



Research Article

The Islamic Concept of Environmental Conservation: Insights from Bangladesh

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Abstract. Aims: The study was carried out to identify the importance of environmental conservation, the role of Islamic law in protecting the environment, investigate whether it is possible to protect the environment by following Islamic rules. Study design: This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Place and Duration of Study: The study was conducted in Bangladesh, with data collection primarily taking place from 01 January 2023 to 31 October 2024. Results: Out of 300 participants, 150 environmentalists and 150 Islamic thinkers were surveyed. Among environmentalists, 77% believed Islamic principles significantly aid environmental protection, with a chi-square test confirming a strong association ($p < 0.05$). Islamic thinkers unanimously supported the role of Islam in conservation, emphasizing awareness campaigns. Regarding waste management, 75% favored recycling, 66.75% reduction, 58.3% reuse, and 33.3%

recovery, highlighting the 4R strategy's importance. These findings underline the relevance of Islamic teachings in promoting sustainable practices and addressing environmental challenges in Bangladesh. Conclusion: In conclusion integrating Islamic principles into environmental conservation can reduce resource misuse, mitigate environmental degradation, and promote sustainable practices, aligning with both ecological and ethical objectives. While the study highlights the potential of Islamic teachings in environmental protection, further research is needed to validate and optimize their practical application in modern environmental management.

Keywords: Islamic Environmental Ethics, Environmental Conservation, Waste Management, Sustainable Practices, Qur'an and Hadith, 4R Strategy, Bangladesh, Islamic Law.

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Qur'an states, "I have created everything in the world for the benefit of mankind." This verse indicates that all living and non-living things on Earth are created for human use, underscoring the human responsibility to protect and maintain these natural elements. The environment, a divine blessing, plays a critical role in human survival. Natural resources, essential components of the environment, are crucial for the existence of all living beings. Depletion of these resources disrupts the ecological balance, threatening human survival. Islamic teachings prohibit the destruction of the natural world for economic gain, emphasizing the importance of environmental stewardship.

The core principle of Islamic environmental ethics is to enhance and preserve the environment, not to exploit or degrade it. Islamic scriptures repeatedly advise maintaining balance with nature and caring for Allah's creation. Unfortunately, many Muslims are not fully aware of these environmental teachings, and current practices often reflect a limited understanding of the Islamic perspective on environmental care. The Holy Qur'an reminds us, "O Children of Adam! Eat and drink, but do not waste. Surely, He does not like the wasteful."

As an integral part of human existence, the environment must be valued and sustained. Human actions have direct consequences on the environment; negative actions can cause harm, while positive actions can ensure long-term environmental sustainability. Therefore, humans have a responsibility to act as stewards of their surroundings. Islam, as a religion of peace and well-being, encourages harmonious coexistence with all living beings. In the Islamic worldview, all creatures belong to God's family, and humans are just one part of this interconnected web of life. Humans hold a special position as the crown of creation, not for domination, but for responsible caretaking on behalf of the Creator. The Holy Qur'an advises, "Eat and drink of Allah's provisions, and do not go about spreading corruption in the land."

This paper explores the significance of preventing environmental damage caused by development activities and how Islamic principles can mitigate these harmful effects. It also investigates the effectiveness of Islamic rules and regulations in protecting the environment through surveys conducted among environmentalists and scholars.

METHODOLOGY

Primary Data

Primary data was collected through standardized Focus-Group discussion, key-interviewing, questionnaire survey. Out of 20 questions, 11 were prepared for environmentalists and 9 for Islamic thinkers. The study includes 150 environmentalists and 150 Islamic thinkers, totaling 300 participants. There are no specific data sources regarding the exact number of environmental specialists and Islamic thinkers in Bangladesh. However, it is known that various universities and institutions in Bangladesh offer environmental science and related programs, which would indicate a significant number of professionals in this field. A substantial number, given the presence of multiple institutions and departments dedicated to Islamic studies, but no exact figure is provided.

