

## *Sustainability of Social Systems Based on the Holy Qur'an: A Multi-Study Mixed-Methods Research*

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*Article History: Received 3 February 2023; Accepted 11 April 2023*

### ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

Sustainability has been recognized as one of the greatest challenges facing social systems in the 21st century. Social systems should have the knowledge and the power to lead this transition and to induce the changes towards this new paradigm. In this regard, it is of crucial importance to achieve a correct and comprehensive understanding of the concept of sustainability and its key components. Although some successful studies have been reported, there is a lack of a local framework for investigating the sustainability of social systems in the context of the Islamic approach, as well as the use of a mixed-methods approach to support an integrated and holistic conceptualization and implementation of sustainability. This paper aims to develop a conceptual framework for the sustainability of social systems based on the Holy Qur'an and assess its validation in universities, which was conducted in two studies, respectively. In the first study, after extracting the key themes from the Qur'an, the relationship between them was shown in the proposed framework consisting of foundations, principles, factors, and dimensions of sustainability. Then, in the second study, the cross-validation method was used. In this section, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out (N=61) to evaluate the fit, reliability, and validity of the framework.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.37264/JIQS.V2I1.10>

Further, concurrently percentage agreement coefficient of semi-structured interviews (N=10) was used to analyze the internal validity of the framework. The results of both quantitative and qualitative studies confirmed the fit, reliability, and validity of the framework. The present research contributes to this literature by presenting a local framework for the concept of sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an, in a holistic and inclusive perspective, using a mixed-methods approach. This study can be a useful and effective initiator for studies and theoretical extensions in conceptualizing sustainability based on Qur'anic teachings, and also pave the way for the application of this knowledge in the functional-practical areas of social systems in Islamic societies.

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KEYWORDS: the Qur'an, Sustainability, Social System, University.

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## *1. Introduction*

Human society is full of numerous and diverse social systems that have emerged to respond to the needs of society and to ensure its survival and development. The social system can be viewed as a network of cohesive relationships among individuals, groups, and institutions in human society that interact with each other in various ways to achieve a common goal. One of the most important and influential social systems in any society is the university (Shields 2019). As the primary institutions for human resource development, universities play a critical role in the sustainability of a society. Many scholars argue that universities have a moral obligation to be leaders in sustainability because their role in society is to educate intellectuals, leaders, and future makers (Lozano 2006; Wright & Horst 2013). However, in the twenty-first century, when increasing and complex environmental changes have dominated various social systems, sustainability has been identified as one of the greatest challenges for all social systems, especially universities (Rusinko 2010).

The concept of sustainability goes beyond the passive persistence of social systems. In this context, sustainability does not refer to ecology and the environment, but rather to the ability of a social system to adapt to its physical, social, economic, and intellectual environment. This perspective on sustainability is consistent with the work of Barnard and Van der Merwe (2016), and Fien, Maclean and Park (2009), who focus on the capacity of social systems to adapt to a changing environment. Moreover, sustainability is not a single element, but a complex new paradigm that affects all areas and activities of social systems (Berzosa, Bernaldo & Fernández-Sánchez

2017). Furthermore, it is a situational matter and depends on the indigenous contingencies and requirements of social systems. With this consideration, it is necessary to achieve a comprehensive and complete knowledge of the multidimensional concept of sustainability and its different aspects, as well as the development of indigenous humanities in this regard. Accordingly, the study of sustainability from the perspective of the Qur'an, especially for social systems in Islamic societies, is proposed.

Muslims believe that this comprehensive holy book covers every aspect of human conduct and behavior. The word sustainability is not found in its common meaning in the Qur'an, although by accepting the guiding authority of the Qur'an for all human beings, especially the Islamic society, the key themes of sustainability can be extracted from it.

