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The Quranic Model in Recreating the Ecological Circular Economy: From the Mīzān of Creation to the Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah

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ABSTRACT

SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: This study addresses the sustainability challenges of the linear "take–make–dispose" economy and examines how core Quranic principles—such as mīzān (balance), khilāfah (stewardship), and amānah (trusteeship)—can provide a comprehensive framework for sustainability, within which the circular economy can be situated.

METHOD & FINDING: Using an interdisciplinary methodology grounded in Quranic studies and sustainability analysis, this research analyzes key Quranic concepts and maps them onto circular economy principles such as regeneration, recycling, and reuse. The findings reveal that while circular economy mechanisms align with these principles, they function primarily as operational tools within a broader Quranic framework. The Quran not only promotes balance, justice, and environmental stewardship but also establishes binding ethical constraints—such as the prohibition of *isrāf* (wastefulness) and *fasād* (corruption)—which extend beyond the technical scope of circular economy models.

CONCLUSION: The study concludes that the Quranic economic framework provides a more comprehensive basis for sustainability than the circular economy alone. Circular economy principles operate effectively as practical tools within this broader ethical system, which integrates environmental protection with social justice and intergenerational responsibility.

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Introduction

In the contemporary world, environmental, economic, and social crises have reached unprecedented levels, largely driven by the dominance of a linear economic system based on the logic of "extract, produce, consume, and discard" (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Kirchherr et al., 2023). This linear approach has led to rapid depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation, increased pollutants, and disruption of ecological balance, threatening not only the stability of ecosystems but also the social and economic sustainability of human societies. The urgency of addressing these challenges has stimulated global interest in alternative models of production and consumption, among which the circular economy has emerged as a prominent framework. The circular economy seeks to minimize waste, keep materials in continuous use, and regenerate natural systems, aiming to establish a balanced, restorative relationship between economic activities and the environment (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015). Countries such as China and members of the European Union have increasingly adopted policies and strategies based on circular economy principles, reflecting a global recognition of the need for sustainable and regenerative economic systems.

Despite the technical and policy advancements in circular economy practice, there remains a critical gap in addressing the ethical and spiritual dimensions of resource use. Islamic teachings, particularly those rooted in the Quran , offer a profound and comprehensive ethical foundation for understanding sustainability and the human–nature relationship. The Quran emphasizes principles such as mīzān (balance), qisṭ (justice), oderation in consumption, and the preservation of the earth as a divine amānah (trust). Humans are portrayed as khalīfah (vicegerents) on earth, entrusted with the responsibility of cultivating, managing, and protecting natural resources while preventing fasād (corruption) and ensuring the sustainability of resources for present and future generations (Quran , 2:30; Quran , 7:56). In this framework, ownership is not absolute but fiduciary; economic activity must align with divine order, ecological balance, and social justice (Javādī Āmolī, 2009; Özdemir, 2008).

Key Quranic concepts such as mīzān, isrāf, amānah, and fasād fī al-arḍ resonate strongly with the circular economy, sharing a common principle of maintaining balance, conserving resources, and regenerating natural cycles (Khateeb et al., 2021).

While studies on circular economy in Western literature have grown rapidly (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Ghisellini et al., 2016; Nargotra et al., 2024), and Islamic environmental ethics has been increasingly explored (Ali & Jumat, 2021), a comprehensive hierarchical framework that systematically integrates Quranic ethical foundations, operational circular economy mechanisms, and Islamic institutional instruments remains underdeveloped. Most existing studies either focus exclusively on ethical-exegetical perspectives or consider

the circular economy as a technical and imported framework, without leveraging the inherent capacities of the Islamic economic system for sustainability, justice, and resource regeneration. This gap motivates the current study to develop a Quranic Circular Economy Model, which integrates foundational concepts from the Quran with practical circular economy mechanisms, creating a hierarchical framework that operationalizes sustainability, justice, and intergenerational equity.

The proposed model positions the Quranic ethical system at the highest level, defining the normative principles for human interaction with nature. Core concepts—including mīzān, khilāfah, amānah, and the prohibition of isrāf and fasād —establish a binding ethical and spiritual structure governing all economic and social behavior. The intermediate level represents the circular economy itself as an operational subsystem, encompassing principles of reduction, reuse, recycling, regeneration, and design for circularity, which serve as practical mechanisms through which Quranic imperatives are realized in material systems. At the third level, Islamic financial and social instruments—including zakāt (alms), waqf (endowment), green sukūk (Islamic bonds), ṣadaqah (voluntary charity), and takāful (Islamic insurance)—function as enablers that translate ethical imperatives and circular mechanisms into real economic and social outcomes. Together, these three levels form a comprehensive, Quran -based framework that can guide the design and implementation of sustainable economic systems while addressing ecological, ethical, social, and intergenerational concerns (Ali & Jumat, 2021; Khateeb et al., 2021).

