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Reactualizing Qur'anic Environmental Ethics for Sustainable Urban River Management

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Abstract

*This article aims to reactualize Qur'anic environmental ethics as a normative foundation for sustainable urban river management. The study highlights three major **problems** contributing to river degradation in urban areas: (1) fraudulent practices by the community in constructing houses, shop-houses, and permanent buildings on river buffer zones, which are legally classified as state land and are not subject to private ownership or trade; (2) low public ecological awareness, as reflected in irresponsible behaviors such as disposing of household waste and garbage into rivers; and (3) the lack of trustworthiness (*amanah*) on the part of the government in carrying out its duties, particularly in the weak supervision and control of illegal buildings along riverbanks. These practices have led to river narrowing, sedimentation, and obstructed water flow, thereby increasing the risk of flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. Through a **thematic exegetical** approach with an ecotheological perspective, this study affirms that the Qur'an contains fundamental principles such as *amanah* (trust), justice, the prohibition of *fasād fī al-ard* (corruption on earth), and collective responsibility in maintaining environmental balance. The reactualization of these values is expected to foster moral awareness within society and **strengthen** governmental integrity, enabling the realization of sustainable, just, and ethically grounded urban river management in accordance with Islamic teachings.*

Keywords: Islamic Ecotheology; Qur'anic Exegesis; Environmental Ethics; Urban River Management; Flooding.

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Introduction

The environmental crisis in urban areas today is becoming increasingly severe, particularly in river ecosystems that are experiencing significant declines in quality. Rivers, which fundamentally function as primary drainage channels and as essential supports for life sustainability, are now widely misused as waste disposal sites and areas of illegal settlement. In Bekasi Regency, particularly in the Cikarang area, the major flood events that occurred throughout 2025 serve as empirical evidence of how poor river governance is in urban areas [1]. The flood was not solely caused by natural factors such as high rainfall, but rather resulted from systemic impact and interrelated factors, including uncontrolled urbanization and land-use conversion that neglects ecological functions [1]. This phenomenon aligns with the view that “the environmental crisis is considered a consequence of ignoring moral obligations towards nature,[2]. “where escalating degradation poses one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century, demanding urgent theological, and practical responses”[3].

The urgency of this study is rooted in the reality that purely technocratic approaches and formal legal compliance often fail to address the root problems, which are moral and spiritual in nature [4]. As Muizudin (2025) argues, “the environmental crisis is deeply rooted in a spiritual crisis, where the desacralization of nature has led to its objectification, where rivers and forests are viewed merely as resources to be exploited rather than sacred creation to be revered”[5]. Communities frequently engage in violations by constructing houses, shop-houses, and permanent buildings on state-owned land along riverbanks,[6] disregarding the fact that these areas are protected zones prohibited by law [7],[8]. Based on Law Number 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning the riverbank or riparian zone is designated as a protected area that functions to preserve the local environment [9]. However rapid population growth and limited residential space have driven communities to construct housing indiscriminately without obtaining official permits [10].

On the other hand, low public awareness of environmental cleanliness has further worsened river conditions. The practice of disposing of waste into rivers is still considered commonplace by some communities [11]. This situation is further exacerbated by the behavior of certain government officials who are perceived as lacking a sense of *amanah* (trustworthiness) in carrying out supervisory duties [12]. Insufficient oversight of illegal structures along riverbanks and law enforcement that is at times applied selectively have caused rivers to become clogged and to lose their water retention capacity [13]. In the Islamic perspective this phenomenon can be interpreted as manifestation of *al fasad* (corruption) on land and sea as mentioned in the Qur’an as a direct

consequence of human actions [2],[14]. Therefore the reactualization of Qur'an based environmental ethics becomes highly relevant as a moral guideline for improving sustainable river governance.

Studies on the relationship between Islam and the environment have developed rapidly in recent years particularly within the field of ecotheological discourse. Scholars emphasize that "environmental ethics in islam are based on transcendental values of the Qur'an, which encompass not only material aspects, but also spiritual and ethical aspects"[15]. A number of contemporary studies emphasize the concept of khilafah as a human amanah to maintain the balance of nature (*mizan*) [16]. Widiastuty and Anwar (2025) state that Islamic ecotheology is grounded in a conceptual framework that is deeply integrated into a comprehensive Islamic worldview in which the entire universe is understood as the creation of Allah and subject to His decree [16]. Other research by Riyadi et al (2025) explores the strategies of ulama in fostering ecological awareness emphasizing the role of religious leaders as pioneers in transforming public understanding of nature [17].

