Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Science and Islamic Studies
ISSN: 3024-9058 (Online - Elektronik)
Volume: 3, 2025
Publisher: Program Pascasarjana, UIN Alauddin Makassar

A SEMANTIC APPROACH TO THE WORD *SALĀM* IN THE QUR'AN: BUILDING ECOLOGICAL PEACE AMID THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS

Nur Auliya Fitriah[1], Amar Ma'ruf Syarif[2], & Baso Pallawagau[3]

[1,2,3] Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, Indonesia
Correspondence Email: 80100224135@uin-alauddin.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The global climate crisis calls for a comprehensive theological and linguistic response within Islamic studies. This research examines the semantic dimensions of the word *salām* in the Qur'an using Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic framework, aiming to construct an ecological *salām* as a foundation for Islamic environmental ethics. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, the study analyzes Qur'anic verses containing the word *salām* (سَلَام) and its derivations, which appear 158 times in the Qur'an, through three analytical stages: syntagmatic, paradigmatic, and *weltanschauung*. The findings reveal that *salām* encompasses three interrelated dimensions: the vertical dimension (human–God relationship), the horizontal dimension (human–human relations), and the ecological dimension (human–nature relationship). The core meanings of *salām* as "safety" and "wholeness" develop into a comprehensive ethical concept of ecological harmony that rejects corruption (*fasād*) and affirms the principle of *mīzān* (balance). This study demonstrates that *salām* in the Qur'an constitutes a holistic moral worldview integrating spiritual, social, and ecological responsibility within a unified Qur'anic vision.

Keywords: Qur'anic semantics; *salām*; toshihiko izutsu; ecological ethics; islamic environmental ethics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global climate crisis has become an existential threat to human survival and to the stability of the planet's ecosystems. Scientific data indicate that the average global temperature has increased by approximately 1.1°C since the pre-industrial era, resulting in more frequent extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, droughts, floods, and accelerating species extinction (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). This escalating crisis demands a multidisciplinary response, including from the field of Islamic studies, given that Muslims—numbering more than 1.8 billion worldwide—bear a theological and ethical responsibility to address environmental degradation based on Qur'anic principles.

The Qur'an provides not only spiritual guidance but also a moral framework governing the relationship between humans and the natural world. The concept of *khalīfah fi al-arḍ* (Q. 2:30) positions humans as stewards entrusted with maintaining the balance of creation rather than agents of destruction (Sayem, 2023). This responsibility is reinforced by key ethical principles such

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as *amānah* (trust) and *mīzān* (balance), which collectively emphasize ecological harmony and the prohibition of *fasād* (corruption) on earth. Within this framework, Qur'anic language functions not merely as doctrinal instruction but as a dynamic moral discourse whose semantic structures shape ethical consciousness.

Contemporary Qur'anic linguistic studies affirm that Qur'anic terms possess relational and contextual meanings that evolve within specific semantic fields, making semantic analysis particularly relevant for addressing ecological issues (Pallawagau et al., 2025). One such key term is *salām* (سَلَام) and its derivations, which appear 158 times in the Qur'an (Abdul Baqi, 1992, pp. 355–358). Traditionally, *salām* has been understood primarily through two dimensions: the vertical dimension (the human–God relationship) and the horizontal dimension (interpersonal and social relations). However, a third dimension that is highly relevant to contemporary ecological challenges—the relationship between humans and the natural environment—has received limited scholarly attention.

Izutsu's semantic approach offers a rigorous methodological framework for uncovering the conceptual structure of Qur'anic terms by examining their relational meanings through syntagmatic, paradigmatic, and *weltanschauung* analysis (Izutsu, 2002). Previous semantic studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in revealing the dynamic moral meanings of Qur'anic concepts, such as *jihād*, which has been shown to encompass broader ethical and social dimensions beyond militaristic interpretations (Nurhuda, 2018). Similarly, research on terms such as *khalaqa* (Amalia et al., 2024), *ṣamrah* (Parbo, 2024), and *ḥizb* (Nugraha, 2019) confirms that Qur'anic semantic fields are fluid and interconnected, reflecting a comprehensive moral worldview.

