

APPLICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PHILANTHROPIC BEHAVIOR THROUGH AL-GHAZALI'S ETHICAL THEORY: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

*(Aplikasi Tingkah Laku Filantropi Alam Sekitar Melalui Teori Akhlak al-Ghazali:
Satu Ulasan Naratif)*

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ABSTRACT

Escalating environmental degradation driven by pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change has intensified the need for sustainable financing mechanisms and moral responsibility in environmental conservation. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action among institutions, communities and individuals guided by ethical principles that cultivate responsible philanthropic behaviour. Accordingly, this study aims to elucidate the application of environmental philanthropic behaviour through the framework of al-Ghazali's ethical theory. Using a narrative review approach, this study synthesises existing literature on al-Ghazali's ethics and Islamic philanthropy within the context of environmental conservation. Thematic and interpretive analysis was conducted based on four core principles of al-Ghazali's ethics, namely justice (al-'adl), moderation (zuhd), prohibition of wastefulness (isrāf) and restoration or reform (iṣlāḥ). The findings indicate that these principles form an ethical foundation for guiding environmental philanthropic behaviour. These principles are further

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strengthened by the concepts of khalifah, moral responsibility and maṣlaḥah, which position environmental conservation as part of human responsibility toward Allah's creation and public welfare. The application of these principles can be observed through initiatives such as Water Waqf, the Green House of Worship programme and various conservation programmes implemented by environmental NGOs. This study emphasises that integrating ethical values into financial support mechanisms can strengthen a culture of giving that is not only based on social benefit, but also grounded in Islamic moral and spiritual values. Therefore, this study recommends the development of measurement instruments for Islamic ethical values in environmental philanthropy to assess public moral awareness and readiness for ethics-based giving. Future research should also examine the role of Islamic values education and digital media, including social media campaigns and environmental documentaries, in fostering empathy and philanthropic engagement in line with al-Ghazali's principles of iṣlāḥ and zuhd.

Keywords: al-Ghazali's Ethical Theory; environmental philanthropy; islamic principles; environmental conservation; maṣlaḥah

ABSTRAK

Kemerosotan alam sekitar yang semakin meningkat akibat pencemaran, kehilangan biodiversiti dan perubahan iklim telah memperkukuh keperluan terhadap mekanisme pembiayaan lestari serta tanggungjawab moral dalam pemuliharaan alam sekitar. Usaha menangani cabaran ini memerlukan tindakan bersepadu daripada institusi, komuniti dan individu yang dipandu oleh prinsip etika bagi membentuk tingkah laku filantropi yang bertanggungjawab. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini bertujuan menjelaskan aplikasi tingkah laku filantropi alam sekitar melalui kerangka teori akhlak al-Ghazali. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan ulasan naratif, kajian ini mensintesis literatur sedia ada berkaitan akhlak al-Ghazali dan filantropi Islam dalam konteks pemuliharaan alam sekitar. Analisis tematik dan interpretif dijalankan berdasarkan empat prinsip utama dalam teori akhlak al-Ghazali, iaitu keadilan (al-'adl), kesederhanaan (zuhd), larangan pembaziran (isrāf) dan pemulihan atau pembaikan (iṣlāḥ). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa prinsip-prinsip tersebut membentuk asas etika dalam membimbing tingkah laku filantropi alam sekitar. Prinsip ini turut diperkukuh melalui konsep khalifah, tanggungjawab moral dan maṣlaḥah yang meletakkan pemuliharaan alam sekitar sebagai sebahagian daripada amanah manusia terhadap ciptaan Allah dan kesejahteraan awam. Aplikasi prinsip-prinsip ini dapat diperhatikan melalui inisiatif seperti Wakaf Air, Program Rumah Ibadat Hijau dan pelbagai program pemuliharaan yang dilaksanakan oleh badan bukan kerajaan alam sekitar. Kajian ini menegaskan bahawa integrasi nilai etika dalam mekanisme

sokongan kewangan berupaya memperkukuh budaya memberi yang bukan sahaja berasaskan manfaat sosial, tetapi juga berteraskan nilai moral dan spiritual Islam. Oleh itu, kajian ini mencadangkan pembangunan instrumen pengukuran nilai etika Islam dalam filantropi alam sekitar bagi menilai kesedaran moral masyarakat dan kesediaan mereka terhadap amalan memberi berasaskan etika. Kajian masa hadapan juga wajar meneliti peranan pendidikan nilai Islam dan media digital, termasuk kempen media sosial serta dokumentari alam sekitar, dalam memupuk empati dan penglibatan filantropi selaras dengan prinsip iṣlāḥ dan zuhd menurut al-Ghazali.

