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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF *RAḤMAH* IN ENHANCING THE SOCIAL WELFARE OF MSES THROUGH A MANGROVE-BASED GREEN ECONOMY

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Abstract: *This study examines the mediating role of raḥmah in enhancing the social welfare of mangrove-based Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Integrating Islamic Mercy Theory, Sustainable Development Theory, and Social Ecology Theory, this research employs a quantitative approach using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) on data from 240 MSE actors. The findings indicate that government policy, green economy models, and community participation significantly influence ecological awareness and the internalization of raḥmah. Furthermore, raḥmah and ecological awareness have direct positive effects on social welfare, while green economy practices and community participation exert indirect effects through raḥmah. The results highlight that social welfare is shaped not only by economic and policy factors but also by the integration of ethical values, ecological awareness, and collective engagement, contributing to a sustainable and inclusive mangrove-based development model.*

INTRODUCTION

Raḥmah acts as a catalyst for mangrove-based green economic development that enhances the social welfare of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) through ecological ethics, green innovation, and social collaboration. As a moral foundation, *raḥmah* promotes sustainable mangrove management and community-based conservation that preserve ecosystem balance while generating long-term economic benefits through ecosystem services and diversified livelihoods (Dean et al., 2024; Farahisah, Yulianda, & Effendi, 2021). *Raḥmah* also encourages green innovations such as mangrove-based products, ecotourism, and silvofishery systems that integrate conservation with aquaculture to strengthen ecosystem resilience and improve community income (Sumarga et al., 2024; Suyono & Fithor, 2025). In addition, *raḥmah* strengthens partnerships among MSEs, government institutions, academia, and local communities, thereby improving access to capital, knowledge, and markets (Dean et al., 2024). Through the integration of ethical values,

sustainability, and collaboration, *raḥmah* supports the development of an inclusive and sustainable mangrove-based green economy.

Previous studies have highlighted the relationship between Islamic ethical values, environmental sustainability, and social welfare. In the economic context, (Setiabudi et al (2024 and Suryani et al., (2023)**.** demonstrate that Islamic ethical values and Islamic Work Ethic improve employee performance, knowledge sharing, and positive organizational behavior. In the ecological dimension, Wahida et al., (2024), Basri et al., (2024) and Sattayapanich et al., (2022)**.** emphasize the importance of environmental ethics and community participation in supporting sustainable mangrove management. Furthermore, leadership studies conducted by by Dutton et al., (2014); Ramachandran et al., (2024); Sodiq et al., (2024)**.** reveal that compassion-based leadership strengthens trust, motivation, and collaboration within organizations and communities.

Although previous studies have discussed Islamic ethics, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility separately, research specifically examining *raḥmah* as a mediating variable in improving the social welfare of mangrove-based MSEs remains limited. Most prior studies focus only on direct relationships between environmental awareness, community participation, or green economy practices and welfare outcomes. Few studies integrate these variables within a comprehensive framework that positions *raḥmah* as an ethical and social mediator connecting ecological awareness, green economy models, and social welfare. This limitation indicates a research gap and highlights the novelty of the present study in developing an integrative and value-based model of sustainable mangrove economic development.

This study integrates three theoretical perspectives, namely Rahmatan lil-ʻĀlamīn (Islamic Mercy Theory), Sustainable Development Theory, and Social Ecology Theory. Islamic Mercy Theory emphasizes compassion, justice, and universal care as ethical principles guiding human interaction with society and nature. Sustainable Development Theory highlights the balance among economic, social, and environmental dimensions to ensure long-term sustainability (Purvis, Mao, & Robinson, 2019). Meanwhile, Social Ecology Theory explains that environmental degradation is closely related to social structures such as inequality and domination (Temper, Demaria, Scheidel, Del Bene, & Martinez-Alier, 2018). The integration of these theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interaction among government policy, green economy practices, ecological awareness, community participation, *raḥmah*, and social welfare within the context of mangrove-based MSE development.

