
INTEGRATING BLUE ECONOMY AND ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SYNERGY IN THE KARIMUNJAWA ISLANDS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the synergy between the economy and the environment in the Karimunjawa Islands through the implementation of Blue Economy principles based on Islamic values. This research employs a qualitative method with a field research approach. The research subjects consist of five individuals, including related government institutions such as BBPBAP Jepara; the Secretary of HPI Karimunjawa; Karimunjawa residents, lodging owners, fishermen who are also tour boat owners, as well as other stakeholders involved in the management of marine resources. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation using data analysis techniques including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the synergy between economic and ecological aspects in Karimunjawa is realized through sustainable practices, such as the use of environmentally friendly fishing gear, aquaculture activities that meet the standards of Good Aquaculture Practices (CBIB), and the development of conservation-based tourism. This is supported by coral reef monitoring data over the past five years, which indicate that the percentage of coral reef cover in the Karimunjawa National Park area falls into the “good” category (average 64.70%), representing an increase compared to the 2019 coverage of 53.80%. Increases occurred in all zones except the marine tourism utilization zone. Public awareness of marine conservation has also increased, along with the understanding that the sea is a source of life and a trust (amanah) from Allah SWT. Islamic principles such as tauhid (unity of God), khalifah (stewardship), maslahah (public benefit), mizan (balance), and anti-israf (prohibition of excess) serve as the foundation for marine economic activities that balance community welfare and ecosystem preservation. Religious traditions such as Sedekah Laut (Lomban) and Barikan Kubro further strengthen the community’s sense of gratitude and ecological responsibility. Thus, the implementation of a Sustainable Blue Economy based on Islamic values in Karimunjawa reflects a model of coastal development that is just, sustainable, and aligned with the principle of environmental balance (hifz al-bi’ah).

Keywords : Blue Economy, Sustainable, Economic, Environmental Synergy, Coastal Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic nation, possesses vast and diverse marine resources that hold enormous potential for economic growth and environmental sustainability (Harris 2023). The maritime sector encompasses fisheries, tourism, transportation, and marine biotechnology, all of which can significantly contribute to national development. However, despite this potential, many coastal and island communities, such as those in the Karimunjawa Archipelago, still face economic disparities, environmental degradation, and inadequate governance. Overfishing, marine pollution, and unregulated tourism activities have disrupted ecological balance and threatened the livelihood of local communities (Tempo 2024).

The research gap in this study lies in the contradiction between community-based environmental conservation rooted in local wisdom and the persistence of environmentally harmful practices, such as illegal aquaculture ponds, despite strong opposition from local residents (Tempo 2024). For generations, the people of Karimunjawa have maintained ecological balance through sustainable practices like using environmentally friendly fishing gear (bubu) and preserving cultural traditions such as Barikan Kubro, Pesta Lombok, and the Kerang Tuktuk tradition, which carry important ecological values. This environmental resilience was also evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the decline in tourism did not prevent the community from sustaining their livelihoods by returning to fishing, supported by abundant marine resources. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how the conflict between modern economic interests and local wisdom based on Islamic and cultural values affects environmental sustainability and community welfare. Based on this, the research problems are: (1) how are the current economic and environmental conditions in the Karimunjawa Islands, particularly regarding the sustainable use of marine resources; (2) what principles of Al-Tanmiya in Islam can be applied to create synergy between economic and environmental aspects in the blue economy; and (3) what strategies can be implemented to promote such synergy through the application of

a Blue Economy based on Al-Tanmiya in the Karimunjawa Islands.

The concept of the Blue Economy emerges as a transformative approach to address these challenges (Shirazi and Azid 2015). It promotes sustainable use of marine resources through innovation, waste minimization, and ecosystem preservation, while ensuring social and economic inclusivity (Marwa et al. 2024). Unlike conventional ocean-based industries that emphasize profit maximization, the Blue Economy advocates for long-term ecological resilience and intergenerational equity. Its principles align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 14 (Life Below Water), which seeks to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources (Ha 2024).