Kata kunci: *Teori Akhlak al-Ghazali; filantropi alam sekitar; prinsip islam; pemuliharaan alam sekitar; maṣlaḥah.*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability has become an increasingly urgent global issue in the 21st century. Rising pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change have posed significant challenges to global human well-being. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP 2021), more than one million species are currently threatened with extinction due to human activities. In Malaysia, river water pollution, deforestation, and high carbon emissions have also placed considerable pressure on natural ecosystems (Asing 2024; Azlina et al. 2022). Uncontrolled urbanisation and industrial activities have contributed to the degradation of river systems, while deforestation increases sedimentation rates and disrupts ecological balance (Chan et al. 2003). Furthermore, high carbon emissions from polluting sources contribute to the increase in greenhouse gases (GHG) and accelerate climate change (Wang et al. 2024).

These challenges require increased expenditure in environmental management and conservation. A report by the Ministry of Environment and Water (2022) indicates that government expenditure in this sector has continued to rise from RM528,963,100 in 2020 to RM551,794,400 in 2021, and further to RM565,535,200 in 2022. This increase in costs reflects the urgent need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, including the private sector, religious institutions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to ensure the effectiveness of conservation programmes (Kementerian Alam Sekitar dan Air 2022).

In this context, environmental philanthropy has emerged as an alternative financing mechanism that supports sustainability initiatives. Through practices such as charitable donations, waqf, and voluntary contributions, communities can directly contribute to the conservation of natural resources (Alya Nasuha et al. 2023). At the national level, several initiatives such as Water Waqf (Khalid et al. 2018;

Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia 2024), the Green House of Worship programme (MGTC 2021), and programmes conducted by the Global Environment Centre (GEC 2024) demonstrate that philanthropy can act as a catalyst for sustained conservation efforts. Environmental sustainability has become an increasingly pressing global issue in the 21st century. Rising pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change have created significant challenges for global human well-being. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, more than one million species are currently threatened with extinction due to human activities (UNEP 2021).

In Malaysia, river water pollution, deforestation, and high carbon emissions have placed considerable pressure on natural ecosystems. The degradation of river systems, particularly due to urbanisation and industrial activities, has led to widespread pollution that affects water quality and biodiversity (Asing 2024; Azlina et al. 2022). In addition, deforestation increases sedimentation rates and disrupts environmental balance (Chan et al. 2003), while high carbon emissions from polluted rivers also contribute to the release of greenhouse gases (GHG), thereby influencing climate change (Wang et al. 2024). One increasingly important approach is environmental philanthropy, which refers to the practice of donating financial resources for environmental conservation purposes. In Malaysia, initiatives such as Water Waqf (Khalid et al. 2018; Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia 2024; Siti Maryam Hanis et al. 2025), the Green House of Worship programme (MGTC 2021), and NGO programmes such as those implemented by the Global Environment Centre (GEC 2024) demonstrate the potential of philanthropy as an alternative financing mechanism to support environmental conservation efforts.

However, existing studies tend to focus primarily on the technical, policy, and financial aspects of philanthropy (Ridwan 2022; Fahlefi 2019), while the moral dimension that underpins the formation of philanthropic behavior has received relatively limited attention. Although there are scholarly discussions on *maqasid al-shariah* and sustainable development (Mohammad Hashim Kamali 2008; Ansari et al. 2012), as well as studies on Islamic social finance instruments such as *zakat* and *waqf* (Nur & Sri Herianingrum 2023), a gap remains in the literature that integrates ethical theory, particularly Al-Ghazali's perspective, to explain how moral values shape environmental philanthropic behavior.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali's ethical framework, which emphasizes the balance between spiritual and physical dimensions as well as the process of purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) leading to positive behavioral outcomes, offers a rich and relevant value framework to support environmental conservation efforts (al-Ghazali 2000; Mohd. Nasir Omar 2013; Wandira et al. 2023; Ma'muroh et al. 2024). Nevertheless, its application in shaping environmental philanthropic behavior has

