

Scarcity and Abundance: An Ethical Framework in Islamic Economics Perspective

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Abstract

Scarcity is the main discussion in economics. However, there has yet to be an agreed consensus in defining the concepts of scarcity and abundance, especially from an Islamic perspective. Even though the concept of scarcity is still an ongoing debate in Islamic economic discourse, there are other more essential discussion aspects of Islamic economics besides scarcity, namely moral ethics in dealing with scarcity and abundance. Because normatively, the Qur'an discusses the concepts of scarcity and abundance in many verses. Islamic economists see that by prioritizing a moderate attitude, Islamic economics can be directed to a more contributing perspective. Therefore, this paper attempts to fill this gap by offering an ethical framework for addressing the challenges of scarcity and abundance by being moderate. This conceptual paper explores an ethical framework for addressing the issue of moderate scarcity and abundance from an Islamic perspective. Employing text analysis from verses of the Qur'an and various Islamic economic literatures, the study reveals that the Qur'an provides a comprehensive ethical framework regarding scarcity and abundance, considering them not as absolute concepts. The paper emphasizes the importance of moderate Islamic ethics in responding to resource scarcity and abundance, aligning with the Qur'an's emphasis on balance and justice. The findings of this paper contribute to the ethical discourse on scarcity and abundance, highlighting the significance of moderation in dealing with these issues. The paper's originality lies in presenting an ethical framework rooted in Qur'anic verses to address the matter of scarcity and abundance by being moderate.

[Kelangkaan merupakan topik utama dalam ilmu ekonomi. Namun, hingga saat ini belum terdapat kesepakatan yang jelas dalam mendefinisikan konsep kelangkaan dan

kelimpahan, terutama dari perspektif Islam. Meskipun konsep kelangkaan masih menjadi perdebatan dalam diskursus ekonomi Islam, terdapat aspek lain yang lebih esensial dalam pembahasan ekonomi Islam, yaitu etika moral dalam menghadapi kelangkaan dan kelimpahan. Sebab secara normatif, Al-Qur'an membahas konsep kelangkaan dan kelimpahan dalam banyak ayat. Para ekonom Islam memandang bahwa dengan mengutamakan sikap moderat, ekonomi Islam dapat diarahkan ke perspektif yang lebih kontributif. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berupaya mengisi kekosongan tersebut dengan menawarkan kerangka etika dalam menghadapi tantangan kelangkaan dan kelimpahan melalui pendekatan moderasi. Penelitian konseptual ini mengeksplorasi kerangka etika untuk menyikapi isu kelangkaan dan kelimpahan secara moderat dari perspektif Islam. Dengan menggunakan analisis teks dari ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an serta berbagai literatur ekonomi Islam, studi ini mengungkap bahwa Al-Qur'an memberikan kerangka etika yang komprehensif terkait kelangkaan dan kelimpahan dengan menganggapnya bukan sebagai konsep absolut. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya etika moderat dalam Islam sebagai respons terhadap kelangkaan dan kelimpahan sumber daya, yang sejalan dengan penekanan Al-Qur'an pada keseimbangan dan keadilan. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada diskursus etika mengenai kelangkaan dan kelimpahan, dengan menyoroti signifikansi moderasi dalam menghadapi permasalahan tersebut. Kebaruan makalah ini terletak pada penyajian kerangka etika yang berakar pada ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an untuk menyikapi isu kelangkaan dan kelimpahan secara moderat.]

Keywords: Abundance; Ethical Framework; Islamic Economics; Moderate; Scarcity

Introduction

Scarcity is a core discussion of the conventional economic system.^{1,2,3,4} There is no point in discussing economic issues when all our resources are abundant.⁵ The discourse about scarcity and abundance has been widely discussed by economists, such as Thomas Robert Malthus,⁶ Lionel Robbins,⁷ Zubair Hasan,⁸ and others. In Islamic economics, the concept of scarcity is different from the economic concept defined by the Western world.^{9,10} Scarcity, as interpreted by Western economists, views that resources are insufficient to meet unlimited human needs.^{11,12} Scarcity refers to a state of scarcity or shortage of supply, where resources are insufficient to meet unlimited human needs.¹³ For them, scarcity arises due to limited natural resources.¹⁴