By integrating Quranic teachings with circular economy principles, the model provides a culturally grounded, ethically robust, and operationally feasible alternative to conventional linear economic systems. It addresses the limitations of purely technical or Western-centric circular economy models, emphasizing that sustainability is not solely a matter of resource efficiency but also involves moral responsibility, justice, and divine accountability. This study seeks to demonstrate that an Islamic circular economy, rooted in Quranic ethics, can offer effective solutions to contemporary environmental crises, restore the human–nature relationship, and provide practical pathways for sustainable development through the use of financial, social, and policy instruments.

Notably, the term "Quranic Economy" in this study does not denote a separate economic discipline distinct from Islamic Economics. Rather, it refers to the normative layer of economic guidance derived directly from Quranic principles governing human interaction with resources, society, and the natural environment. While Islamic Economics encompasses broader jurisprudential, institutional, and market-related discussions, the Quranic Economy refers specifically to the foundational ethical framework established by concepts such as including mīzān, khilāfah, amānah, and the prohibition of isrāf and fasād. In this sense, Quranic Economy constitutes a foundational normative subset of Islamic Economics and simultaneously overlaps with Islamic environmental ethics and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah (objectives of Islamic law).

Conceptual Framework

1. Ecology

Ecology is defined as "the science of the study of interrelationships between living organisms and their environment" (Chapman, 1999, p. 6). This discipline emphasizes understanding the structure, function, and dynamics of natural systems, including energy flow and biogeochemical cycles (Kirchherr & Hartley, 2025, p. 14). Within this study, ecology is extended through a Quranic perspective, linking it to the divine order of creation. The Quran affirms the existence of a precise and niẓām aḥsan (wise system) in which every part of creation has a specific purpose and defined relationships with other parts (Quran , 55:4–5). Consequently, ecology in this research is understood as the study of the laws governing the single, divinely ordained system, highlighting balance, harmony, and the interconnectedness of all life.

2. Circular Economy

The circular economy is a contemporary economic model that aims to redesign production, consumption, and distribution processes so that natural resources remain continuously in the economic cycle (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017, p. 7). It emphasizes the reuse, recycling, redesign, repurposing, remanufacturing, repair, refurbishment, and recovery of materials, water, and nutrients to minimize waste and conserve resources (de Oliveira et al., 2025, pp. 1–4; Ghisellini et al., 2016, pp. 1–10). Unlike the linear "take–make–dispose" model, circular economy strategies aim for continuous regeneration of resources while reducing environmental pollution. Within this study, circular economy principles are interpreted in light of Quranic teachings, showing that reducing waste, regenerating resources, and maintaining ecological cycles align with divine guidance on justice, moderation, and balance.

3. Mīzān

Mīzān (balance) is a central Quranic concept representing balance, justice, and proportion in creation and human activity. The Quran states: "*He raised the heaven and set up the balance, so that you should not transgress the measure*" (Quran , 55:7). This concept applies both to cosmic order and human economic and ecological behavior (Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, 1987, Vol. 28, p. 18; Modarresi, 1998, Vol. 14, p. 288). In the context of a circular economy, mīzān corresponds to systemic equilibrium, where overexploitation or waste disrupts the balance and constitutes transgression against divine law. It forms the theoretical foundation for aligning human economic activities with the natural regenerative cycles and ethical sustainability promoted in Islamic teachings (Khateeb, Jumat, & Khamis, 2021, p. 3).

4. Khilāfah and Amānah

Khilāfah (stewardship) refers to the human role as God's representative on earth, entrusted with cultivating, managing, and protecting natural resources responsibly.

Amānah (trusteeship) complements this concept as a fiduciary responsibility rather than absolute ownership (Javādī Āmolī, 2009, p. 28; Özdemir, 2008). The Quran states: "*Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains*" (Quran , 33:72), emphasizing moral, social,

and ecological accountability. Within the proposed Quranic Circular Economy Model, khilāfah and amānah establish the ethical framework guiding resource use, regeneration, and intergenerational justice. Economic and environmental decisions are therefore seen as duties to maintain mīzān and prevent fasād fī al-arḍ, ensuring the sustainability of natural and human systems.

