

Moderation in Arabic Classical Literature: Qur'anic Teachings on Consumerism and Waste Management

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Abstract

This study explores the semantic meaning of the primary Arabic literature, the Qur'an, on moderation, with particular attention to the prohibitions on Israf (luxury) and Tabdhir (waste). It evaluates its relevance to addressing consumerism and waste management in the modern context. Drawing on Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, and Islamic ethical principles such as Mizan (balance), Imarah (stewardship), and Amanah (trust), the research method employed is the study and semantic analysis of the Qur'anic text. The results demonstrate how Islamic teachings construct a holistic framework that integrates moral, spiritual, and ecological responsibilities. The analysis highlights key applications of these principles at the individual, community, and policy levels, including lifestyle moderation, mosque-led environmental initiatives, and the development of Fiqh al-Bī'ah (Islamic environmental jurisprudence) and ecological fatwas. The study examines issues such as food waste, plastic pollution, e-waste, and the fast-fashion culture and illustrates the contemporary relevance of Islamic ethics to global sustainability challenges. Ultimately, this study argues that the Qur'anic vision of moderation and balance provides not only spiritual guidance but also a practical and normative framework that makes a meaningful contribution to the global debate on sustainability, offering an integrated approach that unites ecological responsibility with moral accountability.

Keywords: Moderation; Arabic Literature; Consumerism; Waste Management

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary industrialized societies face critical challenges from overconsumption, resource depletion, and waste generation that threaten global sustainability. Research reveals that humanity wastes approximately 78% of total water withdrawn, 49% of food produced, 31% of energy produced, 85% of ores, and 26% of non-metallic minerals extracted annually. These wasteful practices, combined with reliance on non-renewable resources, lead to ecosystem pollution, biodiversity loss, and social conflicts (Marín-Beltrán et al., 2021). Environmental problems manifest through both resource depletion ("sources") and insufficient waste absorption capacity ("sinks"), including shortages of fossil fuels, minerals, topsoil, and freshwater, alongside climate change and ocean acidification. The consumer-driven economic model, based on infinite growth and capital accumulation, fundamentally drives these issues rather than population growth alone (Magdoff, 2013). The globally unsustainable consumer lifestyle cannot be universally adopted (Smart, 2010). Solutions require shifting toward degrowth strategies, reducing inequality, implementing circular economies, and addressing the economic system's structural focus on endless accumulation (Marín-Beltrán et al., 2021; Magdoff, 2013).

Modern consumer culture creates a fundamental tension with sustainable living practices. Research demonstrates that global consumer culture promotes the belief that increased consumption leads to greater happiness, yet paradoxically, higher consumption

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levels often result in equivalent or reduced subjective well-being (Aydin, 2010). This creates an unsustainable cycle where consumers continuously seek more goods for expected pleasure that fails to materialize. The retail sector faces significant challenges reconciling consumerism with sustainability, as shopping has evolved from necessity to leisure activity, directly conflicting with sustainable practices (Jones et al., 2005). Consumer culture operates as a form of social control while simultaneously being criticized as debased materialism, though it remains central to modern social life. However, emerging trends suggest potential solutions through deconsumption movements, including sustainable consumption, green consumerism, and ethical consumption practices, indicating growing consumer awareness and behavioral shifts toward more environmentally and socially responsible consumption patterns (Bylok, 2017).

Consumerism, as a socio-economic phenomenon, has been extensively studied in both sociology and economics. It is generally understood as a cultural and economic system that encourages the acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts (Bauman, 2005). The theory of conspicuous consumption, introduced by Thorstein Veblen (1899), emphasizes that consumption is often driven by the desire for social status rather than necessity. Modern consumer culture, fueled by advertising, globalization, and technological innovation, has led to patterns of overconsumption, planned obsolescence, and excessive waste (Jackson, 2009). Behavioral economics further highlights how cognitive biases, such as the “immediacy effect,” drive unsustainable consumption habits, often without consideration of long-term environmental consequences (Kahneman, 2011).

Sustainability is a multidimensional concept encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions. The Brundtland Commission (1987) defines sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Scholars argue that sustainability requires systemic changes in production, consumption, and resource management (Meadows et al., 2004). Within this framework, overconsumption and waste are seen as major obstacles to achieving ecological balance. Sustainable lifestyles emphasize conscious consumption, resource efficiency, and ethical responsibility toward the environment.