Yet, in practice, Indonesia's Blue Economy implementation remains uneven. Policy fragmentation, weak law enforcement, and limited local participation have hindered its success, especially in small island regions. Many existing programs focus primarily on the economic dimension while neglecting the ethical, spiritual, and cultural foundations that shape local environmental behavior. As a result, community-based marine management often lacks a moral framework that encourages stewardship and accountability toward nature (Marwa et al. 2024).

In this regard, Islamic economic principles offer a profound philosophical and ethical foundation for sustainability. Concepts such as tawhid (unity of God), khalifah (stewardship), mizan (balance), maslahah (public benefit), and anti-israf (prohibition of excess) emphasize harmony between humans and nature. (Siregar 2020) These values encourage responsible management of natural resources, recognizing that the environment is both a blessing and a trust (amanah) from Allah SWT. Integrating these principles into the Blue Economy framework can establish a more holistic and equitable model of development, one that balances material welfare with ecological preservation and spiritual accountability (Ahmad Hery Sultoni 2023).

The Karimunjawa Islands provide an ideal setting for exploring this integration. As a marine national park and tourism destination, Karimunjawa faces the dual challenge of

maintaining economic growth while preserving environmental integrity (Suryati 2024). The local community's strong Islamic identity and traditional maritime culture create opportunities for synergy between religious values and sustainable practices. Understanding how these elements interact can generate insights for formulating context-specific policies that align environmental ethics with Islamic economic principles (Iyad Abumoghli n.d.).

Several previous studies have discussed sustainable development, Islamic economics, and the Blue Economy, but most remain limited either in theoretical scope or geographic focus. For instance, Siregar, Masrizal, and Gultom (2020) examined sustainable development within the framework of Islamic economics, emphasizing Maqashid Syariah as a foundation for balanced resource management. (Siregar 2020) However, their study was largely conceptual and did not address its practical application in coastal areas. Meanwhile, Rini et al. (2021) explored a Blue Economy, based business model in Brebes, highlighting efficiency and waste reduction through integrated aquaculture systems. Although the study achieved positive economic and environmental outcomes, it did not consider spiritual or ethical dimensions that influence local sustainability behavior (Rini, Handy, and Hidayah 2021).

Other works, such as Wiryawan et al. (2024) and Khoirun Rizky et al. (2025), examined the national implementation of the Blue Economy and its connection to sustainable development (Firdaus 2023). These studies identified challenges related to policy execution, environmental management, and institutional coordination but overlooked the role of community-based ethics and religious frameworks. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how Islamic values, particularly Al-Tanmiya (development), can be operationalized within the context of the Blue Economy to enhance sustainability outcomes in island regions like Karimunjawa.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by exploring the synergy between economic and environmental sustainability in the Karimunjawa Islands through the application of Islamic principles within the Blue Economy

framework. By employing a qualitative field research approach, this study aims to reveal how Islamic values shape community practices, resource management, and ecological awareness. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of a sustainable coastal economic model that is not only environmentally responsible but also ethically and spiritually grounded

2. METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative research with a field research approach conducted in the Karimunjawa Islands from May 2025 until completion. The research subjects or informants consist of five individuals, including representatives from the relevant government institution (BBPBAP Jepara); HPI Karimunjawa; a resident of Genting Island, Karimunjawa District; a Karimunjawa resident who is also a lodging owner; and a fisherman who is also a tour boat owner, all of whom are directly involved in economic activities and environmental management. The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria such as experience, knowledge, and relevance to the research topic, enabling the collection of in-depth and comprehensive data. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Meanwhile, data analysis was conducted systematically through stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, this study employed validation techniques including source, technique, and time triangulation, supported by prolonged observation, increased persistence, and member checking to obtain credible and reliable data.

Research ethics are an essential part of this study. The research applies commonly accepted ethical principles, such as informed consent, where each respondent is provided with an explanation of the research objectives before the interview is conducted. In addition, the researcher ensures the confidentiality and anonymity of informants' data to prevent any potential harm. Principles of honesty and transparency are upheld throughout the data collection and reporting process, while avoiding any form of data manipulation. The researcher

also respects the norms, culture, and local wisdom of the Karimunjawa community during the research process and ensures that the presence of the researcher does not disrupt the social or economic activities of the local community.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Actor Relationship Diagram (Systemic Scheme)