not been systematically explored in contemporary academic literature. Therefore, this study aims to explain how Al-Ghazali's ethical theory can be applied in shaping environmental philanthropic behavior.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a narrative review approach that is flexible and descriptive in synthesizing existing literature without being constrained by the rigid structure commonly associated with systematic reviews (Khutade et al. 2024; Yao et al. 2020). This approach enables the integration and evaluation of previous findings through thematic and interpretive analysis to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

A total of 25 articles and conference proceedings published between 2000 and 2024 were identified through the Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar databases. These sources were further supported by classical works of Imam al-Ghazali as well as reports from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agencies. The selected literature was then analysed using narrative and thematic approaches. The literature selection focused on Al-Ghazali's ethical theory and Islamic philanthropic practices related to environmental conservation, while studies that did not incorporate the dimension of Islamic ethics were excluded.

The analysis was conducted based on four main principles of Al-Ghazali's ethical theory: justice (*al-'adl*), the prohibition of excessiveness (*israf*), moderation (*zuhd*), and preservation (*islah*), in order to evaluate their application in environmental philanthropic behavior. Although this study does not employ a systematic protocol such as PRISMA, each stage was carried out carefully to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the research findings. This approach aligns with the principles of transparency, methodological documentation, and reflexivity in narrative reviews, which can still ensure the robustness and reliability of the analysis (Byrne 2016; Sukhera 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Principles in Shaping Environmental Philanthropic Behavior

According to Yayah et al. (2024), human beings, as stewards (*khalifah*) on earth, carry a significant responsibility to manage and preserve the environment wisely in accordance with the trust entrusted by Allah SWT. Environmental degradation on land and sea, as mentioned in Surah Ar-Rum verse 41, is interpreted by Quraish Shihab as the result of human actions that violate the principle of ecological balance, such

as pollution, global warming, and biodiversity loss. Natural disasters are also viewed as tests and mercy from Allah intended to remind humanity to return to the right path through reflection and behavioural change. Therefore, Islamic ethical values such as trust (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), and balance should serve as guiding principles to ensure environmental sustainability as a manifestation of obedience to religious teachings.

The concept of khalifah in Islam refers to the responsibility entrusted to human beings by God to protect and manage the environment with justice and wisdom, rather than to exploit or oppress other creatures. This role requires humans to act as responsible stewards by adhering to the principles of justice and preservation toward all of Allah's creation (Rakhmat 2022). According to Ihsan et al. (2024), the khalifah is entrusted with the duty to prosper the earth (*i'mārat al-ard*) in a just manner and to fulfil the needs of all living beings (Surah Hūd: 62), prevent ecological destruction (Surah al-A'rāf: 56), and maintain the balance of nature (Surah al-Isrā': 44).

In addition, humans as khalifah are responsible for upholding justice, liberating people from oppression, and safeguarding the universe in accordance with the commands of Allah (Mubarak et al. 2024). The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize that humans must manage natural resources sustainably without excess or destruction, as reflected in the prohibition against causing corruption (*fasād*) on earth in Surah ar-Rum (30:41) and the encouragement to preserve the environment found in Hadith traditions. Failure to fulfil this trust leads to ecological degradation that not only harms the earth but also constitutes a violation of the trust bestowed by Allah SWT. Therefore, protecting the environment is both a religious and moral obligation for every Muslim as a *khalifah*.

