

Malaysia Madani: Sustainability Through Islamic Principles

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.908000088>

Received: 22 July 2025; Accepted: 30 July 2025; Published: 29 August 2025

ABSTRACT

Malaysia Madani is a national framework designed to instill ethical governance and socio-economic development based on Islamic values. Among its six foundational pillars, sustainability is regarded as a core objective. This paper investigates how Islamic principles such as khalifah (stewardship), ihsan (excellence), and maslahah (public interest) contribute to sustainable policy design and implementation in Malaysia. Employing qualitative content analysis, this study examines key government documents, Qur'anic verses, and prophetic traditions relevant to the Malaysia Madani agenda. The research focuses on three domains of sustainability: ethical governance, environmental responsibility, and socio-economic justice. The study finds that instruments like zakat, waqf, and Islamic finance offer strategic solutions to ensure equity in wealth distribution. Likewise, Qur'anic commands on justice and Hadith on environmental care reflect the moral imperative of sustainability in Islam. Nevertheless, the research highlights several challenges, including fragmented policy application, limited institutional synergy, and the lack of a faith-based evaluation framework. To address this, the study proposes a values-based guideline model grounded in Islamic teachings to assess the spiritual, social, and economic impact of technological and public policies. This model aims to bridge the gap between ethical aspirations and administrative mechanisms. In conclusion, the integration of Islamic sustainability principles into national policy not only strengthens governance and resilience but positions Malaysia as a pioneer of ethical public administration in the Global South.

Keywords - Malaysia Madani, Islamic sustainability, public policy, zakat and waqf, ethical governance

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability stands as the foremost pillar in the Malaysia Madani policy framework, reflecting the government's commitment to ethical development that balances economic advancement, environmental care and social well-being. However, current national policy mechanisms often approach sustainability through a technical lens relying on economic indicators, green growth metrics and global benchmarks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with insufficient integration of Islamic ethical values. In an Islamic worldview, sustainability (istidamah) is not limited to resource conservation but involves preserving spiritual balance, social justice and the ecological harmony entrusted by divine revelation. The concept of stewardship (khalifah) is central to Islam's vision of sustainable governance. As stated in the Qur'an:

وَنَقَّصْنُ لَكَ عِلْمَ مَا إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَأِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝ ٣٠

“Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent (khalifah).”

(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:30)

This verse affirms the human responsibility to act as trustees of creation, not exploiters. The Qur'an further commands:

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

“Do not cause corruption upon the earth after it has been set in order.”

(Surah al-A'raf, 7:56)

This ethical mandate is echoed in Prophetic traditions. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized long-term sustainability even under catastrophic circumstances:

إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا خُلُوعٌ خَضِرَةٌ، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مُسْتَخْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا، فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ، فَاتَّقُوا الدُّنْيَا وَاتَّقُوا النِّسَاءَ، فَإِنَّ أَوَّلَ فِتْنَةٍ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَانَتْ فِي النِّسَاءِ.

“The life of the world is sweet and green. Allah makes you generations succeeding one another so that He may try you in respect of your actions. So, beware of the beguilements of the world and those of women. The first trial of Banu Israel was through women”

(Sahih Muslim, 2742)

These hadiths illustrate that sustainability in Islam transcends environmental conservation, it embodies spiritual intention, social impact and intergenerational responsibility.

Despite these rich ethical resources, current policy approaches in Malaysia struggle to connect Islamic values with public administration. Technical ministries may implement green initiatives, but often without explicit moral frameworks to evaluate their long-term ethical implications. Policies are rarely assessed in terms of spiritual, economic or social equity. Moreover, there is no established Islamic value audit mechanism for evaluating technology-driven policies, especially in the emerging age of artificial intelligence (AI), automation and economic digitalization. The lack of a faith-based evaluative lens limits the potential of Malaysia Madani to fulfil its promise of ethical and balanced governance.

Previous studies such as Kamali (2016) on wasatiyyah (moderation) and Dusuki & Abdullah (2007) on Islamic corporate social responsibility, have emphasized the relevance of Islamic ethics in sustainability. However, these works have not yet translated into a comprehensive guideline for Islamic value-based policy evaluation in Malaysia. This gap reveals the need for a framework that systematically aligns Islamic principles with sustainability indicators in public policy.