Based on the identified research gap, this study examines the influence of government policy, green economy models, community participation, ecological awareness, and *raḥmah* on the social welfare of mangrove-based MSEs. Particular attention is given to the mediating role of *raḥmah* in strengthening the relationship between ecological awareness, green economy practices, and social welfare within a sustainable development framework. Therefore, the research problems of this study are formulated as follows: (1) how do government policies influence green economy models and community participation; (2) how do green economy models and community

participation affect ecological awareness and *raḥmah*; (3) how do ecological awareness and *raḥmah* influence social welfare; and (4) how does *raḥmah* mediate the relationship between ecological awareness, green economy practices, and social welfare among mangrove-based MSEs?

This study aims to analyze both the direct and indirect relationships among government policy, green economy models, community participation, ecological awareness, *raḥmah*, and social welfare. In addition, the study investigates the mediating role of *raḥmah* in promoting sustainable and ethical economic development among mangrove-based MSEs. The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on Islamic economics and sustainable development by positioning *raḥmah* as a mediating value framework within mangrove-based green economic development. Practically, the study provides insights for policymakers, local governments, and community stakeholders in formulating sustainable development strategies that integrate ecological sustainability, social responsibility, and community welfare.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a survey design to examine the relationships among government policy, green economy model, community participation, ecological awareness, *raḥmah*, and social welfare among mangrove-based micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The variables were operationalized based on established theoretical frameworks and prior empirical studies.

Raḥmah was adapted from Ab Hamid et al. (2023) and Sharip et al. (2023), and comprised four dimensions: social empathy (indicator: helping others in the business environment), environmental concern (indicator: maintaining cleanliness and mangrove conservation), moral generosity (indicator: providing assistance without expecting rewards), and non-harm behavior (indicator: avoiding actions that harm people and the environment).

The green economy model was adapted from Sribianti et al. (2021), Widanti et al. (2024) and Arifanti et al. (2025), and consisted of four dimensions: resource efficiency (indicator: efficient use of raw materials), environmental impact (indicator: efforts to minimize environmental degradation), green technology (indicator: use of environmentally friendly business tools), and business sustainability (indicator: sustainable practices that ensure environmental preservation).

Social welfare was adapted from Hasanah (2023) and Setiawan et al. (2023) and comprised four dimensions: economic needs (indicator: adequacy of income to meet basic needs), social security (indicator: perceived safety in working activities), social relations (indicator: good relationships with surrounding communities), and life satisfaction (indicator: satisfaction with life conditions).

Ecological awareness was adapted from Mahaswa and Lingga Dharmayasa (2021), Hamidah et al. (2023), and Musriani et al. (2024), and consisted of four dimensions: environmental knowledge

(indicator: knowledge of mangrove conservation), environmental attitude (indicator: concern for mangrove conditions), pro-environmental behavior (indicator: environmentally responsible business practices), and sustainability orientation (indicator: commitment to long-term environmental preservation).

Community participation was adapted from Hellen (2014) and Safrina (2015), and comprised four dimensions: planning participation (indicator: involvement in decision-making), implementation participation (indicator: participation in mangrove conservation activities), communication (indicator: communication regarding environmental programs), and monitoring (indicator: supervision of mangrove management activities).

Government policy was adapted from Howlett and Cashore (2014) and related public policy literature, and consisted of four dimensions: environmental regulation (indicator: existence of mangrove protection policies), business support (indicator: government assistance for enterprises), infrastructure provision (indicator: availability of supporting facilities), and policy evaluation (indicator: government evaluation of environmental management).

Each dimension was operationalized into indicators, resulting in a total of 24 measurement items. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The questionnaires were distributed online through Google Forms shared via WhatsApp from January to April 2026. This study applied a convenience sampling technique involving 240 mangrove-based MSE actors in South Sulawesi. The sample size fulfilled the minimum requirement for multivariate analysis recommended by Hair et al. (2010).