In the context of fulfilling the responsibility of *khalifah*, Islamic philanthropy plays an important role as a medium for systematically realizing the trust of environmental stewardship. Through Islamic social finance instruments such as zakat, infaq, sadaqah, and waqf, resources can be optimized to fund environmental conservation initiatives and strengthen the capacity of local communities (Nur Ainul Basyirah et al. 2020; Ummi Aida et al. 2021; Nur & Sri Herianingrum 2023). The integration of sustainability principles within Islamic philanthropic instruments not only creates opportunities for innovation, including the use of financial technology (fintech) to maximize fundraising and broaden donor participation (Fahlefi 2019), but also requires collaboration among individuals, institutions, and policymakers. Such cooperation is essential to strengthen regulatory frameworks, address implementation challenges, and foster synergy among various instruments in order to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals (Ridwan 2022).

Behavior through Al-Ghazali's Ethical Theory

According to Al-Ghazali, *akhlaq* (ethics or moral character) refers to a stable and well-established state of the soul that naturally motivates the emergence of good actions spontaneously, without coercion (al-Qasimi 2009; Mohd. Nasir Omar 2013). It is not merely knowledge or intention, but rather the manifestation of internal values in behavior, the perfection of which is achieved through the integration of four human forces: knowledge, desire (*shahwah*), anger (*ghadab*), and justice (*'adl*) (al-Ghazali 2000). This concept extends beyond mere actions or knowledge; instead, it emphasizes a spiritual state that spontaneously produces virtuous deeds until they become habitual in daily life (Sholehah et al. 2018). Al-Ghazali views *akhlaq* as the integration between the human soul and a spiritual condition that continuously nurtures virtuous behavior (Akhmad et al. 2021). Al-Ghazali's ethical theory encompasses two main dimensions: the spiritual and the physical, where internal states interact with outward behavior. Moral character is a continuous trait that emerges naturally through actions influenced by an individual's spiritual condition. These two dimensions are essential for achieving a balanced life, as they are interdependent. The spiritual elements intellect (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), soul (*nafs*), and spirit (*rūh*) work synergistically with four human forces knowledge, desire, controlled anger, and a sense of justice (al-Ghazali 1981) to transmit genuine inner values into virtuous actions in human behavior (al-Ghazali 2000). Thus, according to Al-Ghazali, *akhlaq* is not merely an external habit but a continuous trait that naturally emerges from the balance between spiritual and physical conditions.

From Al-Ghazali's perspective, *tazkiyatun nafs* refers to the process of purification of the soul aimed at disciplining the self, eliminating negative traits, and cultivating virtuous qualities. Al-Ghazali distinguishes three main stages in *tazkiyatun nafs*, namely *takhalli* (the removal of reprehensible traits), *tahalli* (the cultivation of praiseworthy qualities), and *tajalli* (the strengthening of closeness to Allah SWT) (Wandira et al. 2023; Ma'muroh et al. 2024). This process is closely related to the strengthening of faith, as it emphasizes the importance of moral purification in reinforcing the relationship between humans and their Creator. Al-Ghazali argues that moral purification is a prerequisite for attaining wisdom and understanding, which form the foundation of belief (Wandira et al. 2023; Erwahyudin et al. 2024). As individuals increase their efforts in *tazkiyatun nafs*, their spiritual responsibilities and faith become stronger, aligning with the divine will (Arifin et al. 2022). The outcomes of *tazkiyat al-nafs* also demonstrate a close relationship between faith and environmental conservation. According to Noor Shakirah (2007), individuals with high spiritual awareness are more inclined to protect the environment in accordance with the trust of *khalīfah*, as their faith motivates environmental philanthropic actions and encourages them to view every creation as a sign of Allah's greatness.

This is further supported by Kahf (1980), who explains that religious belief, grounded in faith and piety, influences Muslims to adopt moderation in fulfilling their material needs while prioritizing infak fisabilillah by sacrificing part of their wealth for the sake of Allah SWT. Moreover, the motivation of Muslims to assist others based on humanitarian values is itself a manifestation of faith. Nor Aishah et al. (2015) emphasize that religious values serve as a primary motivation within individuals to engage in charitable practices such as sadaqah, infaq, waqf, and zakat. Therefore, moral character functions as a fundamental basis that shapes and influences behavior, guiding individuals to interact responsibly with both the environment and fellow human beings. In this sense, ethics and behavior are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing, where good moral character becomes the source of inspiration for positive and morally responsible actions.