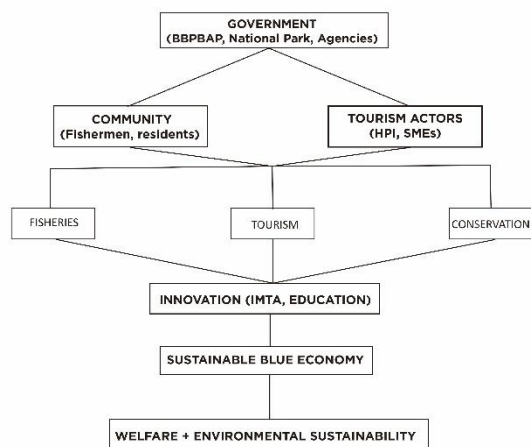


Figure 1. Actor Relationship Diagram

Table 1. Informant Profile

No	Name	Status/Profession	Focus of Information
1	Arief Taslihan	BBPBAP Jepara (Government)	Infrastructure & innovation (IMTA)
2	Jamaluddin	Secretary of HPI Karimunjawa	Regulation & implementation
3	Suhadi	Fisherman & tour boat owner	Fishermen's economic realities
4	Sonia Afriani	Homestay entrepreneur	Tourism & environment
5	Shodiqul Amin	Karimunjawa resident	Infrastructure & social impact

Socioeconomic Conditions and Economic Dependence of Karimunjawa Communities

The Karimunjawa Islands, located in Jepara Regency, Central Java, represent a small island ecosystem characterized by close community ties to marine resources. The livelihood structure of its inhabitants reflects a heavy dependence on the sea, where fishing and marine-based activities form the economic backbone of local society. Despite abundant natural potential, economic diversification remains limited, and community welfare

depends largely on fluctuating marine productivity.

Based on demographic data, the fishery sector employs around 15.18% of the working population, all male, making it the second-largest occupational group after the unemployed and housewives. Other sectors such as trade, agriculture, and small-scale industries remain underdeveloped. The high unemployment rate (24.29%) highlights structural dependence on marine resources as the main livelihood source. This situation underscores the urgent need to enhance sustainable livelihood alternatives that maintain ecological balance while improving economic resilience among coastal households.

Sustainable Utilization of Marine Resources

Effective marine resource management is central to achieving environmental and economic balance in Karimunjawa. According to Mr. Jamaluddin, a community leader,

“Government regulations are actually sufficient to maintain the balance between economic growth and marine conservation, especially through the zoning of the Karimunjawa National Park. The biggest challenge lies in supervision and community understanding of these regulations. Some still practice unsustainable fishing due to limited livelihood alternatives or weak law enforcement.”

This statement reflects the classic dilemma of sustainability: regulation without social adaptation often leads to resistance or non-compliance. Mr. Suhadi, a local fisherman, expressed this in Javanese, translated as:

“Government rules are good, but sometimes they don't fit our daily reality. If certain fishing zones are closed but no alternative jobs are provided, life becomes hard. During the tourist season, we can work as boat guides for snorkeling or diving, but when it's quiet, we return to fishing. So, regulation should come with real solutions.”

Ms. Sonia Afriani, a local tourism entrepreneur, emphasized the growing interdependence between the marine environment and the tourism economy:

“Tourism has grown rapidly. Many residents now open homestays or work as tour guides, but we must stay aware that our business depends on a healthy sea. Without clean water and coral reefs, tourism will decline.”

Such insights underline that sustainable marine management in Karimunjawa requires a social-ecological approach, empowering local communities while ensuring marine conservation.

Infrastructure Development and Government Support for Coastal Progress

Infrastructure development plays a crucial role in strengthening the competitiveness and accessibility of small island economies. In Karimunjawa, improvements in transportation, energy, and communication have significantly boosted economic activity and tourism connectivity. (Ahmad Hery Sultoni 2023) These advancements mark a major step toward realizing an integrated Blue Economy model.

According to Mr. Arief Taslihan, representative from the Jepara Marine Aquaculture Development Center (BBPBAP Jepara):

“In recent years, infrastructure progress has been remarkable—24-hour electricity, better roads, faster ferry services, and an airport under construction. These developments make economic activities easier and attract more visitors.”

