


From Fasād to Iḥsān: Integrating Qur'anic Environmental Morality into Islamic Education through Q.S. al-A'rāf 7:56

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ABSTRACT: The global environmental crisis indicates that ecological degradation is not merely a technical problem but also a moral failure in human relations with nature. Islamic education can cultivate ecological responsibility because it is grounded in Qur'anic moral values. However, previous studies on Islamic environmental ethics have generally remained normative-theological or descriptive-ethical and have not systematically translated environmental exegesis into curriculum design, pedagogy, and character assessment. This study analyzes the integration of Qur'anic environmental morality into Islamic education through an analytical-contextual tafsir study of Q.S. al-A'rāf 7:56. Using library research, the study examines a corpus consisting of the Qur'anic text, classical and contemporary tafsir, Islamic eco-theological literature, Islamic education theory, and sustainability education studies. The findings show that the prohibition of fasād fi al-arḍ embodies preventive, restorative, and ecological responsibility principles. The study's main contribution is a two-layer framework: an anti-fasād curriculum for ecological competencies and an ecological iḥsān benchmark for evaluating environmental character.

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INTRODUCTION

The intensifying global environmental crisis, manifested in climate change, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, is not only a technical problem but also a moral crisis in humanity's relationship with the natural world. Educational responses are therefore required not merely to transmit ecological knowledge, but also to cultivate ethical responsibility and sustained ecological conduct. In the Qur'anic worldview, human beings are entrusted as khalifah and bear responsibility to preserve order, prevent fasād, and act within the balance of creation. Studies on Qur'anic environmental conservation have identified Q.S. Ar-Rūm 41–42 and Q.S. al-A'rāf 56–58 as key textual foundations for environmental education [1].

Islamic education has a strategic role in translating Qur'anic values into students' moral character and social practice. Recent studies show that the integration of environmental sustainability into Islamic Religious Education can strengthen ecological awareness through the concepts of khalifah, amānah, and mizān [2]. Other research similarly argues that Islamic education can connect religious values, culture, and environmental learning so that ecological responsibility is understood as part of religiosity rather than as an external topic added to the curriculum [3].

However, Nevertheless, the existing literature still tends to remain either descriptive-normative or practice-oriented. Studies on Q.S. al-A'rāf 56–58 describe the values of environmental care and human responsibility, but generally do not construct a systematic bridge between tafsir findings and the core components of Islamic education [1], [4], [5]. Similarly, studies on environmental education in Islamic institutions often emphasize implementation, curriculum content, or learning activities, while the conceptual route from Qur'anic moral exegesis to measurable educational competencies remains underdeveloped [2], [3].

At the global level, Islamic environmental thought has been enriched by eco-theological works that critique modern desacralization of nature and articulate Islamic responsibility toward the environment. Nasr's works place the ecological crisis within a spiritual crisis of modern civilization, while Izzi Dien develops legal, ethical, and institutional dimensions of Islamic environmental responsibility [6], [7], [8]. Khalid further emphasizes the ethical-practical relevance of Islam for environmental stewardship [9]. These works are important for positioning the present article within global Islamic eco-theology, yet they still need to be connected more explicitly with Islamic educational design and student character assessment

Table 1. Research Positioning and Novelty

| Literature cluster | Gap | Advancement |
|---|---|---|
| Qur’anic conservation and Q.S. al-A’rāf studies [1], [4], [5] | Values identified; not operationalized. | Builds curriculum and rubric from Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56. |
| Islamic environmental education [2], [3], [10], [11], [12] | Practice-focused; weak tafsir bridge. | Links tafsir, pedagogy, competencies, and character assessment. |
| Global Islamic eco-theology [6], [7], [8], [9] | Ethical critique; not classroom-based. | Turns eco-theology into Islamic education framework. |
| Sustainability and behavior theory [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20] | Limited Qur’anic moral grounding. | Reframes competencies through fasād, iṣlāh, amānah, and ihsān. |

Accordingly, the research gap addressed in this study is the absence of an integrative model that systematically connects the moral interpretation of Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56 with curriculum design, pedagogical orientation, and learner character evaluation in Islamic education. The novelty of this article lies in its two-layer contribution: first, the formulation of an anti-fasād curriculum as a zero-harm and restorative competence model; and second, the formulation of ecological ihsān as an evaluative benchmark that moves environmental character beyond minimal compliance toward excellent, consistent, and socially transformative conduct.