Environmental Philanthropic Behavior through Al-Ghazali's Ethical Theory

Environmental philanthropic behavior can be more deeply understood through Al-Ghazali's ethical theory, which emphasizes the balance of spiritual and moral dimensions within individuals as khalifah on earth. Al-Ghazali (1981) outlines several key ethical principles, namely justice (*al-'adl*), the prohibition of excessiveness (*israf*), moderation (*zuhd*), and preservation (*islah*). These four principles not only regulate the relationship between humans and the Creator but also guide human attitudes and responsibilities toward the environment. This section discusses each of these principles and synthesizes their implications for environmental philanthropic behavior.

a) Justice

From Al-Ghazali's perspective (1981), justice ('adl) is not merely an abstract principle but represents the foundation of the perfection of both outward and inward actions. He emphasizes that the quality of justice must be deeply rooted in the soul, ensuring that every action from fulfilling promises to safeguarding the rights of other beings stems from a spiritual awareness that Allah SWT is the All-Seeing. Al-Ghazali highlights two main dimensions of justice. First, justice as a divine attribute that should be reflected by human beings through the process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul). Second, justice as the basis of social interaction, where fair treatment toward both humans and the environment represents a manifestation of obedience to the shariah and the consciousness of being a khalifah.

Contemporary arguments further reinforce Al-Ghazali's perspective. According to Nasr (2002), environmental justice within Islamic philosophy integrates both ethical and ecological dimensions, emphasizing that ecological imbalance reflects human injustice toward creation. Similarly, Chittick (2011) argues that the principles of *al-*

mīzān (balance) and *al-mikyāl* (measure) discussed by Al-Ghazali provide a holistic framework for addressing the exploitation of natural resources, as every human action should be assessed according to divine standards of justice. In this sense, justice in Islam not only shapes individual behavior but also provides a normative foundation for sustainable environmental management.

b) Israf (Excessiveness)

According to Al-Ghazali (1981), *isrāf* refers to wastefulness or spending beyond reasonable necessity, whether in food, wealth, or natural resources, which ultimately causes harm to individuals, society, and the ecosystem. Such excessive behavior contradicts the principle of *wasatiyyah* (moderation), which constitutes one of the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (Mohammad Hashim Kamali 2008), and at the same time violates the human responsibility as *khalīfah* to safeguard the environment. Al-Ghazali (2000) describes *isrāf* as a manifestation of greed (*ṭama'*), which disrupts the cosmic balance established by the principle of *al-mīzān* (balance) and subsequently contributes to moral decline when worldly values become the sole measure of human conduct.

The Qur'an condemns *isrāf* and *tabdhīr* as two concepts associated with transgressing the limits prescribed by the shariah. Allah SWT states:

“Give to close relatives their due, as well as the poor and ‘needy’ travellers. And do not spend wastefully”.

“Surely the wasteful are ‘like’ brothers to the devils. And the Devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord ”

(Al-Isra', 17:26–27)

This prohibition highlights that wastefulness even in times of hardship incurs divine displeasure and undermines the trust of shared resources entrusted to humanity. Therefore, the rejection of *isrāf* is not only consistent with Islamic teachings but also forms a strong ethical foundation for environmental philanthropic behavior, whereby individuals are responsible for ensuring the preservation of the earth for the collective well-being of society.

c) Moderation (Zuhud)

The principle of *zuhud*, according to Al-Ghazali (1981), reflects the effort to balance worldly life with spiritual dimensions, whereby individuals strive not to become excessively attached to material possessions and instead prioritize their relationship with Allah SWT. *Zuhud* does not imply a total rejection of worldly life; rather, it represents the awareness that everything in this world is temporary and should not

distract humans from their ultimate purpose of drawing closer to Allah. It is also interpreted as a state of the heart that emphasizes simplicity in life and the ability to restrain oneself from excessive desires and worldly temptations (Defriono et al. 2023; Pahlevi 2022).