At the same time, scholarship on *salām* has largely emphasized its social, political, and theological implications. Classical lexicographical works associate *salām* with security, wholeness, and stability (A.-R. Al-Iṣfahānī, n.d.; Manẓūr, 1994) while contemporary studies highlight its function in fostering social cohesion and conflict prevention. In parallel, Islamic environmental theology has expanded significantly, addressing ecological degradation through concepts such as *fasād fi al-arḍ* (Syamsudin, 2017), ecological piety (Bahri et al., 2025), *amānah* and *mīzān* (Sayem, 2023), and the resacralization of nature through Qur'anic interpretation (Setiawan & Mutaqin, 2025). Despite these developments, the semantic integration of *salām* within Islamic environmental ethics remains insufficiently explored.

Notably, no existing study has systematically examined *salām* through the three stages of Izutsu's semantic analysis—syntagmatic, paradigmatic, and *weltanschauung*—to construct an ecological theological paradigm. This research therefore occupies a distinct niche by integrating Qur'anic semantic analysis with Islamic ecotheology to articulate the concept of ecological *salām*. By exploring the semantic structure of *salām* and its relational networks with concepts such as *mīzān*, *iṣlāḥ*, and *fasād*, this study reveals peace not only as a spiritual and social ideal but also as an ethical framework for ecological harmony grounded in the Qur'anic worldview.

Accordingly, this study aims to uncover the semantic structure of *salām* in the Qur'an, elucidate its ecological dimensions, and formulate a conceptual foundation for ecological peace rooted in Qur'anic values in response to the accelerating global climate crisis.

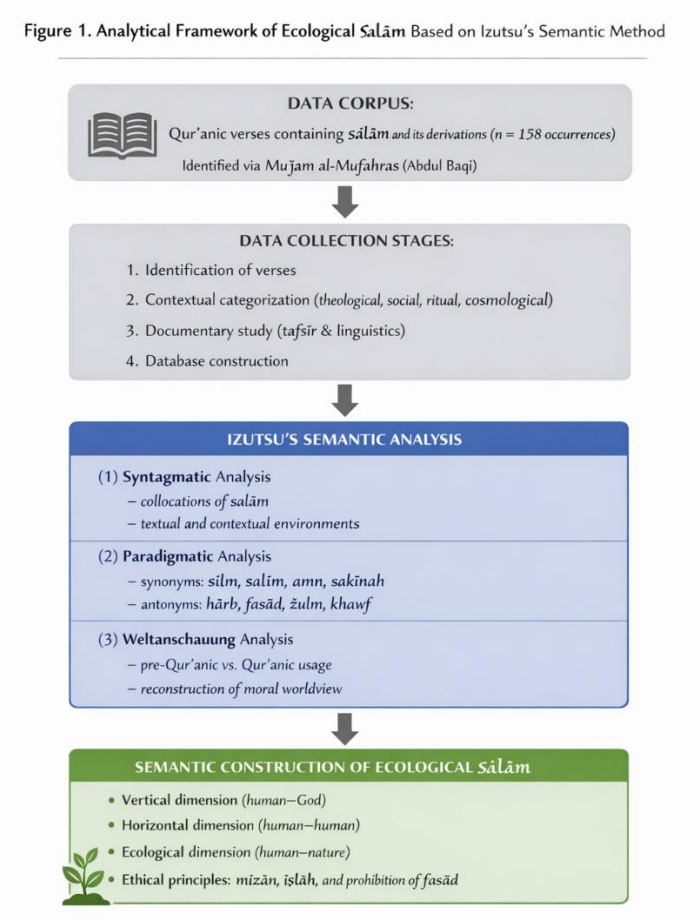
2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive–analytical method (Creswell & Creswell, 2022), as it enables an in-depth contextual and conceptual exploration of the semantic

meanings of Qur'anic terminology. The research was designed as a library-based study in which all data were obtained from authoritative written sources. The primary data consisted of Qur'anic verses containing the word *salām* (سَلَام) and its principal derivations—*islām, silm, salīm, muslim,* and *taslīm*—which appear a total of 158 times in the Qur'an. These occurrences were systematically identified using Muhammad Fuad Abdul Baqi's *Muʿjam al-Mufahras li Alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, which functioned as the primary concordance tool for corpus construction.