This statement was echoed by Mr. Shodiqul Amin, a Karimunjawa resident:

“Now electricity runs all day, roads are improved, and fast boats operate almost daily. Life and business have become easier. We hope the airport operates soon to further promote tourism.”

While infrastructure progress brings undeniable benefits, it also presents environmental challenges, particularly waste management and increased coastal pressure. Thus, infrastructural growth must be coupled with conservation-oriented governance to ensure that economic expansion remains ecologically sustainable.

Economic–Environmental Synergy and Innovation in the Blue Economy

The synergy between economic development and environmental sustainability in Karimunjawa reflects the core principles of the Blue Economy, innovation, inclusivity, and ecological balance. Recent efforts have shown increasing collaboration between research institutions, local government, and coastal communities in developing environmentally friendly technologies such as sustainable

aquaculture, waste recycling initiatives, and community-based tourism (Shirazi and Azid 2015).

Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) systems, for instance, have been promoted as an innovative approach to minimize waste and optimize production efficiency by combining multiple marine species within a single ecosystem. In the tourism sector, community groups are being trained in ecotourism management, emphasizing coral reef conservation, responsible visitor behavior, and low-impact hospitality practices. These initiatives indicate a gradual but promising transformation toward a sustainable Blue Economy framework where technological innovation, education, and community empowerment converge to balance profit with ecological responsibility (Rini et al. 2021).

Sustainable Development through Islamic and Cultural Perspectives

Islamic teachings play a vital role in shaping the moral foundation for environmental stewardship among Karimunjawa’s predominantly Muslim population. The principles of tawhid (unity), khalifah (stewardship), mizan (balance), and amanah (trust) provide ethical guidance for sustainable economic behavior. These values encourage moderation in resource use and a deep sense of responsibility toward preserving nature as part of divine creation.

Cultural traditions such as Sedekah Laut and Barikan Kubro serve as collective expressions of gratitude and ecological consciousness, reinforcing the community’s emotional and spiritual connection with the sea. These rituals symbolize the harmony between faith, culture, and environmental ethics, aligning well with Islamic concepts of hifz al-bi’ah (environmental protection). Through this integration of spirituality, local wisdom, and economic practice, Karimunjawa exemplifies a faith-based model of sustainable coastal development, one that harmonizes material prosperity with environmental integrity and moral accountability.

Compared to prior studies that mainly focus on environmental and economic dimensions (Rini et al. 2021), this research contributes a distinct perspective by integrating Islamic values and local cultural practices into the Blue

Economy framework. While studies such as (Marwa et al. 2024) highlight community empowerment, they do not explicitly explore the role of religious ethics in shaping environmental behavior. In contrast, this study shows that principles such as tawhid, khalifah, mizan, and amanah, along with traditions like Sedekah Laut and Barikan Kubro, function as powerful socio-cultural mechanisms that reinforce environmental responsibility. This suggests that sustainability in Karimunjawa is not driven solely by policy and innovation, but also by moral and spiritual awareness embedded in daily life.

The Synergy Between Economy and Environment in the Karimunjawa Islands: The Application of the Blue Economy for Sustainable Community Welfare

The Karimunjawa Islands exemplify a dynamic intersection between economic growth and environmental sustainability under the Blue Economy framework. As a marine-based region, its economy depends heavily on fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism. However, these sectors also exert pressure on marine ecosystems through overfishing, coral reef degradation, and tourism-related pollution. Data from BPS Jepara (2024) indicate that 15.18% of Karimunjawa's population are fishermen, 24.29% remain unemployed, and 23.46% are engaged in unpaid household work, revealing a fragile dependency on limited economic sources. These conditions reflect what Khoirun Rizky et al. (2025) identify as a key challenge in achieving sustainable growth in small island economies: the difficulty of balancing livelihood improvement with marine ecosystem preservation (Khoirun Rizky et al. 2025).

In recent years, local and national programs have begun implementing Blue Economy strategies to enhance sustainability and resilience (Citaningati et al. 2024). The establishment of marine protected areas, eco-friendly aquaculture systems, and coastal zoning regulations demonstrates a shift toward resource-based governance aligned with the principles of sustainability (Hafidh 2025). Field findings show that local communities are increasingly adopting environmentally friendly fishing methods such as hand lines and bubu traps, replacing destructive gear that damages coral reefs. This transition echoes Ajeng Faizah

Nijma Ilma's (2020) assertion that community-based participation is the cornerstone of the Blue Economy, emphasizing human capital and ecological ethics as key drivers (Ilma 2016).

