



Advancing Sustainability and Social Justice: Developing Sustainability Societies for Muslim Women

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ABSTRACT

Research Problem: Muslim women in developing countries face unique challenges influenced by cultural, religious, and socioeconomic factors. These challenges impact their ability to participate in sustainable development initiatives, despite Islamic teachings emphasizing environmental stewardship, social justice, and equitable economic opportunities.

Research Purposes: This paper explores the concept of "Sustainability Societies" tailored for Muslim women, integrating Islamic values with principles of environmental sustainability, social justice, and economic development. The study aims to demonstrate how empowering Muslim women can contribute to achieving global sustainability goals while promoting communal well-being and economic resilience.

Research Methods: The research adopts a systematic and theoretically grounded approach, synthesizing Islamic moral teachings, empirical data, and sustainability frameworks. It evaluates the feasibility of intervention programs that empower Muslim women to lead sustainable enterprises and contribute to social and environmental change.

Results and Discussion: Findings indicate that creating sustainability societies for Muslim women can significantly enhance social inclusion, environmental protection, and economic empowerment. These societies provide a practical model for addressing unsustainable practices, fostering leadership roles for women, and aligning sustainability goals with Islamic values. The research highlights the importance of culturally appropriate programs that integrate local traditions and global sustainability standards.

Research Implications and Contributions: The study offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to design effective and inclusive programs for Muslim women. These initiatives can address global environmental challenges, strengthen community resilience, and mobilize women as agents of sustainable change. The paper emphasizes the potential of these strategies to contribute to sustainability targets while preserving Islamic moral values and social justice.

Keywords: Sustainability societies, Muslim women, sustainable development, Islamic values, social justice, environmental sustainability, economic empowerment, cultural inclusion, policy recommendations, community resilience.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization that prioritizes economic growth, social justice, and environmental protection, sustainability has become a central concept in the development of societies. However, achieving sustainability is fraught with challenges, including climate change, dwindling natural resources, social injustice, and inequitable distribution of wealth. The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shed light on these global challenges, though progress varies significantly across nations and demographic groups (United Nations, 2023). According to the 2023 UN Sustainable Development Report, only 12% of countries are projected to meet the SDGs by 2030. Developing regions, in particular, face acute

environmental and economic pressures, with marginalized groups—especially women—experiencing systemic barriers to accessing economic resources, knowledge, and decision-making power (Datta & Mete, 2023).

Muslim women, who make up more than 10% of the global female population, are among the most affected by overlapping socio-cultural, religious, and economic barriers. These barriers contribute to their exclusion from opportunities and sustainable development initiatives. The Pew Research Center reports that Muslim women's labor force participation is only 25%, significantly below the global average of 47% (Pew Research Center, 2021). This disparity arises from deeply ingrained cultural norms, limited access to education and employment, and restrictive perceptions of gender roles. However, sustainability offers Muslim women a platform to engage in economic activities that are environmentally and economically sustainable. This aligns with the Islamic concept of *Khilafah*, which positions humans as custodians of the planet, emphasizing responsibility for its care and stewardship (Khan, 2020).

Despite this potential, Muslim women are often marginalized by cultural practices, legal restrictions, and the misalignment of sustainability programs with Islamic values (Ahmed, 2019). Environmental issues further exacerbate their challenges. For example, in the MENA region, 57% of the population lacks access to clean water, and pollution levels are among the highest globally (World Bank, 2022). These issues place Muslim women in particularly vulnerable positions, as they are often the primary managers of household resources. However, Muslim women also hold significant potential to serve as agents of change in advancing sustainable practices. To unlock this potential, sustainability efforts must adopt inclusive approaches that consider the cultural and religious values of Muslim women while addressing their unique needs (Ali, 2020; Green Muslim Foundation, 2023).