In contrast to the conventional economic perspective, which treats scarcity as a universal and natural phenomenon, Islamic economists have a different perspective

¹ Amir Wahbalbari, Zakaria Bahari, and Norzarina Mohd-Zaharim, "The Effect of Scarcity Thinking on Human Wants among Muslims: Exploring the Ideological Orientation of the Concept of Scarcity," in *Islamic Economics: Theory, Policy and Social Justice*, vol. 2, 2015, 65–81.

² Masudul Alam Choudhury, "Tawhidi Islamic Economics in Reference to the Methodology Arising from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah," *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 10, no. 2 (2018): 263–76, doi:10.1108/IJIF-02-2018-0025.

³ Ildus Rafikov and Elmira Akhmetova, "Scarcity in the Age of Abundance: Paradox and Remedies," *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* 35, no. 1 (2019): 119–32, doi:10.1108/IJOES-07-2018-0097.

⁴ Naeem Rahman M. Yahya, "Relative Scarcity of Economic Resources: From Islamic Economics Perspective," *Pakistan Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1–28, <https://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/pjqs/article/download/2524/1289%0Ahttps://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/pjqs/article/view/2524>.

⁵ Asad Zaman, "Scarcity: East and West," *Journal of Islamic Economics, Banking and Finance* 6, no. 1 (2010): 87–104, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3061271>.

⁶ Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principles of Population* (London: John Murray, 1826).

⁷ Lionel Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1945).

⁸ Zubair Hasan, *Introduction to Microeconomics: An Islamic Perspective* (Petaling Jaya: Pearson Malaysia Sdn Bhd, 2006).

⁹ Zaman, "Scarcity: East and West."

¹⁰ Risa Bhinekawati, "Comparing the Concept of Scarcity: Conventional vs. Islamic Economics," *Journal of Applied Business and Economics* 23, no. 3 (2021): 258–62, doi:10.33423/jabe.v23i3.4352.

¹¹ Ahmad Farras Oran, "Scarcity and the Subject Matter of Islamic Economics," *Review of Islamic Economics* 1, no. 2 (2012): 1–24, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273728177_Scarcity_and_the_Subject_Matter_of_Islamic_Economics.

¹² Zaman, "Scarcity: East and West."

¹³ Amir Wahbalbari, Zakaria Bahari, and Norzarina Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics," ed. Professor Masudul Alam Choudhury, *Humanomics* 31, no. 2 (May 11, 2015): 134–59, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/H-11-2012-0021>.

¹⁴ Muhammad Abdul Mannan, *Scarcity, Choice and Opportunity Cost: Their Dimensions in Islamic Economics* (International Centre for Research in Islamic Economics, King Abdulaziz University, 1982).

when looking at the problem of scarcity.^{15,16,17} Conventional economists claim that scarcity is natural and universal, and then impacts a paradigm that negates abundance and sufficiency.¹⁸ Islamic economists view scarcity not only because of nature's limitations in providing resources but also because of unlimited human desires so that resources become scarce.¹⁹ Islamic economists stress that human desires, unchecked by moral and ethical boundaries, are a significant driver of scarcity. This notion suggests that scarcity can be mitigated by controlling excessive desires through Islamic principles such as justice (*‘adl*) and balance (*mizan*). However, the debate between scarcity and abundance in Islamic economics continues in Islamic economic discourse.

There has yet to be an agreed consensus on defining the concept of scarcity from an Islamic perspective.^{20,21} Some Islamic economists reject the concept of scarcity and argue that resources are abundant and unlimited.^{22,23} They argue that scarcity arises from unlimited human wants and is not a primary characteristic of resources. Another group of Islamic economists considers scarcity a fact of life and must be accepted as a part of economic reality in the world.

