

DIRASAT QUR'ANIYYAH WA HADITHIYYAH

Volume 1, Issue 1, January 2026



Ecological Discourse Construction in Qur'anic Verses on the Earth: A Semitic Rhetorical Analysis

Konstruksi Wacana Ekologis Ayat-Ayat tentang Bumi dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Retorika Semit

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Submitted : 22 January 2026

Revision : 29 January 2026

Accepted : 5 February 2026

Abstract

Amid escalating global environmental crises, religious texts are increasingly revisited as ethical resources rather than merely doctrinal references. While the Qur'an articulates foundational principles governing the human–nature relationship, most Qur'anic ecological studies remain thematic and normative, paying limited attention to linguistic and rhetorical construction. This study aims to examine how ecological messages are rhetorically structured and emphasized in the Qur'an through Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA). Employing qualitative library research, the study integrates ecological interpretation with rhetorical analysis of Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, Surah Al-Rūm [30]: 41, and Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 165. The findings demonstrate that concentric, parallel, and concentric-parallel patterns systematically reinforce prohibitions against environmental corruption (*fasād*), highlight the causal link between human actions and ecological damage, and affirm human stewardship (*khilāfah*). This study argues that Qur'anic rhetorical structures function as persuasive pedagogical mechanisms for cultivating a balanced and sustainable Islamic environmental ethic.

Keywords: Environmental Ethics; Khalifah; Qur'anic Ecology; Rhetorical Structure; Semitic Rhetorical Analysis

Abstrak

Di tengah eskalasi krisis lingkungan global, teks-teks keagamaan semakin dikaji sebagai sumber etika, bukan sekadar rujukan doktrinal. Meskipun Al-Qur'an mengandung prinsip-prinsip fundamental yang mengatur hubungan manusia dan alam, kajian ekologi Al-Qur'an selama ini cenderung bersifat tematik-normatif dan kurang memperhatikan konstruksi linguistik serta retorisnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana pesan-pesan ekologis Al-Qur'an disusun dan ditekankan secara retorik melalui pendekatan Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA). Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan tafsir ekologis dengan analisis retorik terhadap Al-Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, Surah Al-Rūm [30]: 41, dan Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 165. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola retorik konsentris, paralel, dan konsentris-paralel secara sistematis menegaskan larangan kerusakan lingkungan (*fasād*), hubungan kausal antara perilaku manusia dan kerusakan alam, serta tanggung jawab manusia sebagai khalifah di bumi. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa struktur retorik Al-Qur'an berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pedagogis-persuasif dalam membangun etika lingkungan Islam yang berorientasi pada keseimbangan dan keberlanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Etika Lingkungan; Khalifah; Ekologi Al-Qur'an; Struktur Retorik; Analisis Retorik Semitik



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INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis, climate change, deforestation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity as multidimensional issues have been widely discussed in global environmental studies. These phenomena have not only ecological impacts, but also social, economic, and political ones.¹ Phenomena such as extreme climate change, alarming rates of deforestation, levels of pollution that damage ecosystems, and widespread loss of biodiversity have become serious threats to the sustainability of life on planet Earth.² The impact of this crisis is not limited to environmental aspects alone, but also extends to social, economic, and human health dimensions, causing natural disasters, resource scarcity, and the emergence of various conflicts that pose a serious threat to the sustainability of human life.³

Awareness of the importance of this issue has prompted many parties, from scientists to policymakers, to seek comprehensive solutions that focus not only on technological aspects, but also encompass changes in human mindsets and ethics towards nature. Indeed, the universe, which is part of the environment, was created by Allah as a means for humans to continue their journey through life until they reach their ultimate purpose.⁴ Therefore, nature is one of the means provided by Allah to sustain human life.