This spiritual awareness is not merely personal but also forms the foundation of Islamic ethical thinking that encourages responsible attitudes toward the environment. Al-Ghazali's teachings also inspire community engagement in implementing sustainable practices, for example through waste management systems that reduce negative impacts on the environment (Khikamuddin et al. 2024; Guftron & Hambali 2022). Furthermore, the principle of *zuhud* provides an ethical framework for Islamic environmental philanthropic behavior that emphasizes social and environmental sustainability in line with the values of moderation and self-restraint (Sharifah Fadylawaty et al. 2021).

d) Preservation (Islah)

The principle of *islah*, according to Al-Ghazali (1981), emphasizes an active approach to preventing corruption (*fasād*) and promoting collective well-being. This principle aligns with contemporary concepts of sustainable development and environmental justice. Rooted in Islamic teachings, *islah* calls for the preservation of natural balance as well as ethical and responsible environmental management. Al-Ghazali highlights that individuals and communities have a moral and ethical obligation to protect and preserve the environment for the well-being of future generations (Fandi Ahmad Syah et al. 2024). This emphasis on *islah* encourages environmental philanthropic behavior by promoting voluntary participation and contributions aimed at restoring and safeguarding the environment.

Within the framework of Islamic environmental ethics, caring for the environment is regarded as a trust (*amanah*) from Allah SWT that must be upheld by humanity. The Qur'an and Sunnah provide eco-ethical principles that guide Muslims in maintaining environmental justice and supporting sustainable development (Gada 2024). The awareness that nature is a divine trust motivates individuals and communities to act generously by contributing their time, energy, or financial resources to environmental conservation and protection initiatives, thereby strengthening environmental philanthropic behavior. The concept of sustainable development in Islam is also guided by the principles of *khalīfah* and *maslahah mursalah*, which emphasize human responsibility as stewards of the earth and support the preservation of ecological balance (Ansari et al. 2012; Alasmari & Hakami 2024). This principle of *khalīfah* provides a strong moral foundation for encouraging environmental philanthropic behavior, such as donations for habitat restoration projects, environmental education programs, and the implementation of environmental protection policies.

Furthermore, Islam prohibits all forms of environmental destruction (*fasād*), emphasizing the principle of preventing harm as a crucial element for global sustainability (Parvaiz 2015; Norita et al. 2022). The prohibition of *fasād* requires a transformation in human behavior so that it aligns with more sustainable practices and provides an ethical justification for supporting philanthropic activities focused on environmental restoration and the prevention of ecological damage. These principles are highly relevant in addressing contemporary environmental challenges, which demand the development of philanthropic behavior and social concern to ensure collective well-being. Although Al-Ghazali's principle of *islah* aligns with the objectives of modern sustainable development, current environmental degradation presents significant challenges, including in Muslim-majority countries. This situation calls for a more progressive interpretation of Shariah to address emerging environmental issues while remaining grounded in its fundamental principles (Norita et al. 2022). Such interpretations create opportunities to strengthen environmental philanthropic approaches within Muslim communities, making them more responsive to contemporary needs while preserving the underlying religious values.

In summary, the principles of justice, the prohibition of excessiveness, moderation (*zuhud*), and preservation (*islah*) within Al-Ghazali's ethical framework provide a comprehensive foundation for shaping environmental philanthropic behavior. Justice establishes the need for fair distribution of ecological rights; the prohibition of excessiveness calls for prudent and responsible resource use; *zuhud* cultivates attitudes of simplicity and sincerity; while *islah* encourages proactive efforts to restore environmental damage. Together, these principles motivate individuals, as *khalifah*, to contribute financially and morally toward environmental conservation and restoration.

Application of Philanthropy in Environmental Conservation

In the context of environmental conservation in Malaysia, philanthropy has evolved as a strategic and holistic mechanism that encompasses financial contributions such as *zakat*, *sadaqah*, *infaq*, and *waqf* to address critical environmental issues, including water pollution, climate change, habitat degradation, and biodiversity loss. Through collaboration among the public sector, corporate entities, religious institutions, and non-governmental organisations, various initiatives have been implemented to ensure ecosystem sustainability and to cultivate environmental awareness among communities (Ridwan 2022; Nur & Herianingrum 2023). When examined through al-Ghazali's theory of ethics, the application of philanthropy is not merely confined to financial assistance, but also reflects the moral responsibility of human beings as *khalifah* to protect the environment, prevent destruction and preserve the public good or *maslahah* of society (al-Ghazali 1981; Mohd. Nasir Omar 2013; Rakhmat 2022).