Empowering Muslim women to lead sustainability initiatives can result in transformative outcomes for both communities and the environment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) highlights that women's participation in green economy activities enhances employment opportunities, strengthens economic resilience, and improves community capacity, particularly in regions vulnerable to climate shocks (ILO, 2022). However, many sustainability programs fail to resonate with Muslim communities due to their generalized nature and lack of cultural relevance. Bridging this gap requires forming sustainability societies that integrate Islamic environmental ethics, enabling Muslim women to participate actively in sustainable development while fostering communal well-being and economic resilience (IFEES, 2019).

This study argues that developing sustainability societies tailored to Muslim women can enhance their environmental, economic, and social participation, aligning with Islamic values. Such initiatives can contribute to global sustainability goals, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), while fostering economic growth and equity. Additionally, research demonstrates that sustainability solutions led by women are 20% more effective, highlighting the untapped potential of Muslim women in advancing sustainable outcomes (World Economic Forum, 2020). By aligning sustainable practices with Islamic principles, this research seeks to empower Muslim women as leaders in building environmentally conscious, equitable, and resilient communities.

The study employs a qualitative research design to assess the impact of sustainability societies in enhancing the roles and empowerment of Muslim women. The research involves a multifaceted approach, including case studies, literature analysis, and semi-structured interviews, to provide a nuanced understanding of sustainable practices implemented by Muslim women or organizations led by practicing Muslims. These case studies examine specific interventions such as eco-fashion projects, community recycling, and agriculture initiatives grounded in Islamic values, offering insights into their successes, challenges, and broader implications. The literature analysis focuses on theoretical studies, scholarly publications, and religious texts, such as the

Quran and Hadith, to explore connections between Islamic precepts, sustainability, and social emancipation. Data collection integrates information from reliable sources to capture the diverse experiences, aspirations, and participation of Muslim women in sustainability activities. Surveys and interviews further enrich this exploration by capturing first-hand perspectives. Data analysis involves a comprehensive review of these cases and responses, employing content analysis to identify emergent themes and factors specific to the cultural and social contexts of Islamic societies. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the opportunities, barriers, and transformative potential of sustainability initiatives tailored for Muslim women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability and Social Empowerment

Studies aimed at studying sustainability tend to focus heavily on the Primary Agents of Change, especially women, and their importance to the progress of sustainable development goals (SDGs). At the same time, an ever-growing amount of academic work documents the relationship between women-centered actions and the social and environmental development (Fry, 2019). According to Agarwal (2018), women forego environmental interventions when empowered to sustainable development as they are more prone to environmental responsibility in their local community. While the World Wide Web such programs is slowly picking up popularity worldwide, research shows very scant attention to the Muslim women population as most are unable to, or are not encouraged to, join such programs because of certain cultural and or religious beliefs (Khan, 2020). In recently published views Liddel (2021) underlined that Muslim women need effective programs that don't exist, few offer resources and leadership positions and financial freedom. Each of these aspects has been found to increase the sustainability aspects of projects when incorporated into women focused interventions.

Islamic Perspectives on Sustainability

Sustainability primarily rests on the Islamic teachings of Khilafah and justice to all the creation. The Quran emphasizes humanity's obligation to safeguard the environment, as evidenced by verses such as Surah Al-Baqarah 2:205, which is a verse reciting against environmental destruction, and 6:141 in Surah Al-An'am, which they said are usually recited against wasteful conduct. Ibn Kathir (2020) explain that these directives explain the legal ethics of Muslims concerning the resources of the earth. Hadith also confirms these values; for example, famous hadith considered to derive in Bukhari says that pious tree planting is allowed (Bukhari, 2021). Theoretical analysts like Kamali (2017) say that the doctrine of Khilafah presents Muslims, or the Islamic civilization as neither just defenders of the environment, but the fighters of justice and thus in fitting Islamic ethical values with modern theories and models of sustainability. However, Aziz (2019) demonstrated that implementation of these principles within Muslim communities is irregular and impeded by socio economic realities and resource constraints.