This study therefore aims to analyze how Qur’anic environmental morality derived from Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56 can be integrated into Islamic education. Rather than limiting itself to theological interpretation, the article develops a conceptual framework that translates tafsir findings into curriculum, pedagogy, and character assessment relevant to contemporary ecological challenges.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design combined with analytical-contextual Qur’anic exegesis (tafsīr taḥlīlī-siyāqī). This design is appropriate because the study does not measure statistical variables or field-based behavior; rather, it interprets religious texts, examines scholarly literature, and conceptualizes educational implications. The qualitative approach enables in-depth interpretation of value-based educational concepts within their textual, theological, and pedagogical contexts [21].

The object of inquiry is Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56. Because the study is text-based rather than respondent-based, the methodological unit is a corpus of selected sources organized through inclusion and exclusion criteria. Primary sources include the Qur’anic verse and authoritative tafsir works, while secondary sources include foundational eco-Islamic literature, Islamic education studies, environmental ethics, sustainability education, and pro-environmental behavior research. Foundational sources outside 2020–2025 are retained because they provide theoretical bases, while recent peer-reviewed studies are used to capture contemporary developments in Islamic education and sustainability discourse.

The inclusion criteria are: (1) sources that discuss Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56 or Qur’anic environmental ethics; (2) works on Islamic eco-theology, Islamic education, curriculum,

character education, or environmental literacy; and (3) theoretical works relevant to sustainability competencies and pro-environmental behavior. The exclusion criteria are: (1) sources without identifiable publication data; (2) non-scholarly materials that do not support conceptual analysis; and (3) sources unrelated to tafsir, education, or environmental ethics.

The research instrument is a textual analysis matrix that organizes the corpus into exegetical, contextual, and educational dimensions. The matrix is used to ensure that the movement from Qur’anic text to educational implication is transparent and analytically traceable.

Table 2. Textual Analysis Matrix

| Dimension | Analytical focus | Output |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Exegetical-textual | fasād, iṣlāh, khawf, ṭama’, muḥsinīn in Qur’an and tafsir | Moral-exegetical principles |
| Contextual-ethical | Ecological crisis and human responsibility in eco-Islam literature | Qur’anic environmental morality |
| Educational-operational | Curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in Islamic education | Anti-fasād curriculum and ecological ihsān benchmark |

Data analysis proceeds through four stages. First, exegetical coding identifies moral concepts in Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56. Second, contextual interpretation relates these concepts to contemporary ecological issues. Third, educational translation converts the moral concepts into curriculum objectives, pedagogical principles, and assessment indicators. Fourth, conceptual synthesis integrates the findings into a framework for Islamic environmental education. Because this study is conceptual, the proposed rubric is presented as a preliminary framework. Its future application should be strengthened through expert judgment involving scholars of Qur’anic studies, Islamic education, and environmental education; content validity can be assessed through approaches such as Lawshe’s Content Validity Ratio and its later methodological refinements [22], [23].

RESULTS

Exegetical Meaning of Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56

Surah al-A’rāf is generally classified as a Makkan surah and contains themes of tawḥīd, moral accountability, prophetic narratives, and the consequences of obedience and corruption. Although the surah’s name refers to al-A’rāf as an intermediate place between Paradise and Hell, the relevance of verse 56 to this study lies not in the topographical meaning of the surah title, but in its moral structure: prohibition of fasād, recognition of a divinely established order, spiritual self-regulation through khawf and ṭama’, and the elevation of ihsān as a standard of conduct [24], [25].

The verse states: *wa lā tufsidū fī al-arḍi ba’dā iṣlāḥihā wa-ad’ūhu khawfan wa ṭama’ā, inna raḥmatallāhi qarībun mina al-muḥsinīn*. It may be rendered: ‘Do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set in order; call upon Him in fear and hope. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good.’

