



From Divine Trust to Sustainable Civilization: Reconstructing Consumption Ethics Through Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah in the Anthropocene

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Abstract

The Anthropocene has intensified scholarly concern regarding unsustainable consumption, ecological degradation, and growing inequalities within global food systems. Sustainability discourse has generated significant theoretical and policy responses, yet much of it emphasizes technology and regulation and pays comparatively less attention to the moral dimensions of consumption. This article proposes that *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* can inform the reconstruction of consumption ethics by framing consumption as a moral responsibility grounded in stewardship, accountability, gratitude, and justice. Drawing on qualitative and conceptual methods, the study undertakes textual analysis of the Qurʾan, Prophetic traditions, and *maqāṣid* scholarship, complemented by comparative engagement with sustainability theory and environmental ethics. It examines the ethical significance of resource use, moderation, and human responsibility in relation to ecological challenges, with attention to food waste as an illustrative case of the wider consumption-ethics problem. The study finds that the Qurʾanic moral economy and the objectives of Islamic law offer an integrated vision linking individual behavior, social welfare, environmental stewardship, and civilizational flourishing. Building on these insights, the article proposes the Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework (MSCF), a conceptual model connecting divine trust, gratitude, moderation, responsible consumption, social justice, and ecological responsibility. The sequence and relationships within this framework are conceptual and remain to be tested empirically. The article concludes that sustainability requires ethical transformation alongside technological adaptation, and that *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* offers a relevant conceptual resource for thinking about sustainable civilization in an age of ecological crisis.

Keywords: *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Consumption Ethics, Sustainability, Anthropocene, Islamic Ethics, Environmental Stewardship, Sustainable Civilization*

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has witnessed unprecedented concern regarding the sustainability of contemporary production and consumption. Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and growing food insecurity have collectively raised questions about the long-term viability of prevailing economic systems. Vast quantities of edible food continue to be discarded annually despite persistent global hunger and malnutrition ([United Nations Environment Programme \[UNEP\], 2024](#)).

At the same time, unsustainable human activity remains a primary driver of ecological instability ([Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \[IPCC\], 2023](#)). These developments have generated increasing scholarly interest in the ethical foundations of sustainability and the moral responsibilities associated with resource consumption. They have also prompted scholars across disciplines to ask whether the ecological crisis is, at its root, a crisis of values rather than merely a crisis of technology or policy.

The emergence of the Anthropocene as a conceptual framework has intensified this debate. Popularized by [Crutzen and Stoermer \(2000\)](#), the term describes a geological epoch in which human activity has become a decisive force shaping planetary systems. It captures how human activity has altered atmospheric composition, biodiversity, and the chemistry of oceans and soils



on a scale previously associated only with major geological events. Its precise onset and boundaries remain contested among geologists and environmental historians.

Even so, the Anthropocene remains a powerful analytical lens for examining the relationship between human behavior and ecological change (Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2016). It raises a profound ethical question that extends well beyond the natural sciences: how should humanity exercise its power over the natural world, and on what moral basis should that power be constrained?

Sustainability studies have generated concepts such as sustainable consumption, degrowth, and circular economy to reduce environmental harm (Jackson, 2017; Raworth, 2017). A body of scholarship in this field argues that certain strands of the discourse remain heavily dependent on technical, managerial, and economic solutions that address the symptoms of ecological crisis without always confronting its moral and cultural causes (Kopnina & Washington, 2015).

This is not a claim that the field as a whole neglects ethics; scholars such as Jackson (2017) and Raworth (2017) explicitly foreground values and well-being. It is, rather, an observation that policy-facing sustainability literature often treats consumption primarily as a matter of individual preference and market choice, so that environmental degradation is interpreted mainly as a technical problem requiring regulation.

Policies focused narrowly on efficiency or technological substitution can fail to address the cultural narratives of abundance and disposability that drive consumption upward even where more sustainable alternatives exist. This more limited claim, examined further in the literature review below, motivates the ethical framework developed in this article.

Within this context, food waste provides a revealing case study. Although typically examined through economic, environmental, and policy lenses, it also exposes deeper questions of justice and responsibility. The coexistence of excessive waste and persistent hunger reflects not merely a logistical failure but a moral contradiction embedded within contemporary consumption patterns. Existing responses to food waste, such as improved logistics, food recovery programs, and consumer awareness campaigns, have produced meaningful but limited results.

This suggests that a more fundamental rethinking of the ethical relationship between human beings and material resources may be required. Understanding this contradiction requires an ethical framework that links individual behavior to broader social and ecological consequences, rather than treating waste as an isolated technical failure to be managed through incremental reform.

Islamic ethical thought offers important resources for this task. The Qur'an and Sunnah articulate a moral vision that situates human beings within a framework of responsibility toward God, society, and creation. Concepts such as *khilāfah* (stewardship), *amānah* (trust), *shukr* (gratitude), and *i'tidāl* (moderation) regulate resource use and discourage excess. Together they treat consumption as a morally significant practice connected to accountability, justice, and human flourishing.

Among the most significant developments in contemporary Islamic thought is the revival of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah as a framework for addressing emerging social and ethical challenges. Building on classical scholars such as *al-Ghazālī*, *al-Shāṭibī*, and *Ibn 'Āshūr*, contemporary maqāṣid scholarship has expanded into governance, development, human rights, and environmental responsibility (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2019). However, its application to sustainability ethics and consumption practices remains comparatively underdeveloped, leaving a significant gap between a rich ethical tradition and one of the most pressing challenges of the present age.