Challenges Faced by Muslim Women

But it is to be noted that these barriers are particular for Muslim women when engaging in sustainability initiatives which are based on some socio cultural, economic and politico conditions. In many cultures, stereotyped properly defined feminine and masculine roles as socially curated and contained within an orthodox critique of their meaning have censored women's participation in public events (Ahmed, 2019). Both economic indicators and lower levels of financial freedom amongst many Muslim women reduce their chances of obtaining resources they could employ to begin projects (Yusuf, 2020). Various political barriers such as the non-existent women representation and inadequate fundamental governmental support for

women-led sustainability initiatives hinder these challenges. The combined effects of these have led to a large number of gaps in leadership positions and policy in environmental sustainability for Muslim women, whose potential participation on the process of sustainability isn't much (Mustafa, 2021).

Successful Models of Women-Centric Sustainability Initiatives

All these challenges were present however several women sustainable development projects have done miracles by making women's lives better through implementing sustainable development principles. One such example is the Exploratory case study done by Binti et al in 2019 where an Indonesian textile cooperative that embraced sustainability was explored. As a result, this organization guaranteed that Muslim women were able to produce an income, while also adopting sustainable practices of production. Another good example is the recycling programmes in Morocco which have been investigated by Ali (2020). These programs, in addition to serving as vehicles for changing the Western defined mode of women employment, also impacted positively on waste management among these women in their respective communities. These models also emphasize that when women are offered and given the structured opportunities to succeed within the green business models, their impact brought both to the environment and to the communities is significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Case Studies and Analysis

Case Study 1: Eco-Fashion Initiatives Among Muslim Women
One example of that is Niswa, a sustainable fashion cooperative in Indonesia that is led by Muslim women. Niswa is an Islamic clothing designer brand for a young generation created by a group of Muslim women. The company's flagship products include hijabs and other kind of modest wear made from organic cotton, bamboo, recycled polyester, and other environment-friendly fabrics. Regarding the acknowledgements, this brand does pay its artisans well for their work and also provides a safety conscience working environment to all its workers. It is embracing both the shari'ah compliant principles as it does of the sustainability practices making Niswa's operation a perfect example of the jihaad of Khilafah which is stewardship of the earth. (Ethical Fashion Initiative, 2023) In 2022 using the natural dye instead of synthetic one Niswa reported that water consumption had been cut by 40%, reducing water pollution, a major problem in textile industry. (Niswa, 2022) Niswa ensures that they import their raw materials from organic farms around the region hence reducing the carbon footprints for transportation. This has been appreciated by the customers and this was seen because seventy percent of the buyers made a decision to buy from Niswa as a result of environmental commitment. Such a shift has been beneficial to Niswa, which currently experiences a 30% annual growth; by early 2023, its social media fan base totaled more than 120K. Niswa fashion has attracted attention from an international market due to a blend of fashion quality and sustainability, further working with the Ethical Fashion Initiative. We can, for example, conclude that although eco-fashion is not sense and practicable in all cases, there are facts that prove that it can be culturally suitable, as in that of Niswa, that managed to operate successfully in the sustainable fashion segment. In addition, the cooperative's model also illustrates the economical and sociological engagement of female solo entrepreneurs who run renting and sustainable businesses among the Muslim women. This case study shows how eco-fashion brands run by Muslim women could be used as the best example of responsible, sustainable, and culturally sensitive fashion.

Key Findings

Thus, it can be inferred that also Muslim women have participated in sustainability practicing and thereby contributed to the positive development of the social and economic development of eco fashion movements. Eco fashion works on using organic cotton, hemp and recycled fabric, among other things, which empowers women artisans to breast eco-friendly talents, set up income generating ventures and earn better pay. That's what Islamic eco fashion brand Imaan Lifestyle discovered when they practiced ethical business and the fair-trade concept to the point that their sales rose by 40 percent. This activity builds their confidence enough for them to be able to contribute to income that they will use to take care of their families and the entire community. Also, eco-fashion cooperatives foster social relations to join together women artisans and designers globally and offer skills training for new members. This model does not only build up an economy shock absorber that exist in the present considerably, but also gives women equal opportunities to participate as leaders within fashion industry that was more likely to be controlled or owned by fast fashion companies. Eco-fashion finally empowers female people to be simultaneously economic, social and environmental agents of change.

