

Research Article

Revisiting the Principle of Israf (Avoiding Waste) in the Context of SDG-12 and Circular Economy Models

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between Islamic Israf (wasteful actions) and Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) while also linking Israf to Circular Economy Practices. Currently, we are experiencing a worldwide crisis on Waste Generation, over consumption and inadequate Recycling, due to many developed and developing countries' economies not considering Moral and Spiritual Values to guide their actions towards being more responsible. To conduct the research for this study, relevant Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, Muslim Classical and Contemporary Scholars, UN Sustainability Documents and Sustainable Practices of Several Islamic Majority Countries were evaluated. This comprehensive analysis shows that there is a clear synergy between Islamic Teachings on Waste Reduction, Resource Conservation and Fair and Responsible Consumption with the Primary Global Sustainable Development Goals, which include: Moderation, Balance, Justice, Stewardship and Individual Accountability. The results illustrate that including Israf within current sustainability programs provides a key motivator for environmentally and socially responsible behavior, increasing environmental results and enhancing community involvement through spiritual and ethical motivations. Furthermore, this research indicates that Israf-based methods can assist and promote Circular Economy (CE) strategies, specifically encouraging reuse, recycling, and proper management of resources. The conclusion of the study suggests that Israf is an effective ethical framework for enhancing the sustainability initiatives of today's society through its combined focus on ethics regarding spirituality, social justice, and economics. Integrating Israf values into government, education, and community projects will help promote awareness of consumer choices and lead towards a more sustainable future through continued efforts at sustainable development.

Keywords: Circular economy; Environmental ethics; Green economy; Islamic sustainability; Israf; SDG-12; Waste reduction.

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1. Introduction

The current global state of environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources through unsustainable production and consumption practices has raised concerns among all nations of the world. In this context, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG-12) of "Responsible Consumption and Production" represents an important means for achieving long-term sustainability. (Tsai F. M., 2025)

Circular Economy is one of the leading options currently available to support a transition from linear to regenerative economies, by promoting a circular approach to production. The objective of a Circular Economy is to create closed-loop systems of production and consumption through reducing resource inputs while maximising the reuse of existing resources and ultimately, creating zero waste. (Camilleri, 2018)

While sustainability models are valuable to develop, most models used today are primarily driven by technical and economic goals. Many of these models fail to address the ethical, moral, and spiritual factors that play an important role in people's actions and decisions. This is particularly true for Muslim-majority communities because religious beliefs strongly influence how individuals determine their values and practice them on a daily basis. (Alhassan G. Mumuni, 2018)

One of the main ethical principles described in the Qur'an and Sunnah related to environmental sustainability is *Israf*, or excessive consumption and wastefulness. (Hafidza Sanshia Arum, 2025) The Qur'an and Sunnah promote moderation, balance (*mizān*), and caretaker (*khalifah*) roles as superior values that need to be adhered to when individuals are using and caring for the Earth. (Dr. Muzaffar Ali, 2024) Scholars have stated that by incorporating *Israf* into the decision-making process, Muslims can make more responsibly and sustainably sound decisions.

Nonetheless, there exists a scarcity of literature identifying any systematic approach outlining the relationship between *Israf* and modern-day sustainability initiatives, e.g., SDG-12 and Circular Economy. The majority of the literature examining Islamic Environmental Ethics refers to *Israf* within the context of other Islamic ethical principles like trust and justice, but limited empirical data have examined how *Israf* has the potential to contribute to the development of Circular Economy strategies and achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals. Likewise, although there has been a proliferation of research on the 'Islamic Circular Economy', much of the research remains isolated or compartmentalized in nature. Some scholarly works only consider business practices while others study Islamic finance, but none integrate *Israf* as a central tenet of their research. Without logical integration of various viewpoints regarding *Israf*, this type of research may be missing potential pathways towards creating culturally and spiritually meaningful sustainability solutions that resonate with Society.