Exegetically, the phrase *lā tufsidū fī al-arḍ* prohibits destructive conduct on earth after it has been placed in a state of order and benefit. The phrase *ba’dā iṣlāḥihā* indicates

that the earth is not morally neutral raw material for exploitation, but a divinely arranged trust whose balance must be maintained. Classical and contemporary tafsir works explain fasād broadly, including moral, social, religious, intellectual, economic, and material forms of corruption; in contemporary terms, this breadth allows environmental exploitation to be read as one manifestation of fasād because it damages the conditions of life entrusted by God [26], [27], [28], [29], [30].

The command to pray with khawf and ṭama’ adds a moral-psychological dimension. Khawf restrains destructive arrogance and cultivates accountability before God, while ṭama’ preserves hope, motivation, and restorative action. Thus, ecological responsibility is not grounded only in utility, regulation, or fear of social sanctions; it is grounded in spiritual self-regulation. The closing phrase, inna raḥmatallāhi qarībun mina al-muḥsinīn, then places iḥsān at the peak of ecological morality. A muḥsin does not merely avoid harm but acts excellently, repairs damage, gives more than the minimum, and sustains goodness.

The grammatical discussion of qarīb in relation to raḥmah also supports this ethical reading. Classical i’rāb discussions explain that qarīb follows semantic intention rather than only surface gender agreement; the nearness of divine mercy is connected to the moral quality of the muḥsinīn [26], [27]. For the present study, the important implication is not the technical grammar itself, but the theological-pedagogical message that divine mercy is associated with excellent conduct. Therefore, iḥsān can be developed as an educational standard for environmental character.

The munāsabah of the verse further strengthens this interpretation. After emphasizing humility in supplication, the Qur’an immediately prohibits corruption on earth, suggesting that authentic worship must restrain destructive conduct and produce social-ecological responsibility. The verse therefore integrates ‘ibādah, moral restraint, and ecological care. Its educational implication is clear: environmental responsibility should be taught not as an external civic value alone, but as part of Islamic moral formation.

Translating Qur’anic Moral Exegesis into Islamic Educational Design

To avoid a direct and unsupported leap from tafsir to curriculum, this study uses a translational logic consisting of three steps: extracting moral principles from the verse, converting those principles into educational competencies, and designing observable assessment indicators. This movement is conceptual rather than empirical, but it provides a coherent route from Qur’anic exegesis to Islamic educational.

Table 3.

Translating Tafsir Findings Into Educational Design

| Qur’anic cue | Principle | Educational operation |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Lā tufsidū fī al-ard | Prevent destructive harm | Anti-fasād learning outcomes |
| Ba’da iṣlāḥihā | Earth as divinely ordered trust | Stewardship/restoration projects |
| Khawf wa ṭama’ | Accountability and hope | Reflection journals and moral dialogue |
| al-Muḥsinīn | Excellence beyond minimum duty | Ecological iḥsān rubric |

From a curriculum-design standpoint, *ba’da iṣlāḥihā* supplies a Through this translational logic, the verse

becomes educationally operational without reducing the Qur’an to a technical manual. Tafsir supplies the moral grammar; educational theory supplies the structure for curriculum and assessment; and environmental education supplies the real-world context in which students practice responsibility. The model therefore connects theological meaning, pedagogical process, and measurable conduct.

Anti-Fasād Curriculum: From Tafsir to Students’ Ecological Competencies

The Qur’anic prohibition of fasād ‘on the earth after it has been set right’ can be positioned as the foundation of an anti-fasād curriculum. This curriculum does not merely promote environmental concern as an abstract slogan; it develops competencies to prevent, reduce, and restore ecological harm. Its urgency is reinforced by contemporary evidence that several planetary boundaries have been transgressed, requiring education to move from knowledge transmission toward ethically responsible action capacity [13].

From a curriculum-design perspective, *ba’da iṣlāḥihā* provides a clear pedagogical sequence: the earth possesses an order; human beings are prohibited from damaging that order; and education must cultivate long-term stewardship. This sequence resonates with sustainability competence frameworks, including systems thinking, normative competence, strategic competence, anticipatory competence, and interpersonal competence [14], [15]. In Islamic education, these competencies can be reframed through Qur’anic concepts such as amanah, mizān, fasād, iṣlāh, and iḥsān.