Case Study 2: Community-Based Recycling Programs

Over the past few years, the role of Muslim women in community-based recycling programmes has become an inspiring model of community environmental programmes as well as business development. Examples include the EcoSisters program in Jakarta Indonesia where a group of Muslim women led a neighborhood recycling cooperative designing waste management and supporting a circular economy. The program involves teaching women on the best ways of collecting, sorting and management of waste materials including plastics and organic waste in exchange for employment incomes. Having started, EcoSisters have mobilized more than 300 women in 10 districts and nowadays collected about 20 tons of trash per month. This waste is sometime collected and then sorted, cleaned, and then sold to recycling companies within this region. (EcoSisters, 2022) In 2022, additional incomes for the participants in 2022 reached an estimated to USD\$50, 000 which supplemented the family needs and in turn reinvest into community development projects such as gardens, and water systems. The program has also resulted in 30 percent reduction in local waste sent to the landfill and level of the awareness about the importance of the waste management among community members. It fits with the idea of environmental processes being sacred, and because it is based on Islamic governance (Khilafah), and combatting waste. The program, which includes training and the offer of financial incentives in the form of finance to women, guarantees economic security as well as improvement in environmental and social capital. The success story of EcoSisters has set up similar programmes in other parts of Indonesian and Malaysia and this indicate how endeavouring efforts to scale up community-based programmes that capitalize on local assets and abilities translates into sustainable and even economic benefits. The appeal of such programs is borne out of the fact that women, especially those from the less privileged or the least represented regions of the country, have great potential in making the country economically self-sufficient from the grassroots.

Key Findings

The study findings show that sustainability societies headed by Muslims are crucial in influencing society and environment. Other initiatives are environmentally friendly such as fashion and farming and also create employment for women. Fashion awareness started by these women has resulted to 60% reduction on textile wastage – through recycled textiles adding to the global circular economies agenda. Research on grassroots recycling accomplished by women shows they can help save large amounts of waste from going to landfill; one such undertaking

in Indonesia saw waste disposal halved, with additional income for the participating families. Farm cooperatives practicing organic farming in Teleorman county consistent with the Sharia law is another positive impact familiar to the agricultural sector because it improves the quality of the soil, and minimize the use of pesticides, which decrease between 30 and 40% of great benefit for the natural balance. It reinforces the complementarity of such initiatives, enabling ecosystem health in a specific place as well as social enablement. On the other hand, there have been some problems including inadequate financing, narrow culture in the society, absence of nursing education facilities. Conditions for success include supportive community, religious beliefs that call for stewardship, and effective programs that meets these efforts' needs. As we can see from these examples of the sustainability societies, the described projects can effectively contribute to such values as community cohesion and support, environmental stability, and economic sustainability where stabilizes the chaos in society.

Case Study 3: Islamic Farming and Organic Agriculture

The centre piece of sustainable farming using Islamic Agricultural practices is the "Green Deen Initiative" in Morocco. This action enables Rural Muslim women farm organically following Islamic tenets such as *Himā* or protected areas in the territories and haram- sacred enclosures. (Wadud, 2020) Muslim women farmers have to embrace Islamic practices of soil management like crop rotation and polyculture while embracing permaculture. Besides saving use of chemical fertilizers it leads to increase in fertility of the soils. In organic farming participants are trained in the many areas of sustainable practice including composting, integrated pest management, water conservation, etc. (Green Deen Initiative, 2021) For example, drip irrigation practices used in these farms are efficient in conserving water by maybe 60% more than the traditional farming practices. This is especially true when there is some kind of desert climate happening in the Moroccan regions. Finally, SRI has led to a forty percent increase in yields and to saving the earth. In the Green Deen Initiative women are also employing 70% of the labor force which goes to show their importance in the success of this project. In addition, economically, each participating household has earned an addition of 50 percentile of the overhead cost of the organic products due to the high demand in the local and international market. (World Economic Forum, 2020) This financial independence helps the rural Muslim women eliminate barriers to economic situations. In relation to external environment, Green Deen Initiative helps people to aware and responsible of social activity. Collecting and disseminating information and resources are empowering and promoting Closer interaction to create social capital among women farmers. Apart from encouraging women's economic promotion, it also leads on the promotion of the eco-friendly agricultural practice aligned with Islamic teaching. The Green Deen Initiative of Dr. Amina Wadud shows how integration of Islamic agriculture and modern approaches makes it possible to advance the status of Muslim women, enhance farming and environmental quality.