In the context of law and administration studies on the regulation of illegal buildings have been conducted in several regions. Roito et al (2025) analyze the problems of implementing administrative sanctions in Bekasi City identifying that weak inter agency coordination and social conflict are the main obstacles to the enforcement of spatial planning law [18]. Meanwhile, Dewi (2025) examines the role of local government in Sukabumi City showing that the regulation of illegal buildings involves systematic stages from site identification to demolition, but is often constrained by budget limitations and limited human resources [18]. From a sociological perspective Yuniarti et al (2020) found a strong correlation between environmental health knowledge and waste disposal behavior, where increased knowledge can positively reduce the tendency of communities to dispose of waste into rivers [18].

Based on the background above, this study aims to address three main research questions: (1) How does the Qur'an interpret the phenomenon of riverbank land violations and indiscriminate waste disposal practices from a theological perspective? (2) To what extent does the failure of government supervision reflect a crisis of amanah (trustworthiness) that contributes to flood disasters? and (3) How can the framework of Qur'anic environmental ethics be reactualized as a functional instrument for sustainable urban river management policy?.

Positioning This Study within Existing Ecotheological Literature

In response to these challenges, it is important to situate this study within the broader landscape of Islamic environmental scholarship, academic discourse on water resource governance within an Islamic perspective has thus far tended to polarize into two dominant approaches: the legal-formal (*fiqh*) approach and the community compliance approach.

In the first approach, studies are largely dominated by juridical-normative analysis. For example, Hamdi et al. (2025) develop a *Maqashid al-Shariah*-based framework for water governance, while Pranotoputera et al. (2025) compare civil law and Islamic law in riverbank regulation. While valid in normative terms, these studies reveal a critical gap: they position religion merely as a static regulatory instrument rather than a dynamic critique of power. Recent international scholarship has increasingly explored the intersection of religious ethics and water sustainability. For instance, Ghunmi et al. (2025) in *Discover Sustainability* propose the "CirculIslamicus" model, using the Islamicity Index to measure water circularity performance across Muslim-majority countries.[19] Similarly, from a comparative ecotheological perspective, Asproulis (2024) in *Religions* emphasizes the role of "eco-ethos" in addressing the climate-driven water crisis [20]. However, while these studies focus on macro-level indices or broad theological ontologies, this research fills a critical gap by providing a granular "Ecotheological Audit" of micro-level policy implementation and structural integrity in urban river management, specifically in the context of the political-economy of "structural fasad" in Bekasi.

In the second approach, research often focuses on evaluating the behavior of civil society. Hakim et al. (2021), through their study of "Fikih Sungai" in Banjarmasin, highlight low public participation and littering behavior as primary causes of river degradation. A bias in this approach is the tendency to place ecological responsibility solely on the community, while the role of policy stakeholders in supervision is often absent from theological analysis. To address this gap, the present study employs a descriptive qualitative field research method combined with a thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) approach within an ecotheological framework. This methodological choice offers significant novelty compared to previous studies:

1. *A Shift from Legalism to Policy Morality.* Unlike *fiqh*-based approaches that focus on the legal validity of actions, the thematic exegesis approach in this study is used to construct a deeper foundation of environmental ethics. The goal is not merely to formulate rules, but to cultivate a more fundamental ecological consciousness.

2. *A Shift in the Object of Evaluation (Structural vs. Cultural)*. This study does not stop at criticizing public awareness (cultural dimension). Instead, it employs the concepts of amanah (trust) and fasad (corruption/destruction) as analytical lenses to assess government performance (structural dimension). Specifically, it highlights the failure to control illegal constructions along riverbanks as a violation of amanah and a manifestation of modern fasad in public policy [21].

Thus, this research positions Qur'anic exegesis not merely as a static sacred text, but as a dynamic evaluative instrument for responding to the crisis of urban river management.

Method

This study employs a field research design using a descriptive qualitative approach integrated with thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) [22]. This methodological combination is intended to place the sacred text of the Qur'an in dialogue with ecological realities in the field within an ecotheological framework.

1. Research Location and Timeframe

The research was conducted in the Citarum River Basin and its tributaries in urban areas identified as flood-prone zones. The selection of this site was based on its ecological urgency, as the area has experienced massive land-use change [23]. Field observations were carried out intensively during seasonal flood events in order to obtain real-time insights into infrastructure damage and community social responses to the disaster.