Furthermore, institutional involvement, such as the BBPBAP Jepara's introduction of Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA), illustrates practical efforts to optimize resource efficiency and minimize waste. In line with the research of Sulistiani and Hartono (2023), who found that coastal community empowerment enhances both economic independence and environmental stewardship, Karimunjawa's approach reflects a promising synthesis between ecological awareness and economic innovation (Istiqomah n.d.). While constraints remain, including limited technological access and market fluctuations, the integration of education, policy reform, and environmental consciousness provides a gradual but steady foundation for sustainable welfare (Marwa et al. 2024). Ultimately, the Karimunjawa case reinforces the idea that economic prosperity and environmental health are not opposing goals but interdependent dimensions of sustainable island development.

The findings of this study are generally consistent with previous research, such as (Khoirun Rizky et al. 2025), which highlights the challenge of balancing economic welfare and marine ecosystem preservation in small island regions. The conditions in Karimunjawa marked by high dependence on fisheries, limited economic diversification, and environmental pressures reinforce this argument. Similarly, this study aligns with (Ilma 2016), emphasizing that community participation is a key driver of Blue Economy success, as reflected in the gradual shift of local fishermen toward environmentally friendly fishing methods such as hand lines and bubu traps. However, unlike prior studies that often portray the Blue Economy as a relatively successful and linear pathway, this research reveals more complex socio-economic realities, including high unemployment, limited access to technology, and income instability, which indicate that sustainability transitions remain uneven and incomplete.

Furthermore, while studies such as (Istiqomah n.d.) suggest that coastal community empowerment can simultaneously enhance

economic independence and environmental stewardship, the findings in Karimunjawa show that such empowerment is still at an early stage and has not been evenly distributed. Although initiatives like IMTA, ecotourism training, and conservation programs have been introduced, their impacts remain limited for certain groups, particularly traditional fishermen who remain vulnerable to market fluctuations and seasonal tourism. This study also challenges the assumption that the integration of policy, innovation, and environmental awareness will automatically lead to sustainable welfare. In reality, increasing economic activities and tourism continue to exert pressure on marine ecosystems, highlighting the need for more adaptive, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches. Therefore, this study contributes a more critical perspective by demonstrating that the successful implementation of the Blue Economy requires not only innovation and regulation, but also stronger social inclusion, economic equity, and local capacity building.

Islamic Principles in Blue Economy Governance to Create Harmony Between Economy and Environment in Karimunjawa

The moral and ethical foundations of Islam play a pivotal role in guiding Blue Economy implementation in Karimunjawa, aligning economic goals with ecological integrity. Within Islamic thought, development is not merely material advancement but a balanced process of *Al-Tanmiya*, growth that preserves justice, balance (*mizan*), and the trusteeship (*khalifah*) of humans over nature (Citaningati et al. 2024). These values form a theological basis for sustainability, where economic activity must contribute to social welfare without degrading the environment (Ahmad Hery Sultoni 2023). As highlighted by Rahman and Abdullah (2022), Islamic economic principles can effectively complement modern sustainability frameworks by embedding moral accountability into resource governance (Firdaus 2023).

In Karimunjawa, this synthesis is visible in daily practices and community rituals such as *Sedekah Laut* and *Barikan Kubro*, which reflect gratitude and recognition of divine order in nature. These traditions serve not merely as cultural expressions but as community-based conservation ethics, reinforcing the Qur'anic injunction: "Eat and drink, but do not waste, for

Allah does not love the wasteful" (Q.S. Al-A'raf: 31). Such practices resonate with findings from Ilma (2020) and Huda (2021), who noted that the incorporation of religious values in local environmental management fosters stronger communal responsibility toward ecological balance (Ilma 2016)(Journal and Economics 2025).