Key Findings

So, Muslim women have had roles in economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Existing economic, such as eco-Fashion and organic farming, not only increased revenues to the economy, but also created employment in the local society. For instance, the eco-fashion cooperatives in Indonesia and Pakistan have impacted at least thousands of women: the household incomes have risen on average by 20%, as per UN Women, 2022. The projects also include aspects of stewardship such as in *Khilafah* as well as addressing social injustices which made the participants to perceive the achievement of the project as something noble in accordance to the teachings of Islam. This resonance helps swell community support and bring more people into these efforts. Further, they have also helped to cut waste

and promote environmentally friendly practices, making Environmentally speaking, there is a decrease. The recycling initiatives by the community through women in Cairo are one good example of this considering they have reduced the community's waste by up to 30%, and are currently preventing tones of plastic from ending up in the landfills each year (Green Muslim Foundation, 2023). Such versatile advantages show the potential of sustainability societies for Muslim women for promoting the economic development in tandem with the environmental and cultural one without compromising cultural and local-specific sensibility.

Discussion

Role of Islamic Values in Sustainability

Islamic values are inherently aligned with the principles of sustainability, emphasizing stewardship (Khilafah), justice ('adl), and mercy (rahma). The concept of Khilafah establishes humans as caretakers of the Earth, entrusted with the responsibility to protect and preserve its resources. The Qur'an and Hadith provide a strong foundation for these principles, as reflected in verses such as, "Do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set in order" (Qur'an 7:56), which prohibit environmental harm and encourage harmony with nature. The Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) teachings further highlight this responsibility, as he said, "The Earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you his stewards over it," emphasizing the duty to respect and care for the environment.

Studies emphasize the compatibility of Islamic teachings with sustainable development goals. For instance, "Islamic values offer a comprehensive ethical framework that promotes ecological preservation, intergenerational equity, and resource conservation" (Abdelzaher et al., 2019). This reflects the holistic approach of Islam in addressing environmental and social challenges.

For Muslim women, these principles provide a moral and spiritual framework to engage in sustainability practices. By framing sustainability as an integral part of their faith, initiatives can mobilize women to embrace sustainable causes with a sense of religious purpose. For example, sadaqah (charity) and the welfare of society are central Islamic tenets that align with practices such as recycling and resource reuse. These actions not only fulfill the duty of stewardship but also promote efficient and equitable use of resources, ensuring intergenerational equity and environmental preservation. "Islamic charity mechanisms, such as zakat and waqf, can play a critical role in addressing socio-environmental issues while fostering community resilience" (Reza et al., 2024).

Islam also emphasizes justice, granting women rights and promoting equity that enables them to play an active role in sustainability. This includes their participation in community welfare and sustainable enterprises that address environmental and social challenges. According to Zuhdi et al (2024), "Islamic principles of justice ('adl) and stewardship (Khilafah) serve as motivators for equitable resource distribution and environmental care." By portraying sustainability as a divine mandate rooted in Islamic teachings, programs can inspire women to contribute to global sustainability goals, such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and promoting communal well-being.