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 4.1.1.7 (Ringle et al., 2022). The analysis included measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation. Validity and reliability were assessed using factor loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha. Hypothesis testing was performed through the bootstrapping procedure with a significance level of p-value < 0.05 (Hair et al., 2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the 240 respondents indicate that the majority were female (77.1%), aged between 30–39 years (32.1%), had 1–5 years of business experience (58.3%), and were senior high school graduates or equivalent (53.8%). Most respondents reported monthly incomes between IDR 1–5 million (68.3%), suggesting that the majority belong to the lower-to-middle income group and are relatively experienced in managing small-scale businesses.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Criteria/Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	55	22.9%
Female	185	77.1%
Total	240	100%
Age		
20 – 29 years	64	26.7%
30 – 39 years	77	32.1%
40 – 49 years	62	25.8%
50 – 59 years	29	12.1%
Above 60 years	8	3.3%
Total	240	100%
Business Duration		
Less than 1 year	40	16.7%
1–5 years	140	58.3%
6–10 years	50	20.8%
Above 10 years	10	4.2%
Total	240	100%
Educational Background		
Elementary School (SD/MI)	23	9.6%
Junior High School (SMP/MTs)	40	16.7%
Senior High School (SMA/MAN/SMK)	129	53.8%
Diploma (D.I–D.IV)	3	1.2%
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	43	17.9%
Others	2	0.8%
Total	240	100%
Monthly Income		
Below IDR 1 million	10	6.4%
IDR 1–5 million	6	3.8%
IDR 5–10 million	1	0.6%
Above IDR 10–50 million	5	3.2%
Total	240	100%

Source: Primary data processed in 2026.

Measurement Model Assessment

The results of the validity and reliability tests indicate that all constructs meet the recommended evaluation criteria. All variables exhibit Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency. In addition, all constructs show AVE values exceeding 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. These findings confirm that the

measurement model is both reliable and valid. Therefore, the model is appropriate for further analysis.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Ecological Awareness (KE)	0.949	0.950	0.963	0.867
Government Policy (KP)	0.908	0.920	0.935	0.783
Social Welfare (KS)	0.927	0.934	0.948	0.821
Green Economy Model (MEH)	0.943	0.946	0.959	0.853
Community Participation (PM)	0.948	0.949	0.962	0.864
Raḥmah (Ra)	0.931	0.935	0.951	0.829

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 1.1.7, 2026

Table 3 presents the outer loading values, confirming the convergent validity of the measurement model. All indicators show loadings above the 0.70 threshold, indicating strong contributions to their respective constructs. Several indicators, such as KE4 (0.949), KP4 (0.931), KS2 (0.939), and MEH4 (0.945), demonstrate particularly high loadings. Similarly, PM3 (0.951) and Ra2 (0.939) reflect very strong contributions. Overall, these results confirm that all indicators are valid and reliable within the PLS model.

Table 3. Outer Loadings

Variables	Ecological Awareness (KE)	Government Policy (KP)	Social Welfare (KS)	Green Economy Model (MEH)	Community Participation (PM)	*Raḥmah* (Ra)
KE1	0.901					
KE2	0.937					
KE3	0.938					
KE4	0.949					
KP1		0.872				
KP2		0.865				
KP3		0.871				
KP4		0.931				
KS1			0.884			
KS2			0.939			

KS3	0.925				
KS4	0.874				
MEH1		0.906			
MEH2		0.920			
MEH3		0.924			
MEH4		0.945			
PM1			0.897		
PM2			0.938		
PM3			0.951		
PM4			0.932		
Ra1				0.869	
Ra2				0.939	
Ra3				0.922	
Ra4				0.912	