Literature Review

The circular economy (CE) has emerged as an important sustainability paradigm in response to the environmental and resource limitations associated with linear production and consumption systems. Geissdoerfer et al. (2017), in The Circular Economy—A New Sustainability Paradigm? examined the conceptual relationship between CE and sustainability and highlighted the need for greater conceptual clarity regarding their similarities and differences. Ghisellini, Cialani, and Ulgiati (2016), in A Review on Circular Economy: The Expected Transition to a Balanced Interplay of Environmental and Economic Systems, reviewed the development, principles, implementation levels, and challenges of CE, emphasizing the transition toward closed-loop production and more efficient resource use. At the operational level, Bocken et al. (2016), in Product Design and Business Model Strategies for a Circular Economy, developed strategies for slowing, closing, and narrowing resource loops through product design and business-model innovation. These studies collectively establish the technical, organizational, and conceptual foundations of contemporary CE research. More recent scholarship has also questioned how the transition toward CE should be understood. Kirchherr and Hartley (2025), in Is Circular Economy a Failing Sustainability Paradigm? Not Necessarily, examine concerns regarding the relatively slow implementation of CE and argue that incrementalism is a fundamental characteristic of the paradigm rather than necessarily evidence of its failure. Their analysis indicates that CE should be examined not only through its technical mechanisms but also through the institutional, policy, economic, and stakeholder contexts within which circular transitions occur.

An Islamic perspective provides an additional normative dimension to this discussion. Ali and Jumat (2021), in the chapter Islamic Finance and Circular Economy: An Introduction, examine the relationship between Islamic finance and CE and introduce the broader convergence of circular economy, Islamic economics, Islamic finance, sustainability, and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah (objectives of Islamic law). Khateeb, Jumat, and Khamis (2021), in Islamic Perspective on Circular Economy, explicitly examine CE in relation to Islamic economic principles and devote part of their analysis to the relationship between circular economy, the Quran , Sunnah, and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah. These studies demonstrate that Islamic economic thought provides a relevant conceptual basis for interpreting circularity beyond purely technological or material considerations.

The present literature, however, leaves room for a more explicit integration of Quranic ethical principles with the

operational and institutional dimensions of CE. The existing CE literature primarily develops mechanisms for closing or improving material and resource loops, while the Islamic CE literature establishes conceptual compatibility between circularity and Islamic principles. The present study advances this discussion by proposing a hierarchical Quranic Circular Economy Model in which Quranic principles—including mīzān, khilāfah, amānah, and the prohibition of isrāf and fasād—constitute the normative foundation; CE strategies such as reduction, reuse, recycling, regeneration, and circular design represent the operational layer; and Islamic financial and social instruments function as enabling mechanisms. Thus, the distinctive contribution of the present study is not to redefine CE or claim that circularity is absent from previous Islamic scholarship, but to organize these existing conceptual connections into a hierarchical framework that explicitly links Quranic normative principles, circular operational mechanisms, and institutional instruments. In this sense, the proposed model extends the scope of CE from questions of resource circulation and efficiency toward ethical accountability, social responsibility, and intergenerational stewardship.

Methodology and Model Development Process

This study employed a qualitative conceptual research design to develop a Quranic Circular Economy Model by integrating Quranic studies, Islamic environmental ethics, and contemporary circular economy literature. The objective was not to empirically test the proposed model, but to construct a theoretically grounded framework that explains how Quranic normative principles can provide an ethical foundation for circular economic practices and how such principles may be translated into operational and institutional mechanisms.

The model-development process consisted of three sequential and interrelated stages. First, Quranic and Islamic ethical sources were examined to identify the principal concepts relevant to environmental responsibility, resource use, ecological balance, justice, and sustainable human–environment relationships. The principal analytical concepts included mīzān, khilāfah, amānah, qisṭ, iṣlāḥ (constructive development), iʿmār al-arḍ (cultivation of the earth), isrāf, and fasād fī al-arḍ. Relevant Quranic verses were identified and interpreted in conjunction with classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship. Classical exegetical sources included al-Ṭabarī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ibn ʿĀshūr, al-Ṭabarsī, and Ṭabāṭabāʾī, while contemporary perspectives included the works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, İbrahim Özdemir, and Javādī Āmolī. The selection of these sources was based on their relevance to the interpretation of Quranic concepts concerning human responsibility, environmental ethics, resource management, and social responsibility.

Second, the principal dimensions of contemporary circular economy theory were identified through an analytical examination of the relevant CE literature. Particular attention was given to reduction, reuse, recycling, regeneration, resource efficiency, and design for circularity, which represent important mechanisms for reducing resource depletion, minimizing waste, and maintaining materials and

resources within productive cycles (Ghisellini et al., 2016; Bocken et al., 2016; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). The purpose of this stage was not to establish a one-to-one correspondence between Quranic concepts and modern CE terminology. Rather, it was to identify areas of conceptual convergence in which contemporary circular mechanisms could potentially operationalize broader ethical principles concerning moderation, balance, stewardship, and responsible resource use.