Even though the concept of scarcity is still an ongoing debate in Islamic economic discourse, scarcity is not the primary discussion aspect of Islamic economics. Because normatively, the Qur'an discusses the concepts of scarcity and abundance in many verses.²⁴ On the one hand, Allah talks a lot about the abundance of resources given to humans as sustenance for His servants. However, in another verse, Allah also talks about scarcity, a test for His servants in living their lives.²⁵

¹⁵ Nurul Naqibah Izzati and Muhammad Faizul, "Islamic Philanthropy and the Qur'anic Approach to Scarcity: Wealth Redistribution as a Solution," *JIEP: Journal of Islamic Economics and Philanthropy* 7, no. 4 (2025): 223–37.

¹⁶ Bhinekawati, "Comparing the Concept of Scarcity: Conventional vs. Islamic Economics."

¹⁷ Zaman, "Scarcity: East and West."

¹⁸ Adel Daoud, "Robbins and Malthus on Scarcity, Abundance, and Sufficiency: The Missing Sociocultural Element," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 69, no. 4 (2010): 1206–29, doi:10.1111/j.1536-7150.2010.00741.x.

¹⁹ Umer Chapra, *What Is Islamic Economics?* (Islamic Research and Training Institute, 1996).

²⁰ Muhammad Akram Khan, "Dilemmas of Islamic Economics," in *Islamic Economic Workshop*, 2019, 52–114, doi:10.5040/9781501376160.ch-027.

²¹ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

²² Muhammad Akram Khan, "Islamic Economics: Nature and Need," *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Islamic Economics* 1, no. 2 (1984): 51–55, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3118130>.

²³ Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "Islamic Economics Revisited: Re-Contemplating Unresolved Structure and Assumptions," in *International Conference on Islamic Economics and Finance*, vol. 8, 2011, 1–19.

²⁴ Ayman Reda, "Abundance and Scarcity: Islamic Economic Thought," in *Prophecy, Piety, and Profits* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 75–107, doi:10.1057/978-1-137-56825-0_7.

²⁵ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

One alternative step in looking at the problem of scarcity is to view it as relative scarcity.^{26,27} Relative scarcity in Islamic economics refers to the paradigm that scarcity is not a main characteristic that is always tied to resources. Scarcity can also occur due to perceptions or understandings that arise from human needs or desires. This view shows that resources, when linked to human needs, can be scarce in certain situations and abundant in other contexts.²⁸ From the idea of relative scarcity, the existence of resources is seen as a function of knowledge, which includes their existence, extraction techniques, forms of utilization, and the costs required.²⁹ When society has the perspective and knowledge to develop effective and efficient ways to access and utilize resources, the paradigm of scarcity can indirectly decrease or even disappear.³⁰

Therefore, in Islamic economics, the relative scarcity perspective views the condition of scarcity as not absolute but departs from a subjective understanding influenced by various variables, such as knowledge, needs, and desires. Islamic economists see that by prioritizing a moderate attitude, Islamic economics can be directed to a perspective that contributes more to overcoming the challenges of the scarcity paradigm by ensuring that fair distribution and utilization of resources can be implemented.³¹ This perspective emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations and promoting justice and equity in resource allocation. Additionally, Islamic economics encourages the reduction of wastefulness and fosters sustainable practices to ensure that resources are appropriately used. Ultimately, by aligning economic activities with Islamic values, the potential for achieving a balanced and prosperous society becomes more attainable.

To the best of author's knowledge, there is no research that specifically discusses an ethical framework rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an for addressing issues of scarcity and abundance. This gap is significant as the discourse on scarcity and abundance has been extensively discussed in conventional and Islamic economic systems and by various economists, but there has been a lack of exploration in applying Qur'anic verses to these concepts. Therefore, this paper lies in its attempt to fill this gap by offering an ethical framework to address the challenges of scarcity and abundance by being moderate.

This article explores an ethical framework based on an Islamic perspective in addressing the issue of scarcity and abundance in the reality of human life. Although there are still various perspectives on scarcity and no consensus among Islamic economists, this paper wants to focus on a more substantial issue to argue that the

²⁶ Bhinekawati, "Comparing the Concept of Scarcity: Conventional vs. Islamic Economics."

