perspective used. However, in general, leadership is often viewed as the process of directing and influencing the behavior of individuals or groups to achieve specific goals (Kartono, 2015).

Interpretation of the Ministry of Religion

The Tafsir *Departemen Agama / Kementerian Agama Indonesia*, often referred to as "Tafsir Kemenag," is an interpretative effort of the Qur'an carried out by scholars and Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia working at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They interpret Qur'anic verses while considering the cultural, historical, and social context of Indonesian society.

Regarding the interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 30, which discusses the story of the creation of man and Adam's role as the vicegerent (khalifah) on Earth, there may be various approaches taken by Indonesian scholars and intellectuals. However, in general, they might highlight several key points: **vicegerent on Earth:** Emphasis on Adam's role as the vicegerent on Earth, entrusted with the responsibility to maintain and manage the universe with responsibility and justice; **role of Humans in the Universe:** Understanding the relationship between humans and the universe, acknowledging that humans are entrusted by Allah to be stewards and caretakers of the Earth, and to use it wisely; **obedience and Loyalty to Allah:** The importance of human obedience and loyalty to Allah in fulfilling the role of vicegerent, and its implications for individual and societal life; **social and Cultural Context:** Interpretation may also consider the social and cultural context of Indonesian society in understanding the message of the Qur'an, as well as its implications for religious practices and daily life; and **respect for Humanity:** The importance of respecting human dignity, as in the Qur'an, humans are considered vicegerents on Earth entrusted by Allah. Of course, the approach and emphasis in this interpretation may vary depending on the viewpoint and methodology of interpretation used by each scholar and scholar.

Human Existence as Caliph

The existence of humans as vicegerents refers to the concept in Islam that depicts humans as representatives or leaders on Earth. The term "khalifah" originates from the Arabic language, meaning successor or representative. This concept emphasizes humans' responsibility to manage and maintain the universe and

all creatures within it in accordance with religious teachings (Muhamad et al., 2020).

As vicegerents, humans have moral and ethical responsibilities to act as stewards and guardians of the Earth, use natural resources wisely, and treat other beings with justice and compassion. This concept also highlights the importance of performing religious duties, such as worshiping Allah, doing good deeds, and administering justice in society.

In this context, the existence of humans as vicegerents not only emphasizes physical presence in this world but also the profound meaning of the moral and spiritual responsibilities inherent in the position of humans as leaders on Earth. In Islam, humans are granted a special status as leaders on Earth. This concept is reflected in various Qur'anic verses and Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). One frequently cited verse is Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 30, where Allah SWT says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِي الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ اِنِّيْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ {۳۰}

"Remember when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am placing a vicegerent on Earth.' They said, 'Will You place on it one who will cause corruption therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?' Allah said, 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know.'"

This verse emphasizes that Allah SWT has appointed humans as stewards or leaders (khalifah) on earth. As leaders, humans bear great responsibility for managing and safeguarding the universe and all creatures within it in the best possible way.

In Islamic teachings, a leader or khalifah must govern with justice, wisdom, and in accordance with religious principles. They are responsible for upholding justice, ensuring security, and promoting the welfare of humankind. Moreover, they have moral and ethical obligations to preserve the natural environment and maintain the balance of ecosystems.

Thus, the concept of humans as leaders in Islam underscores the importance of fulfilling leadership duties properly, in line with religious teachings and the moral principles bestowed by Allah SWT.

Understanding the Meaning of Caliph

Based on the understanding of the term ****khalifah**** (caliph) that has been presented, humans, as khalifah, have the role of upholding and implementing Allah's laws on earth. This means that humans act as managers and regulators of life on earth by applying the laws of Allah, which are essentially His will. From this, it can be understood that humans, as Allah's khalifah, are given

power as a means to carry out His commands (Rahim, 2012).

The concept of khalifah involves three interconnected elements. First, humans as khalifah. A khalifah is a servant of Allah who receives the mandate to act as executor, regulator, policymaker, and enforcer of laws in accordance with Allah's will and the aspirations of those who appoint him as khalifah. Second, the earth as the territory or platform for executing the caliphate. The earth provides various potentials needed by humans to achieve prosperity, thus making the khalifah responsible for managing and cultivating the earth and its resources for the welfare of the people. Third, the relationship between the bearer of authority (humans) with the territory (earth) and with the giver of authority (Allah) as the ****mustakhlif**** (Shihab, 2007).

Leadership Models in Islam

The Qur'an emphasizes leadership principles such as amanah (trustworthiness), justice, syura (consultation), and ****amr bi al-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar**** (enjoining good and forbidding evil). In the Contemporary Dictionary (al-'Ashr), amanah is defined as honesty and trustworthiness (something that can be trusted). Amanah is also one of the essential attributes of the Prophet. There is a saying, "authority is a trust, and therefore it must be carried out with complete trust." Leadership Based on Obedience to Allah: The ideal leader in Islam is someone who is obedient to the commands of Allah SWT and fulfills their leadership duties by using Islamic teachings as the primary guide (Mutalib et al., 2022).