To respond to these gaps, two main research questions are posed:

The Islamic principle of *Israf* is ethically aligned with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 and the Circular Economy by promoting responsible consumption, resource conservation, and the minimization of waste. An *Israf*-based framework can serve as a viable guide for promoting sustainable consumption and production in Muslim-majority contexts while bridging the gap between traditional Islamic ethical principles and contemporary sustainability models.

The purpose of this study is to establish a conceptual/normative framework that connects *Israf* to SDG-12, and Circular Economy within terms of reference. Specifically, three objectives of the study are to (1) analyse Islamic teachings related to *Israf* (Qur'an, Hadith and classical Islamic Ethical literature) and map the teachings against the specific targets set forth in SDG-12; (2) identify how the ethical principles based on *Israf* can support the specific Circular Economy mechanisms such as Waste Reduction, Reuse, and Regeneration; (3) explore the benefits and advantages of adopting a framework of *Israf*.

The results of the research propose many distinctive contributions. First, the results provide a unifying theoretical framework that integrates Islamic moral-ethical principles with models of influence for global sustainability. The results demonstrate that *Israf* is more than simply a religious injunction, that it serves as an effective tool for addressing the environmental agenda through ethical behaviour, and that it can be used as an ethical guide for environmental policy (Dr Shah Junaid Ahmed Hashmi, 2025). Second, the research specifically addresses a gap in the academic literature in relation to *Israf* and the current dialogue regarding the concept of a circular economy, which is an area of study that has not yet been fully developed. Third, the research demonstrates the development of an ethical based model, which is valuable in providing support to policymakers and practitioners of sustainable development, as well as to faith based organisations operating within Muslim majority populations. This ethical model provides support to these groups, empowering them to develop culturally and spiritually meaningful solutions to address sustainability needs. Finally, the research emphasises that sustainable development is not

just a technical/economic issue but is, in addition to all of these things, a moral and spiritual challenge.

In sum, the Islamic ethical framework provides a conceptual foundation through which to develop sustainability discourse related to SDG-12 and Circular Economy Models. This framework provides new ways for integrating ethical principles into current resource efficiency and sustainability models.

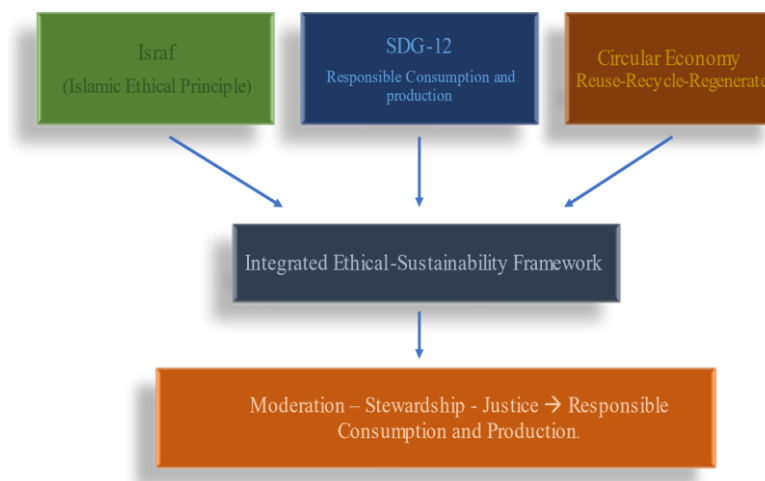


Figure 1. This is a conceptual framework linking Israf, SDG-12 and Circular Economy

2. Literature Review

The Islamic Concept of Israf

The Qur'an states, "Eat and drink, but do not waste. Surely, He does not like those who waste" (Qur'an 7:31). This verse goes against excessiveness and wastefulness. The doctrine of Israf promotes moderation and equitable consumption of resources (Abdelgalil, 2024). Various Is-lamic scholars such as Imam Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun, being considered Islamic thinkers, noted the importance of balance in all aspects of human life such as economics and envi-ronment.

SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production

The SDG 12 goal is to encourage sustainable use of natural resources through efficiency, increasing recycling, and reduction of pollution. It promotes responsible consumption and production behavior (Mishra, 2023). However, it emphasizes technology and systems rather than values, ethics, and/or personal responsibility.

Circular Economy

The Circular Economy (CE) concept is intended to alter the linear "take-make-dispose" model by creating regenerative systems which focus on the reuse, repair and recycling of items or resources (Moharana Choudhury, 2025). The CE is designed to minimize waste; extend the life cycle of the products and materials produced within it; conserve natural resources; and promote sustainable economic practices (Moharana Choudhury, 2025). The primary goal of the CE is to develop closed-loop systems in which products and materials are continually recycled and safely returned to the production process or the environment (Moharana Choudhury, 2025).

Although CE is an admirable concept in Theory, the real-world application of CE is often weakly supported by an Ethical or Moral Framework. Without a strong ethical or moral framework, technology alone or economic incentives are insufficient to motivate individuals, businesses and governments to act responsibly. A large part of many CE initiatives has been formed around efficiency and compliance, allowing us to forget about the Human Aspect of Conception and Production.

Combining moral influences with conventional forms of operation within the CE ecosystem allows for a new level of support and an increase in the degree of responsible action. A focus on both practical solutions and moral direction allows society to become more

than technically capable of achieving sustainability; it will also create an environment in which all aspects of living ethically, socially, and ecologically, are part of a unified system, as opposed to merely another operational goal within a company.

Connection Between Israf, SDG-12, and Circular Economy

Islamic teachings on lending Israf, when applied toward SDG-12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and therefore to CE practices, have both strong ethical and spiritual support. Islam teaches us that resourcing our world is a responsibility to live a moderate and responsible lifestyle, to be "in stewardship" of God's Creation; therefore, that the responsible and wise use of resources is not just a wise guideline but also a religious obligation and moral responsibility as well. The principle of Israf encourages the Muslim community to be more aware of the dangers of wastefulness and to embrace sustainable behaviours as part of their consumption and production practices (Kamali, 2016). By introducing the principle of Israf into contemporary sustainability activities, the Muslim community can install greater environmental responsibility, extend product life cycles and support the establishment of a sustainable resource management culture that includes a balance among ethical, spiritual and practical aspects of sustainability. (Moharana Choudhury, 2025).

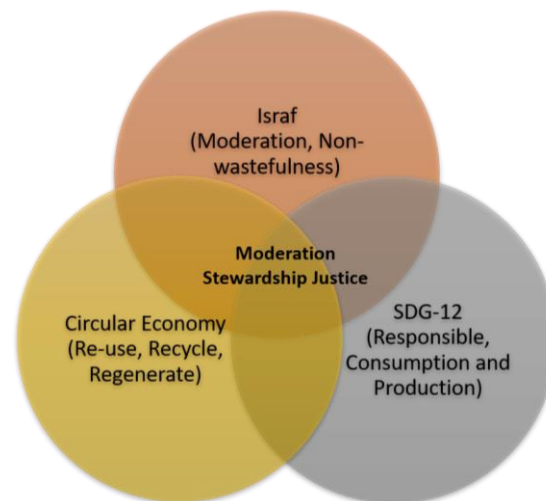


Figure 2. Conceptual Overlap of Israf, SDG-12 and Circular Economy, showing shared values of Moderation, Stewardship, and Justice.