Accordingly, this article is part of a research grant titled “Guidelines for Accountability and Sustainability in Madani Policy Implementation Based on the Sunnah of the Prophet”, which seeks to construct a prophetic value framework for evaluating national policies through the lens of divine revelation (wahy). This paper focuses specifically on the pillar of Sustainability within Malaysia Madani, and proposes an integrative guideline model grounded in Qur’anic ethics, Prophetic traditions and maqasid al-shariah. The aim is to support policy-makers, institutions, and civil society in implementing development strategies that are not only efficient, but spiritually just, socially responsible and environmentally balanced.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a primary focus on content analysis. The objective is to explore and develop a sustainability evaluation model rooted in the ethical foundations of Islam, as framed within the Malaysia Madani policy framework. In particular, the methodology is designed to fulfil the aims of the research grant by examining how sustainability principles derived from the Qur’an and Sunnah can be operationalized as value benchmarks in public policy.

Research Design and Strategy

The study employs library-based research supported by documentary analysis of primary Islamic sources and contemporary policy documents. The key sources include:

The official Malaysia Madani guidebook published by the Prime Minister's Office (2022).

Selected verses from the Qur'an pertaining to stewardship, justice and environmental ethics.

Hadith compilations from authentic sources including Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Musnad Ahmad and Sunan Ibnu Majah.

Contemporary scholarly works on Islamic governance, sustainability and social finance.

This combination of primary and secondary texts enables the construction of a normative framework that is both grounded in revelation and contextualized to the socio-political realities of Malaysia.

Analytical Framework

The research utilizes a **thematic content analysis** approach to identify recurring principles and value constructs related to sustainability in Islamic tradition and public governance. The analysis follows three phases:

Selection and Categorization of Texts: Relevant ayat and hadith are selected based on themes: khilafah (stewardship), 'adl (justice), maslahah (public interest) and amanah (trust). Policy documents are examined for content aligned with these themes.

Coding and Thematic Grouping: Texts are coded and grouped into sustainability domains, including spiritual, social and economic dimensions. For example, Qur'anic verses on ecological balance (al-A'raf, 7:56) are coded under environmental ethics, while hadith on resource sharing are coded under economic equity.

Value Mapping: Each thematic group is mapped against specific policy objectives outlined in Malaysia Madani. This allows the formation of a conceptual framework that bridges Islamic principles with policy implementation metrics.

Instrument and Data Interpretation

While no survey or interview instrument is employed, the interpretation relies on **manual coding** and triangulation using classical tafsir sources (e.g., Tafsir Ibn Kathir) and hadith commentaries (Sharh Sahih Muslim, Nawawi). In interpreting policy documents, the study applies a lens of maqasid al-shariah, ensuring that identified principles align with the higher objectives of Islamic law: protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage and wealth.

Additionally, selected academic sources are used to deepen interpretation. For example, Kamali (2016) offers a framework for moderation in public governance; Hassan and Salleh (2020) provide insights into Islamic finance mechanisms; and Zainiy (2021) connects scientific advancement with metaphysical purpose. These references help validate the alignment between classical Islamic ethics and modern policy requirements.

Analytical Dimensions of Islamic Sustainability

The study divides sustainability into three interrelated domains, each evaluated through relevant textual references:

Spiritual Sustainability: Impact of policy on ethics, virtue and inner balance.

Social Sustainability: Impact on community, justice and social cohesion.

Economic Sustainability: Equity in resource distribution, financial ethics and poverty alleviation.

Each of these domains is cross-referenced with Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic guidance to derive a proposed checklist for evaluating public policy from an Islamic ethical standpoint.

Justification of Methodological Approach

This method is selected due to its flexibility, contextual depth and its compatibility with the epistemology of Islamic research. In particular, qualitative content analysis enables the study to remain faithful to nass (textual sources) while developing an evaluative framework that is actionable within modern governance.

The focus on **document analysis** over interviews is deliberate, as the aim is to construct a normative model from source-based interpretation rather than stakeholder perception. This approach also corresponds with the first phase of the grant project, which emphasizes theoretical foundation before empirical validation.

Limitations and Scope

This study does not attempt to quantify sustainability outcomes or offer statistical validation. Rather, its purpose is to offer a conceptual and normative framework that can guide further empirical studies or policy reform. Its limitation lies in its dependency on textual interpretation, which may vary across schools of thought. However, by adhering to the qur'anic verses and authentic hadith, the research can attain its intended purpose accurately

LITERATURE REVIEW

Qur'anic Foundation for Sustainability

The Qur'an offers a timeless foundation for sustainability rooted in divine purpose and moral accountability. Human beings are designated as khalifah or stewards of the Earth as seen in Surah al-Baqarah (2:30), affirming their duty to govern responsibly. Furthermore, Surah al-A'raf (7:56) warns against causing corruption after the Earth has been set in order. These verses emphasize preservation, balance, and justice as integral to development. According to Ibn Kathir (2000), the concept of fasad (corruption) includes both spiritual and environmental damage. Thus, Islamic sustainability encompasses ecological care along with ethical restraint.