To calculate the sample size with a 90% confidence level, we adjust the Z-value to 1.645 (as this corresponds to a 90% confidence level).

The formula is the same: $n = Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p) / e^2$

Where:

- $Z = 1.645$ (for a 90% confidence level)
- $p = 0.5$ (estimated proportion of the population)
- $e = 0.05$ (margin of error)

Substituting the values:

$$n = 1.645^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1-0.5) / 0.05^2 = 2.7025 \cdot 0.25 / 0.0025 = 270.25$$

Thus, the required sample size would be approximately 271 individuals for each group (environmental analysts and Islamic thinkers) to achieve a 90% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. We have taken a sample size of 300 individuals which is above 90% confidence level.

Secondary Data:

The study also reviewed several relevant literature and earlier research papers, from published sources, journals, books, newspapers. Various verses about conserving the environment mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith, Ijma, Qiyas, Istihsan, Ijtihad to enrich the introductory and the literature review aspects of the research work.

Analytical Techniques

The data obtained from the study were analyzed using simple descriptive statistical techniques such as SPSS (27.0.1.0) and Microsoft excel (2019). Results were presented in pictorial and graphical form using pie and bar charts to ensure adequate illustrations. Chi-Square Test for Independence is tested through Null Hypothesis (H_0) and Alternative Hypothesis (H_1).

Chi-Square Calculation

The chi-square statistic is calculated using the formula: $\chi^2 = \sum (O-E)^2 / E$ Where:

- O = Observed frequency (the actual data values from the table)
- E = Expected frequency (calculated based on the assumption that the null hypothesis is true)

The expected frequency for each cell is calculated using: $E = (\text{row total} \times \text{column total}) / \text{grand total}$

The degrees of freedom (df) for the Chi-Square Test are calculated as: $df = (r - 1)(c - 1)$ Where:

- r = Number of rows
- c = Number of columns

For each table (Environmental Specialists and Islamic Thinkers), the number of rows is 2 (Yes and No), and the number of columns is 1 (question). Thus, the degrees of freedom for each individual test would be $(2 - 1)(1 - 1) = 1$. Chi-Square Distribution and Significance: Once we have calculated the chi-square value for each question, we compare it to the critical value from the chi-square distribution table with $df = 1$ and a significance level of 0.05 (95% confidence level). If the calculated chi-square value exceeds the critical value, we reject the null hypothesis, indicating a significant association.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Importance of Islamic law for the conservation of environmental elements

The environment is made up of several elements and these elements control the balance of the environment. So, one of the most important ways to conserve the environment is to conserve the elements of the environment in the right way. The most important of these elements in the environment are water, soil, sound, animals and plants etc. The basic texts of Islam, such as the Qur'an and Hadith, have been instructed in various ways to preserve these elements of the environment. The role of Islamic regulation in preserving these elements of the environment is discussed in this section.

Air is one of the most important elements of the environment. Without air it is impossible for animals and plants to survive. But this important element of the environment is being polluted by natural and man-made causes. Among the natural causes are air pollution due to volcanic eruptions and forest fires. One of the reasons man-made is the black smoke emitted because of the use of fossil fuels for development work which is increasing day by day. Another reason is excessive deforestation which is reducing the amount of oxygen in the air and increasing the amount of carbon dioxide. The gases present in the air are oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, argon, neon etc. There is a certain proportion of all these gases in the air. For any reason, if the proportion of any gas increases or decreases, it can cause air pollution and create a crisis for mankind. The main concern of the world today is the greenhouse effect, which is increasing due to the increasing proportions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O). One of the reasons for this greenhouse gas emissions is the result of practicing deforestation for of development works, setting up industrial plants and building residential areas. But Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the said in the hadith: "If you know for sure that the Hour has come, then if you have a sapling of a tree in your hand, which can be planted, you will plant that sapling". In the above hadith, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has emphasized on tree plantation because it is possible to prevent air pollution by planting trees.