²⁷ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Zubair Hasan, "Book Review: An Introduction to Islamic Economics," *MPRA: Munich Personal RePEc Archive*, 1996, 580–85, https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/2980/1/MPRA_paper_2980.pdf.

³¹ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

ethical framework is more significant than the debate about scarcity and abundance. The paper emphasizes the importance of moderate Islamic ethics in responding to resource scarcity and abundance, aligning with the Qur'an's emphasis on balance and justice. The findings contribute to the ethical discourse on scarcity and abundance, highlighting the significance of moderation in dealing with these issues. The originality of the paper lies in presenting an ethical framework rooted in Qur'anic verses to address the matter of scarcity and abundance.

This paper consists of six sections, as follows. This paper begins with an introduction and research method in Section 1 and 2. Section 3 discusses scarcity and abundance from an Islamic perspective. Section 4 provides an overview of an ethical framework of scarcity and abundance. Section 5 strengthens an ethical framework by discussing the concept of moderation between scarcity and abundance. The last section contains the conclusions of this paper.

Research Method

This research uses qualitative method using text analysis.³² This conceptual paper examines scarcity and abundance from an Islamic perspective taken from verses of the Qur'an and various Islamic economic literature to explore the ethical framework and offer moral ideas in addressing the issue of scarcity and abundance. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the findings apply data triangulation by comparing various text sources, both verses from the Qur'an and Islamic economic literature. This step ensures that the interpretation minimizes the possibility of bias and has an objective basis so that the analysis results are representative.

Results and Discussion

Scarcity and Abundance in Islamic Perspective

The Islamic perspective regarding scarcity and abundance originates from the belief that Allah provides sufficiency for all creatures in the world, thus only recognizing the existence of relative scarcity.³³ Scarcity is not only seen as a condition of limited resources but also a test from God given to humans. That is why humans need to manage resources responsibly to Allah. The same thing also applies when conditions of abundance occur, and humans are mandated to make the best use of the abundance of resources by not exploiting resources greedily.

Bayu Taufiq Possumah and Abdul Ghafar Ismail argue that scarcity is not the main problem in the economy.³⁴ However, Islamic economists need to understand the four main principles of Islamic economics: first, all wealth belongs to Allah; second, the community is the trustee of the wealth; third, circulation of wealth is a duty; and

³² Mary C. Lacity and Marius A. Janson, "Understanding Qualitative Data: A Framework of Text Analysis Methods," *Journal of Management Information Systems* 11, no. 2 (1994): 137–55, doi:10.1080/07421222.1994.11518043.

³³ Reda, "Abundance and Scarcity: Islamic Economic Thought."

³⁴ Bayu Taufiq Possumah and Abdul Ghafar Ismail, *The Scarcity Assumption, Economic Problem and the Definition of Economics: Revisited, Working Paper in Islamic Economics and Finance No. 1225*, 2016.

fourth, hoarding of wealth is prohibited.^{35,36} These principles form the foundation for addressing the whole economic issue from an Islamic perspective.

Islamic economics rejects the concept of absolute scarcity, emphasizing that human welfare must be aimed at material and spiritual aspects.^{37,38} This is different from what is proposed by conventional economics, which states that scarcity is a fundamental principle, where one of the underlying ideas is that the number of people is too large and continues to increase.³⁹ However, the Qur'an explicitly denies this idea and states that God sustains all His creation.⁴⁰

Islamic teachings through the Qur'an encourage its followers to apply a character that likes to be grateful in any conditions and circumstances, which departs from philosophy and means that Allah has given the world and everything in it to humanity with sufficient, and therefore all humans can their needs be met. This understanding is based on the belief in God's unlimited riches and rejection of the view of absolute scarcity, namely the belief in limited resources, and therefore, humans cannot fulfill all their life needs.⁴¹

Even though Allah never intended absolute scarcity for His servants and creatures, humans must understand that abundance does not provide space for humans to exploit resources and fulfill all their desires. Allah gives abundance to humanity by sending sustenance in proportional amounts according to needs for the benefit of humanity, which functions to provide space for humans to carry out exploration that leads to *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for the whole world).^{42,43}

Thus, although there is no consensus among Islamic economists, and it is still being debated, Islam views that there is no scarcity and absolute abundance in reality. Conditions of scarcity and abundance can occur at any time, but these conditions can change according to human behavior. Just as Allah tests His servants with spacious and cramped conditions, which are part of *sunnatullah* (Allah's law), scarcity can also be understood as a test or trial that humanity must face to test the steadfastness of faith and perseverance in finding solutions. Meanwhile, abundance is seen as a gift from God that needs to be grateful for and used responsibly.