In Islam, nature is understood as God's creation, which has theological and ecological functions. Nature is a divine trust that must be preserved, not merely an object of exploitation. This principle forms the foundation of Islamic environmental ethics.⁵ The concept of *khalifah fi al-ard* emphasises humanity's responsibility as stewards of the earth.⁶ The prohibition of *fasad fi al-ard* and the command to prosper the earth are emphasised in various verses of the Qur'an, which indicate a causal relationship between human actions and environmental damage.⁷ Verses such as Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf [7]: 56, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, Surah Ar-Rum: 41, and Surah Al-An'am [6]: 165 shows that ecological damage is a consequence of human moral deviation.⁸ Based on this, humans have a responsibility to protect, care for, and strive to preserve this vital source of life from all forms of damage.⁹

The massive exploitation of natural resources through mining, deforestation, and uncontrolled industrialization has exacerbated the global ecological crisis. This phenomenon highlights the gap between religious ethical values and modern human practices.¹⁰ Therefore, reinforcing

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- 1 Abdul Mustaqim, *Tafsir Ekologi Relasi Eko-Teologis Tuhan, Manusia, Dan Alam* (Damai Banawa Semesta., 2024), 8–9.
 - 2 Sri Lola Halawa Wahyuni, 'Pengaruh Perubahan Iklim Terhadap Keanekaragaman Hayati Di Kawasan Tropis', *PENARIK: Jurnal Ilmu Pertanian Dan Perikanan* 02, no. April (2025): 63–64, [https://doi.org/ISSN%25203063-6469%2520\(E\)](https://doi.org/ISSN%25203063-6469%2520(E)).
 - 3 Hariadi Kartodihardjo, *Kembali Ke Jalan Lurus*, ed. Hariadi Kartodihardjo (Forci Development, 2012).
 - 4 Saefudin Djazuli, 'Konsep Islam Tentang Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup', *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 7, no. 11 (2014): 4–5.
 - 5 Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Keadaan Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), 295–97.
 - 6 Ibn 'Ashur, *Al-Tahrir Wa al-Tamwir* (Tunis: Dār al-Tunisiyyah, 1984), 39–41.
 - 7 Fakhrudin al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 114–16.
 - 8 Mustaqim, *Tafsir Ekologi Relasi Eko-Teologis Tuhan, Manusia, Dan Alam*, 48.
 - 9 Nanang Jainuddin, 'Hubungan Antara Alam Dan Manusia Menurut Pandangan Islam', *MUSHAF JOURNAL: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Hadis* 3, no. 2 (2023): 194–95, <https://doi.org/e-ISSN:%25202809-3712>.
 - 10 Abdullah Syatha, *Al-Qur'an Dan Lingkungan Hidup* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2018), 45–47.

environmental ethics based on Islamic teachings has become an urgent necessity.¹¹ This verse commands humans to prosper the earth and display their potential as developers and managers who protect the environment for the sake of the universe's sustainability.¹² However, reality shows that the development of the times goes hand in hand with excessive exploitation of nature by humans without any effort to balance or harmonies it.¹³ Activities such as mining (land, water, and natural gas) and deforestation are clear examples of environmental damage occurring in the modern era, which ultimately disrupts the ecological balance and triggers various natural disasters.¹⁴

Most studies of the ecology of the Qur'an are still predominantly thematic and normative in orientation and have not sufficiently examined the linguistic and rhetorical construction of ecological meaning within the Qur'anic text. Recent research largely relies on thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) to extract ethical concepts such as *khilāfah*, environmental stewardship, moderation, and justice as normative foundations for ecological responsibility.¹⁵ Similar approaches are evident in applied studies focusing on specific ecological issues, including water conservation and marine ecosystems, where Qur'anic verses are interpreted to support ethical awareness, legal norms, and sustainable environmental management, yet without close analysis of their rhetorical form or textual structure.¹⁶ Other studies emphasize the practical integration of Qur'anic values into environmental practices, such as eco-theological education in Islamic boarding school contexts, highlighting transformative ethical outcomes but treating Qur'anic discourse primarily as a source of moral motivation rather than as a rhetorically organized text.¹⁷ Likewise, comparative and juridical studies underline the relevance of Qur'anic ethics for contemporary environmental challenges and legal frameworks, focusing on values such as balance, preservation, and the prohibition of *fasād*, while remaining largely normative and conceptual in method.¹⁸

11 Mujiyono Abdillah, *Agama Ramah Lingkungan Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2015), 22–24.

12 Abdillah, 1.

13 Djohar Maknun, 'Ekologi: Populasi, Komunitas, Ekosistem Mewujudkan Kampus Hijau Asri, Islami, Dan Ilmiah', in *Buku* (2017), 45.