Water is another vital element of the environment; without water the existence of life cannot be imagined which covers three parts of the earth's surface. Water is an important blessing from Allah which has been made available to us to sustain our lives. Allah produces crops on the earth through water and human beings have been making a living by producing crops on this land for age to age. Water pollution is caused due to non-disinfection of various chemical wastes from industrial plants, sewage and solid wastes from residential areas and medical and hazardous wastes from Hospital. Apart from that, because of various types of accidents including naval accidents, fuel is polluting the water mixed with river or sea water. Besides providing food, water serves as a source of energy, transport, and weather balance, which is why we see a significant number of verses in the Qur'an describing the important features of water. It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: "Do you not see that Allah has sent down rain from the sky and the earth becomes green? Indeed, Allah is Subtle and Acquainted". Farming is an essential part of human life through which people have been making a living. Water is an essential element of cultivation, so it is not possible to make a living without water. Humans and living beings have been created from water, as evidenced by the Holy Qur'an. Allah says in the Holy Quran: "Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?". So, water is a very important element for human beings which is proved by Quran and Hadith, but human beings destroy the quality of water in various ways which is destroying the balance of the environment. Excessive use of ground water and polluting surface water by throwing waste have led to a shortage of pure and fresh water around the world which is now an alarming issue. In this context, Islam warns mankind to ensure proper use of water so that this natural resource is properly preserved. From these instructions in the Qur'an and Hadith, people can understand the importance of water conservation. Therefore, by following these rules of Islam, people can prevent wastage of water.

Soil or Land is also an important element of the environment and generally refers to the solid surface of the earth. Lands are of different types like fertile lands, forests, hills and mountains, unused lands, deserts, wetland etc.

But now due to the high rate of construction of industrial establishments, the chemical waste emitted from that activity is being dumped into the land and water which is contaminating both the water and the soil. Water is polluted again, and it mixes with the soil and is polluting the soil again. As a result, land is losing productivity, which poses a serious threat to the environment and human livelihood. Islam considers this element of the environment as a very important element and the Holy Qur'an mentions in regarding the preservation of this element very seriously. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an "And in the earth are tracts side by side, and vineyards and ploughed land of corn, and date-palms like and unlike- cornfields which are watered with the same water". Land is one of the main sources of subsistence for mankind on earth, so Allah has given some guidelines in this regard through Islamic rules and regulations. It is said in the Holy Qur'an: "And indeed we have honored the children of Adam, and we have carried them in the land and the sea, and we have

provided them with good things, we have bestowed special favor on them above many of those whom we have created” .

Islam has always instructed to keep the land and dust clean, so that if there is a shortage of water somewhere, anyone can use a piece of soil in the tayammum (a system of being purified with soil instead of water) for prayer and take purity. Islam encourages humans to use land properly and strictly forbids its misuse.

Trees play an important role in maintaining the balance of the environment and as a habitat for animals and birds. Oxygen is one of the most important components of the life of animals, including humans. Plants are the habitat of different kinds of animals, so the existence of these kinds of animals cannot be imagined without plants. Moreover, the importance of trees in human daily use is immense and one of the sources of human livelihood is the tree. Through this discussion trees are a very essential element for the protection of humanity and the environment. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “If a bird, a man or an animal eats from a grain or a tree planted by a Muslim, that person will be rewarded” . This hadith is further clarified in another hadith, “A person who plants a tree is patient in caring for and preserving it until it bears fruit, and Allah will give him goodness in return for every fruit that is lost.” Our Prophet instructed his disciples to plant and care for trees, and he did it himself. Every tree recites the Tasbih of Allah, so the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever cuts down a tree unnecessarily [a tree that into the fire” .

This is proved by these statements of Hadith and Qur'an that trees are the best friend of nature and environment, so it is necessary to take initiative to plant trees for the welfare of environment and human race without cutting down trees indiscriminately.