This article argues that Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah offers a comprehensive normative framework for reconstructing consumption ethics in the Anthropocene. By integrating Qur'anic moral economy, Prophetic ethics, and maqāṣid-based reasoning, the study moves beyond technocratic approaches to sustainability. It works toward a holistic understanding of responsible consumption,

guided by the question: How can Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah contribute to the reconstruction of consumption ethics in an age of ecological crisis?

In pursuing this question, the article seeks to achieve three interrelated objectives. First, it articulates the ethical foundations of consumption embedded within the Qurʾan and Sunnah. Second, it demonstrates how maqāṣid reasoning can be extended to encompass environmental and civilizational concerns that classical jurisprudence has not fully addressed. Third, it translates these foundations into a coherent conceptual framework that informs both scholarship and practice. The article proceeds by reviewing relevant scholarship and outlining its methodology, before developing a maqāṣid-based model of sustainable consumption grounded in the Qurʾanic and Prophetic foundations of resource stewardship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability and Consumption Ethics

Sustainable consumption generally refers to the use of goods and services that satisfy human needs while minimizing environmental impact and preserving resources for future generations ([Jackson, 2017](#)). Despite broad agreement on its importance, scholars continue to disagree on the ethical, economic, and political mechanisms necessary to achieve it.

Ecological modernization scholars argue that innovation, improved resource management, and green technology can decouple growth from degradation ([Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000](#)). Critics contend, however, that efficiency gains alone often fail to reduce overall consumption, since increased productivity may generate additional demand and resource use ([Jackson, 2017](#)). Technological solutions may therefore mitigate environmental harm without addressing the cultural and behavioral drivers of excess.

Ecological ethics, represented by [Leopold \(1949\)](#), [Rolston \(2012\)](#), and [Callicott \(1989\)](#), expands moral concern beyond anthropocentric frameworks to recognize the intrinsic value of ecosystems and non-human life. It offers limited guidance, however, on the spiritual and moral motivations necessary for sustained behavioral transformation within consumer societies. Degrowth scholarship offers a more radical critique, arguing that endless economic expansion is incompatible with ecological limits and advocating reduced consumption and alternative models of prosperity ([Kallis, 2018](#)).

By challenging growth-oriented paradigms, it contributes important structural insights. Critics note, however, that it often lacks a comprehensive ethical anthropology explaining why individuals and communities should embrace self-restraint beyond ecological necessity. Circular economy models promote resource efficiency through recycling, reuse, and waste reduction ([Geissdoerfer et al., 2017](#)).

They remain widely adopted by policymakers, yet largely technocratic and managerial in orientation, with their emphasis on material flows often overlooking the ethical values and cultural assumptions that shape consumption behavior. Collectively, these approaches reveal a normative deficit. The moral foundations of consumption remain underdeveloped, creating space for alternative ethical frameworks such as Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah.

Food Waste Scholarship

Food waste has become a major concern in sustainability research due to its economic, environmental, and social implications. Large quantities of food intended for human consumption are lost or discarded across production, distribution, retail, and household stages ([Food and Agriculture Organization \[FAO\], 2019](#); [UNEP, 2024](#)). A substantial portion of the literature approaches food waste from an economic perspective, examining supply-chain inefficiencies, storage practices, and market structures ([Parfitt et al., 2010](#)).

This scholarship informs policy interventions but often treats food primarily as a commodity, with limited attention to the moral meanings attached to production, consumption, and disposal. A second strand emphasizes environmental consequences, demonstrating that food waste contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, land degradation, and biodiversity loss (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). Such analyses, however, tend to evaluate waste using quantitative and ecological metrics that overlook the cultural attitudes that encourage wasteful behavior.

Policy-oriented research constitutes a third major strand, proposing regulatory frameworks, awareness campaigns, and institutional partnerships to reduce food waste and improve redistribution (FAO, 2019; UNEP, 2024). The effectiveness of such measures, however, depends heavily on broader changes in social values and consumer behavior. More recently, interdisciplinary scholars have begun exploring the social and cultural dimensions of food waste, examining consumer identity, lifestyle practices, and norms of abundance (Evans, 2014).

This represents an important development, yet the ethical and civilizational dimensions of food waste remain comparatively underexplored. Food waste is thus often treated as an environmental or economic problem rather than a manifestation of a broader ethical crisis. This highlights the need for a normative framework connecting resource stewardship, social justice, and sustainability.

Islamic Ethical Thought

Islamic ethical thought situates consumption within a broader vision of accountability before God, justice toward others, and stewardship of creation. Al-Ghazālī (2015) emphasized moderation and the moral regulation of desire, arguing that excessive attachment to material goods undermines spiritual and social well-being.

This critique resonates with modern concerns about consumerism (Moosa, 2015; Orman, 2014) and, in important respects, anticipates contemporary psychological research linking materialism to diminished well-being. Al-Shāṭibī (1997) systematized maqāṣid theory around the preservation of essential human interests and collective welfare (maṣlaḥah).

This provided a foundation for reasoning about resource use and harm prevention that remains foundational to virtually all subsequent maqāṣid scholarship. Ibn ‘Āshūr (2006) expanded maqāṣid beyond classical legal categories to encompass social order, human dignity, and civilizational development. This offers conceptual resources particularly relevant to the civilizational dimension of sustainability explored later in this article.