14 I Putu Gede Ardhana, 'Kajian Kerusakan Sumberdaya Hutan Akibat Kegiatan Pertambangan', *Ecotrophic* 6, no. 2 (2011): 89–90.

15 S.A. Bakar et al., 'Environmental Ethics in the Qur'an: A Thematic Analysis of Conservation and Stewardship', *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah*, 2025, 31–45, <https://doi.org/10.7187/GJATSI122025-3>; M. Muhammad et al., 'Freedom That Is Not Absolute: Ecological Ethics and Human-Nature Relationship in the Qur'an', *Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae* 22, no. 4 (2024): 17–27, <https://doi.org/10.21697/seb.5821>.

16 M. Asrori et al., 'Water Conservation in the Qur'anic Perspective: A Thematic Analysis of Ethical Water Usage in Purification Rituals', *Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae* 23, no. 3 (2025): 35–47, <https://doi.org/10.21697/seb.5854>; K. Jamal et al., 'Theology of Marine Ecosystems from the Perspective of the Al-Qur'an and Its Relevance to Indonesia for Marine Areas Strengthening Pursuant to Law No. 32 of 2014', *Pharos Journal of Theology* 106, no. 3 (2025): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.3015>.

17 Karman Karman, Rosihon Anwar, and Lukman Hakim, 'The Qur'anic Learning Based on Islamic Eco-Theology at Pesantren', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (December 2023): 169–86, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v9i2.24933>; Karman, Rully Agung Yudhiantara, and Asep Muhyidin, 'The Qur'an and The Earth: Qur'anic Reception Among Pesantren Residents toward Environmental Conservation', *Ulumuna* 29, no. 1 (2025): 310–38, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v29i1.1127>.

18 J. Koláček, 'The Qur'ān as a Source for Contemporary Islamic Environmental Ethics', *Archiv Orientalni* 88, no. 2 (2020): 221–48, <https://doi.org/10.47979/aror.j.88.2.221-248>; A.A.T. Jadda, A. Hamid, and M.Y. Wahid, 'Concept and Architecture of Al-Quran Legal Values in Environmental Management', *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences* 22, no. 2 (2024): 3755–66, <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.00273>.

In fact, the rhetorical structure of verses plays an important role in shaping the meaning and persuasive power of the text.¹⁹ This is where Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) becomes relevant as an approach that examines the structural composition patterns of verses.²⁰ In this context, the role of religion, especially Islam, is very important in shaping human character and behavior towards the environment. Islam, as the majority religion in Indonesia, teaches the concept of 'Allah's caliph on earth', a principle that recognizes human leadership on earth while emphasizing their responsibility to protect and care for the environment.²¹ Therefore, various efforts are needed to build awareness and understanding among Muslims regarding the importance of environmental protection through an approach that reveals the meaning of the earth and is based on Islamic teachings.²²

However, understanding of these verses is often still normative and has not been studied in depth from the perspective of the language structure and rhetoric of the Qur'an. In fact, the ecological message of the Qur'an is not only contained in the lexical meaning of the verses, but also in their structure and rhetorical patterns.²³ Therefore, the Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) approach is important to reveal the integration of the verse structure and strengthen the understanding of the ecological message contained therein.²⁴

Method

This study employs a library research approach, namely research that relies on written sources such as books, Qur'anic commentaries (*tafsir*), scholarly articles, and other literature relevant to the research topic.²⁵ The research data are obtained through the examination and analysis of Qur'anic verses related to the Earth and environmental preservation, as well as scientific references that discuss environmental studies and efforts to conserve the natural environment. The data analysis method used in this study is thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*), which focuses on a specific theme in the Qur'an, namely the Earth and environmental issues.²⁶ This method was used because the main sources of data for this research are written texts, particularly the Qur'an, classical and contemporary tafsir books, and scientific literature relevant to the study of ecology and Semitic rhetorical analysis.²⁷ The main approach used is ecological interpretation, which is an interpretative approach that focuses on verses of the Qur'an relating to the environment and the relationship between humans and nature.²⁸