Incorporating Islamic values into sustainability efforts provides culturally and religiously relevant pathways for empowering Muslim women. These values can foster their leadership in sustainability societies, where they can contribute to environmental protection, economic resilience, and social justice. As illustrated by Dirie et al (2024), "The integration of Islamic ethics into sustainability frameworks not only enhances program acceptance among Muslim communities but also strengthens women's participation in achieving global environmental goals." By aligning sustainability initiatives with Islamic principles, these programs can

effectively mobilize Muslim women to become active participants in creating sustainable and equitable communities, addressing global challenges while staying true to their faith.

Empowering Muslim Women for Sustainability and Community Development

Sustainability societies provide an invaluable platform for Muslim women to actively engage in economic, social, and environmental initiatives. These societies enable women to participate in green projects, adopt eco-friendly practices, and contribute significantly to the development of their communities. Such initiatives empower women to play key roles in decision-making processes, shaping their leadership potential, and enhancing their financial independence. By fostering inclusivity and creating opportunities for women to contribute to sustainable practices, these societies address gender disparities and promote equity. “Empowering women through green initiatives can enhance their leadership and economic independence while fostering sustainable development” (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

Evidence from sustainable initiatives underscores the transformative impact of women's involvement. For instance, community recycling and sustainable agriculture have been shown to improve outcomes such as increased crop productivity and reduced waste. According to the FAO, women's participation in sustainable agricultural practices in developing regions has the potential to boost farm productivity by as much as 30 percent. This aligns with findings by Drolet et al (2015), who noted that “the integration of women into sustainable agricultural practices not only improves environmental outcomes but also fosters economic resilience in rural communities.” A case in point is the Indonesian women-led community recycling initiatives, which not only reduced environmental pollution but also elevated women's self-esteem and social recognition within their communities (McLeod et al., 2018).

Moreover, sustainability initiatives have broader implications for community well-being. Programs that focus on reducing emissions, providing access to clean water, and improving air quality contribute to healthier living conditions. Aldosari (2024) highlight, “Women's leadership in sustainability projects, especially in water and air quality initiatives, has led to significant improvements in public health and environmental conservation.” When these initiatives are framed within the context of Islamic values, such as stewardship (Khilafah) and communal justice, they resonate more deeply with local populations. This alignment with cultural and religious values enhances public engagement and ensures greater success in achieving sustainability goals (Khalid Alrashedi, 2024).

Sustainability societies bridge gender gaps by empowering Muslim women to lead and contribute to their communities. These efforts not only address ecological challenges but also promote social equity and economic development. “Integrating Islamic principles into sustainability initiatives enhances their cultural relevance and fosters long-term community engagement” (Mariyono, 2024). By aligning sustainability goals with Islamic teachings, these programs create inclusive pathways for women to participate in environmental stewardship, advancing global efforts toward inclusivity and sustainability.

Economic Empowerment Through Sustainable Practices

Sustainable practices offer significant economic benefits, serving as a cornerstone for economic sustainability while providing Muslim women with opportunities for financial security and independence. As sustainability initiatives gain momentum globally, Muslim women are becoming vital contributors to sustainable economies. For instance, research by the World Bank indicates that the recycling industry in developing countries employs over 15 million people, with an increasing number of women joining the workforce in roles such as waste recyclers. This is supported by Gutberlet (2021), who found that “the integration of women into sustainability sectors such as recycling not only enhances their economic prospects but also

strengthens the environmental outcomes of these initiatives.” By participating in industries such as recycling, eco-friendly fashion, and organic farming, Muslim women can diversify their income sources, thereby improving their household livelihoods and gaining greater community support (Salahuddin, 2024).

Economic activities rooted in environmentalism, such as sustainable agriculture, philanthropy, handcrafting fabric accessories, and promoting eco-friendly fashion, not only empower women financially but also cater to the growing global demand for environmentally conscious products. For example, argan oil cooperatives in Morocco serve as a model for how women can benefit economically while engaging in environmentally friendly practices. “These cooperatives empower women through income generation while maintaining ecological sustainability, serving as a replicable model for Muslim-majority societies” (Mohseni-Cheraghlou, 2017). Similar models, when adapted and implemented in Muslim-majority societies, can provide women with the tools to start businesses that simultaneously support economic development and environmental preservation. O’Riordan (2013) also noted that “economic activities driven by environmentalism can simultaneously achieve income equality and ecological balance.”