Environmental consciousness and conservation of natural resources is an integral part of Islamic beliefs. As representatives of Allah on this earth, mankind should use natural resources in a sustainable way to ensure that Allah's grace continues. Natural resources need to be used sparingly to prevent overuse and invent new methods and equipment that can be used to produce more energy by consuming fewer natural resources.

Expert Opinion on The Role of Islamic Law in Environmental Conservation

Through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Information Interviews (KIIs) and Questioner Surveys, opinions or information have been collected from environmentalists and Islamic thinkers on the effectiveness and reality of Islamic provisions in environmental protection. Most Islamic and environmental experts have expressed the opinions that it is possible to accelerate environmental protection by following Islamic rules. The survey was conducted with a total of 150 environmentalists and 150 Islamic thinkers. The questions that were asked to them during the survey are presented in Appendix-1 & 2.

Chi-Square Test

This study presents the results of a Chi-Square test for independence conducted to evaluate the association between adherence to Islamic laws and

perceived environmental conservation effectiveness. The analysis is based on questionnaire responses collected from Environmental Specialists and Islamic Thinkers.

The hypotheses for the test were:

- Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no association between adherence to Islamic laws and perceived environmental conservation effectiveness.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is an association between adherence to Islamic laws and perceived environmental conservation effectiveness.

Two sets of questionnaire data were analyzed:

- Environmental Specialists (Appendix 1): Responses to 11 questions regarding the effectiveness of Islamic guidelines for environmental conservation.
- Islamic Thinkers (Appendix 2): Responses to 9 questions focusing on the religious and theoretical framework for environmental protection in Islam.

The total responses for each group were categorized as "Yes," "No," or "Others."

The Chi-Square values were determined for degrees of freedom, (df) = 1 at two significance levels:

- $\alpha=0.05$: 3.84
- $\alpha=0.01$: 6.63

These values serve as thresholds to determine whether the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Here we can get,

a. Environmental Specialists (Appendix 1)

The Chi-Square values for the responses were calculated and compared to the critical values. The results are summarized below:

Question	Chi-Square Value	Significant $\alpha=0.05$	at	Significant $\alpha=0.01$	at
1	2.40	No		No	
2	22.23	Yes		Yes	
3	1.70	No		No	
4	22.23	Yes		Yes	
5	3.21	No		No	
6	10.33	Yes		Yes	
7	159.96	Yes		Yes	
8	9.48	Yes		Yes	
9	5.11	Yes		No	
10	22.23	Yes		Yes	
11	10.33	Yes		Yes	

Table 1: Summary of the results of Chi Square Values for the responses of Environmental Specialists (Appendix 1)

b. Islamic Thinkers (Appendix 2)

The Chi-Square values for Islamic Thinkers were overwhelmingly significant for all questions. The results are summarized below:

Question	Chi-Square Value	Significant $\alpha=0.05$	at Significant $\alpha=0.01$
1	35.25	Yes	Yes
2	35.25	Yes	Yes
3	35.25	Yes	Yes
4	537.48	Yes	Yes
5	35.25	Yes	Yes
6	35.25	Yes	Yes
7	35.25	Yes	Yes
8	317.84	Yes	Yes
9	26.56	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Summary of the results of Chi Square Values for the responses of Islamic Thinkers (Appendix 2)

The analysis reveals the following insights:

a) Environmental Specialists:

- There was significant association for most questions, indicating agreement on the role of Islamic teachings in environmental conservation.
- Questions 1, 3, and 5 did not yield significant results, suggesting variability in perceptions regarding specific guidelines of Islam in environmental protection.
- Questions 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, and 11 showed strong significance, reflecting widespread agreement among specialists on key principles like cleanliness, resource conservation, and modern compatibility.

b) Islamic Thinkers:

- All questions showed significant results, with several questions yielding extremely high Chi-Square values.
- Question 4, which asked about issuing fatwas on environmental issues, had the highest Chi-Square value (537.48), highlighting a strong divergence between issuing fatwas and general agreement with Islamic principles.
- The results underline a strong belief among Islamic Thinkers that Islamic laws and guidelines are effective for environmental conservation.