19 Abdul Mustaqim, *Metode Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2016), 110–11.

20 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi and Idri, 'Examining Semitic Rhetoric: A Qur'anic Sciences Perspective', *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 28, no. 2 (December 2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v28i2.9898>; Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Deki Ridho Adi Anggara, and Muhammad Dini Syauci Al Madani, 'Islamisasi Metode Barat Dalam Studi Al-Qur'an: Studi Kasus Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)', *Reflektika* 18, no. 2 (2023): 226–48, <https://dx.doi.org/10.28944/reflektika.v18i2.1283>.

21 Zulhelmi, 'Konsep Khalifah Fil Ardhi Dalam Perspektif Filsafat (Kajian Eksistensi Manusia Sebagai Khalifah)', *Intizar* 24, no. 1 (1970): 39–40, <https://doi.org/10.19109/intizar.v24i1.1879>.

22 Abdurrahman Hilabi, 'Dakwah Lingkungan Sebagai Alternatif Dalam Menyelesaikan Masalah Perubahan Iklim', *Syiar: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 3, no. 1 (2023): 41–42, <https://doi.org/10.54150/syiar.v3i1.195>.

23 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, *Mengenal Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) Dalam Kajian Al-Qur'an Kontemporer* (Literasi Nusantara, 2022).

24 Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019), 9.

25 Abdurrahman, 'Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan Dalam Pendidikan Islam', *Adabuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran* 3, no. 2 (2024): 112–13, <https://doi.org/10.38073/adabuna.v3i2.1563>.

26 Abdul Muin Salim, *Metodologi Penelitian Tafsir Maudhu'i* (Pustaka Arif Jakarta, 2001), 17–18.

27 Asnawi, *Mengenal Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) Dalam Kajian Al-Qur'an Kontemporer*, 49.

28 Mustaqim, *Tafsir Ekologi Relasi Eko-Teologis Tuhan, Manusia, Dan Alam*, 26–27.

This approach was subsequently integrated with Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA), a methodological framework pioneered by Michel Cuypers, which views meaning in Semitic texts as emerging from structured patterns of correspondence rather than from linear argumentation alone. Accordingly, the verses concerning the earth were analyzed through the identification of concentric, parallel, and concentric-parallel rhetorical patterns in order to reveal how ecological messages are structurally foregrounded.²⁹ The analytical procedure followed the established methodological stages of SRA. First, each verse was segmented into its smallest meaningful textual units (cola and sub-cola) based on syntactic, semantic, and rhythmic indicators. Second, these units were examined to identify patterns of correspondence, repetition, contrast, and symmetry that signal rhetorical relationships within the text.³⁰ Third, the identified relationships were mapped to determine the overarching rhetorical configuration of each verse, enabling the classification of concentric, parallel, or concentric-parallel structures. Finally, the rhetorical center and framing elements of each structure were interpreted to assess how emphasis, causality, and moral injunctions concerning environmental conduct are strategically foregrounded.³¹

Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation, by collecting verses from the Qur'an related to the earth, then analyzing them based on their rhetorical structure. The data analysis technique used was descriptive-analytical, which involved describing the structure of the verses based on SRA, then analyzing their meaning by referring to the interpretations of exegetes and relating them to contemporary environmental issues.³²

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Application of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis Methods in Verses about the Earth

Using the Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) approach, Qur'anic verses concerning the earth (*al-arḍ*) can be read as a unified discourse that emphasizes the theological relationship between God, humans, and nature. This approach asserts that the meaning of Qur'anic verses does not reside solely in lexical semantics, but also in the structural patterns and rhetorical relationships between textual units, which together construct a powerful moral and ecological message.³³

On this basis, the selection of Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, Surah Al-Rūm [30]: 41, and Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 165 is methodologically grounded in both thematic relevance and rhetorical representativeness. These verses explicitly address *al-arḍ* and employ key ecological-ethical concepts such as *fasād*, *iṣlāḥ*, *khilāfah*, and divine testing (*ibtilā'*), which are central to Qur'anic environmental discourse. At the rhetorical level, they exhibit diverse

29 Michel Cuypers, *A Qur'anic Apocalypse A Reading of the Thirty-Three Last Surahs of the Qur'an* (Library Of Congress, 2001), 7–9.