So far, numerous studies have been conducted on the sustainability of various organizations and institutions, especially universities, but there are comparatively few research studies on sustainability based on the Qur'an. For a better understanding, the authors of this paper classified the results of the existing studies into three categories based on their commonalities. First, some studies have attempted to explain and clarify the meaning and concept of sustainability from an Islamic perspective (Barry 2015; Sarkawi, Abdullah & Dali 2016). Of course, most scholars have used the definition presented at the United Nations Conference in Stockholm (1972) to examine the concept of sustainability from the perspective of Islam and the Qur'an. In these studies, very few attempts have been made to achieve a deep understanding of sustainability and develop its conceptual and operational aspects based on Qur'anic teachings (Cincera et. al. 2018). Other researchers have paid special attention to the principles and basic elements of sustainability (Matali 2012; Abdullah & Harun 2018). However, due to the complexity of the concept of sustainability and, on the other hand, the comprehensiveness of the Qur'an, the principles and elements discussed have been considered to a very limited extent.

Finally, most researchers have analyzed and explained sustainability with an Islamic approach from the perspective of one of the dimensions of sustainability in particular, among which more attention has been paid to the environmental and economic dimensions (Jusoff, Samah & Akmar 2011; Vincenti 2017; Irfan et al. 2020; Ghoniyah & Amilahaq 2020; Sonita, Miswardi & Nasfi 2021). Generally, these studies do not go beyond introducing the conventional dimensions of sustainability and have neglected other fundamental components of sustainability.

On the other hand, sustainability is a new concept and attention to it from the perspective of Islamic approach does not have strong theoretical support.

There are also methodological limitations in these studies, which have often examined sustainability using a descriptive-analytical approach and in some cases a qualitative approach (Hutchins used to a limited extent 2019). In addition, no study was found that used a mixed-methods approach to examine this concept in depth and comprehensively. What is missing is a framework that takes into account not only all dimensions of sustainability, but also other important aspects of sustainability, and at the same time, the validity of this framework has been confirmed in practice. By developing and validating this framework, the authors of this manuscript aim to fill this gap. As a result, this study will make a valuable and significant contribution, both theoretically and practically, to the literature on sustainability, social systems, and especially to the development of Qur'anic studies.

Theoretically, the present research contributes to this literature by presenting a holistic and inclusive framework that presents crucial components of sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an. The present research can be the beginning of a new path in systematizing the concept of sustainability based on Quranic teachings. In addition, this study has paved the way for the concept of Islamic sustainability to enter the literature of higher education management for the first time.

In practical terms, the findings guide the officials and planners of the academic system and the policy makers to provide the necessary measures for the sustainability of social systems and society in general by conceptualizing it according to each social system and taking the necessary measures according to the appropriate conditions. In addition, since the validation of the framework has been done in universities, based on this framework, a tool can be developed that provides the possibility of evaluating and checking the state of sustainability of national universities, and based on the results, the possibility of conceptual and practical development of the subject will be provided in the future. Therefore, it can be useful and effective to apply the obtained framework for planning and taking actions to ensure and guarantee sustainability in universities.

Thus, the main objectives of this paper are: (a) to extract the key themes of the sustainability of social systems from the perspective of the Qur'an, (b) to demonstrate the relationship between the extracted themes in the form of a conceptual framework for the sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an, and (c) to validate the proposed framework in universities as one of the key social systems of the society.

In this paper, after the introduction, the research methodology will be described, then the key components of sustainability of social systems based on the Holy Qur'an and the relationship between them will be detailed as a conceptual framework. Afterwards, the results of the proposed framework

validation in both quantitative and qualitative methods will be highlighted. Finally, the conclusions and limitations of the study as well as some recommendations for future studies will be presented.

## 2. Methodology

A multi-study mixed-methods design was chosen for this research to allow for an in-depth exploration of the sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an. This method can best address the complexity of the three research objectives as outlined in an earlier section of this paper. The overall research design is illustrated in Figure 1.

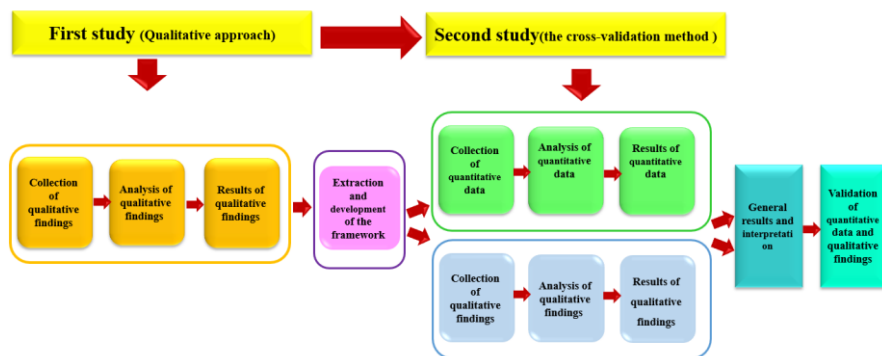


Figure 1. The Process of Multi-Study Mixed-Methods Study (Creswell & Clark 2017)