Contemporary scholars have extended this discourse further. Auda (2008) proposes a systems approach that treats maqāṣid as a set of interconnected objectives rather than a fixed hierarchy, emphasizing interconnectedness, openness, and holistic analysis as tools for addressing complex modern problems. Kamali (2010, 2015, 2019) argues across several works that maqāṣid should inform Islamic responses to environmental degradation, moderation, and sustainable development, treating the objectives of Sharī‘ah as a living framework capable of continual reinterpretation.

Ramadan (2009), Nasr (1996), Foltz et al. (2003), and Dien (2000) similarly highlight the ecological implications of stewardship and moderation, situating environmental responsibility within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition rather than treating it as an externally imported concern. Despite these contributions, Islamic environmental ethics and maqāṣid scholarship remain largely disconnected from sustainability theory, particularly in relation to consumption and food systems. Relatively few studies attempt a systematic, integrative engagement between the two bodies of literature.

The small body of research that does connect maqāṣid reasoning directly to environmental

sustainability illustrates both the promise and the limits of existing work. [Qahtani \(2019\)](#) applies maqāṣid categories to environmental protection but does so at a general programmatic level, without engaging a specific consumption problem in depth.

[Nasir et al. \(2021, 2022\)](#) provide valuable empirical evidence that practitioners in Muslim-majority institutional settings increasingly frame environmental responsibility in Shariah terms. However, their focus is institutional and organizational rather than textual, and they do not develop a Qur'anic or Prophetic moral-economy account of consumption. [Sobian \(2022\)](#) documents the gap between Islamic teaching on food conservation and actual household behavior during Ramadan, offering important empirical grounding. However, the study is descriptive of practice rather than oriented toward building a normative framework.

Read together, this literature confirms that maqāṣid-based environmental and consumption ethics is an active but still emerging area, in which conceptual synthesis across textual, ethical, and empirical strands remains limited. The present article addresses this gap; it does not claim to be the first study to link Islam and sustainability, but it aims to offer a more sustained textual and conceptual synthesis than currently exists on the specific problem of consumption ethics.

Literature Gap

Sustainability scholarship, food waste research, and Islamic ethical literature have each generated valuable but largely disconnected insights. Sustainability studies analyze environmental degradation and propose technological, economic, and regulatory solutions, yet often lack a comprehensive moral framework to motivate enduring behavioral change. Food waste research identifies important economic, logistical, and policy dimensions of the problem, but generally underexplores its ethical implications and civilizational significance.

Maqāṣid scholarship, though expanding steadily into governance, finance, human rights, and bioethics, has rarely directly engaged with consumption ethics and environmental sustainability, remaining largely confined to more traditional areas of Islamic legal and economic thought. Where Islamic environmental ethics has addressed sustainability, it has tended to focus on general principles of stewardship rather than developing an integrated conceptual model capable of engaging directly with contemporary sustainability theory and empirical food-waste scholarship.

This article addresses that gap by integrating sustainability studies, food systems ethics, and maqāṣid-based reasoning within a single civilizational framework. It contributes the Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework (MSCF), which reconceptualizes consumption as a moral, social, ecological, and civilizational responsibility rooted in the objectives of Sharī'ah. In doing so, the article responds to calls within both sustainability studies and Islamic studies for greater interdisciplinary engagement. It offers a model that is grounded in classical scholarship while remaining responsive to the empirical realities of contemporary global food systems.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, conceptual, and normative research design to examine how Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah can contribute to the reconstruction of consumption ethics amid contemporary ecological challenges. The article develops a theoretical framework rather than testing empirical hypotheses. It is concerned primarily with the analysis and synthesis of normative ideas and conceptual relationships within Islamic and sustainability scholarship. A qualitative approach is appropriate because questions of morality, responsibility, and sustainable consumption require interpretive rather than purely quantitative investigation ([Creswell & Poth, 2018](#)).

The research draws on three complementary methods. First, textual analysis of primary Islamic sources explores themes of stewardship (khilāfah), trust (amānah), gratitude (shukr), moderation (i'tidāl), and public welfare (maṣlahah). These sources include relevant Qur'anic

verses, Prophetic traditions, and major maqāṣid works as articulated by al-Ghazālī, al-Shāṭibī, and Ibn ‘Ashūr, read with attention to their ethical implications for contemporary consumption.

Second, comparative analysis places these Islamic concepts in dialogue with sustainability literature, environmental ethics, circular economy theory, and degrowth scholarship, identifying convergences and areas of theoretical enrichment. Third, the article adopts a maqāṣid-based interpretive approach, following contemporary scholars who treat Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah as a dynamic framework for emerging ethical challenges (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2019).

This approach also draws on the analytical distinction between the ends (maqāṣid) and the means (wasā’il) of Sharī‘ah rulings. That distinction allows classical objectives to be pursued through instruments and applications appropriate to contemporary circumstances, without altering the underlying ends themselves (Laldin & Furqani, 2013). Ecological sustainability, responsible consumption, and resource stewardship are interpreted through five preservation categories: life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), wealth (ḥifẓ al-māl), future generations (ḥifẓ al-nasl), environmental integrity (ḥifẓ al-bī‘ah), and civilizational continuity (ḥifẓ al-‘umrān).

The article is interdisciplinary, drawing on Islamic ethics, maqāṣid studies, environmental ethics, sustainability theory, and food systems research. Together, these fields inform a holistic ethical framework linking individual conduct, social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and long-term human flourishing. Its methodological aim is not to generate new empirical data but to develop the Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework (MSCF) as an alternative moral vision for addressing the challenges of the Anthropocene.

