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Towards an Islamic Theology of Nature: An Empirically Informed Conceptual Framework for Marsabit County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to develop a contextualised Islamic theology of nature framework to strengthen ecological responsibility and environmental sustainability. Marsabit County, Kenya, faces persistent ecological degradation despite Islamic teachings that promote environmental care and stewardship. It examined the application of Islamic principles, including divine trust (Amānah), stewardship (Khalīfah), balance (Mīzān), and the prohibition of extravagance (Isrāf), amid deforestation, overgrazing, habitat loss, poverty, and recurrent droughts. Guided by Liberative Social Solidarity Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design in Moyale, North Horr, Saku, and Laisamis sub-counties. A sample of 384 was drawn from a target population of 217,079 Muslims using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Simple random sampling selected Madrasa learners, youths, and adults, while purposive sampling identified religious leaders and other key informants. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 28.0 and presented through descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were thematically analysed. Of 339 questionnaires distributed, 334 were returned, representing a 98.53 per cent response rate. In total, 368 participants contributed data through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings revealed that immediate livelihood pressures often undermine Islamic conservation ethics, trapping communities in a cycle of environmental degradation and survival-driven resource exploitation. The study proposes linking conservation principles with livelihood support through Zakat and financing for alternative clean energy. It also recommends establishing a regional ecological centre and joint faith-based task forces to strengthen religious engagement with county environmental policies, particularly in sustainable rangeland and water management. The framework provides a context-sensitive approach to integrating Islamic teachings, livelihood security, and ecological sustainability.

Key terms: Conservation, Islam, nature, stewardship, theology.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation has become a global issue that has grown in severity in recent years, especially in arid and semi-arid regions where climate change, deforestation, habitat destruction, and increasing stress on natural resources threaten environmental stability (Nasr, 1996).In Marsabit County, Kenya, environmental sustainability and pastoral livelihoods are still facing challenges from recurrent droughts, overgrazing, water scarcity, and loss of vegetation. In this study, environmental degradation refers to the deterioration of the quality and availability of natural resources, while environmental conservation refers to the protection, restoration, and sustainable use of natural resources. Islamic theology of nature involves the connection between Allah, humans, and nature, which is based on the religious teachings that emphasise stewardship, responsibility, and ecological equilibrium. Preservation of creation and responsible management of natural resources are also themes of moral instructions that can be found in Islamic traditions (Foltz et al., 2003).

Despite these teachings, however, environmental degradation persists in the communities living in poverty and facing climatic challenges and natural resource dependence. While there is some awareness of the importance of Islamic environmental ethics (Gade, 2019), there is a lack of study of the implications of Islamic environmental ethics in the particular environmental and socio-economic context of Muslim communities in Marsabit County. To address this, this study has examined Islamic teachings on environmental protection, analysed current conservation practices, considered Islamic approaches to sustainable resource management, and developed a contextualised framework of Islamic theology of nature. The investigation used research questions to highlight the causes of environmental degradation, the perception of environmental conservation in the context of Islamic teachings, community experiences of conservation, environmental protection strategies, and the development of a theological framework appropriate to Marsabit County. The study thus aimed at deepening the linkage of religious values and environmental action by developing a framework of Islamic theology of nature that would motivate the participation of the community, ecological responsibility, and sustainable management of natural resources in Marsabit County, Kenya.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers from all over the world have reviewed the contribution of Islamic teachings to environmental conservation, specifically the duty of humankind to take care of and preserve nature. In his work, Nasr (1996) emphasises the spiritual dimension of the issue of environmental protection, but not much attention is paid to the application of religious principles to practical environmental protection efforts. Foltz et al. (2003) look at the Islamic views on stewardship, environmental justice, and sustainability, but they do not offer a community-based programmatic approach to environmental issues. Likewise, the connection of Islamic environmental values and community practices is shown by Gade (2019), but she fails to provide a satisfactory coverage of the socio-economic and ecological circumstances of pastoral Muslim African communities. The studies throw light on the role of Islam in the protection of the environment, but they do not provide answers to questions concerning the application of these teachings in the vulnerable communities. The Islamic dimension to environmental conservation in Kenya has received little attention, especially in relation to ways to encourage involvement of religious communities in sustainable resource management. So far, the involvement of religious communities in sustainable resource management in Kenya has received limited attention, particularly in terms of the role of religious teachings in this regard. This shows the need for an operational approach to link Islamic principles on the

environment with local conservation action. Persistent droughts, deficient water resources, overgrazing, deforestation, poverty, and high dependence on pastoralism are key challenges in the area of environmental conservation in Marsabit County.

County Government of Marsabit (2023) identifies these challenges and outlines a path towards climate resilience in the county, but does not explore how Islamic values can contribute to the conservation of the environment. Likewise, Manzoor (1984) and Hobson (1998) give some information on the relationship between religion and environmental responsibility, but have not developed a framework applicable in the context of Marsabit. While there are some existing works that prove that religious values and sustainable environmental practices are important, there is limited evidence to suggest how these values can be applied to normal resource use and to help alleviate the economic and social issues faced by local communities. This study was designed to fill this gap by creating a contextualised framework that links nature-theological concepts of stewardship, balance, justice, and accountability within the Islamic faith to community-level nature conservation practices and activities, supporting sustainable natural resource management and building resilience in the community of Marsabit County.