Third, the findings from the Quranic analysis and CE literature were synthesized through an integrative conceptual-modeling process. The synthesis produced a hierarchical structure consisting of three interconnected levels. The first level represents the Quranic normative foundation, comprising principles such as mīzān, khilāfah, amānah, justice, and the prohibition of isrāf and fasād. These principles establish the ethical objectives and boundaries within which economic and environmental activities should operate. The second level represents circular economy mechanisms, including reduction, reuse, recycling, regeneration, resource efficiency, and circular design. These mechanisms constitute the operational means through which resource conservation and environmental sustainability can be pursued. The third level represents Islamic financial and social enabling instruments, including zakāt (alms), waqf (endowment), ṣadaqah (voluntary charity), green sukūk (Islamic bonds), and takāful (Islamic insurance), which may facilitate the translation of normative principles and circular strategies into institutional and socio-economic practices.

As the analytical method of Quranic interpretation, it is notable that the Quranic component of the research followed al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī (thematic exegetical approach). This approach was selected because concepts relevant to environmental sustainability and responsible resource use are distributed across different Quranic passages rather than being presented as a single systematic environmental doctrine. The analysis therefore focused on identifying recurring concepts and normative relationships across relevant verses and their interpretations.

The interpretive procedure involved four principal steps. First, sustainability-related themes were identified and organized into analytical categories, including ecological balance, resource conservation, moderation in consumption, human responsibility, social justice, public welfare, and prevention of environmental harm. Second, relevant Quranic verses were examined through comparative consultation of classical and contemporary exegetical sources. Third, recurring meanings and normative relationships among the selected concepts were identified through qualitative thematic analysis. Finally, the resulting Quranic principles were compared with the operational dimensions of CE to identify conceptual compatibility and construct the proposed hierarchical model.

Importantly, the analysis did not assume that contemporary circular economy terminology is directly equivalent to Quranic concepts. Instead, the relationship was treated as one of normative–operational compatibility. For example, mīzān provides a normative principle of balance, while resource

efficiency and regeneration represent potential operational mechanisms for maintaining such balance. Similarly, khilāfah and amānah establish human responsibility toward creation, while circular practices provide mechanisms through which responsible resource management can be implemented. Conversely, isrāf and fasād establish ethical constraints against wastefulness and harmful practices, thereby providing normative limits for economic activity.

The final model was developed by integrating the three analytical components into a hierarchical framework. At the normative level, Quranic principles define the ethical purpose, boundaries, and responsibilities governing resource use. At the operational level, CE provides practical mechanisms for reducing resource consumption, extending material use, recovering resources, and regenerating natural systems. At the institutional level, Islamic financial and social instruments provide potential mechanisms for financing, enabling, and socially embedding circular practices.

Accordingly, the proposed model conceptualizes the relationship between the Quranic framework and CE as complementary rather than competitive. The Quranic framework addresses the normative question of why resources should be conserved and what ethical limits should govern their use, whereas CE addresses how resource flows can be managed more circularly through operational strategies. Islamic financial and social instruments provide an additional institutional layer through which these normative and operational principles may be translated into practice.

The research is therefore theory-building rather than empirical. No claim is made that the proposed framework has yet been empirically validated or that its institutional mechanisms are universally applicable. The model represents a conceptual synthesis intended to provide a basis for subsequent empirical assessment, expert evaluation, case studies, and policy-oriented research. Future studies can test the proposed relationships through Delphi panels, expert-based validation, comparative case studies, institutional analysis, and the development of measurable indicators for assessing the environmental, social, and ethical performance of circular economic systems within an Islamic normative framework.

Theoretical and Quranic Foundations of the Circular Economy

The circular economy is grounded in several fundamental principles, all aimed at reducing the consumption of primary resources and promoting efficient and sustainable use of existing ones. These principles include reduction, regeneration, recycling, reuse, and design for recycling (Ghisellini et al., 2016; Nargotra et al., 2024). Reduction emphasizes decreasing the extraction of new resources, optimizing energy and raw material usage, and designing products with longer lifespans. Regeneration focuses on returning resources, especially renewable ones such as water and energy, to natural systems for continuous production. Recycling involves recovering materials from waste and end-of-life products, transforming them into new raw materials to minimize environmental impact. Reuse ensures products or components are

employed after their initial life, contributing to resource efficiency. Design for recycling requires products to be created in a manner that facilitates material separation and recovery at the end of their lifecycle.

From an Islamic perspective, these principles are deeply reflected in Quranic teachings. Concepts such as mīzān, qisṭ, and amānah articulate the divine system of balance and ethical use of resources (Quran , 55:7; Quran , 33:72; Quran , 11:61; Quran , 21:16). The Quran presents nature as a self-sustaining system, where every element has a role and no resource should be wasted, mirroring the operational logic of the circular economy (Khateeb et al., 2021). This alignment forms the theoretical basis of the Quranic Circular Economy Model, integrating ethical imperatives with practical sustainability strategies.