Ustice: Justice is the core principle in Islamic leadership. An ideal leader must treat everyone fairly, regardless of differences in ethnicity, religion, or social status; Simplicity: An ideal leader in Islam should live a modest lifestyle and avoid excessive luxury. They should set an example for their community in living a simple and sincere life; Consultation (Shura): An ideal Islamic leader should practice the principle of shura, or consultation, in decision-making. They must listen to the opinions and input of experts and the people before making important decisions; Servant Leadership: An ideal leader in Islam should view leadership as a form of service to the community, rather than a position of power for personal or group benefit; Inspirational Leadership: An ideal leader in Islam should be a source of inspiration for their community. They should possess integrity, intelligence, and a strong personality to motivate those around them; Leadership that Brings Mercy: An ideal Islamic leader is one who brings benefit and mercy to their community. They must strive to improve the welfare of the people and address social and economic conditions; and Responsible Leadership: An

ideal leader in Islam must be accountable for their duties and decisions. They should be open to criticism and accountable for their actions before Allah SWT and the community.

Based on the criteria, requirements, and qualities that a leader must possess, it is expected that leaders can address the various problems increasingly burdening the earth. Observing various environmental destruction cases in Indonesia, it is evident that the main actors behind these cases are large foreign corporations or joint ventures between foreign companies and major domestic companies. This is a consequence of the enactment of Law No. 3 of 1967 on Foreign Investment. According to Article 6 of the law, restrictions on foreign capital only apply to businesses that are crucial to the state and directly impact the livelihoods of the people, such as shipping, aviation, and the like. Fields that play an important role in national defense, such as the production of weapons, machinery, explosives, and war equipment, are entirely prohibited from foreign ownership.

The Concept of the Caliph in the Perspective of the Qur'an

The concept of the caliph from the perspective of Quraish Shihab, a prominent Muslim scholar and intellectual from Indonesia, can be understood from his views on Islamic teachings as a whole. Quraish Shihab tends to prioritize an inclusive and holistic understanding of Islam, emphasizing the importance of justice, peace, and prosperity within the framework of Islamic leadership. Here are some key points in Quraish Shihab's thinking about the concept of the caliph.

Just Leadership: Quraish Shihab emphasizes that a khalifah must lead with justice, adhering to Islamic principles that prioritize fairness for all individuals, regardless of background or social status. Justice is seen as a core value in Islamic governance, ensuring equality and protection of rights across society; **Ensuring the Welfare of the Community:** In Quraish Shihab's view, the khalifah is responsible for the overall welfare of the Muslim community. This includes ensuring the equitable distribution of wealth and resources, as well as providing adequate public services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The khalifah must ensure that societal well-being is at the forefront of governance efforts, promoting both material and spiritual prosperity. **Protection of Human Rights:** Quraish Shihab views that the caliph must protect human rights and respect individual freedom within the limits set by Islamic teachings. **Interfaith Partnership and Dialogue:** Quraish Shihab advocates for an inclusive approach to the role of khalifah, promoting interfaith dialogue and partnerships with non-Muslim communities to foster peace and cooperation. He believes that mutual understanding and collaboration between different

religious groups are essential for maintaining social harmony and collective progress; **Consensus-Based Leadership:** Quraish Shihab may also consider the concept of consensus-based leadership within the context of the khalifah. In this model, significant decisions are made through consultation (shura) with leaders and members of the community. This approach ensures that the voices and perspectives of the people are considered, aligning leadership with the principles of collective wisdom and shared responsibility.

Overall, Quraish Shihab's view of the concept of the caliph tends to reflect universal Islamic values such as justice, the welfare of the people, and peace, while acknowledging the complexities and challenges of the modern era.

Ecology in Islamic Perspective

The Quran is a source of unlimited knowledge. Studying the Quran is a must, both in intracurricular and extracurricular learning (Manik, 2023). This book is a guide whose truth can be proven through science, science, and technology. The Quran and hadith are an important part of Islamic Religious Education lessons (Komariah & Nihayah, 2023).

Capra calls ecology the science that studies the relationships that connect all members of the earth's household. Meanwhile, Sumat Madjaya calls ecology the science that studies the relationship between living things and their environment as a household. Although the definitions are different, the two are not contradictory (Pratiwi et al., 2023). So, ecology is the study of the reciprocal relationship between living things and their environment.

Ecology and environment are different concepts. Harum M. Husein states that the environment is a space inhabited by living things and non-living things that influence each other. Ecology studies species, ecosystems, and habitats, while the environment includes human social, economic, and material life.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّمٌ أَمْثَالِكُمْ
مَا فَرَقْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ {٣٨}

There is not a single animal (existing) on the earth or a bird that flies with its two wings, but all are people (also) like you. There is nothing that We have left out in the book, then to their Lord they will be gathered.