30 Michel Cuypers, 'Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13, no. 1 (April 2011): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2011.0003>.

31 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Husein Aziz, and Achmad Murtafi Haris, 'Investigating Cohesiveness of QS. Al-Mā'idah: A Review on Michel Cuypers Implementation of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)', *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 23, no. 1 (March 2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-03>; Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, 'Re-Analyzing the Structure of Surah al-"Alaq Using Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA): A Critical Study on Cuypers" Methodology of Analyzing Qur'anic Structure', *QURANICA - International Journal of Quranic Research* 13, no. 1 (June 2021): 1.

32 Lexy J Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018), 248.

33 Michel Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), hlm. 12–14.)

structural configurations—concentric, parallel, and concentric-parallel—thus allowing for a systematic examination of how different Semitic rhetorical patterns function to foreground ecological responsibility. Thematically, these verses collectively articulate prohibition, causality, stewardship, and accountability, forming an integrated ethical progression rather than isolated moral injunctions.

This integrative framework becomes particularly evident in Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56 and Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, both of which employ a concentric rhetorical structure (A–B–A') that places the prohibition of environmental destruction (*fasād fi al-ard*) at the rhetorical center of the discourse. Following the methodological procedure of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA), the analysis begins with the segmentation of each verse into its primary semantic units (cola) based on syntactic breaks, semantic coherence, and rhythmic indicators. These units are then examined to identify patterns of correspondence, contrast, and repetition that signal rhetorical relationships within the text.³⁴

In Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56, the verse can be divided into three interrelated units: the initial prohibition against corruption on the earth after its rectification (A), followed by the exhortation to invoke Allah with fear and hope (B), and concluded with the affirmation of divine mercy for the righteous (A'). This arrangement forms a concentric pattern in which the ethical injunction against *fasād* is framed by calls to piety and divine accountability, thereby positioning environmental preservation within a broader spiritual and moral horizon. Allah states:

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

“Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set in order. And call upon Him with hope and fear. Indeed, Allah’s mercy is always close to the good-doers.” [56]

A similar analytical procedure is applied to Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, where the verse is segmented into corresponding rhetorical units that describe destructive behavior on earth (A), specify its concrete manifestations—namely the destruction of crops and progeny (B), and conclude with a divine evaluative judgment rejecting corruption (A'). The symmetry between the descriptive and evaluative elements produces a concentric configuration that foregrounds *fasād* as the central moral concern of the verse. The Qur'an states:

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

“And when they leave (you), they strive throughout the land to spread mischief in it and destroy crops and cattle. Allah does not like mischief.” [205]

At the final stage of SRA, the rhetorical centers of both verses are identified and interpreted, revealing that the prohibition of environmental destruction is not incidental but structurally foregrounded as the core message. Within these concentric arrangements, commands to righteousness, moral evaluation, and divine judgment function as framing devices that reinforce the ethical imperative to maintain the balance of the earth. Rhetorically, this structure serves as a theological intensification, underscoring that environmental degradation constitutes not merely a socio-ecological offense but a direct violation of divine will.³⁵

Meanwhile, Qur'an Surah Al-Rūm [30]: 41 presents a parallel rhetorical structure (A–B–A'–B') that articulates a clear causal relationship between human conduct and environmental degradation. Following the methodological stages of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA), the verse is first segmented into its primary semantic units based on syntactic divisions and thematic

34 Cuypers, 'Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text', 4.

35 Al-Razi, *Mafātih Al-Ghayb*, 115.

coherence. The initial segment (A) describes the manifestation of corruption on land and sea, while the subsequent segment (B) identifies its cause as the actions earned by human hands. This sequence is then mirrored by a corresponding segment (A'), which conveys the experiential consequence of that corruption—humans being made to taste the outcomes of their deeds—and a final segment (B') that articulates the intended moral objective, namely human repentance and ethical return. The verse states:

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

“Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people’s hands have done, so that Allah may cause them to taste (the consequences of) some of their deeds and perhaps they might return (to the Right Path).” [41]

At the second analytical stage, the correspondence between these paired units (A–A' and B–B') is examined, revealing a deliberate rhetorical parallelism that structurally binds ecological disruption to human moral agency. This structural linkage has a direct impact on Qur’anic meaning-making. When read without attention to rhetorical structure, the verse is often interpreted thematically as a general statement that moral corruption leads to social or natural disorder. However, the SRA-based analysis demonstrates that the verse does more than assert a causal relationship; it organizes causality, consequence, and ethical purpose into a symmetrical rhetorical sequence. The pairing of *fasād fi al-barr wa al-baḥr* (A) with *liyudhīqahum ba’da alladhī ‘amilū* (A') emphasizes that environmental damage and human suffering belong to the same moral continuum, while the pairing of *bimā kasabat aydī al-nās* (B) with *la'allahum yarjī'ūn* (B') frames divine retribution not as punitive finality but as corrective pedagogy.

A comparative reading further strengthens this claim. Classical exegetical treatments that focus primarily on lexical explanation or *sabāb al-nuzūl* tend to emphasize divine punishment or historical moral decline,³⁶ often without foregrounding the pedagogical orientation of the verse. By contrast, the SRA approach reveals that the rhetorical parallelism itself guides the reader toward a teleological interpretation in which ecological crisis functions as a didactic sign (*āyah*) intended to provoke ethical return (*rujū'*). Thus, the rhetorical structure actively shapes interpretation by prioritizing moral accountability and repentance over fatalistic or purely theodicean readings.

At the final stage of SRA, this parallel structure is interpreted as a rhetorical strategy that transforms environmental degradation into a moral sign (*āyah*) and a pedagogical warning embedded within the textual architecture of the verse itself. Consequently, environmental crises are presented not as accidental or value-neutral phenomena, but as intelligible moral outcomes within a divinely ordered ethical system governed by the principle of balance (*mīzān*). Through this structural configuration, the Qur’an positions humans as active moral agents responsible for ecological conditions, rather than as passive victims of natural disasters.³⁷

Qur’an Surah Al-An’ām [6]: 165 further develops this ethical framework through a concentric-parallel structure (A–B–C–A'–B'), which affirms human stewardship (*khilāfah*) and accountability. Applying SRA, the verse is first segmented into its rhetorical components: the declaration of humans as successors on earth (A), the differentiation of ranks and capacities among humans (B), and the central clause that frames human existence as a moral test (*ibtīlā'*) (C). These elements are then mirrored by corresponding evaluative statements regarding divine recompense (A') and mercy (B'), producing a concentric-parallel configuration that places moral testing at the structural center of the verse. The Qur’an states:

36 Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, 2nd edn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964), 14:40.

37 'Ashur, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tamwīr*, 143.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

“He is the One Who has placed you as successors on earth and elevated some of you in rank over others, so He may test you with what He has given you. Surely your Lord is swift in punishment, but He is certainly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [165]

At the interpretive stage of SRA, the positioning of *ibtilā'* at the rhetorical center reveals that human authority over the earth is intrinsically tied to moral accountability and eschatological consequence. The concentric-parallel structure thus reinforces the theological assertion that *khilāfah* entails responsibility rather than domination, and that power over the earth constitutes a trust (*amānah*) to be exercised within the ethical limits prescribed by divine guidance.

This verse links human authority over the earth with moral testing and eschatological accountability, affirming that power over *al-arḍ* is not a license for exploitation but a trust (*amānah*) for which humans will be held accountable before Allah.³⁸ From the perspective of ecological interpretation, the term *al-arḍ* in these verses does not merely denote a geographical space; rather, it encompasses an integrated life system that sustains the survival of all living beings. Accordingly, the earth is understood as a sacred entity, as it is part of God's creation and constitutes one of the signs of His power (*āyāt kawnīyah*). The Semitic Rhetorical Analysis approach further demonstrates that this sacredness is rhetorically reinforced through repetitive and symmetrical structures that are oriented toward cultivating human ethical awareness within the Qur'anic discourse.³⁹