The circular economy model has emerged as a response to the linear “take-make-dispose” model of production and consumption. This model emphasizes designing products for reusability, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling, aiming to create a closed-loop system that minimizes waste and maximizes resource efficiency (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013). The circular economy encourages both producers and consumers to adopt responsible behaviors, shifting the focus from mere disposal to holistic lifecycle management. Studies indicate that circular economy initiatives can significantly reduce environmental impact and contribute to sustainable development (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017).

The 3R model — Reduce, Reuse, Recycle — provides a practical framework for managing waste at individual, community, and organizational levels.

1. Reduce: Minimizing resource use and consumption to prevent waste generation.
2. Reuse: Extending the lifecycle of products to delay disposal.
3. Recycle: Processing materials to produce new products, reducing the need for virgin resources.

This model is widely promoted in environmental policies and education programs and has been shown to effectively lower household and industrial waste volumes (UNEP, 2019). However, research highlights that the success of the 3R approach is often constrained by consumer behavior, cultural norms, and lack of awareness emphasizing the need for ethical and value based interventions alongside technical solutions.

While secular scholarship provides a robust understanding of consumerism, sustainability, and waste management strategies, it often neglects the ethical and spiritual dimensions that influence consumption patterns. In particular, there is limited research on integrating religious and moral frameworks, such as the Qur'anic concepts of *Isrāf* (extravagance) and *Tabdhīr* (wastefulness), into sustainability discourse. Addressing this gap could enhance the effectiveness of environmental initiatives by connecting behavioral change with ethical and spiritual motivation.

Current waste management systems around the world predominantly focus on technological innovations and regulatory policies, such as recycling programs, landfill management, and circular economy models. While these approaches are necessary, they tend to address waste as a technical or logistical challenge rather than a problem rooted in human behavior and values. As a result, the ethical and spiritual dimensions that shape consumer choices and patterns of waste are often neglected. This neglect creates a gap without addressing the underlying cultural and moral drivers of overconsumption, waste management strategies remain limited in effectiveness. In Muslim societies, the Qur'anic teachings on moderation, particularly the prohibitions against *Isrāf* (extravagance) and *Tabdhīr* (wastefulness), provide a rich ethical framework that can guide individuals and communities toward sustainable consumption. However, these principles are underutilized in contemporary waste management discourse. Therefore, there is a need to integrate Islamic ethical teachings with modern environmental strategies to develop a more holistic and enduring approach to addressing consumerism and waste.

The aim of this study is to critically examine Qur'anic teachings on moderation, specifically through the concepts of *Isrāf* (extravagance) and *Tabdhīr* (wastefulness), and to explore their relevance and application to contemporary issues of consumerism and waste management. By analyzing these ethical principles, the study seeks to provide a framework for integrating spiritual and moral guidance into strategies for sustainable consumption and responsible waste practices. This study seeks to answer several key questions. First, it investigates what the Qur'an teaches about moderation, particularly through the concepts of *Isrāf* (extravagance) and *Tabdhīr* (wastefulness). Second, it explores how these teachings relate to contemporary consumer behavior and patterns of waste, examining the ethical and moral implications of excessive consumption. Finally, the study considers how Qur'anic values can provide practical guidance for developing sustainable waste management practices, offering a framework that integrates spiritual principles with environmental responsibility.

METHOD

This study uses a text analysis method. Text analysis is a methodology within qualitative research that focuses on the analysis or interpretation of written material based on its context. The text studied is the Quran, specifically verses selected according to the theme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Perspectives on Consumerism, Moderation, and Waste Management

Islamic teachings provide a comprehensive ethical framework that addresses human behavior, consumption, and environmental stewardship. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize moderation, balance, and responsibility, which are directly relevant to contemporary issues of consumerism and waste. Islamic teachings provide a comprehensive ethical framework for addressing contemporary environmental challenges through principles derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Research reveals that Islamic environmental ethics center on three core principles: Imarah (stewardship), Mizan (balance), and Amanah (trust), which advocate for responsible resource use and harmonious coexistence between humans and nature (Ahmad Zuhdi et al., 2024). The Qur'an emphasizes moderation and the avoidance of wastefulness (israf), directly addressing issues of consumerism and waste management (Derysmono & Al-Kahfi, 2025).

These teachings challenge anthropocentric perspectives by recognizing nature's intrinsic value and promoting justice, mercy, and compassion in environmental interactions. Self-knowledge derived from Islamic teachings promotes ethical environmental stewardship by balancing spiritual and material dimensions, preventing overexploitation of natural resources when materialistic tendencies dominate (Ahmad Abedi Sarvestani, 2025). This framework aligns with modern sustainability efforts and offers valuable insights for contemporary environmental policy and sustainable development initiatives.