Source selection followed established principles of qualitative textual research. Primary Islamic sources were selected for their direct relevance to consumption, stewardship, and resource use. Verses central to the analysis were cross-checked against Ibn Kathīr’s Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm (Ibn Kathīr, 2000) as a widely used and representative classical commentary, with citations to this tafsīr included at the relevant points in Section 4.1 where the interpretation of a given verse materially affects the argument.

This check was not exhaustive across the full exegetical tradition; it was intended to confirm that the readings offered here are consistent with mainstream tafsīr rather than with isolated proof-texting, and this limitation is explicitly acknowledged in the Limitations section below. Secondary Islamic sources were drawn from established classical authorities (al-Ghazālī, al-Shāṭibī, Ibn ‘Ashūr) and from contemporary maqāṣid scholars whose work has shaped the discipline’s recent development (Auda, 2008; Chapra, 2008; Kamali, 2010, 2015, 2019).

Sustainability and environmental ethics sources were selected from widely cited works in their respective fields, supplemented by recent reports from international organizations (FAO, UNEP, IPCC, WHO), to ensure that the discussion of food waste and ecological impact reflects current empirical understanding. Analysis proceeded in three stages. The first stage identified the relevant Qur’anic and Prophetic material and its established interpretive context.

The second stage mapped this material onto the five maqāṣid categories used in the study. The third stage synthesized the resulting insights into the integrated conceptual model presented in the Findings and Discussion section. This layered process of textual analysis, comparative reading, and conceptual synthesis provides the interpretive foundation for the Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework developed below.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Qur’anic Moral Economy of Consumption

Contemporary sustainability debates increasingly acknowledge that ecological crises cannot be understood solely through economic or technological frameworks. Patterns of overconsumption and waste are deeply connected to moral assumptions regarding humanity’s relationship with

nature. The Qur'an offers a distinctive moral economy that situates consumption within a framework of responsibility, gratitude, stewardship, and accountability before God. It presents resources as divine gifts entrusted to humanity rather than objects of unrestricted exploitation.

The concept of *khilāfah* establishes humanity as God's vicegerent on earth (Qur'an 2:30), a relationship of stewardship rather than absolute ownership. [Ibn Kathīr's \(2000\)](#) commentary on this verse explains that the angels' question about corruption and bloodshed, and God's reply that He knows what they do not, together frame human vicegerency as a trust accompanied by real capacity for both harm and responsible care, rather than as a grant of unqualified dominion. Human beings may utilize natural resources, but this authority carries moral responsibility and accountability.

Creation reflects divine wisdom and possesses intrinsic value rather than existing merely as an object of domination ([Nasr, 1996](#)). If human beings are stewards rather than owners, consumption cannot be reduced to individual preference or purchasing power. Every act of consumption becomes a moral choice involving responsibility toward other human beings, future generations, and the wider ecological community. In this way, *khilāfah* reorients human agency in the Anthropocene away from domination and toward responsible care.

Closely related is *amānah* (trust). The Qur'an declares that the trust was offered to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet humanity accepted it (Qur'an 33:72), encompassing moral accountability, freedom of choice, and responsibility toward creation ([Ibn 'Āshūr, 2006](#); [Kamali, 2019](#)). [Ibn Kathīr \(2000\)](#) reads this trust as encompassing the religious and moral obligations that other elements of creation, lacking free will, were unable to bear, and notes that the verse's description of the human being as "unjust and ignorant" underscores the weight and risk of accepting this responsibility rather than treating it as an unqualified honor.

Wealth, food, water, and natural resources thus become entrusted gifts whose use carries ethical consequences rather than exclusively private possessions. This differs significantly from consumerist assumptions that prioritize individual entitlement and unrestricted consumption. A trust-based ethic encourages long-term responsibility and intergenerational concern. It broadens accountability beyond immediate economic calculation, offering a normative foundation for sustainable consumption that redefines ownership as stewardship.

Shukr (gratitude) presents the proper recognition and use of divine blessings as a practical expression of responsible living (Qur'an 14:7). It requires both acknowledgment of blessings and their appropriate use ([Al-Ghazālī, 2015](#)). In consumer societies, abundance often coexists with indifference toward the sources and consequences of consumption, since products are valued primarily for utility, convenience, or status. At the same time, their environmental and social costs remain invisible. Gratitude serves as an ethical consciousness that discourages waste and cultivates appreciation for the interconnected relationships that underlie the provision of material goods.

Finally, *i'tidāl* (moderation) is among the most explicit Qur'anic principles of consumption ethics. Believers are instructed to eat and drink without excess (Qur'an 7:31), extravagance is condemned, and squanderers are described as "brothers of the devils" (Qur'an 17:27), and the wasting of agricultural produce is prohibited (Qur'an 6:141).

[Ibn Kathīr's \(2000\)](#) commentary on Qur'an 17:26–27 explains that the description of squanderers as "brothers of the devils" places wasteful spending in the same moral category as other major sins, rather than treating it as a minor lapse in household management, and his commentary on 6:141 similarly links the prohibition on wasting produce directly to divine love for moderation.

Moderation in this sense is not a peripheral virtue but a defining feature of the Islamic ethical orientation more broadly. It is often described as the "middle path" (*wasatīyyah*) that governs belief, worship, and social conduct alike, including how believers relate to the provision of material needs

([Kamali, 2015](#)). Moderation balances legitimate need with ethical responsibility.