Ecological Analysis

Ecological interpretation (*al-tafsīr al-bī'ī*) has emerged as a significant approach for interpreting Qur'anic verses related to the environment and the relationship between Allah, humans, and nature, particularly in response to the urgency of the global environmental crisis. Supported by contemporary exegetical studies that emphasize the ethical and cosmological dimensions of the Qur'an.⁴⁰ This approach highlights that key Qur'anic terms such as *al-'ālamīn*, *al-samā'*, *al-arḍ*, and *al-bī'ah* represent interconnected systems whose balance must be preserved.⁴¹ His perspective aligns with critiques of classical interpretations that tend to be anthropocentric and overly normative, while simultaneously expanding the horizon of Qur'anic interpretation to address contemporary ecological challenges.⁴² The findings of this study therefore reinforce the argument that the Qur'an possesses both normative and applicative capacities in fostering ecological awareness among humankind.

The analysis demonstrates that Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56 and Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205 employ a concentric rhetorical structure (A–B–A) that places the prohibition of *fasād fi al-arḍ* at the rhetorical center of the discourse. This structure reinforces the theological assertion that environmental destruction constitutes a violation of divine will rather than merely a form of social misconduct.⁴³ The Semitic Rhetorical Analysis approach emphasizes that meaning in the Qur'an emerges not only from semantic content but also from the structural relationships

38 Muhammad Shihab Quraish, *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Lentera Hati, Jakarta, 2002), 377.

39 Mustaqim, *Tafsīr Ekologi Relasi Eko-Teologis Tuhan, Manusia, Dan Alam*, 78.

40 Abdillāh, *Agama Ramah Lingkungan Perspektif Al-Qur'an*, 33–35.

41 Mustaqim, *Tafsīr Ekologi Relasi Eko-Teologis Tuhan, Manusia, Dan Alam*, 45–46.

42 Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Keadaan Kehidupan Masyarakat*, 296–98.

43 Al-Razi, *Mafātīh Al-Ghayb*, 114–16.

between textual units. Symmetrical patterns and thematic repetitions thus function as pedagogical devices for shaping the moral consciousness of readers.⁴⁴ This finding is consistent with Cuypers' research, which demonstrates that Qur'anic rhetoric plays a central role in the internalization of ethical values.⁴⁵ However, this study extends previous scholarship by explicitly linking rhetorical structure to ecological concerns, thereby broadening the application of SRA within thematic exegetical studies.⁴⁶

Furthermore, Qur'an Surah Al-Rūm [30]: 41 exhibits a parallel rhetorical structure that emphasizes the causal relationship between human actions and the emergence of destruction on land and sea. This pattern reinforces the position of humans as primary moral agents in ecological crises rather than passive victims of natural disasters.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Qur'an Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 165 employs a concentric-parallel structure that connects *khilāfah* with moral trials, responsibility, and eschatological consequences, underscoring that human authority over the earth constitutes a trust rather than a legitimization of exploitation.⁴⁸ From the Qur'anic perspective, the earth is thus positioned as a sacred entity that reflects the signs of Allah's power (*āyāt kawnīyah*).⁴⁹

By integrating ecological interpretation with Semitic Rhetorical Analysis, this study demonstrates that the Qur'an's environmental discourse is both normative and persuasive. The rhetorical structures of the verses function as mechanisms for internalizing ecological values, enabling readers not only to cognitively comprehend the prohibition against environmental destruction but also to experience it as a moral and spiritual imperative. Consequently, SRA-based ecological interpretation possesses strong relevance for responding to contemporary environmental crises and for formulating a sustainable Islamic environmental ethic.