The results provide evidence of a significant association between adherence to Islamic laws and perceived environmental conservation effectiveness for both Environmental Specialists and Islamic Thinkers.

- Environmental Specialists expressed varied levels of agreement, with notable gaps in perceptions for specific questions.
- Islamic Thinkers exhibited uniform agreement, emphasizing the compatibility of Islamic teachings with modern environmental conservation practices.

This analysis suggests that integrating Islamic principles could be a meaningful approach to environmental policymaking and awareness campaigns,

especially in Islamic contexts. However, further study could explore the specific gaps in perceptions noted among Environmental Specialists.

Opinion of Environmental Specialist

A total of 11 questionnaires distributed in different ways survey includes that email sending, phone calls, focus-group discussion, interviewing etc. 150 people gave their opinion through each of all questions. Responses from the respondents were recorded pertaining to opinion (Yes, No, and Others etc.) environmental awareness, concern, and level of commitment to environmental protection. The data collected through the questionnaire was subject to frequency count. In other words, the responses of the subjects for each separate question were combined to find the maximum frequency of occurrence (i.e. the number of times a particular response has passed). The measurements of these responses to the questions are presented in a percentage chart. This analysis is oriented in bar chart. The graph chart (Figure 1) summarizes the opinion levels of all the respondents in environmental specialist is given below:

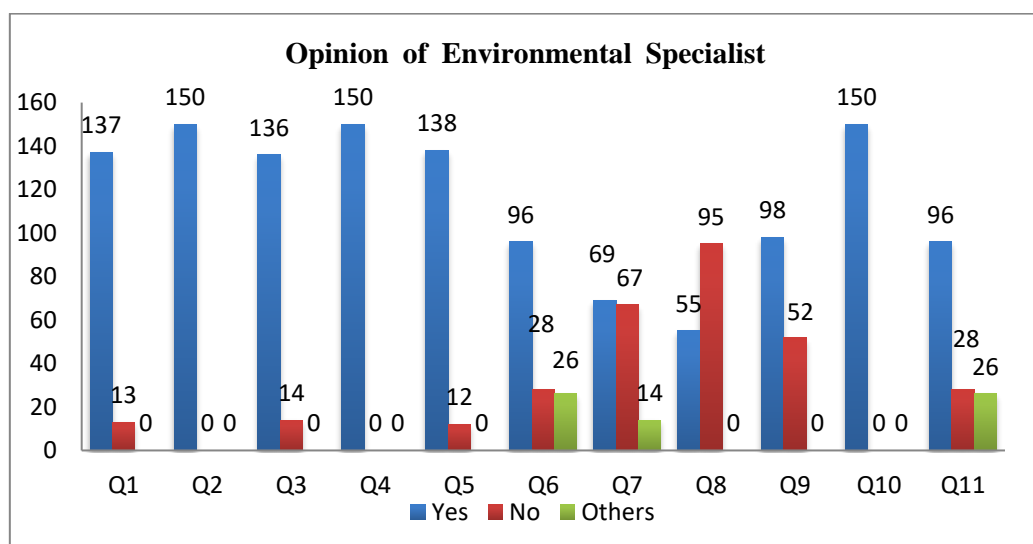


Figure 1: Summary of opinion levels of Environmental Specialists

As can be seen from Figure 1 above, most of the questions surveyor asked environmentalists about environmental conservation, which have (Appendix-1), have been positive, with a consensus rate of 80 %.