### 2.1. The First Study (Qualitative approach)

This is a qualitative study based on a case study strategy to analyze the new and still little analyzed phenomenon of sustainability based on the Qur'an. The case study was conducted in all 114 surahs of the Qur'an. In this study, using thematic analysis, after extracting the key themes of sustainability of social systems from the perspective of the Qur'an, the relationship between them was presented in a conceptual framework.

### 2.2. The Second Study (the cross-validation method)

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used concurrently to validate the findings of the first study. It was conducted in public universities in Iran. The informants of this research were specialized and experienced experts in the field of higher education and sustainability issues, as well as knowledgeable about religious and Qur'anic principles.

Data were collected sequentially in two simultaneous phases. In the quantitative part, an online survey was used as the main tool for data collection. The scale was first sent to 20 people to test its validity and reliability. The results of item analysis and Cronbach's alpha showed that the research scale has good validity and reliability (Table 1).

*Table 1. Validity and Reliability of the sustainability scale*

<b>Components</b>	<b>Correlation</b>	<b>Alpha Coefficient</b>
Foundations	0.50-0.87	0.91
Principles	0.54-0.82	0.89
Factors	0.60-0.86	0.84
Dimensions	0.56-0.87	0.90
Total	0.40-0.98	0.94

The scale was completed by 61 participants (61 out of 326), 10 of whom were interviewed simultaneously. Purposive sampling was used for this part of the study. In the qualitative part, data were collected through the semi-structured interviews, but also through some open-ended questions of the questionnaire. Equal weight was given to both the broad survey data and the selective in-depth interview data, and it was initially thought that both types of data would be collected simultaneously, as is common in triangulated mixed-methods designs (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007).

In the quantitative section, which is a descriptive-correlational study, first and second order confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the factor structure of the framework of sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an. This test was conducted using Smart PLS software. In addition, the interviews were analyzed using the percentage agreement coefficient. Finally, the two datasets were merged by bringing the separate findings together through interpretation.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, 137), there are two techniques for merging the quantitative and qualitative data, which are transforming one type of data to make the qualitative and quantitative datasets comparable and then comparing the datasets, or comparing the data without transformation through discussion or a matrix. In this research, the latter method of merging qualitative and quantitative data -through a matrix- was adopted because some of the data collected were complementary rather than directly comparable.

### 3. The Framework of Sustainability Based on the Qur'an

After extracting the key components of sustainability of social systems, an attempt was made to show the logical relationship between them through a conceptual framework. It is worth mentioning that all these components are interactive and interrelated in the semantic network of the Qur'an. Therefore, the themes of each cycle are connected to each other with a dashed line, which represents a continuous and reciprocal interaction. However, in order to better understand their position in the context of sustainability, the authors have tried to interpret a logical connection between them.

Numerous verses of the Qur'an indicate that everything except Allah and what and/or who is connected to Him will perish (Q. 16:96; 20:73; 28:88). Therefore, in the Islamic perspective, sustainability in the universe belongs to Allah, and human beings will be sustainable only by connecting to this primary source of being and sustainability. According to Figure (2), the key concept of *riḍwān Allāh* as the ultimate goal of true sustainability will be achieved when human beings reach *ḥayāt ṭayyibah* as described in the Qur'an:

*Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions<sup>1</sup> (Q. 16:97).*

The meaning of *ḥayāt ṭayyibah* is a life in which all components and elements are pure and good according to the Qur'anic interpretation. Generally, according to the Quran sustainability is a long-term process from the life (*dunyā*) to the afterlife (*ākhirah*) which can be realized in the context of *ḥayāt ṭayyibah* and to achieve divine satisfaction (*riḍwān Allāh*). Hence, any social system that seeks sustainability must manifest goodness in all aspects of its members' cognitions, values, and behaviors. To achieve this, the creation and development of social systems must be based on fundamental and basic beliefs, which are called the foundations of sustainability.

1. مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَ هُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَ لَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (النحل/97)

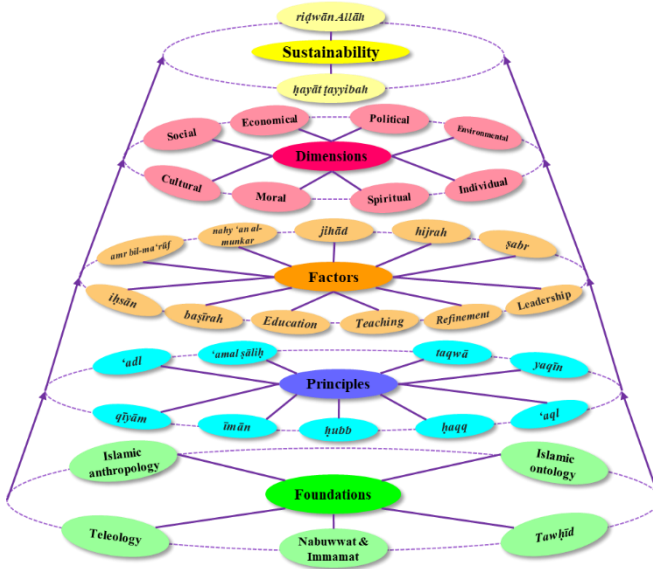


Figure 2. The conceptual framework for the sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an

### 3.1. The Foundations of Sustainability

Foundations refer to cardinal assumptions and approaches in the field of sustainability. According to the findings, Islamic monotheism (*tawḥīd*), Prophecy (*nabuwwat*) and Immamat, teleology, Islamic ontology and Islamic anthropology are the foundations of the sustainability of social systems from the perspective of the Qur'an.

*Tawḥīd*, as the initial and essential foundation of sustainability, is the belief that Allah is One, without partners in His rule and action (*rubūbīyah*), without equals in His essence and attributes (*asmā' wa ṣifāt*), and without rivals in His divinity and worship (*ulūhīyah/ibādah*) (Philips 1994). This basic foundation creates cohesion and solidarity among the members of society and keeps them away from division and discord (Makarem Shirazi 1995). Therefore, if the members of social systems accept the Islamic monotheistic worldview and make it the headline of all their thoughts and actions, cohesion and solidarity will be achieved as key necessities for sustainability under the shadow of monotheism.

After monotheism, another key foundation is the acceptance of prophecy and the imamate. Prophecy is such a central and essential concept for Islam that it is hard to find a Muslim thinker who has not spoken or written about it (Arif 2009). The Prophet and the Imam, as the leader and the messenger



of God in the cultural context of each society, taking into account the existential capacities of that society, seek to have deep intellectual and behavioral influences for the construction of a good life. Accordingly, in any social system, Prophecy and Imamate can play a role as an important foundation for sustainability if the belief in Prophecy and Imamate and the necessity of their existence for the meaningful survival of human society is well established in the intellectual systems and the beliefs of its members. According to the Shiite approach, the education of the waiting generation should be considered. A justice-seeking generation that consciously and continuously strives to improve its current situation and create the crucial conditions for the emergence of the promised savior (Imam Mahdī (PBUH)).

Teleology, another foundation of sustainability, refers to the fundamental belief that the universe is moving toward perfection, and for humankind, the end of this movement is the attainment of the perfect human being. The key point in teleology is the issue of resurrection. Resurrection means the return of human beings to their origin:

*To Allah, We belong, and to Him is our return (Q. 2:156).*

A return whose starting point is in this world. In this view, teleology keeps people away from despair and absurdity and gives them hope to find a divine purpose and meaning for their lives and to make the best use of all their capacities and abilities to build a good life.

The two other important foundations of sustainability are Islamic ontology and anthropology. According to the Qur'anic worldview, Allah purposefully created the universe. In addition, the human being was established as the caliph (*khalīfah*) of Allah on earth. However, in order to achieve this precious position (the caliph of God), it is essential to recognize abilities and accept responsibilities. Islamic anthropology focuses on the education of human beings who grow and achieve excellence in their individuality, and meanwhile, as the righteous servant of Allah, can properly fulfill their individual and social responsibilities.