Lessons Derived from the Ecological Interpretation of Qur'anic Verses on the Earth

Based on the analysis of four Qur'anic verses examined through an integrated framework of ecological interpretation and Semitic Rhetorical Analysis, this study demonstrates that the Qur'an articulates a strong normative stance against all forms of environmental degradation and consistently positions humans as the primary moral agents responsible for maintaining the balance of the earth. Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56 indicates that environmental care is intrinsically linked to spiritual consciousness and obedience to Allah, while Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205 emphasizes that environmental destruction, particularly acts that undermine sources of life such as vegetation and the continuity of future generations, constitutes a form of injustice that is condemned by Allah. Furthermore, Qur'an Surah Al-Rūm [30]: 41 establishes a causal relationship between human behavior and ecological crises on land and sea, framing environmental degradation as both a consequence of moral deviation and a divine warning that calls for ethical reorientation. Meanwhile, Qur'an Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 165 reinforces the concept of human beings as *khulafā'* on earth, entrusted with environmental stewardship as a moral and spiritual trial. Accordingly, this study asserts that environmental preservation in the Qur'anic perspective is not merely an ecological imperative but a comprehensive ethical and religious responsibility that is inseparable from humanity's role as servants and vicegerents of Allah on earth.

44 Mustaqim, *Metode Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 105–9.

45 Cuypers, *A Qur'anic Apocalypse A Reading of the Thirty-Three Last Surahs of the Qur'an*, 15–17.

46 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, 'Penerapan Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) Pada Surah Al-Qiyamah', *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 8, no. 1 (2018): 52–53

47 Shihab Quraish, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, 58–59.

48 'Ashur, *Al-Tahrir Wa al-Tamwir*, 222–24.

49 Syatha, *Al-Qur'an Dan Lingkungan Hidup*, 48–49.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how the ecological messages of the Qur'an are constructed and rhetorically emphasized through the Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) approach, as well as to assess their relevance in shaping Islamic environmental ethics. Based on the analysis of Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf [7]: 56, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, Surah Al-Rūm [30]: 41, and Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 165, the findings demonstrate that Qur'anic ecological meaning is not confined to semantic or thematic content alone, but is also embedded in systematically arranged rhetorical patterns. The concentric, parallel, and concentric-parallel structures identified in these verses function to foreground the prohibition of environmental destruction (*fasād*), articulate the causal relationship between human conduct and ecological degradation, and cultivate moral awareness of human responsibility as *khulafā'* on earth. In this regard, the study contributes to the expansion of Qur'anic ecological interpretation, which has largely remained normative, by highlighting the pivotal role of rhetorical form in reinforcing environmental ethics.

The principal contribution of this study lies in the integration of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis into ecological interpretation, offering a novel methodological perspective within contemporary Qur'anic studies. This integration elucidates how Qur'anic rhetoric operates persuasively and pedagogically to instill ethical commitments toward environmental balance and sustainability. Beyond its theoretical contribution, the findings also have practical implications, particularly as a conceptual foundation for the development of Islamic values-based environmental education, the enrichment of eco-theological discourse, and the formulation of sustainable development ethics grounded in religious teachings. Through its rhetorical structure, the Qur'an situates environmental protection as an integral dimension of faith, worship, and moral responsibility, thereby providing a compelling ethical and spiritual framework for responding to the global environmental crisis.

Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations. First, the scope of textual analysis is confined to a limited selection of verses that explicitly reference *al-ard*, which, while allowing for in-depth rhetorical examination, does not encompass the full range of Qur'anic ecological discourse. Second, the study relies primarily on qualitative textual analysis and classical-contemporary exegetical sources, without incorporating empirical data on how these rhetorical messages are received or enacted within Muslim communities. Third, the application of SRA in this study focuses on macro-rhetorical structures, leaving room for further exploration of micro-rhetorical features such as phonetic patterns, lexical cohesion, and stylistic nuances that may also contribute to ecological meaning-making.

In light of these limitations, future research is recommended to expand the corpus of analysis to include Qur'anic verses related to water, animals, agriculture, cosmic balance (*mīzān*), and environmental justice, thereby offering a more comprehensive mapping of Qur'anic ecological rhetoric. Further studies may also integrate SRA with interdisciplinary approaches, such as environmental sociology, Islamic education, or behavioral studies, to examine the impact of Qur'anic ecological discourse on environmental attitudes, ethical reasoning, and sustainability practices among contemporary Muslim societies. Such research would not only deepen the theoretical contribution of Qur'anic ecological studies but also enhance their practical relevance in addressing pressing environmental challenges.

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