Secondary data were drawn from classical and contemporary tafsīr works, including *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsīr Ibn Kaśīr*, *al-Mīzān* by Ṭabāṭabāʾī, and *Tafsīr al-Manār* by Rashīd Riḍā. In addition, foundational linguistic and semantic references were consulted, such as Ibrahim Anis's *Dalālat al-Alfāẓ*, Mukhtar Umar's *al-Dalālah al-Lughawiyyah*, and Toshihiko Izutsu's *God and Man in the Qur'an* and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*. These were complemented by relevant national and international journal articles on Qur'anic semantics, Arabic linguistics, Islamic ecotheology, and ecological discourse in Islamic thought.

Data collection was conducted through four systematic stages. First, all Qur'anic verses containing *salām* and its derivations were identified through the concordance. Second, the verses were categorized according to their dominant contexts—namely theological, social, ritual, and cosmological—to capture semantic variation across different discursive settings. Third, a documentary analysis of tafsīr literature, lexicographical sources, and academic studies was undertaken to clarify contextual meanings and interpretive nuances. Fourth, the collected data were organized into a structured database comprising verse references, contextual annotations, collocational patterns, and preliminary semantic relations. The overall research workflow and analytical stages are summarized in an analytical diagram (Figure 1), illustrating the progression from corpus construction to semantic interpretation.



Data analysis followed the three stages of Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic methodology. The syntagmatic analysis examined the collocations and immediate textual environments of *salām* within the Qur'an. The paradigmatic analysis explored its semantic field by identifying relationships with synonymous terms such as *silm, salīm, amn,* and *sakīnah*, as well as antonymous concepts such as *ḥarb, fasād, ẓulm,* and *khawf*. The final stage, worldview (*weltanschauung*) analysis, compared pre-Qur'anic and Qur'anic usages of *salām* to reveal shifts in meaning and to reconstruct its conceptual structure within the Qur'anic moral universe.

Data validity and reliability were ensured through several strategies. Source triangulation was applied by cross-referencing Qur'anic verses with multiple tafsīr and linguistic sources. Member checking was conducted through consultations with experts in Qur'anic studies and Arabic linguistics—specifically senior scholars with doctoral qualifications and published research in Qur'anic interpretation and semantic analysis—to verify the accuracy and coherence of the analytical interpretations. In addition, an audit trail was maintained to document each stage of data collection and analysis, thereby enhancing transparency and methodological rigor. As this research relied exclusively on textual sources, formal ethical approval was not required; nevertheless, all sources were used responsibly, and scholarly integrity was strictly upheld.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Semantic Structure of the Word *Salām* in the Qur'an

a) Basic Meaning

Etymologically, the word *salām* (سَلَام) derives from the triliteral root *s-l-m* (س-ل-م), which generally denotes safety, wholeness, peace, and freedom from defect or harm. Ibn Fāris, in *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, explains that all derivations of this root point to a single core meaning, namely "safety and freedom from deficiency" (*as-salāmah wa al-khulū min al-ʿayb wa al-maṭʿan*) (Ibn Fāris al-Qazwīnī, 1979, pp. 90–92). The same root gives rise to several related terms such as *salīm* (one who is safe or sound), *islām* (submission as a means to attain safety), *muslim* (one who submits), and *as-Salām* (one of the Divine Names, meaning the source of safety and peace). This indicates that the fundamental meaning of *s-l-m* is not merely physical, but also spiritual and moral.

Linguists such as al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī in *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qurān* emphasize that *salām* carries the meaning of safety encompassing three dimensions: (1) physical safety from harm, (2) intellectual and moral safety from deviation, and (3) spiritual safety from sin and punishment. He writes that "*as-salām* is freedom from all forms of evil, whether visible or hidden" (A.-R. Al-Iṣfahānī, n.d., p. 245). Thus, the root *s-l-m* reflects a universal concept of the ideal condition of creation: peaceful, whole, and protected from corruption in all aspects of existence.

Within the Qur'anic linguistic context, this basic meaning forms the semantic foundation for all derivations of *s-l-m* found throughout the Qur'an. ʿAbd al-Bāqī, in *al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li Alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, records that derivatives of this root appear more than 158 times, including *salām*, *aslama*, *islām*, *muslim*, and *salīm* (Abdul Baqi, 1992, pp. 345–349). This high frequency indicates that the concepts of safety and peace constitute central themes in the Qurʿanic semantic structure, relating not only to human relations with one another but also to the relationship between humans and God.