Unlike ascetic approaches that reject material enjoyment altogether, the Qur'an permits consumption while imposing moral limits on excess, so that the problem is not consumption itself but consumption detached from responsibility and self-restraint. This offers a powerful critique of consumerism, promoting sufficiency over accumulation and balance over indulgence.

Together, *khilāfah*, *amānah*, *shukr*, and *i'tidāl* form a Qur'anic moral economy that reframes consumption as a morally significant practice rather than a purely economic activity, providing an ethical vocabulary through which contemporary sustainability challenges can be reinterpreted.

Prophetic Ethics and Resource Stewardship

While the Qur'an establishes the moral foundations of stewardship, the Sunnah provides their practical embodiment, transforming abstract principles into lived practices concerning consumption and social responsibility. The Prophet ﷺ consistently encouraged respect for food, water, and other provisions as blessings rather than disposable commodities, reflecting a broader ethical vision in which material goods possess moral significance as manifestations of divine generosity.

Modern consumer culture, by contrast, often treats resources as infinitely replaceable and readily disposable, attitudes that contribute to excessive waste and weaken awareness of ecological limits. Prophetic teachings cultivate reverence that discourages negligence and promotes conservation rooted in gratitude, consistent with contemporary scholarship arguing that sustainability requires cultural transformation in how societies perceive natural resources ([Orr, 2004](#); [Berry, 2010](#)).

Among the most relevant teachings for contemporary sustainability is the strong condemnation of wastefulness (*isrāf*). A well-known narration reports that the Prophet ﷺ advised Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ against excessive use of water during ablution, even when water was abundant, thereby establishing that abundance does not justify waste ([Ibn Mājah, 2007](#), ḥadīth no. 425). The significance of this teaching extends beyond water consumption to a general ethical principle: resources remain morally significant regardless of their apparent availability, directly challenging assumptions that underlie contemporary consumption patterns, in which abundance often encourages overuse.

Environmental ethics literature frequently identifies waste reduction as a key component of sustainability ([White et al., 2019](#)), yet policy interventions tend to focus primarily on efficiency and regulation. The Prophetic approach adds a moral dimension by framing waste as an ethical failure rather than merely an economic inefficiency, particularly relevant where large-scale food waste coexists with persistent hunger.

The Prophetic lifestyle was further characterized by simplicity, moderation, and contentment. Although opportunities for material wealth became available during the later Madinan period, extravagance was consistently avoided, demonstrating that well-being is not dependent on continuous acquisition.

This offers a critique of consumerist cultures that equate happiness with increased consumption, resonating with contemporary research that questions the assumption that greater consumption necessarily produces greater flourishing ([Jackson, 2017](#); [Raworth, 2017](#)). Simplicity here does not imply a rejection of material comfort but rather an ethical control over desire, which is particularly relevant in the Anthropocene, where ecological pressures require societies to reconsider prevailing assumptions about prosperity.

Finally, Prophetic ethics emphasizes social solidarity and equitable distribution of resources. Numerous traditions encourage feeding the hungry and sharing food, linking faith and moral excellence with concern for communal welfare. These teachings broaden consumption ethics

beyond individual behavior, since consumption has social consequences that shape patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and justice.

This resonates with contemporary discourse recognizing that ecological sustainability and social justice are deeply interconnected (Sachs, 2015; Schlosberg, 2007). Taken together, Prophetic teachings on respect for resources, anti-waste ethics, simplicity, and solidarity form a coherent ethic of stewardship that complements the Qur'anic moral economy and prepares the way for a maqāṣid-based framework of sustainable civilization.

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and Sustainable Civilization

Maqāṣid theory seeks to promote human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and prevent harm (*mafsadah*). This makes it particularly relevant to sustainability challenges in the Anthropocene, where ecological degradation, resource depletion, and social inequality threaten both present and future generations. This section argues that sustainable civilization can be understood as a contemporary *maqṣad* emerging from the integrated preservation of life, wealth, future generations, environmental integrity, and civilizational continuity. Sustainability, in this view, is not merely an environmental concern but a comprehensive ethical project rooted in the higher objectives of Sharī'ah.

Hifẓ al-naḥs (preservation of life) traditionally encompasses protection of health and physical well-being (Al-Ghazālī, 2015; Al-Shāṭibī, 1997). Contemporary understanding, however, extends the objective beyond individual survival to the social and institutional conditions necessary for human flourishing. Food security is one of its most important contemporary manifestations.

Despite advances in agricultural production, millions continue to experience hunger and malnutrition even as substantial quantities of edible food are wasted throughout global food systems (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO, 2023). This contradiction illustrates how failures in distribution and consumption directly undermine this objective. A maqāṣid-based perspective reframes food security as an ethical obligation rather than merely a policy challenge. If the protection of life is fundamental to Sharī'ah, then social systems that simultaneously tolerate both abundance and deprivation require moral scrutiny.

Hifẓ al-māl (preservation of wealth), traditionally associated with protecting property rights and lawful economic activity, extends naturally to an anti-waste economy. Classical jurists regarded wastefulness and the destruction of wealth as harmful because they undermine collective welfare (Ibn 'Ashūr, 2006). Contemporary economies lose enormous quantities of valuable resources through inefficient consumption, food waste, excessive energy use, and disposable consumer culture.

From a *maqāṣid* perspective, such practices diminish societal wealth and weaken long-term economic resilience. Unlike purely technocratic approaches, maqāṣid reasoning links economic management to moral responsibility, treating wealth not solely as an instrument of individual gain but as a trust that must contribute to collective well-being. This perspective aligns closely with contemporary calls for circular economic systems, while providing a stronger ethical foundation for conservation.