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in the Liberative Social Solidarity Theory (LST), which emphasises the transformative role of religion and its potential to engage with social, economic and environmental injustice (Gutiérrez, 2009). The theory acknowledges faith as a basis for social responsibility, ethical behaviour, and social change, specifically in the context of poverty-stricken and environmentally precarious communities. In a religious context, the theme of Islam during Ramadan (2009) emphasises the responsibility of Muslims to use Islamic principles in real solutions to address problems like environmental degradation. The theory was applied in the creation of a theology of nature within the context of Islam in Marsabit County, Kenya, to analyse the relationship between the principles of Islamic environmental thinking, the responsibilities of humans, and ecological sustainability. It draws attention to the importance of Islamic principles like Tawhid (unity of creation), Khalifah (stewardship), Amanah (trusteeship), and Mizan (ecological balance) in establishing proper ethical relations between people and nature. Moreover, religious institutions, mosques, madrasas, and religious leaders have the potential to raise environmental awareness, community-based conservation efforts, and ecological justice. Liberative Social Solidarity Theory helped to integrate Islamic teachings on the environment, social responsibility, and environmental action by enhancing this study to develop a conceptual framework of Islamic theology of nature for sustainable environmental management and community resilience in Marsabit County with a foundation in Islamic teachings.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey research design and employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate perceptions of an Islamic theology of nature in Marsabit County, Kenya. The study was conducted in Moyale, Saku, North Horr and Laisamis Sub-Counties. The target population included all Muslims (men, women, youths, Children attending madrasa, and Islamic religious leaders), totalling 217,079 Muslims (2019, KPHC). The sample size was planned to be 384 according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size. Simple random sampling techniques were applied in the study for the respondents of the Muslim questionnaire, and purposive selection was used for the other Muslim religious leaders and key informants. A questionnaire response rate of 98.53% was achieved, as 334 of the 339 questionnaires were filled out. Of the 13 Sheikh, Amir, Kadhi, and Hajj who were invited for interviews, 10

participated, and of the 32 sets of Maalim and Tablik invited for focus group discussions, 24 participated. A total of 368 people participated in these groups. Questionnaires were given to respondents according to their categorical differences; men and women were asked the same set of questions, whereas children and youth were asked different sets of questions. Thus, differences in the number of responses for each table are due to the nature of the questionnaire design, not missing responses. Percentages are based on those who responded to each question.

Ethical clearance was granted by Chuka University, while research authorisation was given by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were discussed during data collection. Data collected were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) in SPSS version 28. Interviews and Focus group discussions were transcribed and thematically organised and coded. The findings from the different sources were synthesised to create depth of understanding in relation to the theological perspectives of the participants and the contextual factors surrounding issues of environmental conservation.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Theology of Nature (ITN)

Islamic Theology of Nature (ITN) is an Islamic paradigm of the interaction between humans and nature that was taken from the Quran and Sunnah (Nasr, 1996). The focus group discussions with Maalim and Tablik participants in Moyale and the findings of respondents in North Horr, Saku and Laisamis revealed the following principles underlying this understanding. These encompassed the notion of "Oneness of Allah (Tawheed)," "humans as stewards (khalīfah)," "environmental balance (mīzān)," and "avoiding excess consumption and wastefulness (isrāf)" (Foltz et al., 2003). They viewed nature as a representation of Allah's presence, intelligence, and power, and they stressed the religious responsibility of humans to have respect for and safeguard nature. This view was that the environmental issues that were faced in Marsabit County, such as deforestation and overgrazing, were a result of failure to live up to the responsibility given to the human family. The results thus point to the moral and spiritual responsibility for protection of the environment that goes beyond ecological aspects (Gade, 2019).

The Human Role as Stewards (Khalīfah)

In Islamic theology, humanity's role is as stewards, not as absolute owners of nature (R1, 2025). As for the concept of khalīfah, it entails the person's duty with respect to the use of natural resources in a manner that preserves them for future generations and protects them (Khalid, 2017). The Moyale focus group discussions showed that participants linked stewardship to the responsibility to protect the environment and maintain nature's balance. This responsibility was manifested in Marsabit County pastoral communities through the need to manage natural resources and their protection, to look after the livestock, to conserve grazing land, to manage shared natural resources, and to ensure the conservation of the environment for future generations. Participants acknowledged that these are a component of the divine trust (amānah) given to humanity. As a result, environmental practices like grazing without control, deforestation, and pollution were considered to be not in line with the Islamic teachings on proper usage of resources. The results show that stewardship is a religious dimension to instigate sustainable environmental practices in pastoral groups.

Nature as a Reflection of Divine Attributes

The Islamic faith views the world as a manifestation of Allah's attributes, such as His power (qudrah), wisdom (hikmah) and beauty (jamāl) (Manzoor, 1984). The focus group discussions with participants from the Maalim and Tablik revealed that the participants connected the elements of the natural environment to the creative power and wisdom of Allah. The landscape, weather conditions, and interdependent ecosystems of Marsabit County were known to be indicators of the Creation and Godly order within nature.R1 (2025) said that nature is the manifestation of His Signs (āyāt) through which His Power, Wisdom, and Mercy become apparent. In the same way, R8 (2025) highlighted that both the Quran and Hadiths provide a call to the believers to look at and observe nature. This reflection (tadabbur) and appreciation (shukr) foster respect for creation and enhance the knowledge of environmental protection as an act of worship ('ibādah) (Benzoni, 2007). The principle of balance (mīzān) was also related to human negative practices in ecosystems. In this context, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and environmental instability were interpreted as problems to be faced, which necessitate responsible human activities to maintain ecological balance. The results of this study reveal the correlation between Islamic spiritual teachings and the conservation of environmental resources, which is especially applicable in the ecological and pastoral environment of Marsabit County.

Nature Reveals the Greatness Of Allah

The data presented in Table 1 below address children's affirmation of whether Nature reveals the greatness of Allah. This final variable measures the theological conviction that underpins all ecological ethics, assessing whether the Madrasa children perceive the natural world as a direct sign (*Ayah*) of divine power and artistry.