³⁵ Asad Zaman and Junaid Qadir, "Putting Social Justice First: The Case of Islamic Economics," *Journal of Islamic Banking & Finance* 34, no. 4 (2017): 87–99, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Junaid-Qadir-2/publication/325946280_Putting_Social_Justice_First_The_Case_of_Islamic_Economics/links/5b2e0a07aca2720785db3f10/Putting-Social-Justice-First-The-Case-of-Islamic-Economics.pdf.

³⁶ Possumah and Ismail, *The Scarcity Assumption, Economic Problem and the Definition of Economics: Revisited*.

³⁷ Choudhury, "Tawhidi Islamic Economics in Reference to the Methodology Arising from the Qur'an and the Sunnah."

³⁸ Bhinekawati, "Comparing the Concept of Scarcity: Conventional vs. Islamic Economics."

³⁹ Malthus, *An Essay on the Principles of Population*.

⁴⁰ Zaman, "Scarcity: East and West."

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Reda, "Abundance and Scarcity: Islamic Economic Thought."

⁴³ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

An Ethical Framework of Scarcity and Abundance

A Muslim must dedicate himself to Allah as a servant by carrying out his role as caliph, where his life goal is to achieve *falah* (the great victory) in the world and the hereafter. This success will not be separated from his management of assets, starting from acquisition and allocation to placement of the resources he owns, which are entrusted to him and by Allah's permission.⁴⁴ As a caliph, a Muslim's responsibility is to ensure that resources are utilized in a way that aligns with Allah's guidance and benefits the greater good of society. Wealth management is viewed not merely as a personal pursuit but as an act of worship that fulfills one's duties to both Allah and society. These principles then become the scientific basis for how an individual should manage assets.⁴⁵

Islamic economics does not reject the fact that individuals must pursue their interests, but this must be done based on moral values so that it does not endanger or harm other people.⁴⁶ This ethical perspective prevents exploitative behaviors and ensures that the pursuit of self-interest does not undermine social welfare. Economic actions should be aligned with the broader societal good, contributing to a just and harmonious community. Economic behavior based on morals can contribute to social cohesion, which maintains a sense of brotherhood and is oriented toward achieving common goals. For this reason, the emphasis on moral values and spiritual goals is one of the main differences between Islamic and conventional economics.⁴⁷

This view is closely related to economic problems, where Islamic economists believe that scarcity can occur due to human behavior, as is often echoed by Islamic economists.^{48,49} Ways of managing resources that are not based on moral values can cause scarcity. Therefore, scarcity can be overcome by providing understanding and awareness about individual behavior when he is aware of his role as a caliph on earth.⁵⁰ The Islamic economic view of scarcity can be seen as an economic experience and individual morality.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Possumah and Ismail, *The Scarcity Assumption, Economic Problem and the Definition of Economics: Revisited*.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Arif, "Toward a Definition of Islamic Economics: Some Scientific Considerations," *Journal of Research in Islamic Economics* 2, no. 2 (1985): 79–93, https://iei.kau.edu.sa/Files/121/Files/153904_Vol-2-2-24E-MArif.pdf.

⁴⁶ Hafas Furqani and Mohamed Aslam Haneef, "Configuring Problems of Economics in Islamic Perspective: Moral Nexus, Realities and Its Unification," *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* 39, no. 4 (2023): 875–91, doi:10.1108/IJOES-04-2022-0076.

⁴⁷ Bhinekawati, "Comparing the Concept of Scarcity: Conventional vs. Islamic Economics."