From a theological-semantic perspective, the fundamental meaning of *s-l-m* has a direct connection with the concepts of *tawḥīd* and existential salvation. Submission to God (*islām*) is not merely a ritual act, but an effort to attain *salāmah*—a state of complete safety and peace. *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* interprets *salām* as "perfect peace, arising from total submission to God and from the purity of the heart from spiritual ailments" (Al-Marāghī, 1986, pp. 66–67). Thus, at its most fundamental level, *salām* integrates linguistic and spiritual meanings: a comprehensive safety—physical, spiritual, and social—reflecting the universal message of the Qur'an.

B. Syntagmatic Analysis: Contextual Relations

The syntagmatic analysis reveals the collocational patterns of the word *salām* with other lexical items, forming a rich and multidimensional semantic field. The key findings are as follows:

a) Collocation with Theological Concepts

The word *salām* frequently appears in contexts related to the names and attributes of God, as in Qur'an, Sūrat al-Ḥashr [59]:23:

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَۚ اَلْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوْسُ السَّلٰمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُۗ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Translation:
He is Allah—there is no deity except Him. He is the Sovereign, the Most Holy, the Source of

Peace, the Granter of Security, the Protector, the Almighty, the Compeller, the Supreme. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.

In this verse, *al-Salām* is one of the Divine Names (*Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*), indicating that peace and safety are divine attributes. Its collocation with *al-Mu'min* (the Granter of Security) and *al-Muhaymin* (the Protector) suggests a semantic field linking *salām* with protection, preservation, and divine security.

b) Collocation with the Concept of Creation

Qur'an, Sūrat al-An'ām [6]:127:

۞ لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

Translation:
For them is the Home of Peace (Paradise) with their Lord, and He is their Protector because of what they used to do (in righteousness).

The concept of *dār al-salām* (the Abode of Peace) refers to Paradise as a place free from all forms of defect, suffering, and corruption. This indicates that *salām* in the Qur'anic worldview represents the ideal state reflecting the perfection of God's creation.

Likewise, in Qur'an, Sūrat Yūnus [10]:25:

وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلٰى دَارِ السَّلٰمِ ۗ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

Translation:
And Allah invites (all people) to the Home of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path (according to their readiness to accept guidance).

This verse shows that *salām* is not only an eschatological condition but also a divine goal in earthly life. Its collocation with *yad'ū* (invites) indicates that *salām* is something to be sought, enacted, and realized.

c) Collocation with Ecological Concepts

A deeper analysis of verses containing *salām* reveals ecological dimensions that have often been overlooked.

Qur'an, Sūrat al-Baqarah [2]:208:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِى السِّلْمِ كَاۤفَّةً ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۗ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٠٨﴾

Translation:
O you who believe! Enter into peace/Islam wholeheartedly, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is a clear enemy to you.

The word *kāffatan* (entirely/wholly) indicates that *silm* (peace/Islam) must encompass all aspects of life, including humanity's relationship with the natural environment. Al-Ṭabarī explains

that *kāffatan* means "in all matters without exception," which includes not only rituals and social ethics but also the human-environment interaction (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000, pp. 156–158).

Furthermore, Qur'an, Sūrat al-Aʿrāf [7]:56:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوْهُ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا ۗ اِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Translation:
And do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set aright. And call upon Him with fear and hope. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good.

Although this verse does not explicitly use the word *salām*, it is syntagmatically linked to its semantic field. The antonymic pairing of *fasād* (corruption) and *iṣlāḥ* (restoration) shows that ecological *salām* means maintaining the balance and order of nature that God has perfected.

d) Collocation with the Concept of Balance (*Mīzān*)

Qur'an, Sūrat al-Raḥmān [55]:7–9:

وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيْزَانَ ۙ﴿٧﴾ اَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِى الْمِيْزَانِ ﴿٨﴾ وَاَقِيْمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيْزَانَ ﴿٩﴾

Translation:
7. *And He raised the heaven and set up the Balance,*
8. *so that you may not transgress within the Balance.*
9. *Establish weight with justice and do not violate the Balance.*

The concept of *mīzān* (balance) repeated three times highlights the centrality of equilibrium in the cosmic order. The syntagmatic relation between *mīzān* and the prohibition *taṭghaw* (to exceed limits) indicates that ecological *salām* can only be achieved when humans preserve natural balance and refrain from excessive exploitation.