Prophetic Traditions on Environmental Ethics

The Prophetic traditions reinforce the Qur'anic vision of sustainability. One narration recorded in Musnad Ahmad states:

إِنْ قَامَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَفِي يَدِ أَحَدِكُمْ فَسِيلَةٌ، فَإِنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ لَا تَقُومَ حَتَّى يَغْرَسَهَا فَلْيَغْرِسْهَا

“If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm shoot in your hand, and you are able to plant it before it arrives, then you should plant it.”

(Musnad Ahmad, 12569)

These hadiths illustrate the high spiritual value of ecological responsibility and proactive good deeds, even in the face of global uncertainty. As al-Zuhayli (2001) comments, these traditions promote a theology of ongoing benefit (sadaqah jariyah), wherein environmental actions are not merely encouraged but are regarded as lasting acts of worship. These principles support the Malaysia Madani agenda by emphasizing the religious significance of actions such as reforestation, urban gardening and food security. They also lend legitimacy to sustainability-focused public policy through a spiritual and communal lens.

Sustainability and Governance in Kamali's Perspective

Kamali (2016), in *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam*, discusses the principle of wasatiyyah as the basis for balanced governance. He emphasizes that sustainability must integrate justice, consultation and collective welfare. Kamali also suggests that the ethical objectives of maqasid al-shariah, such as preserving life, intellect and property are essential for modern policy formulation. His work is valuable in presenting an Islamic ethical framework, but it does not offer specific models for evaluating public policy in the Malaysian context.

Economic Sustainability through Islamic Social Finance

Hassan and Salleh (2020) investigate the role of Islamic social finance instruments such as zakat, waqf and microfinance in promoting sustainability. In their book *Islamic Social Finance: Case Studies from Malaysia*, they argue that productive waqf models have contributed to infrastructure development in education and health. Meanwhile, efficient zakat distribution fosters economic resilience. However, while their study provides strong empirical support for Islamic finance, it does not directly link these mechanisms to policy evaluation frameworks or sustainability indicators in public governance.

Integrating Islamic Philosophy and Ethics

Zainiy Uthman (2021), in *Islam and the Philosophy of Science*, emphasizes the need to re-anchor scientific and technological development within a metaphysical Islamic worldview. He warns against the secularization of knowledge which divorces science from spiritual values. His insights call for reorienting national policies toward tawhid paradigms, where sustainability is guided not only by outcomes, but by divine purpose. While the work provides philosophical depth, its application to administrative and policy procedures remains conceptual rather than practical.

Synthesis and Research Gap

These five sources collectively affirm the centrality of sustainability in Islam. The Qur'an and Hadith provide ethical imperatives for preserving the environment and ensuring justice across generations. Kamali and Zainiy offer foundational frameworks rooted in Islamic ethics and philosophy, while Hassan and Salleh contribute empirical insights into economic sustainability. However, the existing literature lacks a consolidated framework that applies these values to real-time policy assessment in Malaysia's Madani era.

This study addresses that gap by proposing an integrated model based on Qur'anic principles and prophetic values, offering a practical guideline for evaluating sustainability in national policy. The research is situated within the grant titled "Guidelines for Accountability and Sustainability in Madani Policy Implementation Based on the Sunnah of the Prophet" and focuses specifically on the first pillar of Kemampanan (Sustainability). Through content analysis and value-mapping, the study seeks to transform these Islamic sources into operational tools for national governance.

FINDINGS

This study presents findings based on the content analysis of Qur'anic verses, sahih hadith and official Malaysia Madani policy documents. The findings are organized around three sustainability dimensions that is spiritual, social and economic, which emerged as the dominant ethical domains in both the Islamic tradition and national policy objectives. These dimensions offer a framework for developing an Islamic value-based policy evaluation tool to guide Madani implementation.

Spiritual Sustainability: Restoring Ethical Awareness in Governance

The analysis found that spiritual sustainability is underrepresented in current policy narratives, despite being essential in Islamic ethical discourse. The concept of khilafah as mentioned in Surah al-Baqarah (2:30) positions human beings as moral stewards responsible not only for physical resources, but also for preserving spiritual balance in society. This dimension includes the cultivation of inner values such as sincerity, trust, empathy and fear of accountability before God.