⁴⁸ Hamid Hosseini, "Understanding the Market Mechanism before Adam Smith: Economic Thought in Medieval Islam," *History of Political Economy* 27, no. 3 (1995): 539–61, doi:10.1215/00182702-27-3-539.

⁴⁹ Abdul Azim Islahi, "Ibn Taimiyah's Concept of Market Mechanism," *Journal Research Islamic Economics* 2, no. 2 (1985): 51–60, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3127988>.

⁵⁰ Bhinekawati, "Comparing the Concept of Scarcity: Conventional vs. Islamic Economics."

⁵¹ Mannan, *Scarcity, Choice and Opportunity Cost: Their Dimensions in Islamic Economics*.

In the following figure, the author will present how scarcity and abundance should be seen based on the ethical framework from an Islamic perspective. When this framework was created, this idea benefited greatly from research conducted by Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim.⁵² This framework will provide views and perspectives on scarcity and abundance, which are built from the verses of the Qur'an and then manifested in the moral behavior of a Muslim individual (see Figure 1).

This framework starts from the philosophical basis of human existence, explained in the Qur'an, Surah Az-Zariyat verse 56, that the primary purpose of human creation is to worship Allah alone.⁵³ In this context, the interpretation of worship is not only limited to religious rituals, such as prayer, zakat, fasting, and hajj, but also includes ethical behavior, the relationship between humans and humans, and humans with their God, as well as things that are *mu'amalah* in nature. This reflects that the creation of humans must be oriented towards worshiping Allah by maximizing their role as caliphs on earth.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me. (51:56)

To maximize this role, there are two scenarios in which humans live their lives, namely, they can be in a position of facing scarcity, and there is also the possibility of being in a position of abundance. Therefore, many Islamic economists conclude that there is no absolute scarcity and abundance, only relative scarcity and abundance.^{54,55} Allah reveals this in the Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqoroh verse 155 about shortages, which many scholars interpret as scarcity, and Surah Al-Qamar verse 49, which talks about abundance.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

We will certainly test you with a touch of fear and famine and loss of property, life, and crops. Give good news to those who patiently endure. (2:155)

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

Indeed, We have created everything, perfectly preordained. (54:49)

⁵² Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Effect of Scarcity Thinking on Human Wants among Muslims: Exploring the Ideological Orientation of the Concept of Scarcity."

⁵³ Oran, "Scarcity and the Subject Matter of Islamic Economics."

⁵⁴ Choudhury, "Tawhidi Islamic Economics in Reference to the Methodology Arising from the Qur'an and the Sunnah."

⁵⁵ Possumah and Ismail, *The Scarcity Assumption, Economic Problem and the Definition of Economics: Revisited*.

The existence of relative scarcity and abundance is part of *sunnatullah*, closely related to the concept of life tests faced by humanity,⁵⁶ as described in the Al-Qur'an surah Al-Mulk verse 2. In this verse, it is described that life and death are only a test from Allah to humans, whose main goal is to see who does the best charity. This verse reflects the Islamic view that life is only temporary. Therefore, a Muslim individual must have the character of always being patient and grateful for being given tests, whether in the form of scarcity or abundance.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

'He is the One' Who created death and life in order to test which of you is best in deeds. And He is the Almighty, All-Forgiving. (67:2)

Thus, the ethical framework from an Islamic perspective describes the character that Muslim individuals should live by when facing scarcity or abundance. When facing this problem, there are only choices that can be made when facing scarcity and abundance, namely being patient when facing scarcity, which is driven by severe efforts to make ends meet, and being grateful when facing abundance, by not exploiting the abundance of resources, which is accompanied by with the spirit of sharing with those in need. This moral value of patience and gratitude is stated in many verses of the Qur'an, such as in Surah Ibrahim verse 5 and Surah Luqman verse 31.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ

Surely in this are signs for whoever is steadfast, grateful. (14:5 & 31:31)