Hifẓ al-naṣl (preservation of progeny), traditionally focused on protecting family structures and the continuity of society, is increasingly interpreted through the broader lens of intergenerational responsibility (Auda, 2008; Chapra, 2008). Environmental degradation raises profound questions about obligations to future generations. Unsustainable resource extraction, climate change, and ecological destruction impose burdens that extend far beyond the present generation, so that preserving future generations requires not merely biological continuity but also the protection of the environmental and social conditions necessary for dignified life.

Excessive consumption today may therefore constitute an injustice toward those who inherit

diminished resources and degraded ecosystems tomorrow. By emphasizing long-term responsibility, *ḥifẓ al-nasl* challenges short-term economic thinking in favor of resilience and future well-being.

Although not among the classical necessities identified by early jurists, *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* (preservation of the environment) is increasingly recognized by contemporary scholars as an essential objective within modern maqāṣid discourse. Environmental systems provide the material foundation on which all other maqāṣid depend. Without healthy ecosystems, preserving life, wealth, and future generations becomes increasingly difficult ([Kamali, 2010](#); [Dien, 2000](#); [Qahtani, 2019](#)).

Recent empirical research reinforces this theoretical claim. Studies of corporate and institutional behavior in Muslim-majority contexts find that practitioners increasingly understand environmental responsibility as an extension of Shariah's broader objectives rather than a purely secular regulatory concern. However, such recognition remains uneven across institutions and is often shaped by external, rather than purely religious, pressures ([Nasir et al., 2021, 2022](#)). From this perspective, environmental stewardship becomes an ethical imperative rather than a matter of personal preference. Sustainable consumption, waste reduction, and conservation of natural resources all contribute to its realization.

Finally, *ḥifẓ al-ʿumrān* (preservation of civilization) draws on Ibn Khaldūn's theory of civilization and Ibn ʿĀshūr's emphasis on social order and human flourishing. It represents perhaps the most significant contribution of a maqāṣid-based sustainability framework ([Chapra, 2008](#); [March, 2015](#)). Civilizations do not decline solely because of political or military factors.

History demonstrates that environmental degradation, resource mismanagement, social inequality, and moral decay also contribute to civilizational decline, so that the sustainability crisis of the Anthropocene raises fundamentally civilizational questions concerning the future of human societies. This concept broadens sustainability beyond environmental protection alone, highlighting the need to preserve the moral, social, economic, and ecological foundations upon which human flourishing depends.

Viewed collectively, the maqāṣid framework reveals an interconnected vision of sustainability: the preservation of life requires food security; the preservation of wealth requires responsible resource management; the preservation of future generations requires intergenerational justice; the preservation of the environment requires ecological stewardship; and the preservation of civilization requires integrating these objectives within a coherent ethical order. Sustainability, in this light, is not merely an environmental agenda but a civilizational project.

Food Waste as a Civilizational Crisis

From a maqāṣid-based perspective, food waste represents more than inefficiency. It reflects a disruption in the moral relationship between human beings, resources, and the natural environment. Households, food services, and retailers collectively waste over a billion tonnes of food annually ([UNEP, 2024](#)), even as hunger and food insecurity persist across many regions ([FAO et al., 2023](#)). This pattern is not confined to non-Muslim societies. Recent research on household food waste within Muslim communities documents substantial waste during periods such as Ramadan, despite explicit Prophetic guidance on food conservation.

This indicates a gap between doctrinal teaching and everyday practice, reinforcing the need for the ethical reconstruction proposed in this article ([Sobian, 2022](#)). This section presents selected empirical indicators of food waste, its relationship to global hunger, and its environmental consequences. Each is interpreted through the maqāṣid categories developed above, to demonstrate how quantitative evidence and ethical analysis can be read together rather than treated as separate domains of inquiry.

Table 1. Global Food Waste: Selected Indicators

Indicator	Recent Estimate
Food wasted each year globally	Over 1 billion tonnes
Share of food waste from households	Approximately 60%
Food service sector contribution	Approximately 28%
Retail sector contribution	Approximately 12%

Source: [UNEP Food Waste Index Report \(2024\)](#).

The large household share indicates that consumer behavior, not merely supply-chain inefficiency, drives the persistence of the problem, reinforcing the argument that sustainability requires ethical transformation alongside institutional reform.

Table 2. Food Waste and Global Hunger

Indicator	Recent Estimate
People experiencing hunger	More than 700 million
People facing food insecurity	Over 2 billion
Children affected by malnutrition	Hundreds of millions
Food wasted annually	Exceeds nutritional needs of many food-insecure populations

Source: [FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO \(2023\)](#).

From the perspective of *hifz al-nafs*, the persistence of hunger despite substantial food availability represents a failure to realize a fundamental objective of Sharī'ah. Waste signifies not only the loss of material goods but missed opportunities to support human well-being and social justice. Malnutrition compounds this failure.

Beyond insufficient calories, deficiencies in essential micronutrients continue to affect the growth, cognitive development, and long-term health of children and vulnerable populations in many low- and middle-income countries ([World Health Organization \[WHO\], 2023](#)). This underscores that food security concerns not merely the quantity of food available, but its quality, distribution, and equitable access.