The anti-fasād curriculum can be articulated into three learning outcome domains. First, knowing: students understand ecological concepts, local environmental problems, and Qur’anic moral vocabulary. Second, valuing: students recognize ecological destruction as a moral-spiritual violation of divine order. Third, acting: students are able to design and implement preventive or restorative actions at the classroom, school, family, and community levels. Environmental literacy studies support this structure because literacy includes knowledge, affective sensitivity, issue awareness, practical skills, and readiness to participate in problem solving [16].

To translate learning outcomes into real behavior, the curriculum should be supported by behavior-change theory. The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that intention is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [17]. Theories of environmentally significant behavior and knowledge-action gap studies further show that habits, infrastructure, procedural knowledge, and social pressure affect whether students act consistently [18], [19]. These insights help Islamic educators design indicators that evaluate not only what students know, but also whether they can overcome barriers to ecological action.

For assessment, anti-*fasād* values must be represented through behavioral rubrics (not solely cognitive tests). The literature on sustainability-competence assessment highlights the need for combined tools—observation, performance tasks/projects, reflection, and self-assessment instruments—supported by clear descriptors so that evaluation does not become overly subjective [24]. The following concise four-level rubric can be directly linked to *ba’da iṣlāḥihā*:

- Level 1 (Emerging): Knows harm/stewardship terms but lacks consistent action.
 - Level 2 (Developing): Acts preventively when reminded, e.g., saves water or sorts waste.
 - Level 3 (Proficient): Acts consistently and explains the Qur’anic moral rationale.
- Level 4 (Exemplary): Initiates restorative action and mobilizes peers over time.

Table 4. Preliminary anti-fasād behavioral rubric

| Level | Behavioral descriptor | Evidence source |
|---------------|--|---|
| 1. Emerging | Knows harm/stewardship terms but lacks consistent action. | Quiz and teacher observation |
| 2. Developing | Acts preventively when reminded, e.g., saves water or sorts waste. | Observation checklist and reflection note |
| 3. Proficient | Acts consistently and explains the Qur’anic moral rationale. | Project portfolio and peer feedback |
| 4. Exemplary | Initiates restorative action and mobilizes peers over time. | Impact report and presentation |

From The rubric is deliberately behavioral because anti-fasād values should not be assessed only through cognitive tests. Sustainability-competence assessment literature recommends a combination of observation, performance tasks, projects, reflection, and self-assessment with clear descriptors to reduce subjectivity [20]. In Islamic education, such assessment can be embedded in akhlaq learning, fiqh al-mu’āmalāt themes, school culture, and service-learning projects.

In Authentic projects can include school waste mapping, plastic-reduction campaigns, water-use audits, classroom composting, tree-care programs, and ecological reflection journals. Studies on plastic waste and planetary boundaries can serve as macro-level contexts, while school-based projects make global ecological crises visible at the micro level [13], [31]. Experiences from eco-theology-based Islamic Religious Education and environmental curriculum development in pesantren also suggest that clear learning outcomes, theory-practice integration, and evaluation design can make environmental education more operational and sustainable [32], [33].

Iḥsān as a Green Benchmark: Evaluating Environmental Character

Accordingly, Positioning iḥsān as a green benchmark shifts environmental character evaluation from minimal compliance toward excellent, proactive, and sustained moral performance. Within Q.S. al-A’rāf 7:56, the prohibition of fasād establishes a zero-harm threshold, while the phrase mina al-muḥsinīn establishes a higher ethical horizon: ecological conduct should not stop at avoiding violations, but should also enhance, repair, and sustain what has been set in order.

Green iḥsān can be operationalized into four principles. First, beyond compliance: students do more than the minimum required by school rules. Second, zero harm: students avoid actions that add ecological burdens after order has been restored. Third, istiḳāmah: ecological responsibility appears as repeated habit across contexts. Fourth, social diffusion: students influence peers and school culture so that ecological goodness becomes collective, not merely individual.

This benchmark is consistent with Islamic character education because iḥsān forms dispositions and habits, not merely occasional obedience [34]. It is also consistent with broader ethical discussions that treat iḥsān as a foundation for moral excellence in public life [35]. When applied to environmental education, iḥsān helps transform ecological practices from monitored compliance into internally motivated responsibility.