C. Paradigmatic Analysis: The Semantic Network

The paradigmatic analysis reveals the semantic network of *salām* through its relations of synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy.

a) Synonymy Relations

Arabic Word	Transliteration	Core Semantic Nuance
سِلْم	*silm*	Peace defined primarily as the absence of war or conflict
سَلِيم	*salīm*	Safety emphasizing wholeness and freedom from defect
أَمْن	*amn*	Security focused on protection from external threats
سَكِينَة	*sakīnah*	Tranquility associated with inner calm and spiritual reassurance
طُمَأْنِينَة	*ṭumaʾnīnah*	Deep and settled serenity indicating enduring inner stability

These synonymy relations show that *salām* possesses a broad semantic field, encompassing both external dimensions (social–ecological peace) and internal dimensions (spiritual tranquility).

b) Antonymy Relations

Arabic Word	Transliteration	Core Antonymic Function
حَرْب	*ḥarb*	Negates *salām* as peace by representing armed conflict
فَسَاد	*fasād*	Opposes *salām* as ecological harmony through corruption and destruction
ظُلْم	*ẓulm*	Contradicts *salām* as ethical justice and moral balance
خَوْف	*khawf*	Undermines *salām* as psychological security and inner peace
اِضْطِرَاب	*iḍṭirāb*	Denies *salām* as cosmic and existential order

The most relevant antonym to the ecological crisis is *fasād* (corruption). In the Qur'an, *fasād* refers to acts that disrupt the natural order, as in QS al-Rūm [30]: 41:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَيْدِى النَّاسِ لِيُذِيْقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ عَمِلُوْا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's hands have earned, so that He may let them taste part of what they have done, that they might return to righteousness."

This verse explicitly links ecological degradation to human actions (*mā kasabat aydī al-nās*), indicating that environmental damage results from violating the principles of ecological *salām*.

c) Hyponymy Relations

The word *salām* functions as a hypernym (general concept) encompassing several hyponyms (specific concepts):

- **Vertical Salām**: Submission to God (*islām*)
- **Horizontal Salām**: Peace among humans (*ṣulḥ*, *musālamah*)
- **Ecological Salām**: Harmony with nature (*tawāzun*, *i'tidāl*)

This hierarchical structure indicates that *salām* in the Qur'anic worldview is a holistic concept that integrates spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions.

D. Weltanschauung: The Transformation of the Meaning of *Salām*

a) Pre-Qur'anic Era (Jāhiliyyah)

In pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, *salām* and its derivatives were typically used in limited contexts:

- **Greetings and Farewells**: *Salām* as a social expression of greeting (taḥiyyah). (Al-Jāḥiẓ, 1998, pp. 234–236)
- **Individual Safety**: Focus on personal or familial protection from physical danger. (Imru' al-Qays, 1994, pp. 45–47)
- **Tribal Peace Treaties**: *Ṣulḥ* or *silm* as agreements to cease intertribal warfare. (A. al-F. Al-Iṣfahānī, 2008, pp. 123–125)

In the Jāhiliyyah worldview, peace was limited to the horizontal dimension (between people) and was largely pragmatic. There was no spiritual (vertical) foundation for peace, and the ecological dimension was entirely absent. Nature was viewed as an object to be exploited, not a partner in a moral relationship.

b) Qur'anic Era: Expansion of the Semantic Field

The Qur'an radically transforms the concept of *salām*, expanding its semantic field into three major dimensions:



Figure 2. Three-dimensional paradigm of salām illustrating the expansion of its Qur'anic semantic field into vertical (theological), horizontal (social), and ecological (cosmological) dimensions.

1) Vertical Dimension (Theological)

The Qur'an elevates *salām* into a central theological concept, making it one of God's names (*al-Salām*) and the essence of the religion (*islām*). Peace is no longer merely a social condition but a reflection of submission to divine will.

QS Āl 'Imrān [3]: 19 emphasizes this:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam..."

The root *s-l-m* shows that the essence of religion is surrender (*taslīm*) to Allah, which produces *salām*—safety, harmony, and wholeness in all aspects of life.