One of the environmental conservation initiatives in Malaysia is the Water Waqf project, which was specifically designed to finance small-scale water service projects in areas affected by pollution, including Sungai Kim Kim, Sungai Semenyih, and Sungai Gong. Since a significant proportion of Malaysia's water resources depends on river systems, continuous pollution has adversely affected the quality of clean water supply and aquatic ecosystems. As of December 2023, the collaboration between Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability had channelled cash waqf amounting to RM4,560,738.61 to several states, including Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Kelantan, Pahang, Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Sabah, and Sarawak, to finance mobile filtration systems, pipe infrastructure repairs, and water catchment rehabilitation programmes (Khalid et al. 2018; Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia 2024).

Based on al-Ghazali's theory of ethics, the Water Waqf initiative reflects the principle of justice or al-'adl, as it seeks to ensure that access to clean water can be enjoyed by communities affected by pollution. At the same time, this initiative also embodies the principle of *islah*, as waqf funds are utilised to restore water supply systems, repair infrastructure, and reduce the adverse effects of environmental degradation. This is consistent with al-Ghazali's view that good character must be translated into actions that promote benefit, prevent harm, and maintain balance in human life (al-Ghazali 1981; al-Ghazali 2000). From the perspective of human responsibility as *khalifah*, contributions to Water Waqf are not merely financial assistance, but represent a manifestation of moral trust in safeguarding natural resources that constitute a shared necessity. Therefore, Water Waqf can be understood as a form of environmental philanthropy that aligns with the principle of *maslahah*, namely the effort to preserve social well-being and environmental sustainability on a continuous basis (Ansari et al. 2012; Rakhmat 2022; Norita et al. 2022).

Furthermore, the Green Houses of Worship Programme, managed by the Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation (MGTC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability, emphasises the integration of environmentally friendly technologies and environmental education within religious spaces. Mosques, suraus, and churches throughout the country have been equipped with energy-efficient LED lighting, rainwater harvesting systems, and solar panels. In addition, environmental awareness modules have been implemented through sermons, weekly religious lectures, and recycling workshops. This approach not only reduces the environmental footprint of religious institutions, but also instils the values of *tawazun*, trustworthiness, and responsibility among congregants (MGTC 2021; Norshariani et al. 2025).

The implementation of the Green Houses of Worship Programme can be linked to the principles of *zuhud* and the prohibition of *israf* in al-Ghazali's ethical theory. The use of energy-efficient lighting, rainwater harvesting systems, solar panels, and recycling activities reflects efforts to reduce wastage and utilise natural resources prudently. In this context, *zuhud* does not imply the rejection of worldly conveniences, but rather the responsible, moderate, and non-excessive use of such conveniences. This is in line with al-Ghazali's view that the formation of good character requires control over desires and attachment to material elements, so that human actions remain grounded in spiritual consciousness (al-Ghazali 1981; Defriono et al. 2023; Pahlevi 2022). Thus, houses of worship function not only as spaces for religious devotion, but also as centres for the formation of environmental ethics that educate society to practise moderation, avoid wastage, and uphold responsibility towards the creation of Allah SWT (Khikamuddin et al. 2024; Gada 2024).

In addition, non-governmental organisations play an important role as intermediaries among donors, communities, and authorities in advancing the environmental conservation agenda. The Global Environment Centre focuses on the conservation of river, coastal, peatland, and forest ecosystems through waste management programmes, water quality monitoring, and skills training for local communities. The Malaysian Nature Society, meanwhile, has developed a network of protected areas that represent the country's biological diversity while conducting scientific studies on endangered species. Sahabat Alam Malaysia, through the Friends of the Earth network, promotes environmental justice advocacy and opposes development activities that destroy natural habitats. WWF-Malaysia implements conservation programmes involving tropical rainforests, coral reefs, and wildlife, while also supporting sustainable agriculture and renewable energy initiatives. In the marine sector, Reef Check Malaysia monitors more than 300 coral reef sites annually and provides scientific data for government policy and youth engagement. Meanwhile, the Centre for Environment, Technology and Development Malaysia (CETDEM) strengthens sustainable development through training, research, and consultancy in green technology, renewable energy, and organic agriculture (GEC 2024; Malaysian Nature Society 2024; Sahabat Alam Malaysia 2024; WWF 2024; Reef Check Malaysia 2024; CETDEM 2024).