2. Data Sources

The data sources of this study are divided into two categories:

Primary (Empirical) Data: Visual data were collected through documentation of river physical conditions, accumulations of domestic waste, and the presence of permanent illegal constructions along riverbanks [24]. In addition, narrative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with flood-affected residents to explore their perceptions of flood causes and environmental ethics.

Secondary (Theological-Literary) Data: These include Qur'anic verses related to ecological themes (*fasad, amanah, mizan*), authoritative exegetical works, and supporting literature on water and spatial governance policies.

3. Data Analysis Technique: The Reactualization Model

To ensure methodological transparency, the data analysis follows a systematic three stage "Ecotheological Auditing" process:

Normative Construction: where we inventoried and interpreted key verses (Al-A'raf: 56 & Ar-Rum: 41) using *tafsir maudhu'i* to build an "ideal type" of environmental ethics grounded in amanah and mizan [25].

Empirical Auditing: where we juxtaposed these ideal norms against field data (visual documentation and interview transcripts) to identify specific gaps between religious obligation (das sollen) and empirical reality (das sein) and.

Strategic Synthesis: where we formulated the "Policy Morality" concept by integrating theological findings into practical administrative recommendations [26].

This systematic auditing framework ensures that the resulting recommendations are not merely theoretical, but are empirically grounded and actionable for local governance.

Result and Discussion

Theoretical And Conceptual Framework

Islamic ecotheology is a branch of theology that explores the relationship between God, humans, and the universe based on the primary sources of Islamic teaching. Its main principle is *Tawhid* [27], which affirms the unity of creation and the dependence of all beings on Allah. Within this framework, environmental destruction is understood as an action that disrupts the order of Allah's signs as manifested in nature [16]. This perspective aligns with Alhinai and Ringer (2025), who argue that concepts like *amanah* and *umma* should be understood as "core Islamic ecospiritual principles that offer a decolonial epistemology grounded in relational ethics, reciprocal responsibility, and more-than-human kinship" [28]. These principles provide the ethical foundation upon which broader Qur'anic prophetic values can be understood and reapplied in contemporary environmental contexts within this Qur'anic ethical framework, several interconnected principles further clarify the moral structure of human-nature relations [29]. In addition, the concept of mizan (balance) requires humans to manage natural resources wisely to ensure their sustainability for future generations [16].

Humans are positioned as *khalifah fi al-ardh* (God's representatives on earth) bearing the amanah to prosper the earth, not to destroy it [30]. This implies that humans are endowed with the power to manage natural assets productively, ensuring that nature's bounty is developed beneficially rather than exploited destructively [21]. As Ratna Dewi (2025) emphasizes, "humans, as *khalifah*, have an obligation to maintain this balance, not to destroy it through actions such as excessive exploitation, environmental pollution, or injustice towards nature" [15]. This amanah includes the moral responsibility to maintain cleanliness, uphold

honesty in land use, and carry out social oversight to preserve ecosystems.[16] Violations of this amanah, whether by individuals through land-related misconduct or by the government through tolerating illegal constructions, can be viewed as a form of spiritual and ethical failure.

Injustice According to the Qur'an (*Zulm* and *Baghy*)

In the Qur'an, the term *zulm* has a broad range of meanings, from the darkness of the heart to acts of oppression against fellow beings [18],[31]. Etymologically, *zulm* conveys the meanings of *jara wa jawaza al-hadd* (to act unjustly and exceed limits) as well as *wada'a al-shay fi ghairi mawdi'ih* (placing something in the wrong place) [31]. Constructing buildings on riverbanks or riparian zones represents a concrete example of placing something in an improper location, as these areas are legally public property for irrigation purposes [10].

In addition, *baghyun* is used to describe actions that violate the rights of others, show hostility, and deviate from legal norms [31]. Community involvement in the illegal trade of state-owned land along riverbanks or riparian zones constitute a form of *baghyun* because they deprive other citizens of their right to a safe environment free from flooding [32]. This ecological injustice leads in *zulumat* (darkness and hardship) for the wider community. To counter this injustice, "the principles of *maslahah* (public interest) and *'adl* (justice) emphasize that governments and corporations bear the responsibility of preventing water crises and ensuring sustainability"[33] in this sense, according to the Qur'an, protecting the environment is a religious duty in addition to a social obligation, and is not considered an optional matter [34].