1. Justice and Mīzān in the System of Creation

Building upon the conceptual definition provided earlier, mīzān functions as the foundational Quranic principle governing ecological and socio-economic equilibrium. Within the proposed model, it serves as the normative benchmark against which sustainability and resource stewardship are evaluated (Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, 1987, Vol. 28, p. 18; Modarresi, 1998, Vol. 14, p. 288). In the circular economy context, mīzān corresponds to systemic equilibrium, where overexploitation or mismanagement of resources disrupts ecological and social balance. Aligning human activity with mīzān enables sustainability and supports the natural regenerative cycles embedded in the Quranic worldview (Khateeb, Jumat, & Khamis, 2021, p. 3).

2. Isrāf and Fasād: Anti-Circular Behaviors

The Quran repeatedly condemns isrāf and fasād, highlighting behaviors that threaten ecological balance and social justice: "*Indeed, the squanderers are brothers of the devils*" (Quran , 17:27) and "*Do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set in order*" (Quran , 7:56). These verses emphasize the prohibition of waste and the ethical responsibility of humans to maintain balance in consumption and production (Shakeri, 2025, Vol. 53, pp. 53–84). Within the circular economy framework, refraining from isrāf mirrors the principle of resource efficiency, while avoiding fasād corresponds to maintaining ecological integrity and systemic resilience. Thus, anti-circular behaviors in modern economic systems are analogous to violating divine ethical limits in the Quranic context.

3. Amānah and Khilāfah: Human Responsibility for the Cycle of Life

The Quranic concepts of khilāfah and amānah form the ethical core of the circular economy from an Islamic perspective. Humans, as God's trustees on earth, are charged with responsibly managing resources and ensuring their regeneration (Javādī Āmolī, 2009, p. 28; Özdemir, 2008). The Quran states: "*He brought you forth from the earth and made you its cultivators*" (Quran , 11:61), indicating that cultivation must align with the preservation of natural systems. This fiduciary view of resource management contrasts sharply with exploitative economic logics, emphasizing regeneration and stewardship rather than consumption and depletion. Integrating khilāfah and amānah into

economic decision-making provides the ethical justification for designing sustainable circular systems that respect both current and future generations (Nasr, 1993; Ali & Jumat, 2021).

4. Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah and Ecological Sustainability

The relationship between environmental sustainability and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah (objectives of Islamic law) can be understood through the higher objectives of Islamic law, which seek to preserve human welfare and prevent harm. Classical maqāṣid scholarship, particularly that of Shāṭibī (1997), established that the fundamental objectives of Sharīʿah revolve around the preservation of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-ʿaql), lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl). Although environmental protection was not formulated as an independent category within classical maqāṣid theory, contemporary scholars have increasingly argued that ecological sustainability constitutes a necessary condition for safeguarding these essential objectives.

Environmental degradation directly threatens human life through the destruction of natural resources, pollution, climate instability, and ecosystem decline. Likewise, the preservation of property cannot be achieved without maintaining the natural capital upon which economic activities depend. The protection of future generations, which is closely associated with ḥifẓ al-nasl, also requires responsible stewardship of environmental resources and the prevention of irreversible ecological damage. Consequently, sustainable resource management may be regarded as an extension of the maqāṣid framework rather than an external concern.

The expansion of maqāṣid theory by Ibn ʿĀshūr (2006) provides additional support for this interpretation. Ibn ʿĀshūr emphasized broader societal objectives, including justice, social order, moderation, and public welfare, thereby extending the scope of maqāṣid beyond individual legal rulings toward comprehensive societal wellbeing. From this perspective, environmental sustainability serves as a prerequisite for achieving social justice and maintaining the long-term stability of human civilization. Similarly, ʿAllāl al-Fāsī (1993) argued that the ultimate purpose of Sharīʿah is the realization of public maṣlaḥah (expediency) and the prevention of mafsadah (harm), principles that strongly support environmental conservation and responsible resource governance.

Within the context of the proposed Quranic Circular Economy Model, the maqāṣid approach provides an important juridical foundation linking ecological stewardship with legal and ethical obligations. Circular economy practices such as resource conservation, waste reduction, recycling, and regeneration contribute to the protection of life, property, public welfare, and future generations. Therefore, sustainability is not merely an environmental objective but also a Sharīʿah-based obligation derived from the higher purposes of Islamic law. The principles of maṣlaḥah (public interest), dafʿ al-mafāsid (prevention of harm), and intergenerational responsibility collectively reinforce the

legitimacy of circular economic practices within an Islamic normative framework.

5. Comparison with Alternative Sustainability Paradigms

Unlike ecological modernization theory, which emphasizes technological solutions, and unlike strong sustainability approaches that primarily focus on ecological limits, the Quranic framework combines environmental stewardship with ethical accountability, social justice, and spiritual responsibility. Similarly, while the circular economy focuses on material circulation and resource efficiency, the Quranic approach introduces normative obligations grounded in trusteeship, justice, and accountability before God. Consequently, the proposed framework complements rather than replaces existing sustainability paradigms by providing an additional ethical dimension.