The role of these environmental NGOs demonstrates the practical application of the principle of *islah*. Programmes such as river rehabilitation, forest conservation, coral reef monitoring, wildlife protection, and environmental education represent efforts to repair ecological damage and prevent *fasad* against the environment. According to al-Ghazali's ethical framework, public support for these programmes through donations, volunteerism, and advocacy can be viewed as an extension of individual morality into social and environmental responsibility. This corresponds with the principle of *islah*, which emphasises reform, restoration, and the prevention

of harm for the sake of collective well-being (al-Ghazali 1981; Fandi Ahmad Syah et al. 2024). Furthermore, the prohibition of *fasad* in relation to the environment demands a transformation of human behaviour towards more sustainable practices, including philanthropic support for conservation and environmental protection efforts (Parvaiz 2015; Norita et al. 2022). Therefore, environmental philanthropy is not merely aimed at resolving ecological problems from a technical standpoint, but also at cultivating moral awareness that human beings are responsible for maintaining environmental balance for the *maslahah* of present and future generations (Ansari et al. 2012; Gada 2024).

Overall, the application of philanthropy in environmental conservation in Malaysia reflects a collaborative ecosystem that connects financial contributions, religious institutions, NGOs, communities, and ethical values in supporting environmental sustainability. When examined through al-Ghazali's theory of ethics, initiatives such as Water Waqf, the Green Houses of Worship Programme, and NGO-led conservation programmes are not merely financing mechanisms, but also practical manifestations of justice, moderation, the prohibition of wastage, *islah*, the responsibility of *khalifah*, and *maslahah*. These principles strengthen the meaning of environmental philanthropy as a moral and spiritual practice that encourages human beings to contribute to environmental conservation with greater awareness, sincerity, and responsibility (al-Ghazali 1981; Mohd. Nasir Omar 2013; Noor Shakirah 2007). Therefore, the integration of al-Ghazali's theory of ethics into the application of environmental philanthropy can foster a culture of giving that focuses not only on financial contributions, but also on awareness, education, advocacy, and continuous engagement in preserving environmental balance.

CONCLUSION

This article has narratively examined the application of the key principles of al-Ghazali's theory of ethics in shaping environmental philanthropic behaviour. The study takes into account global sustainability challenges and Malaysia's need to ensure societal well-being through value-based and behaviour-oriented approaches. Al-Ghazali's theory of ethics offers a comprehensive conceptual framework for guiding philanthropic practices towards the goal of environmental conservation. The review found that behaviour, according to al-Ghazali's theory, is shaped through spiritual and physical dimensions as well as the process of *tazkiyatun nafs*, which produces key principles such as justice (*al-'adl*), the prohibition of excessiveness (*israf*), moderation (*zuhud*), and preservation or restoration (*islah*). These principles provide a strong ethical foundation for shaping environmental philanthropic behaviour.

The discussion shows that the application of environmental philanthropy, such as Water Waqf, the Green Houses of Worship Programme, and NGO-led conservation programmes, functions not only as a financing mechanism but also reflects the principles of justice, moderation, the prohibition of wastefulness, *islah*, the responsibility of *khalifah*, and the preservation of *maslahah*, as outlined in al-Ghazali's theory of ethics. Thus, environmental philanthropy should not be viewed merely as a financial contribution for social benefit, but also as a moral and spiritual practice that connects human beings with their responsibilities towards Allah SWT, society, and the environment.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations, as it is a narrative review based on thematically selected literature without adopting a systematic approach or empirical data, and is limited to the Malaysian context. Therefore, future studies are recommended to conduct empirical research, in-depth case studies, more systematic conceptual model development, and policy effectiveness assessments in order to integrate al-Ghazali's theory of ethics more effectively into environmental philanthropy strategies

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