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 1.1.7, 2026

Table 4 confirms that all constructs meet the Fornell–Larcker Criterion, as the square root of AVE exceeds inter-construct correlations. For example, Ecological Awareness (0.931) and Government Policy (0.885) are higher than their correlation (0.807). Similarly, Social Welfare (0.906), Green Economy Model (0.924), Community Participation (0.930), and *Raḥmah* (0.911) also exceed their respective correlations. Overall, these results indicate strong discriminant validity and a well-established measurement model.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variables	Ecological Awareness	Government Policy	Social Welfare	Green Economy Model	Community Participation	*Raḥmah*
KE	0.931					
KP	0.807	0.885				
KS	0.901	0.771	0.906			
MEH	0.885	0.754	0.897	0.924		
PM	0.810	0.814	0.745	0.758	0.930	
RA	0.898	0.769	0.864	0.897	0.778	0.911

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 1.1.7, 2026

Table 5 demonstrates strong explanatory power, with high R^2 values across all constructs. *Raḥmah* (0.855) shows the highest value, followed by Ecological Awareness (0.829) and Social Welfare (0.827). Community Participation (0.662) and Green Economy Model (0.569) also indicate substantial explanatory capacity. The Adjusted R^2 values are very close to the R^2 values, confirming model stability and no overfitting. Overall, the model shows high predictive accuracy and strong contributions of the independent variables.

Table 5. R-Square and Adjusted R-Square Values

Variables	R-square	Adjusted R-square
Ecological Awareness (KE)	0.829	0.828
Social Welfare (KS)	0.827	0.825
Green Economy Model (MEH)	0.569	0.567
Community Participation (PM)	0.662	0.661
Raḥmah (Ra)	0.855	0.854

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 1.1.7, 2026

Table 6 shows that Government Policy (KP) has very strong effects on the Green Economy Model (MEH) (f^2 = 1.320) and Community Participation (PM) (f^2 = 1.961), while the Green Economy Model strongly influences Ecological Awareness (KE) (f^2 = 1.007). Ecological Awareness also exerts a large effect on Social Welfare (KS) (f^2 = 0.461) and a near-large effect on *Raḥmah* (Ra) (f^2 = 0.349). In contrast, Community Participation has a moderate effect on Ecological Awareness (f^2 = 0.267), and *Raḥmah* shows a small effect on Social Welfare (f^2 = 0.091), indicating a predominantly robust model.

Table 6. F-Square Values

Variables	KE	KP	KS	MEH	PM	*Ra*
Ecological Awareness			0.461			0.349
Government Policy				1.320	1.961	
Social Welfare						
Green Economy Model	1.007					0.327
Community Participation	0.267					
Raḥmah			0.091			

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 1.1.7, 2026

Structural Model Assessment

Table 7 presents SEM-PLS results of direct effects, showing all hypothesized paths were significant ($p < 0.01$). *Raḥmah* (β = 0.644) and ecological awareness (β = 0.484) positively influenced social welfare. The green economy model affected *raḥmah* (β = 0.754) and ecological awareness (β = 0.637), while ecological awareness also influenced *raḥmah* (β = 0.814). Community participation impacted ecological awareness (β = 0.469), and government policy promoted both community participation (β = 0.328) and the green economy model (β = 0.286). High t-statistics confirmed the robustness of all paths, highlighting the integrated role of policy, green economy, ecological awareness, *raḥmah*, and community participation in fostering sustainable social welfare.