Qur'anic Teachings on Moderation

The Qur'an repeatedly cautions against excess and wastefulness, promoting a balanced lifestyle that avoids both extravagance and deprivation. Key concepts include:

1. **Isrāf (Extravagance):** This term refers to excessive or unnecessary use of resources. The Qur'an warns: "Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful." (*Qur'an 17:27*). The concept of *isrāf* (extravagance) in Islamic teachings refers to excessive or unnecessary use of resources, which is explicitly forbidden in the Qur'an across multiple verses. Research examining Muslim consumers' perspectives on extravagance across Turkey, Qatar, and Indonesia identified both individual and societal dimensions of this concept, revealing cultural similarities and differences in understanding (Terzi & Altunışık, 2016). Thematic analysis of Qur'anic teachings on food consumption identifies seven key themes regarding *isrāf* in eating behavior, emphasizing moderation and prohibition of excessive waste (Mohd et al., 2023). Contemporary applications show how social media-driven FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) leads Generation Z toward excessive consumption patterns that contradict Islamic principles found in Qur'an 17:26-27, which prohibit wasteful behavior (Muchtar, 2025). Islamic guidance from sources like *Nahj al-Balaghah* emphasizes avoiding excessive consumption, with Qur'an 7:31 specifically commanding believers to "eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters" (Amani & Kalbasi, 2022).
2. **Tabdhīr (Squandering/Wastefulness):** Tabdhīr emphasizes the squandering of resources that could otherwise benefit oneself or society. The Qur'an instructs: "O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess." (*Qur'an 7:31*). The

concept of *tabdhīr* (wastefulness) and moderation in Islamic consumption has gained scholarly attention as Muslim communities face economic challenges and excessive materialism. Oziev & Tahir (2020) emphasize that *al-Wasaṭiyah* (moderation) provides essential guidance for sustainable economic development, contrasting with contemporary culture's excessive spending and consumption patterns. This principle is particularly relevant in addressing modern consumer behaviors, as demonstrated by Bahri et al. (2025), who analyzed impulse buying trends through the lens of *tabdzir*, showing how social media and emotional impulses drive prohibited consumptive lifestyles. Biplob & Abdullah (2021) highlight that Islamic consumption principles emphasize permissibility, wholesomeness, and moderation (*wasatiyyah*), noting that both wastefulness and miserliness negatively impact individuals, society, and the economy. Rozzaq & Mujahid (2024) further elaborate that wasteful behavior encompasses excessive spending on wealth, food, drinks, and unnecessary items, emphasizing scholarly guidance to avoid such practices and their negative spiritual consequences.

3. Balance (*Mīzān*): The Qur'an stresses that God created the world in proportion and balance, and humans are entrusted with maintaining it: "And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance; that you not transgress within the balance." (*Qur'an* 55:7–8). The concept of balance (*mīzān*) in the Qur'an represents a fundamental principle governing both cosmic order and human responsibility. Research demonstrates that the Qur'anic understanding of balance encompasses multiple dimensions, from the relationship between rights and obligations to the harmony between spiritual and material aspects of life (Danisha, 2023). The Qur'an presents mountains as symbols of cosmic balance and divine wisdom, functioning as stabilizers that illustrate the interconnectedness between natural order and moral responsibility (Johnderose et al., 2024). Scientific analysis of Sūrah Al-Rahmān reveals that balance manifests in both microcosmic and macrocosmic systems, emphasizing universal stability and rhythm while connecting physical and metaphysical dimensions (Ashfaq, 2016). This principle of *mīzān* serves as an epistemological foundation for environmental stewardship, establishing human responsibility as *khalīfah* (stewards) to maintain ecological balance and preserve the integrity of God's creation (Mangunjaya, 2015).