Analysis of Community Violations in the Use of Riverbank and Riparian Land

This practice is often driven by uncontrolled urbanization and the scarcity of affordable residential land. Low-income communities often end up building in prohibited areas, while well-capitalized individuals exploit legal loopholes to establish strategic commercial buildings along the riverbanks [18]. From the Qur'anic perspective, this action can be interpreted as a form of *baghyun* (violation of rights) affecting both the state and the public, as the land functionally belongs to the community to ensure the safety of urban waterways.

Furthermore, the existence of permanent commercial buildings in the riparian zone is not only a violation of positive law – specifically Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning – but also a profound theological failure [35]. In Islamic governance, compliance with state regulations intended for public safety (*maslahah*) is part of the covenant (*ahd*) between the government (*ulil amri*) and the people [36]. When the government neglects enforcement and allows these

illegal structures to proliferate for economic gain, they are committing structural treason (*khianat*) against the public trust (*Amanah*) [37]. This creates a form of 'structural *fasad*' where policy failure directly contributes to environmental destruction.

Low Public Awareness in Maintaining River Cleanliness

Littering behavior is a significant environmental challenge in Bekasi Regency. Various research findings indicate that the low level of public awareness and understanding of the impacts of waste is the main factor driving this behavior [38]. Most residents living along riverbanks or designated river zones still use rivers as final disposal sites for household waste, domestic effluents, and even excrement [39]. The reason often cited is convenience, driven by the assumption that the waste will be carried away by the current, without considering the accumulation of waste downstream, which has the potential to block the drainage system [18]. Such behavior contradicts the fact that the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of the principle of moderation in consumption, sustainable resource management, preparedness for environmental challenges, and greening [15].

This is reinforced by interview findings with a resident living along the riverbank, who stated that disposing of waste into the river has been a long-standing habit due to the lack of access to waste collection services reaching their settlement. The informant explained, "We are confused about where else to throw our trash; usually when heavy rain comes, the garbage is immediately washed away so it does not pile up here." Field observations also indicated the absence of adequate temporary waste disposal facilities (TPS) in the surrounding area.

This low environmental awareness is not only observed among communities with lower educational attainment, but also appears across various social strata [40]. This condition indicates that cognitive knowledge does not necessarily transform into ecological piety. Direct disposal of waste into rivers impacts water quality, increases mortality of aquatic organism, and causes blockages in water flow, which can ultimately can trigger flooding when rainfall increases [1]. In 2025, authorities in the Cikarang area reportedly removed tens of tons of waste from rivers to alleviate floodwaters that inundated residential areas [41].

Weaknesses in Government Implementation of Supervision and Enforcement

Local governments play a crucial role as enforcers of spatial planning laws and as guardians of policy implementation among the public. However, the 2025 flooding in Bekasi Regency revealed significant weaknesses in governmental supervision. The lack of consistent oversight of illegal development from the outset allowed permanent structures to proliferate along riverbanks, making subsequent enforcement more difficult and triggering social conflicts [42].



Figure 1. Permanent commercial and residential buildings encroaching on the riverbank. **Source:** sourced from the researcher's camera

Criticism of the government often concerns selective enforcement practices, in which small residential buildings are sanctioned while large commercial structures that violate boundaries frequently escape oversight [43].

Based on direct field observations, the researcher identified unequal treatment between residents' semi-permanent structures and large commercial buildings within the same zone. An interview with a neighborhood head (RT leader) revealed that public outreach regarding riverbank boundary regulations rarely reaches the grassroots level. He noted, "Government officials usually come only after major flooding occurs or during enforcement operations, but routine guidance or community engagement is almost nonexistent".

Meanwhile, weak coordination among agencies, such as Satpol PP, the Spatial Planning Office, and the Land Agency, often reduces riverbank regulations to mere rules on paper [44], without effective implementation in the field. This weakness in supervision and enforcement reflects a lack of integrity and professionalism among *ulil amri*, who are responsible for ensuring protection and justice for all citizens [45]. Field data show that community perceptions align with the researcher's analysis regarding a crisis of *amanah*

(trust and responsibility) in environmental oversight. An affected resident expressed disappointment over the government's tolerance of illegal structures along the riverbanks, combined with the community's harmful practice of disposing waste into the river, as the main causes of the flooding they experienced [46]. This demonstrates that the disaster constitutes a clear manifestation of *fasad* (destructive disorder) arising from the neglect of ecological responsibility by both authorities and the community.