Table 1: Nature Reveals the Greatness of Allah

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	57	47.4
	Agreed	47	39.5
	Undecided	5	3.9
	Disagreed	11	9.2
	Sub-Total	120	100.0
	Youth, Men & Women	214	
Total		334	

The results reveal that 47.4 per cent strongly agree with the statement 'Nature is evidence of the greatness of Allah' and 39.5 per cent agree with the statement, making a majority of 86.9 per cent of the children in the Madrasa sample agree with the statement, reflecting the deeply internalised Islamic ecological ethics within the younger generation, and the place of the cosmos as a sacred text (Ayāt) that is to be protected (Soim, 2026). Conversely, a very small minority 9.2 per cent disagreed, and 3.9 per cent were undecided, which reflects that a small number of Madrasa students are more influenced by pragmatic than theological arguments, underscoring the importance of including future sermons and curricula in Madrasa education to explicitly promote 'tafakkur' (contemplation) of the local arid ecosystems (Goshu, 2026). As it grows an intrinsic solidarity with creation, this shared consensus goes beyond an abstract appreciation of a spiritual kind: it is a powerful movement in the community toward ecological justice.

Islamic Theology Supports the Sacredness of the Environment

The data presented in Table 2 below addresses the youths ' affirmation of whether Islamic theology supports the sacredness of the environment. This variable measures the theological conviction that the environment possesses intrinsic value, deriving its sacred status from its relationship to the Creator, which underpins the ethic of profound respect for nature.

Table 2: Islamic Theology Supports the Sacredness of the Environment

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	40	52.6
	Agreed	26	34.2
	Undecided	3	3.9
	Disagreed	5	6.6
	Strongly Disagreed	2	2.7
	Total	76	100.0
	Children attending Madrasa, Men & Women	258	
Total		334	

The results revealed that 52.6 per cent strongly agreed and 34.2 per cent agreed that Islamic theology supports the sacredness of the environment, meaning the youth sample majority (86.8%) viewed environmental conservation as an act of worship (Ibādah) and reverence rather than a merely pragmatic utility task. On the other hand, 2.7 strongly disagreed, 6.6 disagreed, and 3.9 per cent were undecided, meaning that 13.2 per cent of the minority is non-affirming, which supports the existence of anthropocentric barriers or views that prevent full theological alignment, and calls for targeted educational initiatives based on the primary religious texts (Mohamed, 2012). This high consensus is based on Liberative Solidarity Theory, in which solidarity is extended to all creation, which functions as an extension of their spiritual duties, and thus mobilises youth to engage in protecting the natural world.

Islamic Framework for Understanding Nature

The data presented in Table 3 below addresses the youth's affirmation of whether there should be an Islamic framework for understanding nature. This variable measures the youth's demand for a formalised, systematic theological and ethical model to guide their interaction with the environment, moving beyond scattered teachings to a cohesive doctrine.

Table 3: Islamic Framework for Understanding Nature

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	20	26.4
	Agreed	41	53.9
	Undecided	4	5.3
	Disagreed	8	10.5
	Strongly Disagreed	3	3.9
	Total	76	100.0
	Children attending Madrasa, Men & Women	258	
Total		334	

The research results indicated that 53.9 per cent agreed and 26.4 per cent strongly agreed that there is a need for a formal Islamic framework for nature, which means that 80.3 per cent of youth stated that they agree that it is necessary to have intellectual rigour and practical clarity in Islam relating to nature, theology, jurisprudence and policy (Özdemir, 2026). But on the other hand, 19.7 per cent disagreed or argued that the teaching must be scattered and that there is no need to institutionalise anything, thereby pointing to the possibility of resistance to institutionalisation or an unwillingness to accept a new law (Mohamed, 2012). This collective effort for a structured doctrine, based on Liberative Solidarity Theory, does more than transform environmental engagement from a reactive form of piety to a proactive institutionalised one for the purpose of community resilience.

The Quran and Hadith Provide a Theological Basis for Eco-Ethics

The data presented in Table 4 below pertains to the youths ' affirmation of whether the Qur'an and Hadith provide a theological basis for eco-ethics. This variable measures the youth's recognition of the primary sacred texts as the legitimate, foundational source for environmental ethics, which is crucial for the faith's authority in conservation.

Table 4: The Quran and Hadith Provide a Theological Basis for Eco-Ethics

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	24	31.6
	Agreed	32	42.1
	Undecided	5	6.6
	Disagreed	7	9.2
	Strongly Disagreed	8	10.5
	Sub-Total	76	100.0
	Children attending Madrasa, Men & Women	258	
Total		334	

The results of the findings show that 42.1 per cent agreed, 31.6 per cent strongly agreed and 26.3 per cent disagreed that the Qur'an and Hadith gave the necessary theological underpinning to the issue of eco-ethics; that is, 73.7 per cent agreed and strongly agreed that the Qur'an and Hadith gave the necessary theological foundation for eco-ethics, and not as an imposition from abroad, but as a direct command of Allah via the received message, based on the concept of stewardship (khalīfah) as stated in Qur'an 2:30: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority" (Lambek, 1990). In addition, this view sees ecological crises as a result of human moral failure, based on Qur'an 30:41: "Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned" (Nasr, 1996). On the other hand, 10.5 per cent strongly disagreed, 9.2 per cent and 6.6 per cent were neutral (26.3% non-affirming minority), indicating that there is a need for contemporary interpretations of the sacred texts (tafsīr) that connect ancient with modern environmental and ecological issues. This theological foundation is based on Liberative Solidarity Theory and complements various arguments Nasr (1996) presents that suggest viewing nature as a divine sign (āyah) and not as economic property provides a means to resist modern ecological exploitation and to restore a worldview of the sacred.

Environmentalism is Part of Islamic Identity

The data presented in Table 5 below addresses the children attending Madrasas' affirmation of whether Environmentalism should be part of Islamic identity. This variable measures Madrasa children's demand for the integration of ecological commitment into the core definition of being Muslim, moving environmental concern from a mere policy issue to a non-negotiable ethical component of faith.