2) Horizontal Dimension (Social)

The Qur'an broadens social peace from the mere absence of war to a value system encompassing justice (*'adl*), compassion (*raḥmah*), and solidarity (*ta'āwun*).

QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 10 states:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ

"Indeed, the believers are but brothers, so reconcile between your brothers..."

This shows that social *salām* requires active reconciliation, community repair, and mutual care, not simply non-conflict.

3) Ecological Dimension (Cosmological)

This is the most transformative and the most relevant to contemporary crises. The Qur'an introduces ecological *salām* through several key principles:

- **Ecological Tawḥīd :** QS al-Isrā' [17]: 44 asserts that the heavens, the earth, and all beings glorify Allah. This implies that nature possesses intrinsic spiritual value as a worshipping creation (*musabbiḥ*), not a mere resource. Ecological peace thus begins with acknowledging the sacredness of creation.
- **Khalīfah and Amanah:** QS al-Baqarah [2]: 30 designates humans as *khalīfah* (stewards). Humans are trustees (*amīn*), not absolute owners of the earth. Ecological *salām* requires fulfilling this moral responsibility by preserving rather than destroying.
- **Mīzān (Cosmic Balance):** QS al-Raḥmān [55]: 7–9 describes the universe as constructed in perfect balance. To maintain *salām* is to preserve this balance and avoid disrupting the cosmic order (*ṭughyān fī al-mīzān*).
- **Prohibition of Fasād (Corruption):** Verses such as QS al-A'rāf [7]: 56 and QS al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 77 forbid all forms of corruption on earth. This includes ecological destruction. The Qur'anic ban on *fasād* establishes ecological preservation as a theological obligation, not merely an ethical recommendation.

E. Actualizing *Salām* in the Context of the Global Climate Crisis

The global climate crisis constitutes one of the most severe ecological disruptions in modern history and can be understood as a manifestation of humanity's deviation from the Qur'anic principle of ecological *salām*—a state of harmony, balance, and wholeness between humans, nature, and the Creator. The Qur'an portrays the universe as an ordered and balanced system governed by divine wisdom; therefore, environmental degradation represents not merely an ecological failure but a theological and moral rupture.

Scientific data confirms the urgency of this crisis. Global temperatures have risen by approximately 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels and are projected to reach the critical 1.5°C threshold by 2030 without decisive intervention (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). The Arctic continues to lose around 13% of its ice volume per decade (National Snow and Ice Data Center, n.d.), while biodiversity loss has accelerated dramatically, with extinction rates estimated to be up to one thousand times the natural background level (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2019). At the same time, extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity, generating widespread economic losses and climate-induced displacement (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2022).

These phenomena exemplify what the Qur'an describes as *fasād fī al-arḍ* (corruption on earth), arising from human transgression (Q. al-Rūm [30]:41). The climate crisis thus reflects a violation of the divine principle of *mīzān* (balance) and a failure of humanity's role as *khalīfah* entrusted with safeguarding creation. Within this framework, ecological *salām* emerges as a Qur'anically grounded ethical paradigm that integrates theological responsibility, ecological balance, and moral stewardship in responding to contemporary environmental crises.

F. The Theological and Ethical Significance of Ecological *Salām*

The concept of *salām* carries multidimensional meanings in the Qur'an—peace, safety, restoration, wholeness, and harmonious order. When extended into the ecological domain, *salām* describes a state in which natural systems function in harmony, free from destructive human practices.

This ecological reading challenges the anthropocentric paradigm dominant in industrial modernity, which positions humans as exploiters with unlimited dominion over nature. In contrast, the Qur'anic worldview is theocentric: God is the Owner (*al-Mālik*) and Sustainer (*al-Rabb*) of all creation, while humans are entrusted with the moral responsibility to preserve, not destroy, the earth.

The principle of *mīzān*, extensively elaborated in Surah al-Raḥmān, establishes that the world was created with precise balance and proportion. The disruption of ecological systems—through deforestation, pollution, resource extraction, or greenhouse gas emissions—is therefore not merely a scientific concern but a spiritual violation, described in the Qur'an as *ṭughyān fī al-mīzān* (transgressing the limits of balance).