Reactualization of Qur'anic Environmental Ethics: Interpretation of Surah Ar-Rum Verse 41: Ecological Degradation as a Spiritual Warning

In QS. Ar-Rum: 41, Allah ta'ala says:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

The meaning: "Corruption has appeared on land and sea as a result of what the hands of people have earned. (Through this) Allah makes them taste some of the consequences of their deeds so that they may return (to the right path)" [47],[48].

Imam Ibn Kathir, in his tafsir, explains that "fasad" (corruption) in this verse refers to polytheism and immorality, which lead to a reduction in blessings from the heavens and the earth, such as drought, famine, and the loss of security [48]. Manan Cheema and Rahman (2025) expand this definition to the modern context, stating that "Pollution (plastic waste, oil spills, toxic emissions), deforestation, habitat destruction, overconsumption, disrupting of natural balance (mizan) are forms of fasad (destructive activities)" [3].

This theoretical postulate is confirmed by empirical data from the field. Throughout 2025, Cikarang experienced three extreme flood cycles with water levels reaching up to two meters. While hidrologically this was triggered by high rainfall, in an ecotheological perspective, this phenomenon represents a fundamental disruption of Mizan (cosmic balance). The water, which naturally requires space to flow (*haqq al-ma*), has been displaced by concrete structures, forcing it to reclaim its space through disastrous overflow. This catastrophe is not merely a natural disaster, but a theological signal that the limit (*qadar*) set by nature has been violated by human greed

In the context of urban rivers, particularly in Bekasi, such immorality can be recontextualized as acts of "ecological misconduct." Construction along riverbanks and the improper disposal of waste constitute social sins because they harm many people. Allah allows humans to experience the impact of floods as a form of *dzauq* (tasting the consequences) so that they may become aware and repent (*yarji'un*) [14]. The reactualization of the ethical message of this verse calls

for “ecological repentance”, namely the complete cessation of all forms of riverbank occupation and water pollution as an expression of a servant’s obedience to the Creator [49].

The Prohibition of *Fasad* and the Principle of *Mizan* in Qur’an Surah *Al-A’raf* Verse 56

In QS. Al-A’raf: 56 Allah ta’ala says:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ
مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

The meaning: “Do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been properly ordered. Pray to Him with fear and hope. Indeed, Allah’s mercy is very near to those who do good” [50].

Imam Ibn Kathir, in his tafsir, explains that Allah forbids all forms of corruption after improvement, whether through the *Sharia* of the prophets or through the harmonious order of nature. Riverbank areas, which are naturally designated as water protection zones, are part of the earth’s order that has been “properly arranged”. This order reflects the idea that “God created the world in balance (*mizan*), including habitats, ecosystems and all forms of life. However, this balance can be disrupted by humans due to their capacity to cause *fasad* (corruption) on earth [51].



Figure 2. Disruption of *mizan* and the emergence of *fasad* in the 2025 Cikarang floods. **Source:** sourced from the researcher's camera

Constructing shophouses and permanent buildings in riverbank or protection zones disturb the balance (*mizan*) and contradicts the divine mercy embedded in the earth's natural system [16]. The reactualization of this ethical principle teaches that preserving riverbank boundaries is not merely a matter of complying with state law, but also of fulfilling a religious duty to maintain the harmony of God's creation for the safety and well-being of all.

The Manifestation of Amanah in River Governance and Leadership

After discussing the prohibition of *fasad* and the principle of *mizan* in QS. Ar-Rum: 41 and QS. Al-A'raf: 56, the Qur'an also emphasizes the importance of safeguarding trust (*amanah*) and fulfilling it properly.

In QS. An-Nisa: 58 Allah ta'ala says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا
بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٥٨﴾

The meaning: "Indeed, Allah commands you to deliver trusts (*amanah*) to their rightful owners. When you judge between people, judge with justice. Indeed, Allah instructs you in the best way. Indeed, Allah is All Hearing, All Seeing."

In this verse, Allah ta'ala obliges every holder of authority to fulfill their responsibilities with justice and professionalism. In the governance of rivers, the Bekasi Regency government acts as the trustee (*amanah*) of state land and the safety of its people. The failure to supervise illegal constructions and inconsistencies in law enforcement can be viewed as a breach of the trust entrusted to them (both as a divine mandate and as a public responsibility) [52].