Table 5: Environmentalism should be Part of Islamic Identity

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	33	27.6
	Agreed	63	51.3
	Undecided	6	5.3
	Disagreed	9	7.9
	Strongly disagreed	9	7.9
	Sub-Total	120	100.0
	Youth, Men & Women	214	
Total		334	

The results reveal that 78.9 per cent of the Children attending the Madrasa sample agreed that there is a need to make environmentalism a part of Islamic identity, with 51.3 per cent agreeing and 27.6 per cent strongly agreeing. This demonstrated the successful shift of environmentalism from being a secondary concern to a primary one for children in Islamic identity, and further strengthened the idea of stewardship (khalīfah) as an integral part of moral personhood (Hancock, 2020) within Islam. On the other hand, 21.1 per cent (7.9% disagreed, 7.9% strongly disagreed, and 5.3% were undecided) constituted a minority that showed resistance to the fusion of environmentalism, secular or Western connotations, and the need for religious leaders to develop and apply the existing Islamic vocabulary to support the mandate firmly in the tradition (Desplat, 2005). Rooted in Liberative Solidarity Theory, embedding ecological responsibility within collective religious identity leads to increased mobilisation at the community level and to the conservation being driven by deep spiritual motivation.

Marsabit Needs More Awareness on Islamic Theology Of Nature

The data presented in Table 6 below pertains to the youths ' affirmation of whether Marsabit needs more awareness of Islamic theology of nature. This variable measures the youth's perceived gap in deep theological understanding despite the general acceptance of environmental ethics, pointing to a need for more explicit and sophisticated teaching on the religious philosophy of nature.

Table 6: Marsabit Needs More Awareness on Islamic Theology of Nature

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	39	51.3
	Agreed	31	40.8
	Undecided	2	2.6
	Disagreed	4	5.3
	Sub-Total	76	100.0
	Children attending Madrasa, Men & Women	258	
Total		334	

The results indicate that 51.3 per cent strongly agreed and 40.8 per cent agreed, resulting in a majority of 92.1 per cent who agreed that there is a need to be more aware of the Islamic theology of nature, which is a call to practice more than just superficial lessons of Islam but to enter the deeper discourse of its philosophy, metaphysics and jurisprudence of stewardship (khalīfah) (Özdemir, 2026). However, 5.3 per cent disagreed, while 2.6 per cent (with a slight difference of 7.9% of the non-affirming minority) believed that the current awareness is good, which in turn indicates pedagogical changes needed in religious institutions and establishing special training for the teaching of religious ecological awareness within the context of the origin of its foundations and concepts. On the basis of the theory of Liberative Solidarity, this is an omnipresent pursuit of depth in learning that transforms reactive piety into a lasting dedication to the cause of Environmental justice, as a philosophical commitment.

Islamic Theology Should Guide Local Environmental Policies

The data presented in Table 7 below addresses the youths ' affirmation of whether Islamic theology should guide local environmental policies. This variable measures the youth's demand for the formal integration of faith-based ethics into secular governance, assessing the desire for religious principles to inform and shape practical conservation law and administrative decisions in Marsabit County.

Table 7: Islamic Theology should Guide Local Environmental Policies

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	25	32.9
	Agreed	36	47.4
	Undecided	2	2.6
	Disagreed	11	14.5
	Strongly Disagreed	2	2.6
	Sub-Total	76	100.0
	Children attending Madrasa, Men & Women	258	
Total		334	

According to the research, 32.9 per cent strongly agree, and 47.4 per cent of the youth sample expressed a clear majority of 80.3 per cent that Islamic theology should guide local environmental policies, which means there is a need for an integrated model of governance based on stewardship (khalīfah) and non-wastefulness (isrāf) for the acceptance of the community. On the other hand, 2.6 per cent strongly disagreed, 14.5 per cent disagreed, and 2.6 per cent were undecided, for a non-affirming minority of 19.7 per cent who appear to have concerns about separation between state and religion and/or policy rigidity, and thus the need for consultation and collaboration mechanisms based on religious principles in order to inform ethical goals, not to determine technical implementation (Houssaini, 2024). This policy perspective is based on Liberative Solidarity Theory, connecting spiritual commitment to inclusive dialogue to ensure the sustainability of local resource management, grounded in social justice.

Nature Should be Discussed in Islamic Conferences and Forums

The data presented in Table 8 below addresses the youth's affirmation of whether Nature should be discussed in Islamic conferences and forums. This variable measures the youth's demand for mainstreaming environmental discourse within high-level religious and intellectual gatherings, moving the topic from local mosque activity to a key agenda item for scholars and leaders.

Table 8: Nature Should be Discussed in Islamic Conferences and Forums

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	22	28.9
	Agreed	42	55.3
	Undecided	5	6.7
	Disagreed	4	5.2
	Strongly Disagreed	3	3.9
	Sub-Total	76	100.0
	Children attending Madrasa, Men & Women	258	
Total		334	

The results showed that 55.3 per cent agreed and 28.9 per cent strongly agreed, indicating a majority (84.2%) of the youth sample said that there should be a way of discussing nature in Islamic forums, suggesting that the institutionalised intellectual discourse and scholarly consensus are important in the process of translating theological insights into effective grassroots action (Hashem, 2006b). On the other hand, 15.8 per cent (3.9%, 5.2%, 6.7%) do not agree, or are undecided about high-level discussion in academic circles, which does not yield any concrete outcomes, and this means that academic talks must be action-oriented and directly linked to the implementation projects in Marsabit County (Jati et al., 2022). Drawing on Liberative Solidarity Theory, this strategic approach to institutionalised dialogue connects the theoretical and community mobilisation dimensions in order to enable ecological stewardship to be discussed and put into action.