### *3.2. The Principles of Sustainability*

Principles of sustainability are the headline and practical guide for designing and implementing sustainability programs and guiding them in the desired direction in practice. In other words, the principles define and guide the quality and manner of sustainability measures taken from the aforementioned foundations.

*Aql* is a central quality, characteristic, power, and capacity of reason and

intellect in human beings. In Islamic teachings, *'aql* is the compelling force by which humans understand life as a trust as well as a gift, from which humans are obliged to use it as a capital to do righteousness by following the teachings of the scriptures (Dalhat 2015). Therefore, it is worth mentioning that the greater the sustainability of thought, the greater the sustainability of life (Tabataba'i 1999).

Accordingly, through the proper use and development of their reason and intellect, members of social systems can attain a correct knowledge of truth (*ḥaqq*) and create within themselves the spirit of truth seeking as another principle of sustainability. Of course, in addition to reason, God's love and affection (*ḥubb*) are so necessary to move toward the truth. The attainment of divine love, accompanied by reason and the spirit of truthfulness, will ignite the flames of faith (*īmān*) in people's hearts. True faith (*īmān ḥaqīqī*) has to do with heartfelt conviction; a conviction that translates into action (Khan 1819). Such faith motivates individuals to rise up (*qīyām*) in defense of the truth that their reason and heart affirm; people must become an upright *ummah* (the community of believers), determined to perform their individual and social duties in the best possible way to achieve the desired end, which is the good life.

At the forefront of all motives, what drives people to revolt more than anything else, is justice and equity (*'adl*). Justice in Islam is not practiced only on Muslims. Rather, it is practiced on every human being regardless of his or her faith or religion (Bhat, 2019). However, justice cannot be achieved except in the context of action, which according to the Qur'an is righteous action (*'amal ṣāliḥ*). Righteous action, in turn, leads to piety of the heart (*taqwā*). A person with *taqwā* desires to be in the good pleasures of Allah and to stay away from those things that would displease Allah, and he/she is careful not to go beyond the boundaries and limits set by Allah (Alabed 2017). After going through all these steps, certainty (*yaqīn*) is achieved. This important principle eliminates all doubts, fears, and worries and helps people to overcome all hardships and difficulties with true confidence and peace on the way to build a good life.

### 3.3. The Factors of Sustainability

Although the foundations and principles are the basic and underlying necessities of any plan and action for sustainability, these two have more cognitive-value aspects and for their objective realization, components are needed that go beyond cognitive boundaries and bring practical efforts. Sustainability factors are actions or deeds that, through special functions and effects (agents) that are based on the foundations and principles of

sustainability, lead to the desired results and achievements in the path of sustainability of social systems.

According to the proposed framework, leadership is the initiator and director of other sustainability factors. Since leadership is an essential part of people's daily lives, Islam has set the guidelines for this social process (Alabed 2017), and the Qur'an and Sunnah contain numerous teachings on how a leader should behave towards his followers and vice versa (Almoharby & Neal 2013). Leadership as an essential factor allows social systems to make the best use of all their material and spiritual resources and capital to achieve their desired goal. In this sense, it is necessary to create a comprehensive educational system that focuses on refinement, the elimination of moral vices, and the creation of moral and behavioral virtues to ultimately educate people who grow according to the aforementioned foundations and principles. In addition to being a key factor for sustainability, education can include other factors. To put it more clearly, other factors of sustainability, in order to have a more desirable function and effect, must be institutionalized in individuals through the education system. Therefore, the leaders of social systems should consider the institutionalization of key factors such as insight (*baṣīrah*), benevolence (*ihsān*), enjoining good (*amr bil-ma'rūf*), forbidding wrong (*nahy 'an al-munkar*), *jihād*, emigration (*hijrah*), and patience (*ṣabr*).

### 3.4. *The Dimensions of Sustainability*

In the last cycle of the proposed framework, the objective and practical presentation of all foundations, principles, and factors of sustainability in various dimensions and practical-functional areas of social systems are considered. From the perspective of the Qur'an, the key dimensions of the sustainability of social systems are individual, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental.