This will form a character based on moral values so that it can realize Homo Islamicus. Homo Islamicus can be interpreted as an ideal human being who adheres to Islamic values and norms in behavior and economic activities by prioritizing the welfare of society, acting altruistically, and making decisions based on moral and ethical considerations.⁵⁷ When Muslim individuals can understand their role and position as caliphs on earth by applying the ethical principles as explained previously, the ideal human being known as Homo Islamicus can undoubtedly be achieved. This is also confirmed by Monzer Kahf that the concept of success in Islam is always

⁵⁶ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

⁵⁷ Mohammad Omar Farooq, "Self-Interest, Homo Islamicus and Some Behavioral Assumptions in Islamic Economics and Finance," *International Journal of Excellence in Islamic Banking and Finance* 1, no. 1 (2011): 52–79, <https://platform.almanhal.com/Files/Articles/7878>.

associated with the value of morality, which implies a positive attitude towards life and other human beings.⁵⁸

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

The 'true' servants of the Most Compassionate are those who walk on the earth humbly, and when the foolish address them 'improperly', they only respond with peace. (25:63)

When individual Muslim behavior can behave ideally as guided by the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, which is oriented towards the benefit of humanity, of course, this will impact a highly civilized society based on great moral values. This is reflected in the behavior exemplified by the Prophet PBUH to become the best human being who provides benefits to those around him who is also gifted with various internal capacities, such as reason, free will, the ability and desire to determine his destiny has the nature and tendency to do good, based on his role as servant and caliph.⁵⁹ In the end, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as envisioned by Islam will be able to be realized.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

We have sent you 'O Prophet' only as a mercy for the whole world. (21:107)

⁵⁸ Monzer Kahf, *The Islamic Economy: Analytical Study of the Functioning of the Islamic Economic System* (Indiana: The Muslim Students' Association of the United States and Canada., 1978).

⁵⁹ Hafas Furqani and Abdelghani Echchabi, "Who Is Homo Islamicus? A Qur'anic Perspective on the Economic Agent in Islamic Economics," *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 14, no. 2 (2022): 206–20, doi:10.1108/IJIF-05-2021-0102.



Figure 1. An Ethical Framework of Scarcity and Abundance in Islamic Perspective

The Concept of Moderation Between Scarcity and Abundance

From an Islamic perspective, moderation between scarcity and abundance is an ethical framework emphasizing balance and justice in economic and social behavior.⁶⁰ Islam views the concept of moderation as closely related to choosing a *wasatiyyah* (middle) position between extreme realities.⁶¹ This ethical framework significantly influences socio-economic life, reflecting the philosophy of life. In many verses, the Qur'an highlights the importance of ethics and morals in economic behavior, especially in a moderate context, avoiding waste and stingy behavior.⁶² This includes holding back and hoarding goods, which can cause scarcity.⁶³

Islam views the concept of moderation as a *sunnatullah* given to human life, where all of God's creation has been given according to the correct and proportional measure. Such a view implies that human behavior must be in line with divine order, which describes the concept of moderate morality.⁶⁴ Moderate attitudes are seen as behavior that describes the characteristics of Muslim individuals in solving economic

⁶⁰ Reda, "Abundance and Scarcity: Islamic Economic Thought."

⁶¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatiyyah* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁶² Zaman, "Scarcity: East and West."

⁶³ Possumah and Ismail, *The Scarcity Assumption, Economic Problem and the Definition of Economics: Revisited*.

⁶⁴ Reda, "Abundance and Scarcity: Islamic Economic Thought."

problems such as scarcity and abundance. This perspective describes God's gift that the resources that God has given are available and sufficient for humanity's needs.⁶⁵ Therefore, the concept of moderation between scarcity and abundance in Islamic ethics underlines the importance of balance, justice, and ethical behavior in economic and social interactions, reflecting the divine order in creation.