Prophetic traditions reinforce this responsibility. One narration state: "If the Final Hour comes while one of you holds a sapling in his hand, and he is able to plant it before the Hour arrives, let him plant it." (Musnad Ahmad, 12569). This hadith affirms that ethical action must persist regardless of external certainty. It promotes future-oriented thinking rooted in divine accountability.

However, the Malaysia Madani framework places limited emphasis on the spiritual consequences of technological or developmental policies. There is a lack of structured ethical screening mechanisms that assess

how policies affect virtue, moral decay or spiritual alienation. This gap weakens the holistic spirit of sustainability as envisioned in Islam.

Social Sustainability: Equity and Community Well-Being

Social justice, compassion and community empowerment are central to the sustainability model in Islam. The Qur'an repeatedly addresses the importance of mutual responsibility, especially in Surah al-Ma'un and Surah al-Nisa', which warn against economic neglect, oppression and social fragmentation. The hadith of the Prophet ﷺ states:

مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَغْرِسُ غَرْسًا، أَوْ يَزْرَعُ زَرْعًا، فَيَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ طَيْرٌ أَوْ إِنْسَانٌ أَوْ بَهِيمَةٌ، إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِهِ صَدَقَةٌ

“No Muslim plants a tree from which a bird, human or animal eats, except that it is a charity for him.”

(Sahih Bukhari, 2320)

Another hadith emphasizes societal unity:

الْمُسْلِمُونَ تَتَكَافَأُ دِمَاؤُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَدٌ عَلَى مَنْ سِوَاهُمْ يَسْعَى بِذِمَّتِهِمْ أَدْنَاهُمْ وَيُرَدُّ عَلَى أَقْصَاهُمْ

“The blood of every Muslims is equal; they are one hand against others. The asylum offered by the lowest of them in status applies to them (all), and the return is granted to the farthest of them.

(Sunan Ibnu Majah, 2683)

These narrations point to a collective social ethic where the welfare of all is a shared responsibility. Nonetheless, policy implementation often lacks mechanisms that measure communal impact or unintended consequences such as urban isolation, generational inequality or exclusion in digital economies.

The study finds that a value-based social audit could be integrated into Madani policy assessments to better align with Islamic ethics. This includes incorporating indicators on family resilience, local participation and equity in digital access.

Economic Sustainability: Fair Distribution and Accountability

Islamic economics centers around balanced resource allocation, the eradication of poverty and prevention of wealth concentration. Surah al-Hasyr (59:7) states: “...So that wealth does not merely circulate among the rich among you.” The use of zakat, waqf and ethical trade forms the cornerstone of economic sustainability. The Prophet ﷺ also cautioned against leadership misplacement. This highlights the significance of merit-based appointments in governance, a key factor in economic stability and institutional trust.

In examining Madani documents, it is evident that while economic metrics such as investment, growth and innovation are present, the dimension of ethical distribution is underdeveloped. The policies do not currently address wealth inequality through a moral lens or explore zakat integration into national development planning. Islamic finance is promoted in isolated segments but lacks systemic incorporation into the policy framework.

The study therefore proposes that a value-integrated economic sustainability framework should include measures of wealth redistribution, meritocratic leadership and ethical corporate responsibility.

Environmental Accountability and the Role of Amanah

Across the three domains, the study finds that current policy documents lack an integrated mechanism to ensure that all policies are assessed based on spiritual, social and economic sustainability from an Islamic ethical perspective. While Malaysia Madani articulates noble aspirations, its implementation tools remain predominantly technical and secular in orientation.

This gap signals the need for a prophetic sustainability audit model that can serve as an evaluative instrument. Such a model would be based on Qur’anic injunctions, hadith ethics and the maqasid al-shariah objectives. It would guide policy-makers in scrutinizing laws, technological initiatives and economic strategies to ensure long-term, balanced outcomes that preserve human dignity and environmental integrity.