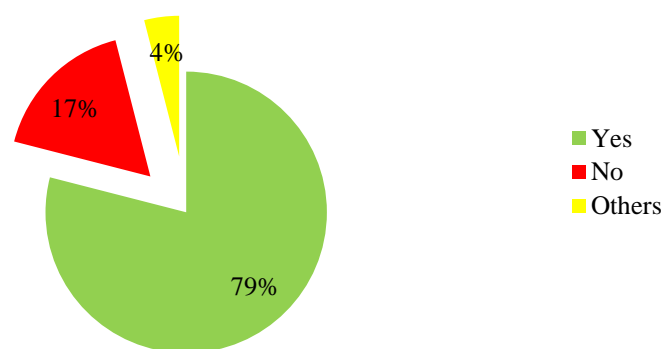


Figure 2: Percentage of Opinion

Figure 2 indicates that 77% of the respondents agreed with survey question that Islamic rules can help protect the environment, 19% of the respondents did not believe that Islamic rules could protect the environment properly, and 4% of the respondents gave opinions of others.

A study of the above-mentioned survey shows that the rules of Islam for the conservation of the environment will play an important role in the protection of the environment if properly followed.

Opinions Revealed from Environmental Specialist

During the survey, environmentalists were given the opportunity to make spontaneous comments on what needs to be done to protect the environment in the context of Bangladesh. The following is a summary of the important comments made by environmentalists in this regard.

- Incentive, not punishment-based enforcement of environmental laws are necessary.
- Mass awareness and proper implementation of existing environmental laws and regulations.
- Environmental acting is essential from personal and family level.

Opinion of Islamic Thinkers

A total of 9 questionnaires were sent to Islamic thinkers and they gave important opinions according to questions. They have provided sufficient information on the environment that can be preserved following the guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith.

From the survey results, it was observed that 150 Islamic thinkers give their valuable opinion on nine (9) different questions. In contrast to questionnaire mentioned in Appendix 2, most of them had a positive 'yes', as can be seen in the following figure (Figure 3). This graph chart summarizes the opinion levels of all the respondent's Islamic thinkers.

Figure 3: Summary of opinion levels of Islamic Thinkers

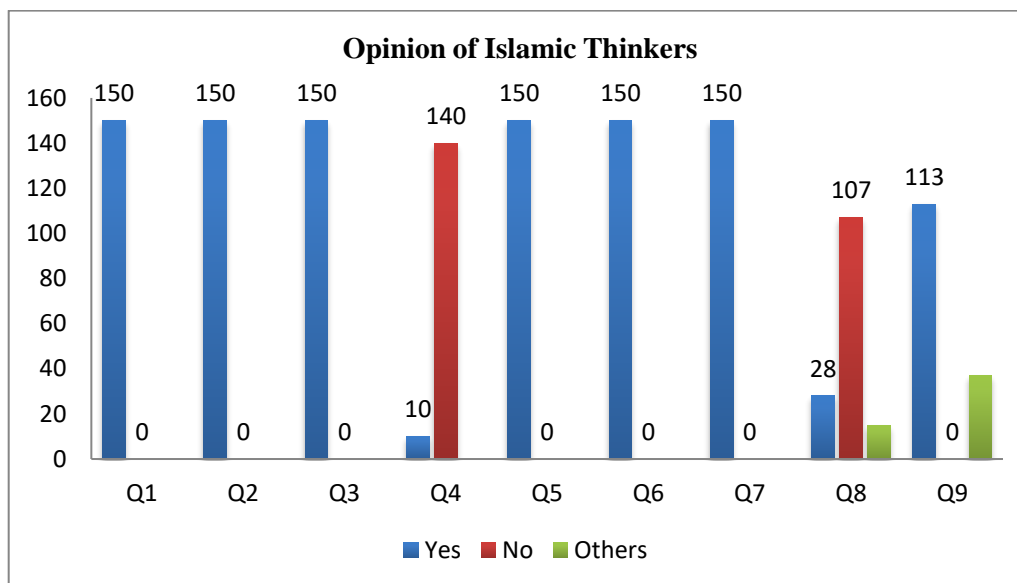


Figure 3 represents the opinion of Islamic thinkers. Reviewing the questioner survey, it appears that all Islamic thinkers agree that Islam enjoins prevention of waste and pollution of the environment. It also mentions that destroying the environment is a punishable offense. In addition, it is known that the imams of the mosques, Islamic thinkers and any religious organization have not taken any awareness activities to implement these provisions of the Qur'an and Hadith to protect the environment. If they conducted awareness activities and explained the consequences to the people, then there would be widespread awareness among the people which would play an important role in protecting the environment.