6. The Quran and Ecological Balance: Human Responsibility

The Quran emphasizes that the environment is part of a divinely ordained system built upon balance, harmony, and proportion: "*Indeed, We have created everything in measure (qadar)*" (Quran , 54:49) and "*And the earth—We have spread it out and placed therein firm mountains and caused to grow therein every well-balanced thing (mawzūn)*" (Quran , 15:19). Humans, as vicegerents, must manage these resources responsibly, avoiding overconsumption, pollution, and disruption of natural cycles (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, Vol. 19, p. 97; Qummi, 1984). The circular economy operationalizes this principle through resource efficiency, regeneration, and recycling, ensuring sustainability aligns with divine law.

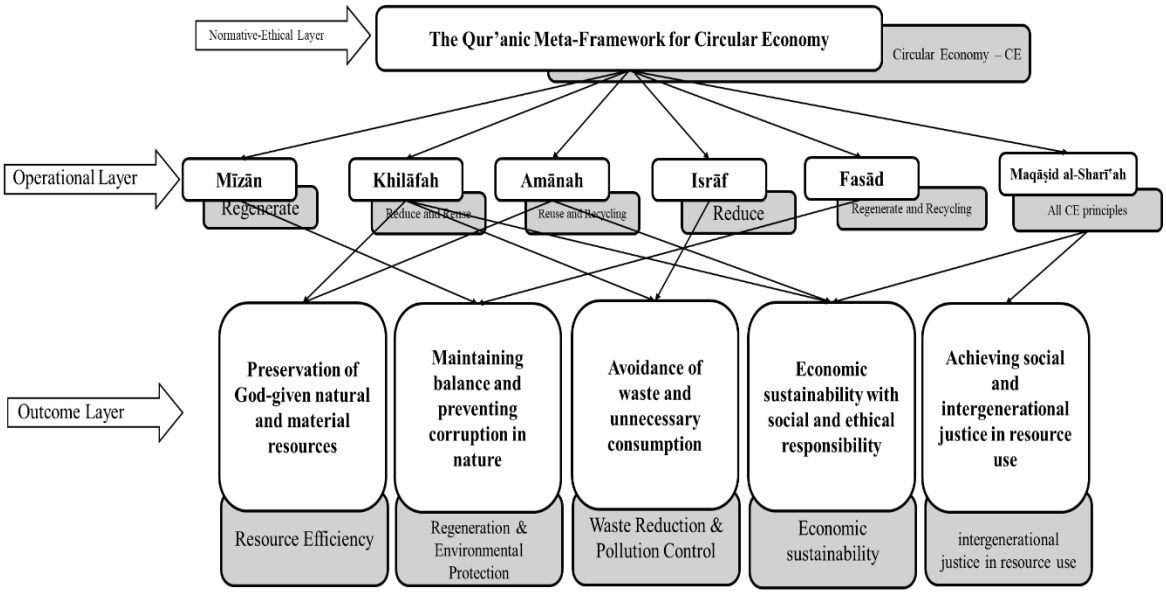
7. Islamic Financial and Social Instruments with a Circular Economy Nature

To operationalize the Quranic Circular Economy Model, financial and social instruments play a critical role. Zakāt (alms) enables ethical redistribution of wealth, preventing accumulation and ensuring resources circulate within society (cf. Quran , 9:103; Makārim Shīrāzī, 1995, Vol. 8, p. 117). Waqf (endowment) preserves capital while generating continuous societal benefits, reflecting the principle of regeneration. Green sukūk (Islamic bonds) channel investments into environmentally sustainable projects, linking finance with ecological responsibility. Ṣadaqah (voluntary charity) and takāful (Islamic insurance) serve as social mechanisms that strengthen solidarity, redistribute risk, and support communal resilience (Ṣadr, 1978; Nūrī, 1987). Collectively, these instruments form a circular financial ecosystem that translates Quranic ethics into practical economic and environmental action.

8. Conceptual Integration of the Quranic and Circular Economy Models

The conceptual framework presented in this study integrates the Quranic economy and the circular economy into a single hierarchical model, illustrating how ethical, operational, and outcome-oriented dimensions interact to achieve sustainability (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Hierarchical structure of the Quranic meta-framework, in which circular economy functions as an operational subsystem governed by higher-order ethical principles



In this study, the term "more comprehensive" does not imply greater technical efficiency than circular economy models. Rather, comprehensiveness refers to the breadth of sustainability dimensions addressed. While circular economy frameworks primarily focus on material flows, resource efficiency, and environmental regeneration, the Quranic framework additionally incorporates ethical accountability, distributive justice, intergenerational equity, social responsibility, and spiritual obligations. The comparison therefore concerns the scope of normative sustainability objectives rather than operational effectiveness alone.