Table 7. SEM-PLS: Direct Effect Testing Results

Relationship of Variables		Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
H1	*Raḥmah* (Ra) → Social Welfare (KS)	0.644	0.637	0.103	6.250	0.000
H2	Ecological Awareness (KE) → Social Welfare (KS)	0.484	0.475	0.077	6.262	0.000
H3	Green Economy Model (MEH) → *Raḥmah* (Ra)	0.754	0.749	0.064	11.777	0.000
H4	Ecological Awareness (KE) → *Raḥmah* (Ra)	0.814	0.807	0.051	16.003	0.000
H5	Green Economy Model (MEH) → Ecological Awareness (KE)	0.637	0.648	0.063	10.036	0.000
H6	Community Participation (PM) → Ecological Awareness (KE)	0.469	0.474	0.078	6.019	0.000
H7	Kebijakan Pemerintah (KP) → Community Participation (PM)	0.328	0.313	0.061	5.403	0.000
H8	Government Policy (KP) → Green Economy Model (MEH)	0.286	0.288	0.106	2.697	0.007

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 1.1.7, 2026

Figure 1. Output of the structural model testing

Table 8 presents SEM-PLS results of indirect effects, showing all mediated paths were significant ($p < 0.05$). The green economy model mediated the effect of ecological awareness and government policy on *raḥmah* and social welfare ($\beta = 0.353–0.480$). Ecological awareness mediated the impact of community participation and the green economy model on *raḥmah* and social welfare ($\beta = 0.138–0.410$). Community participation also influenced *raḥmah* and social welfare indirectly through ecological awareness ($\beta = 0.134–0.159$). High t-statistics confirmed the robustness of all paths, highlighting the integrated roles of policy, green economy, ecological awareness, *raḥmah*, and community participation in promoting sustainable social welfare.

Table 8. SEM-PLS: Indirect Effect Testing Results

Relationship of Variables		Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
H9a	Green Economy Model (MEH) → *Raḥmah* (Ra) → Social Welfare (KS)	0,353	0,354	0.064	5.548	0.000
H9b	Ecological Awareness (KE) → *Raḥmah* (Ra) → Social Welfare (KS)	0.410	0.415	0.087	4.696	0.000
H10a	Government Policy (KP) → Green Economy Model (MEH) → *Raḥmah* (Ra)	0.211	0.198	0.044	4.756	0.000
H10b	Government Policy (KP) → Green Economy Model (MEH) → Ecological Awareness (KE)	0.308	0.309	0.067	4.621	0.000
H11a	Community Participation (PM) → Ecological Awareness (KE) → *Raḥmah* (Ra)	0.159	0.147	0.033	4.851	0.000
H11b	Community Participation	0.138	0.135	0.051	2.722	0.007

	(PM) → Ecological Awareness (KE) → Social Welfare (KS)					
H11c	Green Economy Model (MEH) → Ecological Awareness (KE) → *Raḥmah* (Ra)	0.267	0.253	0.053	5.063	0.000
H11d	Green Economy Model (MEH) → Ecological Awareness (KE) → Social Welfare (KS)	0.480	0.487	0.073	6.584	0.000
H12	Government Policy (KP) → Community Participation (PM) → Ecological Awareness (KE)	0.134	0.139	0.062	2.154	0.032

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 1.1.7, 2026

Discussion

Table 7 shows that social welfare emerges through interconnected effects of government policy, green economy, ecological awareness, *raḥmah*, and community participation. Government policy drives the green economy model and community engagement, which in turn enhance ecological awareness. Ecological awareness strengthens *raḥmah* and directly contributes to social welfare, while *raḥmah* serves as an ethical mediator. These findings indicate that social welfare is shaped not only by economic or policy factors but by the synergy of regulation, sustainable practices, participation, awareness, and moral values. Overall, the results highlight the multidimensional determinants of sustainable social welfare.

These empirical findings are with Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn, sustainable development, and social ecology theories (Lind & Nobre, 2021), framing social welfare as multidimensional. Social welfare emerges from the synergy of policy, green economy, community participation, ecological awareness, and *raḥmah*, which mediates ethical behavior (Si, Jiang, & Meng, 2022). Structural support from policy and green economy, combined with community engagement, reinforces collective responsibility (Manuella et al., 2023). Literature emphasizes the role of ethical and religious values in sustainability (Andrini, Syafei, Murtadho, Keguruan, & Tarbiyah, 2025). Overall,

integrating policy, moral values, and ecological awareness promotes holistic, sustainable, and equitable social development.