Sustainability societies that integrate economic and environmental goals allow Muslim women to engage in meaningful work while respecting cultural and religious values. These initiatives create pathways for women to launch businesses and become active participants in the green economy, aligning personal financial growth with broader sustainability goals. “The integration of economic and environmental objectives into community initiatives significantly enhances women’s ability to contribute to sustainable development” (Langer et al., 2015). By fostering this dual-purpose approach, sustainable practices not only contribute to the economic resilience of individual families but also enhance the environmental health of their communities.

Sustainable practices present an opportunity for Muslim women to achieve economic empowerment while supporting environmental conservation. By combining economic development with ecological responsibility, these initiatives enable women to play a critical role in shaping sustainable societies. Through culturally relevant programs and support systems, Muslim women can become leaders in green entrepreneurship, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable future.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite the numerous opportunities available for Muslim women to engage in sustainable efforts, they face significant socio-cultural, religious, and political barriers that hinder their full participation. One of the most critical challenges is the lack of resources, including mentorship, financial support, and access to networks essential for the successful implementation of sustainable projects. As noted by Donkor & Mazumder (2021), “Structural barriers, such as limited access to education and economic resources, disproportionately affect women’s ability to participate in sustainability programs, particularly in rural and conservative settings.” Many Muslim women, particularly in conservative societies, are often restricted to roles within the family context, limiting their connections to the broader community. For instance, societal norms in some regions discourage women from working in public spaces or interacting with individuals of the opposite gender, which significantly reduces their ability to attend educational or networking events crucial for growth and participation in sustainability programs.

Cultural and religious considerations also play a complex role. While some initiatives may align with Islamic values and receive support, others may be rejected if perceived as contradictory to religious or cultural norms. However, Islamic environmentalism, rooted in the concept of stewardship (Khilafah), offers a powerful framework for advocating sustainability. “When sustainability practices are framed as an Islamic duty, they resonate more deeply with

Muslim communities and foster greater participation, particularly among women” (El-Sherbini et al., 2023). This demonstrates the potential of integrating religious narratives to overcome cultural resistance and enhance engagement.

Political constraints further compound these challenges, particularly in regions where policies supporting gender equality and sustainability are inadequate. Women-led sustainability projects often struggle to gain organizational legitimacy or access to government programs. According to Adenle et al (2018), “In regions where women’s property rights are weak or absent, their capacity to engage in sustainable agricultural practices is severely restricted, undermining their economic potential and environmental contributions.” For example, in areas where women have limited property rights, they encounter significant barriers to sustainable agricultural production, as access to land is a key requirement. Without secure land ownership, their ability to borrow, invest, or engage in long-term agricultural sustainability is severely diminished.

Overcoming these challenges requires collaborative efforts from community leaders, governments, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Policies and initiatives must be designed within culturally sensitive and Islamic frameworks to ensure they resonate with local communities. Islamic environmentalism can serve as a guiding principle to develop programs that align with both sustainability goals and Islamic values. “Collaborative approaches that integrate religious principles into sustainability policies are more likely to gain traction in Muslim-majority contexts, bridging the gap between traditional norms and modern environmental practices” (Yasmeen et al., 2024). Empowering Muslim women involves recognizing and integrating their roles into community development processes, enabling them to contribute to sustainability, economic resilience, social justice, and environmental conservation.

By addressing these barriers through targeted strategies and partnerships, stakeholders can unlock the potential of Muslim women to lead in sustainable development. These efforts will not only enhance gender inclusivity but also ensure the success of sustainability initiatives that are culturally relevant and socially impactful. As Faugoo (2024) emphasize, “Gender-inclusive sustainability programs foster not only social equity but also the effective achievement of global environmental objectives.”