Prophetic Teachings (Sunnah)

The Hadith literature complements the Qur'anic emphasis on moderation and resource conservation: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged avoiding waste even when resources are plentiful, e.g., conserving water during ablution: "Do not waste water, even if you perform your ablution on the banks of a flowing river." (*Ibn Majah, Hadith* 425). Research states that Islamic teachings, particularly those of Prophet Muhammad, emphasize water conservation even during religious practices. Studies show significant water waste during ablution in contemporary mosques, with Muslims using 4-8 liters per ablution (Hurayra et al., 2024) and up to 7 liters in Omani mosques, which is approximately 8 times more than the Prophet's method that required only 0.6 liters (Al Alawi et al., 2023). Despite this waste, 82% of surveyed Muslims are careful about water conservation during ablution, and 70% consider water wastage during ablution as 'haram' (unlawful) (Hurayra et al., 2024). The Prophetic Sunnah establishes water security principles through optimal water use and pollution prevention (Al Balloushi, 2021), while promoting environmental stewardship, moderation, and sustainable resource management (Rajper, 2023). Religious motivation plays a crucial role, with 95% of

participants believing it can significantly encourage water conservation during ablution (Hurayra et al., 2024).

Research on Islamic consumption principles consistently emphasizes moderation (wasatiyyah) as a central tenet in daily life practices. The Prophet's lifestyle exemplified this balanced approach, avoiding both extravagance and stinginess in food, clothing, and household consumption (Hani Mohamed Abdul Aziz, ٢٠٢٢). Islamic teachings require consumers to be simple, neither wasteful nor miserly, but moderate in their spending behavior (Arifin & Ulumuddin, 2024). Consumption guidelines in Islam mandate several key principles: consuming only halal goods, practicing thrift, avoiding extravagance, staying away from debt, and rejecting both stinginess and wastefulness (Putra et al., 2023). The concept of wasatiyyah in consumption serves broader social purposes, as both wastefulness and miserliness negatively impact individuals, society, and the economy. These principles aim to achieve contentment and self-peace while contributing to social development, with consumption viewed not merely as fulfilling personal wants but as actions that bring divine pleasure and benefit others (Biplob & Abdullah, 2021).

Ethical and Theological Foundations

Islamic ethics frames waste not only as a practical issue but also as a moral and spiritual concern:

1. Wastefulness is viewed as ingratitude (*kufr al-ni'mah*) toward God's blessings.
2. Humans are considered trustees (*Khilāfahullāh*) of the Earth, responsible for sustainable management of resources.
3. Moderation (*wasatiyyah*) is a core principle, advocating a lifestyle that balances personal needs, societal welfare, and environmental sustainability.

Islamic ethics provides a comprehensive framework for addressing waste management as both a practical and spiritual concern. The Quran emphasizes key principles including Imarah (stewardship), mizan (balance), and the avoidance of israf (wastefulness) as foundational elements for environmental conservation (Derysmono & Al-Kahfi, 2025). Central to this framework is the concept of humans as trustees of Earth, responsible for sustainable resource management, with moderation (*wasatiyyah*) serving as a core principle that balances personal needs, societal welfare, and environmental sustainability (Kamali, 2016). Wastefulness is viewed as ingratitude toward God's blessings, making waste management a moral imperative beyond mere practical considerations (Omar et al., 2018). The integration of Maqasid al-Shari'ah (higher objectives of Islamic law) with sustainable waste management practices provides ethical guidance that promotes environmental protection and public welfare (Shompa et al., 2024). These Islamic teachings offer a holistic approach that can serve as moral and spiritual foundations for environmentally responsible waste management practices in Muslim societies.

Contemporary Applications

Scholars have increasingly applied these principles to modern environmental challenges:

1. Islamic environmental ethics inform sustainable consumption campaigns in Muslim communities.
2. Eco-fatwas (religious rulings) have been issued encouraging reduction of plastic use, energy conservation, and tree planting.
3. Faith-based initiatives such as "Green Mosques" and Islamic schools teaching waste reduction integrate spiritual motivation with practical environmental action.

Islamic environmental ethics provide a foundation for sustainable consumption practices in Muslim communities through scriptural teachings emphasizing stewardship, moderation, and justice (Ali & Agushi, 2024; Gulzar et al., 2021). The Qur'an and Sunnah offer principles that discourage wastefulness and promote responsible resource use, viewing environmental degradation as a consequence of theological neglect (Gulzar et al., 2021). Muslim NGOs leverage these teachings through various initiatives including radio campaigns, tree-planting activities, environmental education programs, and the issuance of fatwas declaring harmful practices like illegal logging (Koehrsen, 2020). Islamic economic principles guide consumption behavior toward ethical and sustainable practices, emphasizing balance between needs and desires while avoiding excess (Putri & Syakur, 2023). However, challenges exist as grassroots acceptance of Islamic environmental initiatives remains limited, with environmental engagement often confined to concerned Muslim organizations and activists rather than achieving broader community impact (Koehrsen, 2020).