In the Qur'an, the individual and society are considered simultaneously, and Islam has been introduced as a social religion. However, it is the individual who is supposed to ultimately attain divine pleasure. Accordingly, the individual dimension of sustainability and attention to it is a priority. Based on the individual dimension of sustainability, human capabilities should grow and flourish in the individuality of each person in accordance with spirituality and morality. When the individuality of each member of the social system has such an opportunity to grow, flourish, and blossom, we can see the formation of a cultural system with the rule of the principles, spiritual, and moral values of Islam. Undoubtedly, due to the multidimensionality of human life, the footprints of the transcendent human

being cannot be summarized only in the form of cultural patterns. Rather, the requirements of social coexistence, financial and economic areas, political and environmental issues are also important areas in which the results of the excellence of individuality can be observed. Therefore, for the sustainability of social systems, the realization of a good life, and ultimately the attainment of the position of divine pleasure for all members of the system, the foundations, principles, and factors of sustainability must have an objective and practical manifestation in all aspects of individual, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental life.

### 4. Validating the Framework of Sustainability Based on the Qur'an

#### 4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analyses

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using SmartPLS software to establish the structural validity of the framework. As shown in Figure 3, the factor loading for each item exceeds 0.4. In addition, according to Figure 4, the t-values (shown in the relationship paths of the constructs) are all accepted and significant at 0.001.

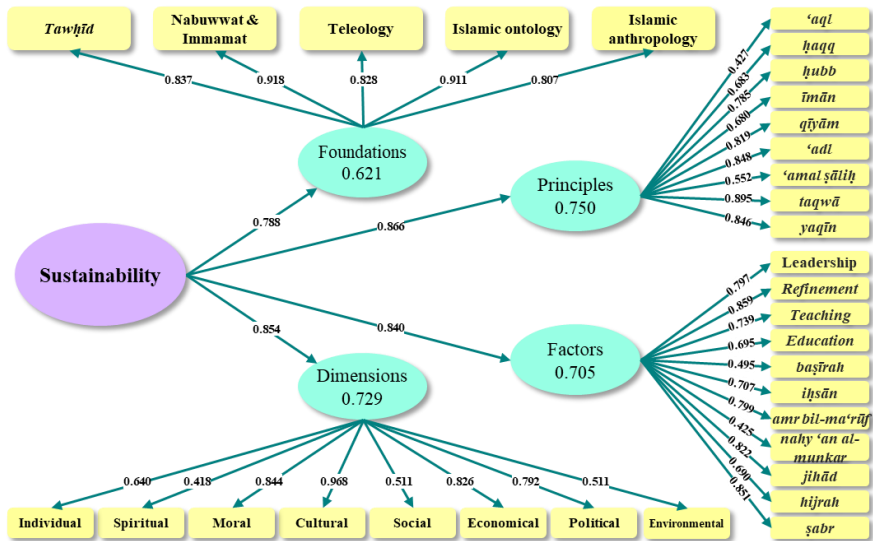


Figure 3. Confirmatory factor analysis model with standardized path coefficients and factor loads with SmartPLS