Fasād, likewise, is framed as a moral wrongdoing with worldly and eschatological consequences. Those who spread corruption (*mufsidūn*) are condemned not only for ecological destruction but for violating God's trust. The Qur'an also emphasizes *amānah*—a divine trust encompassing responsibilities toward future generations and non-human species. Islamic ethics therefore demands that the earth be preserved as an inheritance for those who come after us.

These principles converge into the framework of ecological *salām*—a notion that binds lexicology, theology, cosmology, and ethics into a holistic approach to environmental care.

G. Strategies for Actualizing Ecological *Salām*

Realizing ecological *salām* requires multidimensional strategies that integrate religious education, public policy, institutional practice, and community behavior.

a) Education and Awareness

Embedding ecological *salām* into Islamic education—ranging from primary schools to higher education—is fundamental. Curricula can highlight Qur'anic environmental ethics, prophetic ecological teachings, and contemporary sustainability concepts (Bahri et al., 2025). Religious platforms such as Friday sermons, community lectures, and digital campaigns play an essential role in shaping awareness, especially among youth.

b) Policy and Legal Frameworks

Islamic councils and ministries can influence national environmental policy. The issuance of environmental fatwas by institutions like MUI demonstrates the power of religious guidance in shaping public behavior (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2016). The revival of the classical concept of *ḥimā*—protected ecological zones—shows how tradition can inform modern conservation policy (Hashem, n.d.).

Extending halal certification to include ecological standards could encourage industries to reduce environmental impacts.

c) Institutional Practices

Mosques can serve as hubs for environmental transformation. Green Mosques incorporate renewable energy, water conservation technologies, sustainable architecture, recycling systems,

and educational programs. Zakat and waqf can be mobilized for ecological restoration, climate action, and support for vulnerable communities.

Forest *waqf*, water *waqf*, and biodiversity *waqf* represent innovative ways to link Islamic philanthropy with long-term environmental protection (Çizakça, 1998).

d) Grassroots and Social Movements

Muslim communities worldwide are developing ecological initiatives such as urban farming, zero-waste movements, community gardens, and eco-friendly transportation (Mangunjaya & Mckay, 2012). Interfaith environmental cooperation illustrates that ecological *salām* has the potential to unify diverse groups around shared planetary concerns (Palmer & Finlay, 2003).

H. Global and Local Examples of Successful Implementation

Several initiatives demonstrate how ecological *salām* can be actualized:

- The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) created the "Green Guide for Hajj," reducing the environmental footprint of millions of pilgrims.
- Indonesian eco-pesantren integrate spirituality, environmental education, and sustainable technology (Mangunjaya, 2011).
- The 2015 Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change mobilized Muslims globally to engage in climate action.
- Jordan's *ḥimā* program successfully restores degraded rangelands, reviving classical Islamic conservation methods in modern contexts (Hashem, n.d.).

These cases reveal that ecological *salām* is both actionable and scalable.

I. Integration of the Concept of Ecological *Salām* in National Policy: The Eco-Theology Program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama, Kemenag) has designated ecotheology as one of its national priority programs for the 2025–2029 period, as stipulated in Ministerial Decree (KMA) No. 244 of 2025 ((Kemenag), 2025). Minister of Religious Affairs Nasaruddin Umar emphasizes the importance of involving houses of worship as drivers of environmental conservation. The main programs initiated under this policy include:

- **Eco-Mosques / Green Mosques & Green Pesantren:** This program aims to transform mosques into centers of education and practical implementation of Islamic ecological ethics through initiatives such as waste management, renewable energy use, water conservation, and greening programs (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022). It actualizes the metaphor of *dār al-salām*—the mosque as a garden of paradise—into environmentally friendly practices. In the pesantren environment, Kemenag promotes the "Green Pesantren / Green Madrasah" movement, for instance through mass tree-planting initiatives, environmental education for students, sustainable lifestyle training, and pollution reduction (ANTARA, 2024b).
- **Green KUA:** One of the major targets for 2025 is the development of 160 environmentally friendly Offices of Religious Affairs (KUA), known as "Green KUA" (ANTARA, 2024a). These facilities are designed to feature green spaces, improved water and drainage systems, and solar panels to support clean energy. Through Green KUA, ecological values and environmental responsibility become integral components of public religious services,

rather than peripheral activities(Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). This demonstrates the integration of ecological *salām* values into administrative practice.