Social welfare in Islam integrates material, moral, and ecological dimensions within the human caliphate framework (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30; HR. Bukhari & Muslim). Environmental responsibility reflects ethical accountability and stewardship (QS. Ar-Rum [30]:41; QS. Ar-Rahman [55]:7–9; HR. Ahmad), while Rahmah guides humane treatment of all beings (QS. Al-Anbiya [21]:107; HR. Bukhari & Muslim). Long-term orientation and social participation reinforce collective accountability and sustainable resource use (QS. Al-Hashr [59]:18; QS. Al-Ma'idah [5]:2). Public policy and moderation operationalize justice and holistic falah (QS. An-Nahl [16]:90; QS. Al-A'raf [7]:31; HR. Bukhari & Muslim), providing a Sharia-compliant foundation for sustainable development.

Meanwhile, the indirect effects presented in Table 8 indicates that government policy strategically promotes the development of a green economy, which enhances ecological awareness and cultivates Rahmah values in society. The green economy serves as a key pathway to social welfare, both through ecological consciousness and Rahmah internalization. Community participation further strengthens ecological awareness, contributing to the formation of Rahmah and improving social welfare. Integrated ecological awareness within Rahmah values also sustains social well-being. Overall, these findings highlight a reinforcing chain linking policy, green economy, community engagement, ecological awareness, and Rahmah toward holistic social welfare.

These findings indicate that government policies, green economy practices, community participation, ecological awareness, and *Raḥmah* values collectively enhance social welfare. Policies operationalize Islamic ethics, promoting sustainability, justice, and environmental stewardship (Le, 2022). Ecological consciousness mediates moral and social outcomes, while collective norms support pro-environmental behavior (Lidskog, Standring, & White, 2022). The integration of structural, social, and ethical dimensions creates resilient, equitable, and sustainable welfare, bridging empirical evidence with normative Islamic principles for long-term development (Javaid, 2022).

Findings from Table 9 indicate that government policies facilitate green economy initiatives, enhancing ecological awareness and the internalization of *Raḥmah* (QS. An-Nisā' [4]:59; QS. Al-Ḥajj [22]:41; HR. Muslim). Community participation further strengthens ecological consciousness and *Raḥmah* values (QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:2; HR. Ahmad), while the internalization of *Raḥmah* expands development orientation toward holistic social welfare (QS. Al-Anbiyā' [21]:107; HR. Bukhari-Muslim). Social welfare is achieved through the integration of public policy, green economy, collective participation, ecological awareness, and *Raḥmah*, underpinned by principles of sunnatullāh, moderation, and socio-ecological justice (QS. Ar-Ra'd [13]:11; QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:143; HR. Ahmad; QS. Al-Ḥadīd [57]:25).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *raḥmah* plays a significant mediating role in enhancing the social welfare of mangrove-based micro and small enterprises (MSEs). The findings indicate that government policy, green economy practices, and community participation significantly influence ecological awareness and the internalization of *raḥmah*, which in turn directly and indirectly improve social welfare. These results demonstrate that social welfare is not solely determined by economic and policy factors, but is shaped by the synergistic interaction of ethical values, ecological consciousness, and collective engagement within a mangrove-based green economy framework.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of *Rahmatan lil-'Ālamīn*, Sustainable Development Theory, and Social Ecology Theory by positioning *raḥmah* as a key mediating variable in value-based economic development. Practically, it provides an integrative framework for policymakers and stakeholders to design sustainable development strategies that promote ecological awareness, strengthen green economy practices, and foster ethical value internalization.

However, this study is limited by its cross-sectional design and geographical scope, focusing only on mangrove-based MSEs in South Sulawesi. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ longitudinal approaches, include more diverse and larger samples, and incorporate additional variables to further explore the dynamics of *raḥmah* internalization and sustainable economic practices.

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