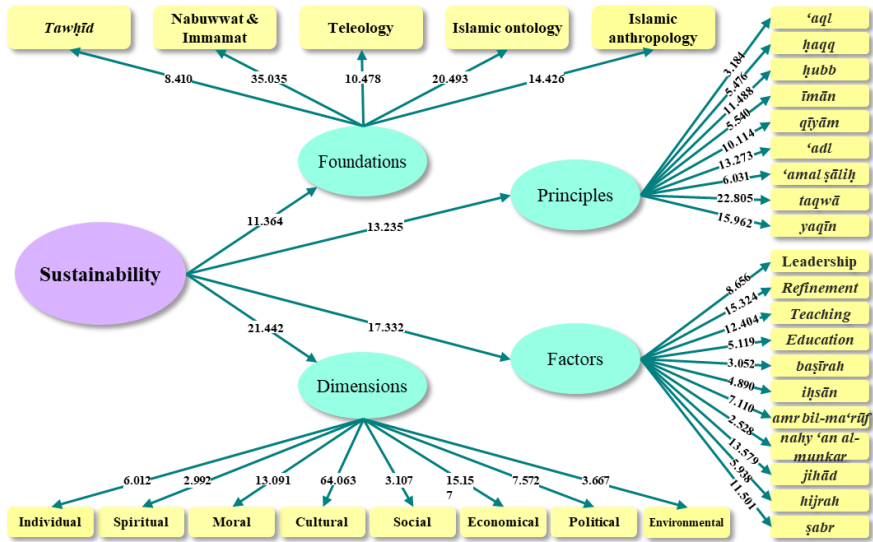


Figure 4. Confirmatory factor analysis model with t-value

In addition, Table 2 shows that all composite reliability (CR) values are above 0.7, indicating internal consistency (Gefen, Straub & Boudreau 2000). All average variance extracted (AVE) are above 0.5, indicating convergent reliability (Chin 2010). Finally, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient values are all above 0.7, consistent with the suggestions of Rui Sarmiento & Costa (2017).

Table 2. Reliability, validity, and internal consistency results for the CFA of the framework

Factor	CR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
Foundations	0.93	0.74	0.91
Principles	0.91	0.54	0.89
Factors	0.92	0.53	0.90
Dimensions	0.88	0.51	0.84
Total (sustainability based on the Qur'an)	0.95	0.70	0.94

Discriminant validity was assessed using Fornell and Larcker (Fornell & Larcker 1891) by comparing the square root of each AVE in the diagonal with the correlation coefficients (off-diagonal) for each construct in the corresponding rows and columns. As shown in Table 3, this measurement model supports discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table3. Discriminant validity

	Foundations	Principles	Factors	Dimensions
Foundations	0.86			
Principles	0.64	0.74		
Factors	0.53	0.56	0.72	
Dimensions	0.57	0.68	0.62	0.71

### 4.2. Percentage Agreement Coefficient

Concurrent with the distribution and collection of the research scale, the percentage agreement coefficient was used to assess the content validity of the framework from the perspective of experts. Therefore, the validity of the framework was assessed by key informants based on seven criteria: relevance, usability, solidarity, comprehensiveness, perceptibility, innovation, and acceptability. The results of the percentage coefficients of the mentioned criteria are as follows: relevance (100%), usability (70%), solidarity (70%), acceptability (100%), comprehensiveness (100%), perceptibility (50%), and innovation (100%). In general, the results indicate the validity of the proposed framework.

Table 4. Joint display of quantitative and qualitative findings regarding the framework of sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an

Key components	Quantitative findings	Qualitative findings		
		Percentage agreement coefficient		Key informants' views
Foundations	Statistical significance	Relevance	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The necessity of monotheism</li> <li>- Monotheism, prophecy, and resurrection as the foundations of the universe sustainability</li> <li>- Prioritization of the foundations of sustainability</li> </ul>
		Usability	70%	
		Solidarity	70%	
		Acceptability	100%	
Principles	Statistical significance	Comprehensiveness	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection of effective principles</li> <li>- Paying attention to the important aspects of the issue of sustainability</li> <li>- The importance of the mentioned themes and components in making the framework practical</li> </ul>
Factors	Statistical significance			
Dimensions	Statistical significance	Perceptibility	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paying attention not only to the reward of the Hereafter but also to the aspects of life in this world</li> <li>- Paying attention to the fundamental issues of individual and social life</li> <li>- Man, the main focus of the present discussion</li> </ul>
		Innovation	100%	

## 5. *Mixed-Methods Findings*

The degree, to which the proposed framework is valid, is discussed below using the results of quantitative and qualitative studies. A joint display of these findings is given in Table 4, which shows that the qualitative findings from the interviews confirm the results of the quantitative study. In general, it can be said that the validity of the research framework has been approved both quantitatively and qualitatively.

## 6. *Discussion*

Considering the importance and necessity of the issue of sustainability, on the one hand, and the belief in the completeness of the Qur'an as a complete source of various issues related to the requirements of *ḥayāt ṭayyibah*, on the other hand, the present research has attempted to establish the conceptual framework of sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an.