Establishing Islamic Theology of Nature Can Improve Marsabit's County Environment

The data presented in Table 9 below addresses the youth's affirmation of whether establishing Islamic theology of nature can improve Marsabit County's environment. This variable measures the youth's perceived practical, tangible utility of theological formalisation, linking intellectual development directly to concrete environmental outcomes.

Table 9: Establishing Islamic Theology of Nature Can Improve Marsabit County Environment

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	15	19.7
	Agreed	34	44.7
	Undecided	7	9.3
	Disagreed	14	18.4
	Strongly Disagreed	6	7.9
	Sub-Total	76	100.0
	Children attending Madrasa, Men & Women	258	
Total		334	

Overall, 66.9 per cent of the youth respondents agreed that an Islamic theology of nature could enhance the environment of the country by offering directives for understanding the moral dimensions of desertification issues, authoritative management directives, and mobilisation of the community (Bashir, 2025a). In contrast, the 35.6 per cent non-affirming minority represents doubt about the direct connection between theological concepts and practical ecological change, emphasising the need to articulate

theological themes into specific water management and resource sharing proposals, moving them from the realm of abstract theology to concrete actions. (Abumoghli, 2023) This pragmatic expectation for tangible effects and change connects spiritual ethics to the practices of the people and environment, applying spiritual thinking to the struggles of community survival and ecological justice as grounded in Liberative Solidarity Theory.

Nature Is a Sign (Ayah) Of Allah's Creation According to the Qur'an

The data presented in Table 10 below addresses the men and women's affirmation of whether Nature is a sign (Ayah) of Allah's creation according to the Qur'an. This variable measures the theological foundation of environmental ethics across the full respondent sample, assessing the belief that the natural world holds intrinsic, sacred value derived from its direct relationship to the Creator.

Table 10: Nature is a Sign (Ayah) of Allah's Creation according to the Qur'an

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	52	37.7
	Agreed	69	50.0
	Undecided	7	5.1
	Disagreed	3	2.1
	Strongly Disagreed	7	5.1
	Sub-Total	138	100.0
	Youth & Children attending Madrasa	196	
Total		334	

The results indicate that 50.0 per cent agreed and 37.7 per cent strongly agreed, confirming that there is, in fact, a majority of 87.7 per cent that nature is an Ayah (sign) of Allah's creation; this demonstrates how deeply Islamic ecology is institutionalised, where the environment is regarded not as a means to an end, but as an object of contemplation (tafakkur) and reverence. On the other hand, the 12.3 per cent non-affirming minority suggests that there is a small minority which demands a more scriptural teaching of ecology and theology (Gada, 2024). This high consensus is supported by qualitative findings drawn from the North Horr Sub-County, which suggest that the act of observing nature's complexity is more than just an act of contemplation; it is an act of responsibility to ensure its protection as a direct reflection of the power of the Creator (R2, 2025).

Islam Emphasises Balance and Harmony in Creation (Mizan)

The data presented in Table 11below addresses the men and women's affirmation of whether Islam emphasises balance and harmony in creation (*Mīzān*). This variable measures the perceived awareness and acceptance of the core theological concept of cosmic balance as mandated by the faith, which serves as the fundamental justification for all conservation efforts.

Table 11: Islam Emphasises Balance and Harmony in Creation (Mizan)

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	59	42.8
	Agreed	41	29.7
	Undecided	14	10.1
	Disagreed	13	9.4
	Strongly Disagreed	11	8.0
	Sub-Total	138	100.0
	Youth & Children attending Madrasa	196	
Total		334	

In this regard, it was found that a majority of 72.5 per cent (29.7% agreed and 42.8% strongly agreed) of men and women believe that balance and harmony are the central tenets of Islam, which is reflected in the creation's balance and harmony, and the violation of which is forbidden from the ethical perspective (Rahmat et al., 2025). On the other hand, 27.5 per cent (8.0 per cent strongly disagreed, 9.4 per cent disagreed, and 10.1 per cent were undecided) were in the non-affirming minority who find it challenging to relate this abstract theological idea to day-to-day resource usage, underscoring the need for religious leaders to connect these abstract theological concepts to real local situations in Marsabit County (Pius, 2026). Based on the principles of Liberative Solidarity Theory, this philosophy of Mīzān gives conservation a new purpose, that of being an active defence of God's design, and requires a set of visual and narrative tools that more directly connect sustainable practices with the survival of communities and ecological justice.

Islamic Theology Considers Sustainable Living a Moral Obligation

The data presented in Table 12 below addresses men and women's affirmation of whether Islamic theology considers sustainable living a moral obligation. This final variable measures the community's perceived theological mandate for sustainability, assessing the belief that prudently managing resources for future generations is not optional but a required act of faith.

Table 12: Islamic Theology Considers Sustainable Living a Moral Obligation

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	60	43.5
	Agreed	64	46.4
	Undecided	6	4.3
	Disagreed	4	2.9
	Strongly Disagreed	4	2.9
	Sub-Total	138	100.0
	Youth & Children attending Madrasa	196	
Total		334	

The results revealed that for both men and women, 43.5 and 46.4 per cent, respectively, strongly agreed, with the majority of 89.9 per cent of the valid sample (n=138) indicating that Islamic theology requires sustainable living as a moral responsibility, thus successfully incorporating modern principles of prudence about using scarce resources into its classical teachings about stewardship (khalīfah) and waste prohibition

(isrāf) (Bashir, 2025b). By contrast, there was a 10.1 per cent minority (2.9% disagreed, 2.9% strongly disagreed, and 4.3 per cent were undecided) who were not affirming, suggesting that a few people have some difficulty balancing the abstract moral demands with the limitations of poverty or immediate survival, and thus the need to make the theological obligations practical, low-cost, and accessible in resource-poor settings (Asante & Woode, 2026). This high consensus is based on Liberative Solidarity Theory, putting intergenerational equity at the centre of sustainability goals as a sacred responsibility and an obligation of religious duty.