Likewise, Muhammad Baqir As-Sadr argues that economic problems come from a system that continues to exploit, where production orientation is determined by society's power structure, not by the actual valuation created by resources.⁶⁶ For this reason, Islam views that the problem of scarcity is not part of nature's fault but rather human morality and behavior itself.⁶⁷ As-Sadr quoted a verse that explains God's gift to humans,⁶⁸ namely:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمُوتَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْهَارَ

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ

وَأَنْتُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ ؕ وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا ۗ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَطُلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ

It is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you. He has subjected the ships for your service, sailing through the sea by His command, and has subjected the rivers for you. He has 'also' subjected for you the sun and the moon, both constantly orbiting, and has subjected the day and night for you. And He has granted you all that you asked Him for. If you tried to count Allah's blessings, you would never be able to number them. Indeed humankind is truly unfair, 'totally' ungrateful. (14:32-34).

This verse does not convey a view of world scarcity that limits resources but provides a picture of world life in which Allah provides sufficient resources for human life. At the same time, the verse repeatedly mentions the editorial "submit to you," which is addressed to humans. This illustrates that Allah has given enormous blessings to humanity.⁶⁹ However, these abundant blessings need to be managed well.

⁶⁵ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

⁶⁶ Muhammad Baqir As-Sadr, *The Islamic Economic Doctrine: A Comparative Study (Iqtisaduna)*, ed. Kadom Jawad Shubber (London: MECI Ltd, 2010).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

Abundance does not exist to give humans unlimited freedom but functions to help humans in serving Allah through their duties as caliphs on earth.⁷⁰

A moderate attitude is needed in managing scarcity and abundance. Besides, a moderate attitude is needed to maintain economic stability and social justice. Extreme attitudes towards scarcity or abundance can cause unstable economic fluctuations, such as overreaction to scarcity, which can cause inflation, while overreaction to abundance can lead to deflation.⁷¹ Likewise, in social justice, fair handling of scarcity ensures a more equitable distribution of resources, while judicious handling of abundance can prevent excessive inequality. Islam is a moderate religion and asks us not to be stingy or wasteful. Wealth that exceeds our needs should be spent on less fortunate people than us.^{72,73}

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

'They are' those who spend neither wastefully nor stingily, but moderately in between.
(25:67)

Therefore, this discussion integrates Quranic teachings to offer a balanced view of managing resources, highlighting the need for ethical handling of scarcity and abundance. Besides, the role of Muslims as stewards of the earth, advocating for responsible resource management within moral boundaries. It contrasts Islamic economics with conventional approaches by focusing on moral considerations and the importance of education and awareness in resource management.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper presents a comprehensive analysis of scarcity and abundance within an Islamic framework, emphasizing a moderate ethical approach grounded in Quranic teachings. This approach is essential for addressing economic issues, moving beyond simplistic interpretations to offer a nuanced perspective that incorporates balance and justice in resource management. This paper then delves into the Islamic concept of sufficiency provided by Allah, viewing scarcity and abundance as physical resource limitations and divine tests requiring ethical management.

Muslims are highlighted as caliphs of the earth, tasked with pursuing personal interests within moral boundaries and differentiating from conventional economic methods by prioritizing moral considerations. The importance of moderation in Islamic economics is underscored, advocating for a balanced approach to the extremes of scarcity and abundance and opposing wastefulness and stinginess to promote

⁷⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Study Quran* (New York: HarperOne, 2015).

⁷¹ Pal Tamas, *Water Resource Scarcity and Conflict: Review of Applicable Indicators and Systems of Reference* (UNESCO, 2003).

⁷² Wahbalbari, Bahari, and Mohd-Zaharim, "The Concept of Scarcity and Its Influence on the Definitions of Islamic Economics."

⁷³ Zaman, "Scarcity: East and West."

social and economic justice and stability. This paper suggests that addressing scarcity requires understanding resource limitations and changing human behavior towards responsible resource management, emphasizing the need for education and awareness about individual responsibility in resource management.

This paper paves the way for further research in several key areas, all centered around the understanding and application of Islamic principles in resource management and economic behavior. Future studies could delve into the development and evaluation of educational programs aimed at instilling principles of responsible resource management within an Islamic context. A significant area of exploration lies in the realm of behavioral economics, specifically examining how Islamic teachings shape economic behaviors under conditions of scarcity and abundance. Additionally, comparative studies between Islamic and conventional economic frameworks would offer insights into their approaches to resource management, sustainability, and justice.

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