The Blue Economy in Karimunjawa thus becomes not only an economic strategy but also a manifestation of spiritual stewardship (*amanah*). By integrating Islamic principles, justice (*adl*), moderation (*wasatiyyah*), and gratitude (*syukr*), into resource governance, the community is able to sustain livelihoods while respecting ecological limits (Hafidh 2025). This harmony between economy and environment confirms what Rizky et al. (2025) describe as "integrative sustainability," where faith-based ethics function as a unifying force between growth and conservation (Khoirun Rizky et al. 2025). Hence, the Karimunjawa experience offers a practical model for other Muslim-majority coastal regions seeking to balance economic welfare with environmental preservation through a spiritually grounded Blue Economy paradigm (Istiqomah n.d.).

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with previous research, such as (Citaningati et al. 2024), (Ilma 2016) and (Rini et al. 2021), which emphasize that Islamic values can strengthen environmental governance by embedding moral responsibility into economic activities. Similar to these studies, the Karimunjawa case demonstrates that principles such as *tawhid*, *khalifah*, *mizan*, and *amanah* are not merely theoretical concepts but are actively reflected in community practices and cultural traditions like *Sedekah Laut* and *Barikan Kubro*. These findings support earlier arguments that integrating religious values into environmental management can enhance collective awareness and promote sustainable behavior. In this sense, the study reinforces the idea proposed by (Khoirun Rizky et al. 2025) that faith-based ethics can serve as a unifying foundation for achieving balance between economic growth and environmental conservation.

However, this study also provides a more critical perspective compared to prior research, which often assumes that the integration of Islamic principles into economic governance

will automatically lead to sustainable outcomes. The findings in Karimunjawa reveal that while religious and cultural values do contribute to environmental awareness, they do not fully eliminate structural challenges such as economic dependency on marine resources, limited alternative livelihoods, and pressures from tourism development. This indicates that moral and spiritual values alone are insufficient without being supported by strong institutional frameworks, economic diversification, and effective policy implementation. Therefore, this study extends previous literature by highlighting that the success of a spiritually grounded Blue Economy requires not only ethical awareness but also practical socio-economic support systems, making sustainability a multidimensional process rather than purely a moral achievement.

Table 2. Main Findings by Theme

Theme	Key Findings	Field Evidence/Quotes
Economic Dependence	High reliance on marine sector	Fishermen 15.18%; unemployment 24.29%
	Low economic diversification	Other sectors < 2%
Environmental Management	Adoption of eco-friendly practices	Bubu traps & hand lines
	Ongoing environmental pressure	Overfishing & tourism impact
Regulation	Regulations are adequate but weakly implemented	“The biggest challenge lies in supervision...” – Jamaluddin
Fishermen’s Dilemma	Conflict between policy and livelihood	“Rules are good... but life becomes hard...” – Suhadi
Tourism	Alternative income source	“Tourism has grown rapidly...” – Sonia
Infrastructure	Supports economic growth	“24-hour electricity... faster ferry...” – Arief
	Direct benefits for society	“Life and business have become easier...” – Shodiquil
Innovation	IMTA and ecotourism development	Efficiency & low waste
Culture & Religion	Islamic values support sustainability	Sedekah Laut & Barikan Kubro

4. CONCLUSION

This study finds that the economic and environmental conditions in Karimunjawa are characterized by a high dependence on marine resources with limited economic diversification, although growing awareness of sustainable practices has begun to emerge. The application of Islamic principles of Al-Tanmiya—such as tawhid, khalifah, mizan, maslahah, and anti-israf provides an ethical foundation that encourages balance between economic activities and environmental preservation, where the sea is viewed as an amanah that must be protected. To strengthen this synergy, key strategies include promoting environmentally friendly fisheries and aquaculture (e.g., CBIB and IMTA), developing conservation-based tourism, enhancing community capacity through education and participation, improving policy implementation, and diversifying livelihoods to ensure sustainable welfare without compromising ecological integrity.

The findings imply that integrating religious values, local culture, and innovation can enhance sustainable coastal development, making the Karimunjawa model relevant for other Muslim-majority coastal regions. However, this study is limited by its small number of informants, localized scope, and qualitative approach, which may not fully capture broader socio-economic dynamics or allow generalization. Future research is recommended to use mixed methods, involve a larger and more diverse sample, and examine long-term impacts of Blue Economy policies, particularly in addressing structural issues such as economic diversification, inequality, and environmental pressures from tourism.

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