Islamic Theology Can Offer Solutions to Current Environmental Challenges in Marsabit County

The data presented in Table 13 below addresses men's and women's affirmation of whether Islamic theology can offer solutions to current environmental challenges in Marsabit County. This variable measures the perceived efficacy and practical relevance of the religious framework in addressing concrete, local ecological crises, linking theological principles to tangible problem-solving.

Table 13: Islamic Theology Can Offer Solutions to Current Environmental Challenges in Marsabit County

		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly Agreed	46	33.3
	Agreed	66	47.8
	Undecided	7	5.1
	Disagreed	12	8.7
	Strongly Disagreed	7	5.1
	Sub-Total	138	100.0
	Youth & Children attending Madrasa	196	
Total		334	

The majority of respondents, 81.1 per cent (n=138), totally agreed that Islamic theology can provide solutions to environmental problems in Marsabit County, with 47.8 per cent agreeing and 33.3 per cent strongly agreeing, hence showing high confidence that the teachings of Islam such as stewardship (khalīfah) and prohibition of waste (isrāf) offer a framework for addressing drought and desertification in the county (Oladipo et al., 2026). However, 18.8 per cent of the minority disagreed, with 5.1 per cent strongly disagreeing and 5.1 per cent undecided, suggesting that there is scepticism about how religious institutions can convert abstract principles into technical solutions, which calls for interdisciplinary collaboration where religious leaders work with technical experts and county officials (Ogolla & Karanja, 2026). This practical consensus, developed within a framework of Liberative Solidarity Theory, connects the spiritual with the practical, and the theoretical with the problematic, making the interventions scientifically sound and also theologically sound to ensure ecological justice in the region.

Theological Principles for Addressing Environmental Challenges

The focus group discussions with Maalim and Tabligh members in Moyale identified the Islamic principles of stewardship (khalīfah), ecological balance (mīzān), and wastefulness avoidance (isrāf) as important moral principles to consider when solving environmental issues in Marsabit County. The results align with Abumoghli (2023), who stresses humans' responsibilities to protect creation, and Rahmat et al. (2025), who equate environmental sustainability with the balance Allah has wrought. Likewise, Bashir (2025b)

acknowledges that moderation in the use of resources is one of the religious duties. However, the following study adds to these viewpoints by showing that they are applicable to local environmental issues such as deforestation, overgrazing, lack of water and water overuse for ablution (wudu). Respondent R3 (2025) also gave an explanation that the unsustainable use of natural resources affects the divine order, thus strengthening Nasr's (1996) interpretation of environmental destruction as a spiritual issue. The findings in Marsabit are different from the previous ones that mostly laid the theological groundwork for conservation; the findings here offer a way of addressing local environmental challenges using the principles of conservation. Liberative Solidarity Theory offers a moral framework to promote collective responsibility and participation in environmental protection through such teaching.

Theological Inspiration for Sustainable Living

The result of the discussions with the Maalim and TabliK participants in Moyale showed that Islamic faith instils sustainable living practices, as the human being is entrusted to care for Allah's creation. The themes of stewardship (khalīfah) and trusteeship (amānah) were linked to responsible use of resources, moderation, and maintenance of balance in the environment. The observations align with Bashir (2025c), who links environmental responsibility to Islamic moral responsibilities and also with the work of Moyer et al. (2012) that examined the impact of religious beliefs on attitudes and practices towards the environment. The findings from Marsabit, however, offer a more local perspective of how communities under environmental stress become and can be more environmentally responsible when they have a greater religious commitment. This study makes a connection between religious motivation and the practical realities of resource scarcity and environmental deterioration, while existing scholarship looks at the broader moral relevance of sustainable living. The results correspond with the potential for the use of common spiritual values as a basis for consolidating joint actions in the protection of the environment in accordance with the principles of Liberative Solidarity Theory.

Benefits of an Islamic Theology of Nature for Local Communities

The Moyale focus group participants proposed that an Islamic Theology of Nature (ITN) is relevant to the local context, and that the creation of an ITN could facilitate the adoption of environmental responsibility by understanding that conservation is an act of worship (ibādah). This is in line with Pius (2026) and Olorunfemi (2025), who are cited on the religious and ethical approach to caring for the environment. The present study, however, adds a contextual dimension in that the found Islamic values can be utilised in solving the environmental issues which are of concern to the Marsabit communities, including deforestation, water scarcity, etc. More general theological consideration focuses on the moral responsibility to safeguard creation; the results of this study suggest that religious values have the potential to help in community-based conservation and shared responsibility. Marsabit's role is thus to demonstrate how the present belief systems can serve as a foundation for developing an Islamic approach to the environment that is able to meet ecological challenges. This strategy is part of a discourse on Liberative Solidarity Theory that makes connections between religious involvement and their united efforts for environmental sustainability.

Barriers to Promoting an Islamic Theology of Nature

Results of the focus groups showed a number of challenges to encouraging an Islamic Theology of Nature in Marsabit County, such as many religious leaders' lack of understanding of Islamic environmental ethics, lack of access to theological resources on nature, and the greater attention paid to jurisprudence (fiqh) and ritual worship (ibādah) over ecological responsibilities. The results are relevant to those of Fatoni et al.