At the top of the model are the two primary economic patterns. The first, the Quranic economy, establishes the overarching ethical and moral foundation. It is grounded in key Quranic principles, including mīzān, khilāfah, amānah, and the prohibition of isrāf and fasād. These principles define the ultimate objectives of economic activity, emphasizing justice, stewardship of resources, social equity, and intergenerational responsibility. The second pattern, the circular economy, represents operational strategies such as reduction, reuse, recycling, regeneration, and design for circularity. While the circular economy provides effective practical methods to manage resources and minimize environmental impact, it is not independent; its practices derive direction, legitimacy, and ethical boundaries from the Quranic economy. In this way, the model explicitly positions the circular economy as a subsystem embedded within the broader ethical framework of Islamic economics, demonstrating that the Quranic economy encompasses circular principles while extending beyond them to address moral, social, and ecological imperatives.

The second layer of the model identifies the tools and mechanisms available to these two patterns for achieving their objectives. The Quranic economy relies on ethical norms, legal guidance, and social principles derived

from the Quran to shape human behavior and governance. These include stewardship responsibilities, moral limits, and societal accountability mechanisms that ensure adherence to divine guidelines. The circular economy employs operational tools such as resource efficiency strategies, waste minimization, recycling processes, regenerative practices, and product design for circularity. These operational mechanisms are nested within the ethical oversight of the Quranic economy, ensuring that all technical and managerial interventions serve higher moral and societal objectives. The interaction of these tools highlights the instrumental role of circular economy practices, which operationalize and make actionable the ethical and normative goals defined by the Quranic economy.

The third layer represents the outcomes and impacts generated by the application of these tools. From the Quranic economy, the outcomes include moral compliance, stewardship, intergenerational justice, social equity, and ecological preservation. From the circular economy, outcomes include enhanced resource efficiency, waste reduction, regeneration of natural systems, and measurable environmental performance improvements. These results are interdependent: operational achievements facilitated by circular economy tools support the higher ethical and societal objectives of the Quranic framework, while the ethical oversight ensures that circular economy strategies are implemented responsibly and sustainably.

The model also illustrates the dynamic interaction between the two patterns. The Quranic economy establishes the "why" by providing ethical, social, and spiritual objectives, while the circular economy provides the "how" by offering practical mechanisms for achieving these objectives. The tools at the second layer serve as mediators, translating normative principles into actionable strategies. The third layer demonstrates the outcomes, showing how practical application and ethical guidance converge to produce tangible benefits for society and the environment. This hierarchical conceptualization, therefore, depicts the circular economy not as an independent framework, but as a component of the broader Quranic economic system, with its performance and legitimacy dependent on alignment with ethical, social, and ecological principles.

In sum, the model emphasizes that the Quranic economy provides the normative and ethical foundation, the circular economy supplies operational tools, and the outcomes layer demonstrates the practical and measurable results of integrating both. By situating the circular economy within the Quranic framework, the model shows that sustainability, resource efficiency, and environmental protection are not merely technical objectives, but are inseparable from moral responsibility, social justice, and intergenerational stewardship. This conceptual framework therefore bridges the gap between theory and practice, ethical guidance and operational mechanisms, demonstrating a holistic, integrated, and culturally grounded approach to sustainable development.

9. Practical Implications, Policy Applications, and Future Research Directions

The proposed Quranic Circular Economy Model provides several practical and

policy-oriented implications for sustainability governance, environmental management, and ethical economic planning. By integrating Quranic ethical principles with circular economy mechanisms, the framework offers policymakers, institutions, and communities a culturally grounded approach to sustainable development that extends beyond purely technical or market-oriented sustainability models.

At the policy level, the model can support the development of environmentally responsible governance frameworks in Muslim-majority societies by embedding ethical obligations such as mīzān, khilāfah, and the prohibition of isrāf into environmental legislation, resource management strategies, and sustainable production policies. Governments and regulatory institutions may utilize the framework to design sustainability policies that integrate ecological protection with social justice, equitable resource distribution, and intergenerational responsibility. The model also provides a normative basis for incorporating circular economy principles into national sustainable development strategies and green transition programs.

From an economic and institutional perspective, the framework highlights the strategic role of Islamic financial and social instruments in supporting sustainability transitions. Instruments such as zakāt, waqf, green sukūk, ṣadaqah, and takāful can facilitate investments in renewable energy systems, waste recovery infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, circular manufacturing systems, and environmentally regenerative projects. Consequently, the model contributes to expanding the role of Islamic finance beyond conventional financial activities toward ecological and social sustainability objectives.