Possibilities for Recycling in the Economy by Implementing Israf

Adopting Israf principles can greatly enhance recycling and economic prosperity (Bachrul Ulum¹, 2025). Communities and industries can encourage a circular economy by reducing waste and supporting reuse; this can lead to a more efficient economy where products have a higher utility and are more self-sustaining over time. Adoption of Israf principles or simply repurposing/waste reduction is likely to lower expenses, save useful materials, and spur innovation in recycling products and processes. Awareness programs that are faith-based can motivate families and communities to reuse and recycle materials that will generate local green employment and contribute to the sustainability of society. Israf-based recycling has energy conservation advantages; it also reduces waste management expenses while enhancing environmental sustainability and economic sustainability in communities.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative doctrinal and comparative research approach to examine the relationship between the Islamic principle of Israf, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12, and the Circular Economy framework. The research is based on secondary sources, including Islamic texts, policy documents, and academic literature. A textual review of relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadiths is conducted to identify Islamic teachings on moderation, responsible resource use, and waste avoidance. In addition, a document review

of United Nations publications, SDG-12 frameworks, and Circular Economy literature is undertaken to understand contemporary sustainability objectives and practices.

The study further applies a comparative analysis to assess the similarities between Islamic ethical principles and international sustainability targets, particularly in the areas of responsible consumption, waste reduction, and environmental stewardship. To support the analysis, selected case studies from Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Indonesia are examined to evaluate how Islamic values have been incorporated into environmental and sustainability policies.

The findings are synthesized to assess the potential of an Israf-based framework in promoting sustainable consumption and production while bridging traditional Islamic ethics with modern sustainability models.

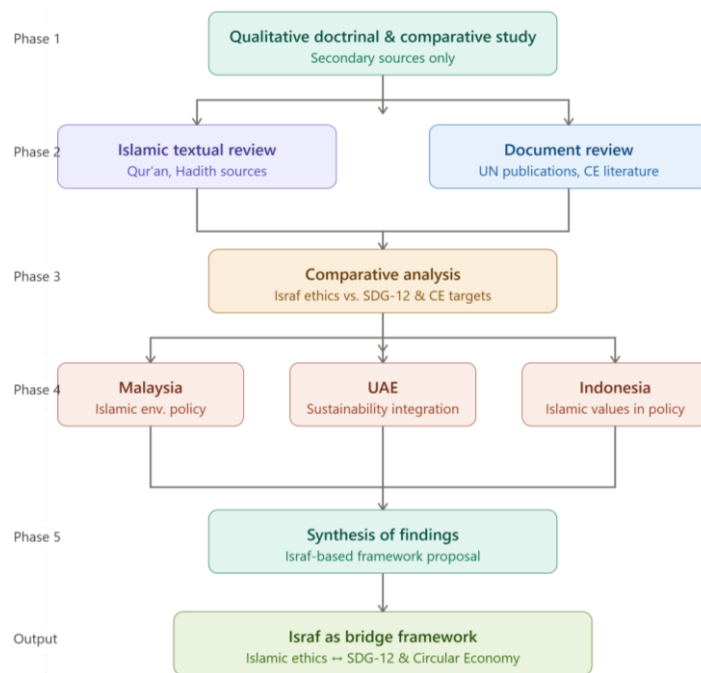


Figure 3. Methodology Flowchart.

4. Results and Discussion

Common Objectives: Convergence of Israf and SDG-12 in Waste Reduction and Resource Stewardship

The comparative analysis reveals a substantive convergence between the Islamic principle of Israf and the objectives articulated under SDG-12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Both frameworks are fundamentally oriented toward the responsible utilization of natural resources, the minimization of waste, and the promotion of moderation in consumption patterns. SDG-12 operationalizes these goals through measurable targets, including the re-duction of per capita food waste, sustainable management of chemical substances, and the adoption of sustainable public procurement practices. While Israf establishes an ethical im-perative grounded in Qur'anic injunctions against excess (Q. 7:31; Q. 6:141). The alignment between these two frameworks is not merely coincidental but reflects a broader convergence between classical Islamic environmental ethics and contemporary global sustainability dis-course. This finding supports the argument that Israf can function as an indigenous normative foundation that complements and reinforces the universalist ambitions of the SDGs, partic-ularly in Muslim-majority societies where religious motivation carries significant behavioral weight.