(2025), who focus on the role of Islamic environmental ethics in religious education, and Semali and Stambach (1997), who discuss wider issues of knowledge systems and educational practice. However, the Marsabit study highlights a specific challenge related to the poor incorporation of environmental messages into sermons (khutbahs), religious education, and community conservation initiatives. The present findings differ from the scholarship that broadly reviews the linkage between religion and education in that they uncover the limitation of the application of the principles of Islamic conservation in the context of insufficient environmental awareness in religious institutions. The study is therefore a contribution to the understanding of the institutional and educational obstacles to the pursuit of environmental action by the Faith Communities in the Marsabit environment. From the perspective of Liberative Solidarity Theory, strengthening religious education in the environment can increase people's awareness of environmental problems and motivate them to take positive actions.

Relationship between Nature and God in Islamic Theology

The interviews conducted in both North Horr and Moyale Sub-Counties revealed that the participants considered nature to be a manifestation of Allah's wisdom, greatness, and mercy. Respondents R1 (2025) and R2 (2025) described how the natural world is filled with signs (āyāt) through which humans learn about their responsibility to safeguard creation and recognise the Creator. They are in line with Nasr (1996), who argues that nature has spiritual significance in addition to its physical and economic roles. The present study, however, shows how religious leaders have a view of the sacredness of nature in their local environment, but see and understand it differently from Nasr, who sees it from a broader and more philosophically theological perspective. The findings bring a local dimension since the consciousness of the presence of Allah through nature is associated with the responsibility to take care of the natural resources that are important for people's livelihood in the community. This knowledge forms a connection between spiritual respect and collective environmental protection, particularly in vulnerable communities where the environment is undermined.

Theological Link between Tawhīd and Environmental Conservation

The results of the interviews conducted in Saku, Moyale and North Horr Sub-Counties demonstrated that the perception of the relationship between the creation and responsibility for the environment among the interviewees is a result of the concept of tawhīd (the absolute oneness of Allah). The respondent R1 (2025) pointed out that all creation comes from one God and therefore promoting ecological balance is a great expression of respect for God's authority. This is in line with Nasr (1996), who equates divine unity with the spirituality of the natural world. The unity of Allah is mentioned in Qur'an 112:1-4, but the environmental aspects of the unity of Allah are evident in the broader lessons of Islam concerning creation, stewardship and balance. The Marsabit finding expands upon this theological framework to demonstrate links between religious leaders and conservation of the environment and responsible resource management. The doctrine was not just spiritual, but also earthly; the participants saw it. The findings support the empirical evidence of the potential of common religious beliefs to create a sense of collective responsibility for ecosystem and ecological balance, reflected in Liberative Solidarity Theory.

Theological Importance of Protecting Creation as Part of Worship

Interviews conducted in the Four Sub-Counties of North Horr, Moyale, Laisamis and Saku revealed that the respondents viewed environmental conservation as an act or an expression of worship (ibādah) and surrender to God's will. Respondents R1, R2 and R3 (2025) believed that the creation of a safe haven for creation conveys a sense of gratitude, a stewardship responsibility toward creation and a promise of the

continued availability of nature to future generations. The results are in line with Abdul-Matin (2010), who emphasises the necessity of introducing and implementing Islamic principles in practical application, such as the reduction of waste and conserving water resources. However, the present study attempts to approach things differently: it relates environmental protection to the responsibilities of religious communities in a scarcity context. In contrast, Abdul-Matin deals with environmental responsibility in a more general way, while the Marsabit stories emphasise the sense of conservation as a religious concern, and one for the future. The study therefore brings an interpretation to worship that involves the ordinary aspects of life with regard to land, water and natural resources. This is a spiritual orientation that, based on the principles of Liberative Solidarity Theory, can be used to promote cooperation in the community and responsible environmental action.

Developing an Islamic Theology of Nature for Marsabit

The results obtained from the interviews in North Horr Sub-County revealed a need for a locally-based Islamic Theology of Nature based on Marsabit County environmental and livelihood context. The respondent (R2) in 2025 pointed out that the quality of the land is deteriorating and water is becoming scarce in the world, which is a great and important issue to address theologically and practically. The respondent also suggested integrating Islamic environmental educational approaches into sustainable pastoral practices, water conservation and land rehabilitation. The findings are consistent with Abdul-Matin (2010), who has suggested actions based on Islamic ecological principles that can promote a sustainable lifestyle. But the contribution of Marsabit is a more geographically specific contribution, in which the environmental priorities arise from pastoral, arid and semi-arid environmental communities. The current study has emphasised the importance of adapting religious messages to the local climate, livelihood systems and resource constraints of local contexts, rather than generic messages of religious responsibility for the environment in a variety of contexts. This local theory is capable of drawing the connection between Islamic environmental ethics and the involvement and action of the community in order to raise ecological resistance through utilising Liberative Solidarity Theory.

Theological Misconceptions Hindering Conservation

Conversations conducted in the sub-counties of North Horr, Moyale, Laisamis and Saku revealed some issues of misunderstanding of human supremacy over natural resources hampering environmental protection. Respondents R1, R2 and R3 (2025) understood some of the interpretations to be incorrect, as they implied that human beings can do anything to creation, which contradicts the Islamic stewardship concept (khalīfah) and the concept of balance (mīzān). The results are similar to those of Nasr (1996), who challenges conceptions of nature which focus on it as a resource for human exploitation, while ignoring its spiritual qualities. Marsabit County, however, contributes to this discussion by emphasising the implications of these misconceptions in the local religious and environmental context. However, while Nasr has examined the more spiritual origins of environmental degradation, the focus of the current study is on the need for proper understanding of religious commandments, which is achieved through community education. It was emphasised that the teaching of moderation in life, use of resources and protection of the environment are significant religious duties. Using Liberative Solidarity Theory, these misconceptions can be corrected and contribute to the creation of environmental awareness and critical questioning of environmental practices that result in ecological destruction.