Table 3. Environmental Costs of Food Waste

Impact Area	Consequence
Greenhouse gas emissions	Significant contribution to climate change
Water use	Massive quantities of freshwater wasted
Land use	Unnecessary pressure on agricultural land
Biodiversity	Increased ecological degradation and habitat loss

Sources: [Poore and Nemecek \(2018\)](#); [UNEP \(2024\)](#).

Because food production requires extensive land, water, energy, and labor, discarded food effectively wastes these inputs as well, undermining both *hifz al-māl* and *hifz al-bī'ah*. Beyond economics and ecology, contemporary consumer societies normalize over-purchasing and disposable consumption in ways that encourage viewing food as a commodity rather than as a blessing or a source of trust.

Waste thus becomes a symptom of the erosion of gratitude, moderation, and solidarity, affecting social cohesion and long-term sustainability. Addressing food waste therefore requires more than improved logistics or regulation. It requires the kind of ethical transformation that the maqāṣid framework and the Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework proposed below

seek to achieve.

The Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework (MSCF)

Building on the preceding analysis, this article proposes the Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework (MSCF) as an integrative ethical model that links Islamic moral principles to contemporary sustainability concerns. The MSCF holds that sustainable consumption cannot be achieved through policy and technology alone but requires a moral transformation, beginning with the individual's understanding of resources and extending outward to society, the environment, and civilization.

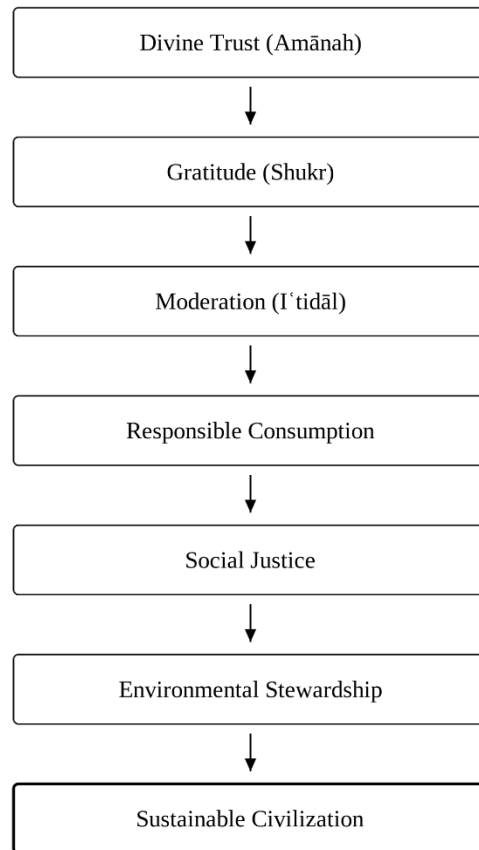


Figure 1. The Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework (MSCF)

The framework begins with *amānah*, which redefines the relationship between human beings and the material world, making consumption an act of responsibility rather than an unrestricted entitlement. *Shukr* serves as the internal moral mechanism that transforms this awareness into ethical behavior, encouraging appreciation and restraint in the face of cultures of disposability.

I'tidāl translates this ethical consciousness into practical habits, addressing overconsumption and waste through balance rather than extravagance. Together these three principles produce responsible consumption: resource use guided by ethical reflection rather than impulse or status competition. Responsible consumption occupies the center of the framework.

Responsible consumption leads outward to social justice, since consumption is never solely private but shapes patterns of distribution and collective welfare. It encourages redistribution and sensitivity to inequality within food and economic systems. This in turn supports environmental stewardship, as more equitable and less wasteful consumption reduces pressure on ecological

systems and reflects humanity's responsibilities toward creation.

The framework culminates in sustainable civilization: the long-term preservation of the moral, social, economic, and ecological conditions necessary for human flourishing. It converges the maqāṣid objectives of preserving life, wealth, future generations, environmental integrity, and civilizational continuity. The originality of the MSCF lies in integrating ethical consciousness, behavioral transformation, social responsibility, and ecological stewardship within a single normative model, offering a maqāṣid-based alternative to prevailing technocratic approaches to sustainability.

The sequential structure of the MSCF is a conceptual ordering derived from the textual analysis above, not an empirically tested or logically necessary causal chain. The arrows connecting its elements denote thematic and interpretive associations grounded in the Qur'anic and Prophetic material discussed in this article, rather than causal pathways that have been confirmed between psychological states and behavior.

Beginning with amānah rather than with behavioral prescriptions reflects a conviction, shared across the maqāṣid tradition, that lasting ethical change originates in changed understanding rather than external compulsion; this is a normative claim consistent with the textual sources, not an empirical finding about how attitude change actually occurs, which would require the psychological and behavioral research called for in the Limitations section below. At the same time, the framework is not intended as a strictly linear sequence experienced in the same way by every individual or institution.

Gratitude and moderation may reinforce one another, and social justice and environmental stewardship often develop in parallel rather than in strict succession. The framework should therefore be understood as a heuristic, integrated ethical architecture whose elements are mutually reinforcing, with sustainable civilization representing the cumulative, long-term outcome of their interaction rather than a discrete, empirically verified final stage.

Discussion

Theoretical contribution

Existing sustainability frameworks, including sustainable consumption, the circular economy, and degrowth, have generated valuable insights into resource management but remain primarily focused on institutional, economic, or technological reforms and offer limited explanation of how enduring changes in cultural values can be achieved. The MSCF contributes a moral framework rooted in stewardship, gratitude, moderation, and accountability, complementing this literature by addressing questions of moral agency and broadening sustainability to include social justice and civilizational well-being alongside environmental protection (Raworth, 2017; Sachs, 2015).