Ethical and Spiritual Dimension: Moral Persuasion Beyond Legal Compliance

A distinctive contribution of the Israf framework, as identified through the textual and doctrinal analysis, lies in its capacity to motivate behavioral change through moral and spiritual persuasion rather than regulatory enforcement. Unlike the compliance-driven mechanisms that underpin most contemporary environmental governance frameworks, including SDG-12's reliance on national legislation and institutional accountability, Israf engages the individual conscience by framing overconsumption and waste as acts of spiritual transgression. This internalized ethical motivation constitutes a form of endogenous norm enforcement that state-led regulatory frameworks frequently struggle to achieve. The implications of this finding are significant: policy frameworks that integrate Israf-based messaging may be capable of fostering deeper and more durable behavioral change among Muslim populations, particularly in contexts where institutional enforcement capacity is limited. This dimension of the Israf principle resonates with broader scholarship on the role of religion in environmental governance, which emphasizes the unique capacity of faith-based norms to mobilize communities beyond the threshold of legal obligation.

Practical Applicability: Community Responsiveness to Islamically Framed Environmental Programs

The examination of national case studies from Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia demonstrates that the embedding of Islamic ethical principles, including Israf, within formal environmental and sustainability programs generates measurable positive responses at the community level. In each of the three cases, environmental initiatives that explicitly invoked Islamic values, including the concept of khalifah (stewardship of the earth) and the prohibition of fasad (corruption of the natural environment), achieved higher levels of community engagement and voluntary compliance than those framed exclusively in secular or technocratic terms. These findings suggest that the cultural and religious legitimacy conferred by Islamic framing is a significant variable in the effectiveness of environmental policy implementation in Muslim-majority contexts. This has important implications for the localization of SDG-12: rather than adopting a uniform global implementation model, policymakers in these settings may achieve greater impact by anchoring sustainability objectives within locally resonant religious and ethical vocabularies.

Alignment with Circular Economy Principles: Israf as an Indigenous Circular Economy Ethic

The doctrinal analysis further reveals that the principle of Israf is inherently compatible with, and in several respects anticipates, the core tenets of the Circular Economy (CE) model. The CE framework advocates for the elimination of waste through the design of closed-loop systems that prioritize reuse, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling over linear patterns of production and disposal. The Israf principle, by prohibiting excess and enjoining moderation in resource use, establishes an ethical foundation that naturally discourages the linear "take-make-dispose" paradigm and encourages the conservation and cyclical use of resources. Notably, classical Islamic jurisprudence also recognizes the concept of hima (protected zones) and emphasizes the avoidance of israf al-ma' (wasteful use of water), which parallel contemporary CE principles of resource efficiency and ecological boundary-setting.

This alignment suggests that Israf does not merely complement the Circular Economy framework as an external moral overlay but may be understood as an indigenous Islamic articulation of circular economy ethics. One that predates the emergence of the CE model by over fourteen centuries and carries its own independent normative authority within Islamic scholarly tradition. Writing algorithms or pseudocode can be an alternative for explaining scientific paper content. The algorithm must be cited in the main text. Below is an example of writing an Algorithm. You need to use "Algorithm head FAITH" and "algorithm step FAITH" styles.

Sections must summarize briefly and concisely the contents of the document or essay. This section may contain (1) A summary of the main results, findings, and evidence from your research or analysis. (2) Synthesis of findings, namely the relationship between findings and research objectives, and show how these findings support arguments or hypotheses. (3) The author may also be able to discuss the implications of research findings for research benefits. What is the contribution or impact on the knowledge or topic discussed? (4) Limitations and suggestions for further research.

5. Conclusions

The Israf principle provides an ethical framework that endorses both SDG-12 and the circular economy for all time. It embodies moderation, egalitarianism, and care for the environment as faith-based actions. Islamic faith can augment contemporary sustainability measures by fostering responsible and just development. Future research may include understanding how Israf-based values can be coupled with education, industry, and policymaking. This is an avenue of research that is presented as a way to contribute to sustainability, being a moral and cultural good to share, rather than a global goal.

Conflicts of Interest: “The authors declare no conflict of interest.”

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