Role of Islamic Theology in Marsabit's Environmental Crisis

The interviews conducted in Laisamis showed that Islamic theology has a positive influence on environmental conservation in terms of moral values, religious education, community involvement and sustainable development. Respondent R9 (2025) spoke about the need to integrate environmental education into the mosques, madarasas and religious lessons, and encouraged the religious leaders to be involved in the conservation effort. These findings are in line with the responsibilities of Islamic stewardship highlighted by Abumoghli (2023) and the practical manifestation of Islamic environmental values by Abdul-Matin (2010). The Marsabit study approach is, however, an institutional approach, more grounded in the institution to identify how religious institutions can participate in addressing environmental issues in the community. The findings do not only see Islamic environmental principles as tools for personal moral guidance but as a possibility for using these principles in religious education, community mobilisation, and in discussions about environmental policies. This approach is known as Liberative Solidarity Theory, which brings together religious consciousness and collective action and responsibility to tackle ecological problems. The findings, however, are not necessarily indicative of the effectiveness of existing conservation programs, but rather of the perceived importance of these institutional roles.

Influence of Hisāb (Accountability) on Environmental Care

An examination of the Islamic concept of accountability (ḥisāb) through interviews in Saku Sub-County revealed that it has an impact on the responsibility of believers towards the natural environment. This is because of the conviction of Divine judgment, which leads Muslims to realise that their actions with regard to creation are part of their responsibility before Allah, respondent R7 (2025) explained. This discovery is in line with Abumoghli (2023), who has enumerated moral responsibilities that are implied by stewardship, and also consistent with Nasr (1996), who has stressed the need to restore human responsibility towards nature from a spiritual point of view. Findings from the present study, however, give a local basis for understanding how the sense of divine accountability can be used to promote careful management of natural resources in Marsabit County. While the preceding scholarship addresses the ethical importance of religious obligation, this work is concerned with how ḥisāb relates to community issues of protecting the environment and the impacts of resources' improper use. This awareness in Liberative Solidarity Theory can foster increased individual awareness and impact on collective environmental wellness.

Islamic Theology on Nature's role.

The Kadhi of Saku Sub-County was interviewed, and it emerged that nature was seen as proof of Allah's wisdom and mercy, as well as a source of valuable resources for the survival of human beings. Respondent R8 (2025) provided the explanation that natural features are divine signs (āyāt) and they also contribute to human livelihood. It resonates with the sacredness of nature and with Nasr (1996), who stresses the importance of nature and its understanding rather than material gain. The Marsabit discovery, however, expands this view by showing that spiritual love of creation is strongly connected with the local community's reliance on natural resources. The study thus provides an understanding of nature that is coupled with religious significance and livelihood needs, instead of being in competition with each other. This link is significant in Marsabit, where environmental degradation has an impact on access to water, productive land, and other resources required for survival. Liberative Solidarity Theory: Appreciating the spiritual and practical value of nature can inspire communities to act together to protect their natural environment.

Theological foundations for the protection of the environment.

The findings of the interviews held in Saku Sub-County indicated that the Islamic teachings provide an environmental conservation and management religious approach in the context of stewardship (khalīfah), trusteeship (amānah), ecological balance (mīzān) and worship (ibādah). Respondents R8 and R10 (2025) said that preserving the natural environment is a responsibility of mankind towards Allah and is in line with the moral and spiritual aspects of protecting the natural environment. The results are consistent with Nasr (1996), who considers environmental degradation as a consequence of the inability of human beings to show their reverence towards creation. They are also applicable to Cooper and Palmer (1998), who examine religious attitudes towards environmental protection, or Islamic ecological principles and practices. Similarly, Abdul-Matin (2010) emphasises the importance of spreading Islamic environmental values in all aspects, such as water saving, waste minimisation, and sustainable use of resources.

The current study, on the other hand, builds on these discussions by exploring the application of these principles in the ecological and socioeconomic setting of Marsabit County. The findings highlight the contribution of religious actors to their understanding of environmental protection in the context of the current drought, land degradation, water scarcity and pastoral livelihoods, and not just academic theological or ethical frameworks. The value of the study is to show how the existing Islamic values can be applied to a locally appropriate Theology of Nature that will meet the environmental needs of vulnerable communities. The integrated view of Liberative Solidarity Theory on which sustainable resource management is practised is understood as the combination of spiritual responsibility, environmental education and community involvement.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: The study has come up with a context-based Islamic Theology of nature for environmental conservation in Marsabit County. The topics of tawhīd, stewardship (khalīfah), trusteeship (amānah), balance (mīzān), moderation (isrāf), accountability (ḥisāb), and worship (ibādah) are all important concepts in Islam that are addressed in this. The outcomes indicated that the lack of theological knowledge, inadequate educational resources, and wrong perception of human responsibility towards nature are a bad influence on nature conservation. The framework is created in reference to the Liberative Solidarity theory and linked to environmental action through religious education, inter-institutional collaboration and community involvement. It provides a locally relevant solution to enhance pastoral activities, water management, degraded land, and environmental sustainability in Marsabit County.

Recommendations: Systematically teach Environmental Ethics in the sermons of the mosques in Marsabit and in the teaching of the Madarasas in the Marsabit region, rather than through traditional jurisprudence, by teaching explicitly on ecological teachings such as stewardship (khalīfa) and the prohibition on waste (isrāf). Theological error about unlimited resource dominion needs to be addressed in education in a proactive manner, and this requires a focus on Divine balance (mīzān) and personal accountability (ḥisāb) on the Day of Judgment. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral linkages are necessary between religious scholars, secular policy makers, and technical experts to make general theological concepts practically and easily applicable to the arid context of the region at an affordable cost, such as sustainable pastoralism, water harvesting, and rehabilitation of land.

Limitations of the Study

The large and remote geographic regions raised travelling expenses and time. To overcome these, a research assistant was hired to help conduct the data collection process efficiently.

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