According to the findings, the sustainability of social systems is realized in the context of *ḥayāt ṭayyibah* and the light of *riḍwān Allāh*. In the light of these interpretations, any social system that wants to be sustainable must demonstrate *ḥayāt ṭayyibah* in all its cognitive, value, and behavioral dimensions. In this regard, in the first and basic step, it is necessary to develop the monotheistic spirit of Islam and its fundamental beliefs in the members. The monotheistic approach, which considers the Prophethood, the Imamate, and teleology as its fundamental principle, definitely presents a very different view of the universe and man. In the monotheistic view, the system of existence, from the beginning of creation to its end, is in continuous motion in the path of evolution and reaches its essence of existence, which is God. Humans, as an important part of this system, are on this path whether they like it or not, and will one day have to answer for all their thoughts and actions.

The next step is to introduce and internalize a set of key principles that emerge from the above epistemic context. These principles are, in fact, rules and instructions that guide people on the difficult path of sustainability. The principles introduced are *ʿaql*, *ḥaqq*, *ḥubb*, *īmān*, *qīyām*, *ʿadl*, *ʿamal ṣāliḥ*, *taqwā*, and *yaqīn*. It is worth mentioning that all the components mentioned under the title of the principles of sustainability of social systems have interactive and mutual connections in the semantic network of the Qur'an. Although some of them, such as *īmān*, *taqwā*, and *yaqīn*, have been identified to some extent in terms of precedence and backwardness, but in

general, they are related to each other in an interactive cycle and have a mutual influence on each other.

Despite the key position and very significant role that the above principles play in the sustainability of social systems, they cannot guarantee sustainability. Although the principles mentioned are associated with a practical commitment, their cognitive-value aspects are generally bold. It is necessary to think about other measures for the objective presentation of the foundations and principles. In this regard, from the deep study of the Quran, components have been extracted under the title of sustainability factors. Due to their agency, these components go beyond intellectual and internal boundaries and require practical efforts. Leadership, Refinement, teaching, Education, *baṣīrah*, *iḥsān*, *amr bil-ma'rūf*, *nahy 'an al-munkar*, *jihād*, *hijrah*, and *ṣabr* were identified as the main factors of sustainability.

The final stage of the sustainability framework considers the objective and practical expression of all the foundations, principles, and factors of sustainability in the various dimensions and functional areas of social systems. Based on the monotheistic worldview of the Qur'an, to achieve the sustainability of social systems and the realization of *ḥayāt ṭayyibah*, and ultimately the achievement of all its members to the position of *riḍwān Allāh*, it is necessary that the foundations, principles, and factors of sustainability in all dimensions of personal, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental life have an objective and practical appearance.

## 7. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the Qur'an, as the eternal guidance for humanity, does not express all the concepts, titles, and emerging issues of human life under the same name and title. However, it is divinely chosen and described as a way of life for human beings. Accordingly, new concepts and issues must be derived and explored from this sacred book. Sustainability of social systems is one of these concepts that has been recognized as an inevitable challenge and necessity for social systems.

The purpose of this paper was to develop and validate a framework for the sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an. Sustainability has been widely documented in the literature. However, very few studies have considered the Islamic aspect of it. The results showed the framework of sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an, including foundations, principles, factors and dimensions of sustainability. In addition, the validity of the research framework was confirmed quantitatively and qualitatively. The study makes theoretical and practical contributions by developing and



validating a framework for sustainability of social systems based on the Qur'an. It provides a solid background on the issue of sustainability in the context of the Islamic perspective. It also describes avenues for future research that can be pursued in further work.

There are two major limitations to this study that should be addressed in future research. First, the study has a small sample size. In the future, researchers are motivated to evaluate and validate the framework in a larger sample size to enable generalization. Second, the context was limited to universities; more studies can be replicated to examine the model in different contexts. In general, the results of the present study should be seen as an input for future and more holistic studies. A future research agenda on sustainability in the context of the Qur'an and Islamic perspective could include an emphasis on the following issues

- Identifying the factors that influence the unsustainability of social systems from a Qur'anic perspective.
- A comparative study of the concept of sustainability in the Islamic approach and the Western approach.
- Pathology of sustainability of higher education system of Islamic societies based on the proposed framework.
- Capacity building for sustainability of social systems based on the teachings of the Qur'an.

## *Acknowledgements*

This paper has been extracted from the dissertation prepared by Elham Razi to fulfill the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The authors would like to acknowledge the Faculty of Education and Psychology, Shiraz University, and the Research Deputy for providing the necessary resources and environment for conducting this research.

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