Contribution to maqāṣid scholarship

The article extends maqāṣid discourse, previously applied mainly to governance, finance, and bioethics, into the comparatively underexplored field of consumption ethics and critically engages with the small existing body of maqāṣid-sustainability research discussed in Section 2.3. The inclusion of *ḥifẓ al-ʿumrān* as a civilizational objective is offered as a proposal to extend the maqāṣid categories, consistent with their underlying concern for welfare and harm prevention, rather than as an established classical category; its plausibility should be judged against that more modest standard.

Practical implications

If unsustainable consumption is rooted partly in moral attitudes and cultural norms, effective

responses need to extend beyond regulatory measures and economic incentives. Religious institutions, particularly mosques, already command moral authority within many communities and could promote waste-conscious consumption through sermons and community initiatives; educational institutions could integrate sustainability ethics into curricula rather than presenting environmental issues solely as technical concerns; and food banks and community redistribution systems embody the same maqāṣid principles discussed above.

Public campaigns addressing food waste in Muslim-majority societies may resonate more effectively when framed in terms of amānah, shukr, and i'tidāl than in the purely technical vocabulary of carbon footprints, since such campaigns draw on moral vocabulary already familiar within everyday religious life. These implications are illustrative rather than exhaustive and, like the MSCF itself, would benefit from the empirical testing discussed in the Limitations section.

Toward an ethics of sustainable civilization

The broader implication is that sustainability requires ethical, not only technological, engagement, and that the reconstruction of consumption ethics is connected to wider efforts to cultivate more just and sustainable forms of collective life. The MSCF illustrates one way religious traditions can contribute to this task; it is offered as a starting point for further conceptual and empirical work rather than a finished or comprehensive account.

CONCLUSIONS

This article set out to examine how Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah can contribute to the reconstruction of consumption ethics in an age of ecological crisis, using food waste as an illustrative case. It has argued that the concepts of khilāfah, amānah, shukr, and i'tidāl establish a moral vision in which resources are divine trusts rather than objects of unrestricted ownership, and that the Sunnah reinforces this vision through explicit anti-waste ethics and social solidarity. Mapping these principles onto the five maqāṣid categories, including the less-classical but increasingly discussed ḥifẓ al-bī'ah and ḥifẓ al-'umrān, shows how food security, responsible resource management, intergenerational responsibility, environmental protection, and long-term social flourishing can be read as interconnected objectives of Sharī'ah rather than as separate policy concerns.

The article's main original contribution is the Maqāṣid-Based Sustainable Consumption Framework (MSCF), a conceptual model linking divine trust, gratitude, moderation, responsible consumption, social justice, and environmental stewardship. As discussed above, the framework's proposed sequence is a textually grounded conceptual ordering rather than an empirically validated causal chain, and its practical value will depend on the kind of empirical testing outlined in the Limitations section.

One concrete way this could proceed, for example, is through a pilot Ramadan food-conservation program in which a small number of mosques deliver amānah- and shukr-framed sermons alongside practical household waste-tracking, with pre- and post-Ramadan waste measurements compared against a control group of mosques using conventional public-health messaging; such a design would test directly whether the MSCF's proposed sequence from ethical framing to behavioral change is more than a plausible conceptual ordering.

The wider implication is that sustainability requires ethical engagement, not only technological and regulatory ones, and that Islamic ethical sources, while not the only such resource, offer a textually grounded and currently underused starting point for that engagement. Framed modestly, in the terms established in the Limitations section below, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah offers one relevant conceptual resource among several for thinking about consumption, waste, and civilizational sustainability in the Anthropocene, and this article has tried to develop that resource with more textual and conceptual depth than the existing literature currently provides for the

specific problem of consumption ethics.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study is conceptual and normative in design, and its conclusions are accordingly limited in several respects. First, the MSCF has been developed through textual and comparative analysis rather than empirical testing. Its practical effectiveness in shaping actual consumption behavior remains a matter for future investigation rather than an established finding. Future research should examine how its principles are understood and practiced by consumers, religious institutions, and policymakers, using surveys, interviews, or case studies across diverse cultural and economic settings.

Second, the tafsīr engagement described in the Research Method section was limited to cross-checking key verses against a single representative commentary (Ibn Kathīr) rather than a comprehensive review of the exegetical tradition, including differences among madhhabs or between classical and modern exegetes; a more exhaustive tafsīr review is an important task for future work. Third, the article draws primarily on classical and contemporary Sunni maqāsid scholarship. Engagement with other schools of Islamic thought, including Shīʿī jurisprudence, and comparative work with non-Islamic and indigenous ethical traditions concerned with stewardship would strengthen the framework's cross-cultural applicability.

Fourth, food waste serves as an illustrative case because of its clear connection to consumption ethics; the MSCF's relevance to other domains, such as energy use, water, and fast fashion, remains to be explored, and each may reveal dynamics not captured by the food-focused analysis presented here.

Finally, subsequent research could assess the practical implementation of the MSCF through pilot programs in educational or religious institutions, evaluating its measurable impact on consumption behavior, waste reduction, and community-level sustainability outcomes over time. Such empirical work would not only test the framework's practical viability but could also refine its theoretical structure. It would help ensure that the relationship between its constituent elements, divine trust, gratitude, moderation, responsible consumption, social justice, and environmental stewardship, accurately reflects the lived experience of those seeking to apply it.

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