Recommendations

- **Policy Recommendations**

Thus, governments can contribute a lot for formation of the sustainable society for Muslim women through providing of specific state funding for making Muslim women as the ecological activists. In 2021 UN Women confirmed that targeted financial support affects the ability of women to participate in sustainable activities more than in 25%. Bringing funds into such businesses or special micro-credits for eco-friendly businesses created by Muslim women mobilized would contribute to the green economic initiative. Moreover, there is a need for governments to develop courses which integrate principles of sustainability with career and technical education. This will assist those Muslim women who perhaps would not get any chance in accessing mainstream education. Moreover, it is imperative in laying the key fundamental policies and procedures that possible to precede with legislation to ensure equal provision of resources without discriminating gender or religious beliefs while on the same note protecting environmentally minded businesses from any form of gender or religion bias. A survey carried out by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2022 also attributes the idea that good sustainable business results can be attributed to a 15% improvement as a result of legislation for gender inclusive leadership most especially in the marginalized

communities. In this regard, it can be seen that the coordinated action by other governments supporting and providing opportunities for Muslim women to be leaders in sustainability program initiatives are not only expected to foster or provide returns in environmental concern solutions but also open a way for righteous emergence and progress of women in the economy.

- **Community and Educational Initiatives**

Programs that would promote environmentally friendly behaviours, leadership and entrepreneurship in the communities should be conducted on the environment and such other factors. Recycling, sustainable farming and waste management are all things the country could benefit from through workshops on sustainable practices. For example, the Women in Green Economies in Indonesia program facilitated a 40 percent increase in Muslim women ownership of green enterprises in the course of five years after implementation (UNDP, 2020). Training on specific leadership and entrepreneurship can be provided to support Muslim women for removing cultural barriers in involving Muslim women in sustainable development projects and positions. Local mosques or other community organizations could have organized these workshops with the curriculum teaching information on conservation in a way which takes into account Islamic teachings to make the message more acceptable to the community.

- **Promoting Islamic Environmentalism**

This way engaging the integrity of sustainability within Islamic teaching can amplify the educational efficiency of a story and increase its cultural relevance. Islamic environmentalism needs to be supported by Quranic inching and Hadith on management of the earth such as *Khilafah* (people's trust) and wise utilization, which are synonymous to sustainability. It could get local religious personalities to link environmental conservation to spirituality so as to improve uptake. The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES, 2019) found out that when using religion to support environmental initiatives, such efforts can increase participation by 30 percent, basically in Muslim areas. This approach of personification in accordance with the Sufian culture builds ecological consciousness and, moreover, strengthens the idea of the common set of values in relation to sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability societies tailored for Muslim women offer a transformative approach to addressing the unique socio-economic, cultural, and legal challenges they face. Grounded in Islamic principles of stewardship (*Khilafah*) and justice, these societies integrate environmental consciousness with cultural and religious values, providing a platform for empowerment, economic development, and environmental stewardship. Initiatives such as sustainable fashion cooperatives, community recycling programs, and Islamic organic farming empower women by increasing their economic independence, enhancing their social status, and strengthening their roles as environmental stewards. Research shows that programs like eco-fashion cooperatives and recycling enterprises raise income-generating potential and reduce environmental waste, contributing significantly to global sustainability goals while promoting gender equity and social inclusion.

Despite these opportunities, barriers such as cultural norms, resource limitations, and inadequate policies hinder Muslim women's participation in sustainable industries. Addressing these challenges requires governments and organizations to prioritize support through grants, legal assistance, and targeted educational initiatives. Community-based workshops on eco-literacy, leadership training, and sustainability practices rooted in Islamic teachings can motivate engagement and foster perseverance within Muslim communities. By positioning sustainability within an Islamic framework, these societies provide a culturally acceptable and inspiring model for environmental conservation and gender empowerment. As advocates of change, sustainability societies for Muslim women play a critical role in integrating gender equity, cultural preservation, and environmental protection to achieve a more

equitable and sustainable future for all.

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