A green iḥsān assessment therefore needs to measure both actions and their drivers. Students may be evaluated on whether they hold a moral conviction that causing harm after iṣlāḥ is a violation, whether supportive group norms exist, and whether they possess the skills and facilities to act. This approach avoids empty moralism by combining Qur’anic ethics with environmental psychology: attitudes, norms, perceived control, values, and habits all influence behavior [17], [18], [19].

To make “green iḥsān” measurable, it must be translated into *learning outcomes*, indicators, and rubrics. Competencies can be aligned with sustainability *key competencies*—such as systems thinking, anticipatory, normative, strategic, and collaborative competencies—then “Islamized” through the ethics of *amānah* (trust) and the prohibition of *fasād* [18]. For example, the outcome “reducing one’s personal waste footprint” may include indicators such as:

- Consistently bringing a reusable bottle;
- Choosing products with minimal packaging; and
- Being able to map consumption-to-pollution causal chains.

A rubric then differentiates between levels of ‘adl (occasional compliance), good (routine and self-directed practice), and iḥsān (routine, self-directed practice that also mobilizes peers and improves collective norms).

From the standpoint of environmental psychology, this standard can be reinforced by pro-environmental behavior theories so that assessment does not become empty moralism. The *Theory of Planned Behavior* helps explain action intentions through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control; meanwhile, the *Value-Belief-Norm* perspective emphasizes moral values and personal norms as drivers of environmentally significant behavior [21]. This implies that evaluation should measure not only “actions,” but also their drivers:

- Whether students hold a moral conviction that causing harm after iṣlāḥ is a violation;
- Whether supportive group norms exist; and
- Whether students feel capable (access to facilities, skills, and time).

The *iḥsān* standard is especially relevant because contemporary environmental problems show how cumulative damage often emerges from small, repeated habits. Research on plastic waste flowing into the ocean underscores the need for behavioral change in consumption patterns and upstream waste management, including at the household and school levels [25]. However, the *knowledge-action gap* literature reminds us that knowledge alone frequently fails to translate into practice due to barriers such as habits, infrastructure constraints, social pressure, or perceived futility [31]. Hence, a “green iḥsān” rubric should include indicators of overcoming barriers—for instance, students can design simple strategies (classroom waste-sorting stations, a plastic-free canteen campaign, weekly waste audits) and sustain them over time

In practice, Islamic education can integrate this benchmark through Qur'an-hadith learning, akhlaq instruction, fiqh al-bi'ah or fiqh al-mu'amalat themes, and community-engaged projects. Studies on Islamic teaching and conservation show that ecological awareness can be cultivated as part of religiosity [36], while textbook analyses demonstrate that Islamic values can be embedded in curriculum materials but still require robust evaluative instruments to assess real-world consistency [37].

Accordingly, ecological iḥsān is a more demanding evaluative standard than ordinary compliance: not only avoiding harm, but repairing; not only participating occasionally, but acting consistently; not only being individually virtuous, but producing socially contagious improvement. In this sense, iḥsān becomes the character-evaluation counterpart of the anti-fasād curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Q.S. al-A'raf 7:56 provides a Qur'anic framework for environmental ethics that integrates theological, moral, and ecological dimensions. The prohibition of fasād after iṣlāḥ positions the earth as a divinely ordered trust; therefore, environmental destruction is not merely a technical ecological problem but a moral violation of the order entrusted by God. The command to call upon God with khawf and ṭama' provides a spiritual psychology of self-regulation, while the nearness of divine mercy to the muḥsinīn elevates iḥsān as a standard that surpasses minimal compliance.

The principal contribution of this study is the translation of exegetical meaning into an educational framework. The anti-fasād curriculum functions as a zero-harm and restorative competence model that develops knowing, valuing, and acting. Ecological iḥsān functions as a character-evaluation benchmark that assesses whether students act beyond compliance, avoid harm, sustain ecological habits, and influence collective norms. Together, these concepts bridge Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic educational theory, sustainability competencies, and behavioral assessment.

The study is limited by its conceptual nature; the proposed curriculum and rubric have not yet been empirically tested in classroom or institutional settings. Future research should validate the ecological iḥsān rubric through expert judgment and content validity procedures, test its reliability in Islamic education contexts, and conduct intervention studies comparing anti-fasād and iḥsān-based learning designs. Such research would strengthen the contribution of Qur'anic environmental morality to national and global sustainability education discourse.

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