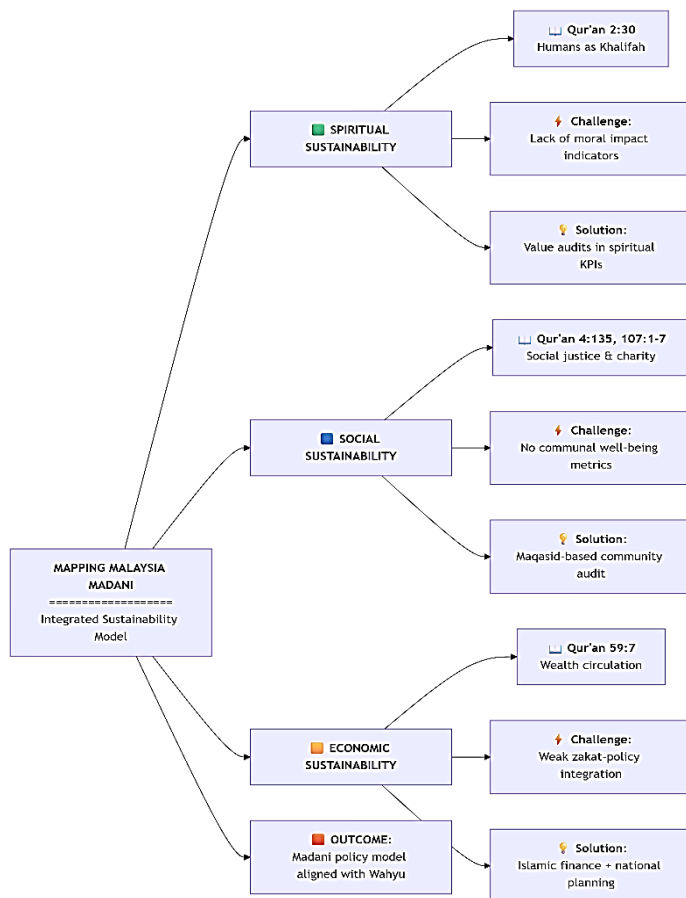


Fig 1: Integrated Sustainability Model

These findings collectively suggest that Malaysia Madani can move beyond symbolic references to Islamic values and begin institutionalizing them in national governance. This requires a deliberate translation of Islamic ethics into policy tools, legal instruments and education systems-ensuring that the sustainability pillar is not only effective but spiritually anchored.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the integration of Islamic sustainability principles within the Malaysia Madani framework, focusing particularly on the pillar of sustainability (Kemampanan). The findings demonstrate that while Malaysia Madani presents a progressive direction for national development, its alignment with Islamic ethical values, especially those found in the Qur’an and Sunnah, remains fragmented and underutilized. The research confirms the potential of Islamic ethics, especially the concepts of khilafah, maslahah and maqasid al-shariah, to reinforce holistic sustainability that covers spiritual, social and economic dimensions. These principles must not only be acknowledged at the conceptual level but must also guide policy execution and governance systems in practice.

Based on this study, it is recommended that a comprehensive Islamic Sustainability Audit Model be introduced to serve as an evaluative mechanism for all future Madani policies. This model should incorporate core values such as justice, equity and trustworthiness (amanah) and use measurable indicators including spiritual well-being, economic balance and social integrity. In addition, all technology-driven initiatives and national policies should undergo value screening that accounts for their impact on the spiritual fabric of society, the distribution of resources and communal cohesion. The inclusion of Qur’anic principles (such as from Surah al-Baqarah, al-

Hasyr and al-Nisa') and authentic hadith in the value audit framework would ensure that sustainability remains rooted in divine guidance.

This article was developed as part of the research grant titled "Guidelines for Checking the Implementation of Civil Malaysia Policies Based on The Sustainability of The Prophet's Sunnah", which seeks to produce a guideline model for policy evaluation grounded in the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The insights from this article will contribute directly to the formulation of that guideline, especially by highlighting the importance of aligning modern policy tools with prophetic ethics.

Importantly, this study also aims to initiate a practical shift among key implementing institutions such as JAKIM, state religious departments, Islamic research bodies and related policy agencies, by encouraging deeper internalization of Prophetic values in evaluating and executing policies. The framework proposed is not only academic in nature but is also designed for adoption and contextual application by national and state-level actors involved in Islamic governance, policy design and religious outreach. By embedding the maqasid and sunnah-based sustainability benchmarks into institutional practice, this study intends to revive a governance model that is both value-driven and spiritually grounded.

Finally, it is hoped that this study will inspire further interdisciplinary research that bridges Islamic ethics and public policy, especially in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, digital governance and environmental conservation. By restoring the balance between development and divine responsibility, Malaysia has the opportunity to become a leading model of value-based governance in the Muslim world and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Deepest appreciation is extended to the Center for Research Excellence & Incubation Management (CRIEM), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) and Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies for supporting the publication of this article. This paper article is a result of one of the components of the research project FRGS/1/2024/SSI03/UNISZA/02/6 entitled "Guidelines for Checking the Implementation of Civil Malaysia Policies Based on The Sustainability of The Prophet's Sunnah".

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