The reactualization of the ethics of *amanah* requires the government to:

1. Conduct impartial supervision of all constructions along the riverbanks.
2. Maintain the integrity of land administration to prevent illegal certification on state land along the riverbanks [35].
3. Provide affordable, adequate, and sustainable housing solutions for residents affected by relocation, as a form of the leader's social responsibility.

On the other hand, the community also bears *amanah* at the individual, level by refraining from misconduct and maintaining environmental cleanliness as part of the manifestation of faith (*an-nadhafatu min al-iman*) this is because environmental protection, which is a major goal of the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs), was already embedded in Islam and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad centuries ago [53].

Islamic Ecotheology-Based Community Empowerment Strategies

Addressing the river crisis requires synergy between legal approaches and community empowerment grounded in Islamic spiritual values. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach can be implemented by involving scholars and religious leaders as agents of change to foster ecological awareness within the community [54]. Interviews with local community organizers indicated that residents are willing to change their behavior, provided that adequate facilities are made available [55]. The researcher observed that religiously grounded approaches are more readily accepted by the community than mere threats of fines. Observations of regular neighborhood religious gatherings further suggest that ecotheological values hold strong potential to be integrated into local da'wah materials.

Islamic ecotheology based community empowerment programs can include:

1. Critical Education Based on the Value of Tauhid

Providing the community with an understanding that disposing of waste into rivers constitutes a violation of their amanah as caliphs on earth and has the potential to cause harm (mudarat) to other living beings [27].

2. Optimization of Waste Banks as an Implementation of Gratitude

Encouraging a shift in community's mindset from the habit of dumping waste to engaging in productive waste management practices as a form of gratitude (syukur) for the resources bestowed by Allah

3. Revitalization of Local Wisdom in Harmony with Islamic Values

Reviving local practices in river stewardship that align with Islamic principles of mizan (balance) and the prohibition of causing fasad (corruption) on earth [56].

Through the internalization of Qur'anic environmental ethics, the community is expected to transform from agents of destruction into pioneers of river conservation, as part of their responsibility and human stewardship (khilafah) on earth [53].

Results and Theoretical Contribution

First, this study finds that flooding in Bekasi is not merely a natural phenomenon, but a manifestation of fasad (corruption) that is both physical and metaphysical, resulting from the neglect of the ethics of khilafah in development practices along riverbanks. This strategic framework emphasizes that any urban

development must align with the cosmic equilibrium established by the Creator, prioritizing long-term ecological stability over short-term economic gain.

Second, the Qur'an positions rivers as Ayatullah (signs of Allah's power) that have the right to flow, yet this right is often diminished by land conversion, river narrowing, and industrial and residential expansion. This reductionist approach to water bodies ignores the inherent sanctity of the river as a divine sign, leading to a spiritual and ecological vacuum in urban spatial planning. This finding supports the idea that "The Qur'an defines nature as signs of God, thus enhancing awareness of the sanctity of the natural world" [28].

Third, this study formulates a strategy for the reactualization of river management through the concept of "Rivers as the Sacred Core of Life," an approach based on the principle of mizan (balance) to ensure that river use does not exceed the natural carrying and support capacity. This concept challenges the modern view in which "rivers and forest are viewed merely as resources to be exploited rather than sacred creations to be revered" [5].

Theoretically, this study enriches the field of ecological exegesis by presenting an applied example through a specific urban case study, while simultaneously expanding the analytical scope of Qur'anic environmental ethics within contemporary urban contexts. It bridges the **gap** between normative theological texts and empirical urban crises, demonstrating that Qur'anic values are not merely abstract ideals but functional instruments for environmental auditing and ethical evaluation [57]. This study therefore moves beyond static textual analysis by offering a dynamic model of ecotheological auditing that evaluates both structural policy arrangements and patterns of cultural and social behavior related to environmental management.

Practically, the findings provide strategic recommendations for urban policymakers, particularly those in Bekasi Regency, emphasizing that river restoration efforts cannot rely solely on technical-structural approaches, such as constructing concrete infrastructure or reinforcing river embankments. Instead, sustainable river governance must also involve the internalization of environmental ethical values among communities living along riverbanks through a religiously grounded approach [58]. By integrating the spirit of amanah into public policy, governmental authority can transform administrative compliance into a collective moral movement that supports long-term and sustainable river conservation.