The model also has practical implications for organizations and industries seeking to implement circular economy strategies within ethically informed sustainability frameworks. Industrial sectors may adopt the proposed framework to align resource efficiency, recycling systems, and regenerative production models with broader ethical and social responsibilities. Educational and religious institutions may similarly employ the framework to enhance environmental awareness and promote sustainability-oriented behavioral change rooted in cultural and spiritual values.

Although the present study focuses primarily on theoretical and conceptual development, the proposed framework creates significant opportunities for empirical and applied research. Future studies may operationalize and validate the model through qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including expert-based assessments, Delphi studies, institutional analyses, policy evaluations, and comparative sustainability studies across different socio-economic contexts. Case studies examining the implementation of circular economy initiatives in Islamic societies could provide practical insights into the applicability and effectiveness of the proposed framework.

Further research may also investigate the integration of the model into specific sectors such as agriculture, water management, renewable energy, urban

sustainability, waste management, halal industries, and green supply chains. Comparative studies between Islamic sustainability frameworks and other faith-based or ethical sustainability models may further enrich interdisciplinary sustainability discourse. In addition, future studies could develop measurable sustainability indicators derived from Quranic principles to assess ecological performance, social justice outcomes, and ethical compliance within circular economic systems.

Overall, the Quranic Circular Economy Model opens a new interdisciplinary research agenda linking Islamic ethics, sustainability science, ecological economics, and circular transition studies. Its broader contribution lies in demonstrating that sustainable development can be strengthened when technical efficiency is integrated with ethical responsibility, cultural legitimacy, and long-term ecological stewardship.

Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the proposed framework is theoretical and conceptual in nature and has not yet been empirically tested. Second, the analysis relies on selected Quranic interpretations and jurisprudential traditions, while alternative exegetical perspectives may yield different emphases. Third, the model has not been evaluated across different socio-economic, cultural, or institutional contexts, limiting its generalizability. Finally, the operational relationships among ethical principles, policy instruments, and sustainability outcomes require empirical validation through future qualitative and quantitative research.

Conclusion

The present study has developed a comprehensive Quranic Circular Economy Model, integrating ethical, operational, and institutional dimensions to provide a holistic framework for sustainable development. By situating the circular economy within the broader normative and moral principles of the Quranic economy, the model demonstrates that while circular practices are effective for resource efficiency, waste reduction, and environmental regeneration, they achieve their highest potential only when guided by ethical, social, and intergenerational imperatives. The model establishes a hierarchical structure in which the Quranic economy defines the ultimate objectives and boundaries, operational mechanisms such as reduction, reuse, recycling, regeneration, and design for circularity provide practical tools to realize these objectives, and Islamic financial and social instruments ensure implementation, compliance, and societal impact.

This hierarchical framework highlights several key contributions. First, it clarifies that the circular economy, although widely recognized for its technical and operational benefits, is not sufficient on its own; it requires the broader ethical and societal guidance provided by the Quranic economy. Second, the model explicitly links ethical principles, operational strategies, and measurable outcomes, demonstrating the interdependence of moral, practical, and institutional dimensions in achieving sustainable development. Third, it offers a conceptual and practical roadmap for policymakers,

financial institutions, and communities seeking to implement sustainability initiatives in a manner that is both culturally grounded and ethically robust.

The study also provides practical implications for environmental management, resource governance, and economic planning. By integrating Quranic principles with circular economy strategies, organizations can develop policies that ensure resource efficiency, equity, and long-term ecological balance. Financial tools such as zakāt (alms), waqf (endowment), green sukūk (Islamic bonds), ṣadaqah (voluntary charity), and takāful (Islamic insurance) enable the translation of ethical imperatives into concrete economic actions, ensuring that sustainability is not limited to operational practices but permeates financial, social, and governance systems. Moreover, the model fosters intergenerational justice by embedding stewardship responsibilities and trusteeship into decision-making processes, ensuring that the benefits of sustainable practices extend to future generations.

In conclusion, the Quranic Circular Economy Model provides a holistic, integrated, and culturally grounded approach to sustainability that surpasses the conventional scope of the circular economy. It demonstrates that effective environmental and resource management must combine technical efficiency with moral accountability, social justice, and ethical stewardship. The proposed model contributes to theoretical discussions concerning sustainability, environmental ethics, and Islamic economic thought by offering an integrated conceptual framework. However, given the conceptual nature of the study, its practical effectiveness remains subject to future empirical investigation and institutional validation.

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Authors' Contributions

Haytham Booazar contributed to the development of the Quranic discussions, drafting the initial manuscript, and conceptual framing of the ethical and normative dimensions. Majid Dekamin and Lyila Atamadynya contributed to the circular economy and ecological aspects, editing, and refinement of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Negative AI Statement

The author(s) declare that no AI tools or services were used or heavily applied during the preparation of this work.

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