While the Qur'an and Sunnah provide clear guidance on moderation and anti-waste practices, practical application in contemporary consumer societies remains limited. Integrating these ethical principles with modern waste management strategies, circular economy initiatives, and sustainable consumption campaigns represents a significant opportunity to bridge moral guidance and practical action.

Research demonstrates that Islamic teachings provide comprehensive ethical frameworks for sustainable waste management, though practical implementation remains challenging in contemporary Muslim societies. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize key principles including imarah (stewardship), mizan (balance), and israf (avoidance of wastefulness) that align with modern environmental conservation efforts (Omar et al., 2018; Derysmono & Al-Kahfi, 2025). Studies reveal that Maqasid al-Shari'ah principles can effectively guide sustainable waste management practices by integrating Islamic ethical objectives into human behavior and environmental conservation (Shompa et al., 2024). Furthermore, Islamic moral economics demonstrates compatibility with circular economy concepts through sustainable agriculture, efficient water usage, and fair trade practices (Alfaihani, 2024). The transformation of waste into energy through waste-to-energy innovations aligns with maqasid shariah by promoting environmental protection and public welfare (Derysmono & Al-Kahfi, 2025). However, modernization and economic growth have diminished the application of these holistic Islamic teachings in waste management practices across Muslim-majority countries (Omar et al., 2018).

Consumerism and Waste in Contemporary Context

Building on the Qur'anic principle of moderation, these teachings find strong relevance in addressing today's global waste crisis. Food waste, for instance, stands in stark contrast to the Qur'an's call to avoid excess, as modern societies struggle with surplus production and mass disposal while millions remain hungry. The culture of single use plastics and excessive packaging also reflects a disregard for responsibility and stewardship, conflicting with the Qur'anic ethic of accountability toward creation. Likewise, the rise of electronic waste driven by the overconsumption of gadgets and the industry's planned obsolescence reveals an imbalance that undermines the value of resources and sustainability. In the fashion and luxury industries, consumerist trends such as fast fashion encourage extravagance, whereas the Qur'an advocates modesty and simplicity, reminding believers that true dignity lies not in material excess but in conscious, responsible living.

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Applications of Qur'anic Principles

The applications of Qur'anic principles on moderation and responsibility can be intended at multiple levels. At the individual level, believers are called to adopt moderation in their daily consumption and to cultivate a sense of spiritual accountability in their use of resources, recognizing that wastefulness contradicts divine trust. At the community level, mosques and Islamic centers can serve as hubs for promoting sustainable lifestyles by hosting awareness programs, encouraging recycling, reducing food waste during communal gatherings, and organizing eco-friendly events. At the policy level, Muslim majority nations can integrate Qur'anic ethics into environmental governance, ensuring that laws and policies reflect the values of balance and stewardship. Furthermore, the growing field of *Fiqh al-Bī'ah* (Islamic environmental jurisprudence) and the issuance of eco-fatwas provide religiously grounded frameworks to guide societies toward ecological responsibility, aligning spiritual principles with practical action for sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the significance of Qur'anic guidance on moderation, together with the explicit condemnation of *Isrāf* and *Tabdīr*, as a coherent ethical framework with enduring relevance for contemporary society. The Qur'anic emphasis on balance (*Mīzān*) situates human beings within a divinely ordained order, where stewardship requires the responsible use of resources and the avoidance of wastefulness in all forms. This ethical orientation directly addresses pressing modern challenges, including food waste, unsustainable consumption of plastics and packaging, the rapid generation of electronic waste, and the exploitative culture of fast fashion and luxury consumerism. The Prophetic model of simplicity and restraint further illustrates the practical application of these values, offering a paradigm for sustainable living grounded in spiritual accountability. Beyond the individual dimension, the Qur'anic framework extends to community and policy levels, providing an integrated vision of ecological responsibility. Mosques and Islamic centers can act as catalysts for communal awareness and sustainable practices, while the incorporation of Qur'anic ethics into policy frameworks in Muslim-majority contexts highlights the potential for faith-informed governance. The development of *Fiqh al-Bī'ah* and the issuance of eco-fatwas demonstrate the dynamism of Islamic jurisprudence in engaging with contemporary environmental concerns. It's concluded that the principles of moderation, balance, and accountability articulated in the Qur'an not only provide Muslims with moral guidance in confronting waste and consumerism but also contribute meaningfully to global sustainability discourses. By aligning spiritual values with ecological imperatives, Islamic ethics provide a distinctive and constructive approach to promoting sustainable development and preserving the balance of creation.

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