- **Green Waqf:** Kemenag actively encourages the transformation of traditional waqf concepts—from merely supporting social welfare or religious facilities—towards waqf that contributes to environmental sustainability. This initiative, known as "Green Waqf," has been implemented through collaborative programs with waqf organizations and civil society institutions (such as BWI and Mosaic), including the establishment of forest waqf as a sustainability solution (Mosaic Indonesia, 2025). These waqf forests are intended to absorb carbon, preserve biodiversity, and support local communities. Green Waqf underscores that waqf is not only a form of charity or worship but also a concrete contribution to climate mitigation and environmental preservation, aligned with the ecological concept of *salām*.
- **One Million Matoa Tree-Planting Movement:** As a large-scale implementation effort, Kemenag launched the One Million Matoa Tree-Planting Movement, accompanied by national circulars and campaigns as part of its ecotheology and environmental preservation program (Sekretariat Jenderal Kementerian Agama, 2025). This movement is synchronized with the 2025 Earth Day commemoration and involves all Kemenag units: KUA offices, mosques, pesantren, and religious educational institutions. The movement demonstrates that environmental values are not merely symbolic or theoretical but are realized through mass action involving broad communities—showing that ecological *salām* can be actualized collectively.

J. Challenges and Evaluation

Implementation challenges include limited environmental literacy among religious leaders, insufficient funding, resistance to lifestyle changes, and gaps in institutional capacity. Capacity-building programs, innovative funding models—particularly through zakat and waqf—and recognition systems for environmentally responsible institutions can help overcome these barriers. Continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensure accountability and long-term impact.

K. A Model for Integrating Ecological *Salām*

This research proposes a four-tiered model:

1. **Theological–Linguistic Foundations**: Grounding ecological ethics in the semantic depth of *salām*, *mīzān*, *fasād*, and *amānah*.
2. **Institutional Policy Development**: Formulating regulations and allocating resources to support ecological commitments.
3. **Field Implementation**: Carrying out programs across mosques, religious offices, pesantren, and educational institutions.
4. **Social Transformation**: Encouraging environmentally conscious behavior as an expression of worship and obedience to God.

This model affirms that ecological *salām* is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical vision for restoring harmony between God, humanity, and the natural world.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of *salām*, when examined through Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic framework, evolves from its basic meaning of safety and wholeness into a comprehensive paradigm encompassing theological, social, and ecological dimensions. Syntagmatic and paradigmatic analyses reveal that *salām* is deeply interconnected with key Qur'anic concepts such as *al-Salām* (the Divine), *mīzān* (cosmic balance), *iṣlāḥ* (rectification), and the prohibition of *fasād* (corruption). Through the Qur'anic worldview (*weltanschauung*), *salām* is transformed from a pre-Islamic notion of interpersonal security into a holistic ethical framework governing the relationship between humans, God, society, and the natural world. This transformation gives rise to the concept of ecological *salām*, grounded in ecological *tawḥīd*, stewardship (*amānah*), and the human role as *khalīfah*, thereby positioning environmental responsibility as an essential component of religious obedience.

In the context of the escalating global climate crisis, this study affirms that contemporary ecological degradation represents a violation of the Qur'anic principle of *salām* and demands an urgent ethical and theological response. Theoretically, this research contributes to Qur'anic studies by extending Izutsu's semantic method into the field of Islamic ecotheology, demonstrating how linguistic analysis can uncover the moral foundations of environmental stewardship embedded in the sacred text. Practically, the framework of ecological *salām* offers a normative basis for developing environmentally oriented Islamic education, informing religious legal discourse, shaping public policy, and strengthening mosque- and community-based ecological movements. Given the accelerating pace of environmental destruction, the actualization of ecological *salām* is no longer optional but an urgent imperative for integrating faith, ethics, and ecological responsibility in confronting the global climate crisis.

Acknowledgment (if any)

The author extends sincere gratitude to the supervising lecturer for the guidance and direction provided throughout this research. Appreciation is also conveyed to fellow students of the Master's Program in Arabic Language and Literature for their valuable discussions and insights. This study is dedicated to future generations who will inherit this earth—may we be able to pass it on in a better condition than when we received it.

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