However, in their answers, it can be clearly understood that the Qur'an and Hadith have given guidelines on keeping the environment beautiful and preventing waste, through which it is possible to preserve the environment by preventing environmental pollution. Islamic thinkers added that almighty Allah says in the holy Quran "As for the earth, we spread it out and placed upon its firm mountains and caused everything to grow there in perfect balance. And in it I have created a means of sustenance for you and others, whom you do not give sustenance to. "Rizik" has no means of reserve that we do not hold, only to bring it to the right measure. We provide clean air and send down rain from the firmament for your drink. It is not you who holds its reserves" 12. In various verses of the Holy Qur'an, Almighty Allah says which environment will benefit people or people will be able to live well. Plants, houses, soil, water, air, animals, livestock, roads, rivers, mountains, vehicles, factories, etc. comprise the environment. All these are the best blessings of Almighty Allah. Most scholars do not directly play their role in protecting the environment. In this case, they are showing indifference regarding this correlation between Islam and Environmental conversation. The survey results show that at present very few Islamic organizations in Bangladesh are playing a significant role in environmental protection. Only 16% of respondents said yes that there is an active Islamic

organization in Bangladesh that works for environmental well-being. Exemplary “Islamic Foundation Bangladesh” an Autonomous body under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Government of Bangladesh play only a named role on spreading Islamic view regarding Environmental Conservation putting a single session in their Imam training curriculum including some literatures provide them with a booklet.

Percentage of The Best Way to Manage Waste for Environmental Conservation

A questionnaire survey was also done to reveal whether environmental conservation can be done by introducing the 4R strategy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover). The graph chart (Figure 4) summarizes the percentage levels of all the respondents in environmental specialist are given below:



Figure 4: Introducing 4R to Manage Waste for Environmental Conservation

Figure 4 shows that among the respondents, they give feedback 75% in favor of recycling, 66.75% in favor of reduce, 58.3% in favor of reuse and 33.3% in favor of recover for waste management. Based on the above opinion, it is understood that it's possible to conserve the environment by managing waste with 4R (recycle, reduce, reuse and recover).

Large portions of non-hazardous inorganic waste are reused and recycled by the inhabitants at the generating points. NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) providing door-to-door collection services also segregate the wastes and reuse them without processing. The residents store their daily waste in a plastic or metal bin within the home or on their premises to supply them to the waste collectors. During their collections, the collectors keep the waste in a single chamber van that they use to separate the useable and recyclable wastes, such as clothing, plastic products, and scrap metal, in hanging sacks behind the van, which are then sold in the informal sector recyclers. NGOs working in waste collection provide the collected wastes in composting plants to produce compost for the market sale ¹³.

Although Islam does not talk about waste management system directly but the Islamic statement regarding waste management encourages to follow 4R strategy. Islam urges to reuse without wasting anything. Regarding reuse, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “When something falls out of your kitchen

utensils, pick it up and eat it clean, don't leave it to the devil" 14. Islam also talked about recycling process, the Holy Qur'an says "It is He Who has brought into being gardens, the cultivated and the wild, and date-palms, and fields with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and variegated. Eat of their fruit in season but give (the poor) their due on harvest day. And do not waste, for God does not love the wasteful." 15. Islam always encourages not be spendthrift and not use or buy more than needed which has similarity with reduce in waste management strategy, in chapter 7, verse 31, the Qur'an states "eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters." The Qur'an praises the behavior of "those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes)."

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of Islamic environmental teachings in addressing the global environmental crisis. The Qur'an and Hadith contain numerous verses and passages related to environmental conservation, emphasizing the interconnectedness between humans and nature. The survey results demonstrate that both environmentalists and Islamic thinkers in Bangladesh recognize the potential of Islamic principles in promoting environmental protection.

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