Abdillah (2001) stated that this verse contains an implied meaning that all communities in the ecosystem, including humans, flora, and fauna, are part of one family (Amaruddin & Wahidi, 2022). From this interpretation, it can be reflected that in ecology, humans are part of nature and are an integral component of the

ecosystem. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Qur'an views ecology as a complex ecosystem consisting of human, flora, and fauna communities. All elements in this ecosystem are interconnected and related; damage to one part will have an impact on the entire ecosystem. Although humans have intelligence and abilities, they are still part of the environment and have no right to exploit nature. All components of the environment have equal ecological rights.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Qur'an and Hadith provide a strong foundation for humans as leaders on earth, with the responsibility to protect, care for, and use natural resources and other living things wisely. Studying the Qur'an is essential to understanding this role, whether through formal or informal learning, because this book provides guidance whose truth can be proven by science, science, and technology. Ecology, as the study of the reciprocal relationship between living things and their environment, is recognized in Islam as part of human responsibility. The Qur'an teaches that all communities in the ecosystem—humans, flora, and fauna—are one interdependent family. Damage to one part of the ecosystem will affect the whole, so humans must act as guardians of the environment fairly and wisely, without the right to exploit nature. All components of the environment have equal ecological rights, and human well-being depends on the harmony and balance of the ecosystem. By understanding their role as leaders on earth, humans are expected to be able to create harmony between personal, social, and environmental interests, for the sake of sustainability and common welfare and for future generations.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Mr. Syamsu Syauqani, Lc. MA. as the lecturer of the history of the Qur'an and Tafsir Nusantara course for his dedication in the lecture process, may you always get the love and pleasure of Allah SWT.

Author Contributions

All authors carried out each stage cooperatively until this article was completed.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

References

- Abdillah, M. (2001). *Agama ramah lingkungan: perspektif al-Quran*. Paramadina.
- Abidin, A. Z., & Muhammad, F. (2020). Tafsir Ekologis Dan Problematika Lingkungan:(Studi Komparatif Penafsiran Mujiyono Abdillah Dan Mudhofir Abdullah Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Tentang Lingkungan). *Qof: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 4(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v4i1.1990>
- Amaruddin, A., & Wahidi, R. (2022). Wawasan Al-Qur'an Tentang Ekologi. *SYAHADAH: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Keislaman*, 10(1). Retrieved from <http://ejournal.fiaiunisi.ac.id/index.php/syahadah/article/view/552>
- Fadjar, A. M. (2005). *Holistika pemikiran pendidikan*. UIN-Maliki Press.
- Haron, H., Jamil, N. N., & Ramli, N. M. (2020). Western and Islamic values and ethics: Are they different? *Journal of Governance and Integrity*, 4(1), 12-28. <https://doi.org/10.15282/jgi.4.1.2020.5609>
- Kartono, K. (2015). *Pemimpin dan Kepemimpinan Apakah Kepemimpinan Abnormal Itu?* Depok: PT Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Komariah, N., & Nihayah, I. (2023). Improving the personality character of students through learning Islamic religious education. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*, 2(1), 65-77. <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i1.15>
- Manik, W. (2023). Reinterpretasi Ayat-Ayat Ekologi Dalam Al-Qur'an: Perumusan Rencana Aksi Berbasis Konservasi Lingkungan, Masyarakat Cerdas Berkehidupan. *Jurnal Al-Fatih*, 6(2), 165-185. <https://doi.org/10.61082/alfatih.v6i2.275>
- Muhamad, A., Syihab, A. H., & Ibrahim, A. H. (2020). Preserving human--nature's interaction for sustainability: Quran and Sunnah perspective. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 26(2), 1053-1066. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-020-00192-7>
- Mutalib, M. A., Rafiki, A., & Razali, W. M. F. A. W. (2022). *Principles and practice of Islamic leadership*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0908-5>
- Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage publications.
- Pratiwi, N., Mustafa, M., & others. (2023). Analisis Perspektif Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi dan Seyyed Hossein Nasr tentang Islam dan Sains. *Al-Ubudiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam*, 4(1), 69-77. <https://doi.org/10.55623/au.v4i1.167>
- Rahim, A. (2012). Khalifah dan Khilafah Menurut Alquran. *HUNAFA: Jurnal Studia Islamika*, 9(1), 19-53. Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/229979089.pdf>
- Shihab, M. Q. (2007). *"Membumikan" Al-Quran: fungsi dan peran wahyu dalam kehidupan masyarakat*. Bandung: Mizan Pustaka.
- Siagian, S. P. (1991). *Teori dan praktek kepemimpinan*.

Rineka Cipta.

Sidiq, U. (2014). Kepemimpinan Dalam Islam: Kajian Tematik Dalam Al-Quran Dan Hadits. *Dialogia*, 12(1).

<https://doi.org/10.21154/dialogia.v12i1.305>

Sugiyono, S. (2010). Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D. In *Alfabeta Bandung*.

Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in Organizations*. Pearson Education India.