Conclusion

The urban river crisis in Bekasi Regency, which culminated in the devastating Cikarang floods of 2025, serves as a profound empirical reflection of the collapse of environmental ethics at both the individual and institutional levels. This study concludes that the recurrent disasters in this region cannot be adequately understood as merely isolated hydrological or climatological phenomena. Rather, they are deeply embedded in a broader socio-ethical crisis marked by a systemic disregard for the sacredness of nature and the moral responsibilities entrusted to human beings as stewards of the earth. The degradation of river ecosystems thus reflects not only physical mismanagement, but also a failure to internalize environmental values as a moral and spiritual obligation.

Community misconduct, characterized by the fraudulent construction of permanent buildings on state-owned river buffer zones and the habitual disposal of household waste into waterways, represents a direct violation of fundamental Qur'anic principles. These practices contradict the concept of *khilafah* (stewardship), which mandates humans to protect and manage nature responsibly; undermine *mizan* (balance), which signifies ecological equilibrium as a divine order; and fall squarely within the prohibition of *fasad* (corruption and destruction on earth). From a theological perspective, this study interprets the recurring floods as a form of *dza'iq*, namely a condition in which Allah allows humanity to taste the consequences of its own actions as a moral warning and an opportunity for ethical reflection and repentance. This interpretation is not intended as a deterministic claim, but rather as a normative framework that situates environmental disasters within a Qur'anic moral worldview.

Furthermore, the findings reveal a critical crisis of *amanah* (trustworthiness) within public leadership and governance structures. The government's failure to maintain consistent supervision over river buffer zones, coupled with selective law enforcement – where minor residential violations are penalized while large commercial and industrial structures remain tolerated – constitutes a serious breach of public trust. Such practices indicate that environmental governance is often subordinated to short-term economic interests, thereby eroding the ethical foundation of state authority. In this context, environmental degradation emerges as a structural problem rooted in governance failure rather than solely as a consequence of community behavior.

Although the physical enforcement operations and demolitions carried out throughout 2025 can be acknowledged as necessary immediate interventions, this study argues that they remain insufficient if not accompanied by a deeper moral and ethical transformation. Sustainable urban river management cannot

rely exclusively on technocratic solutions, infrastructural development, or legal-formal mechanisms. Instead, it requires a paradigmatic shift toward what this study conceptualizes as Policy Morality, namely a governance model that integrates ethical accountability, spiritual consciousness, and ecological justice into public policy formulation and implementation. Within this framework, state authorities are expected to function as *ulil amri* who consistently prioritize *maslahah* (public interest), long-term environmental sustainability, and intergenerational justice over short-term political or economic gains.

Ultimately, the reactualization of Qur'anic environmental ethics offers a comprehensive and integrative normative foundation for addressing contemporary urban river crises. By internalizing the values of Tawhid and recognizing rivers as *Ayatullah* (signs of God's power and wisdom), both the state and the community can be guided toward a more harmonious and responsible relationship with the natural environment. This study emphasizes that the restoration of urban rivers should not be perceived merely as a technical engineering task or an administrative obligation, but as a profound moral and spiritual struggle to restore the cosmic balance (*mizan*) established by the Creator.

The synthesis of administrative law, environmental governance, and spiritual responsibility proposed in this study highlights that effective river management must be grounded in ethical consciousness as much as in regulatory compliance. Such an integrative approach ensures that river governance promotes not only ecological sustainability, but also social justice and moral accountability. In this sense, the preservation of urban rivers ultimately represents the preservation of life itself, affirming that environmental ethics rooted in the Qur'an remain highly relevant as a guiding framework for sustainable development in contemporary urban contexts.

However, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research is geographically limited to the Cikarang River basin in Bekasi, which possesses unique socio-political characteristics that may not be immediately generalizable to other regions with different governance structures. Second, as a qualitative study, it relies on theological interpretation and subject interviews, without quantifying the direct correlation between religious understanding and behavioral change. Future research is recommended to employ quantitative methods to measure the "Ecological Piety Index" of riverbank communities or to conduct comparative studies in other urban river basins to test the broader applicability of the Policy Morality model.

Author Contributions

Muhammad Raihan Al Rasyid and **Muhammad Muchtar** contributed to concept development, methodology design, writing, investigation and through supervision of the research process

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Conflict of Interest

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