

The Role of Islamic Education in Building Ecological Awareness Among Youth

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Islamic education in building ecological awareness among youth by examining how Islamic values are integrated into the curriculum, pedagogy, and educational strategies in Islamic institutions. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through literature studies and in-depth interviews with educators and students at Islamic schools and pesantren. The findings show that Islamic teachings contain strong ecological values such as *khalifah* (stewardship), *amanah* (responsibility), and *ihsan* (compassion), which, if effectively taught, can shape youth attitudes toward environmental preservation. However, these values are often not explicitly embedded in the formal curriculum, and the implementation is still limited. The study recommends integrating eco-theological education models into Islamic education to develop more holistic and spiritually grounded ecological consciousness. This approach provides both a moral foundation and practical strategies to support sustainability efforts among Muslim youth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis is a global issue that is increasingly worrying. Global warming, deforestation, air and water pollution, and biodiversity damage are real threats to human survival (Yahuda et al. 2024). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023) report shows that global temperatures have increased by 1.1°C compared to pre-industrial times, and this trend will continue to increase if there are no significant changes in human behavior patterns (Naufani 2024). In Indonesia, environmental damage is also occurring massively: forest fires in Kalimantan and Sumatra, plastic waste in the sea, as well as floods and landslides in various regions are clear evidence of ecological damage that is occurring systematically.

This condition is exacerbated by the low ecological awareness among the younger generation. Data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK, 2022) shows that only 38% of Indonesian youth have the habit of sorting waste or behaving in an environmentally friendly manner. The phenomenon of urbanization and a consumptive lifestyle reinforce unsustainable lifestyles. Ironically, the younger generation is the group that will inherit the condition of the earth in the future, but they lack critical awareness in caring for and preserving the environment. In this case, education plays an important role in shaping environmentally friendly values, attitudes, and behavior from an early age (Susanto and Syahrudin 2024).

Unfortunately, in practice, environmental education in schools and formal institutions has not been fully effective in instilling ecological awareness in a deep and transformative way. The national education curriculum often places environmental issues as a complement, not as a core value. As a result, ecological learning only becomes a cognitive aspect and does not touch on the affective and spiritual aspects. This is where it is important to find alternative and integrative approaches that can reach the dimensions of values, ethics, and spiritual awareness of students (Rosenstock 1974).

One potential approach that has not been explored in depth is Islamic education (Susanto 2024). Islam as a religion *rahmatan lil 'alamin* contains very strong ecological values. The concept of *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, *tawazun*, and *mizan* are principles that emphasize balance, responsibility, and harmony between humans and nature. The Qur'an mentions more than 500 verses related to the universe and the environment. However, in the current practice of Islamic education, these values have not been mainstreamed in learning, especially in building ecological awareness among the young generation of Muslims (Susanto and Sugiyar 2023).

For this reason, it is necessary to design an Islamic educational approach that is able to ground environmental values in the curriculum, teaching methods, and spiritual experiences of students. Islamic education does not only teach faith and worship, but also ecological ethics as part of manners towards Allah SWT's creations. Instilling ecological awareness through an Islamic approach is believed to be more effective because it touches on the realm of spirituality and moral responsibility. Mosques, madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic missionary institutions can be strategic spaces for building Islamic ecopedagogy that is able to produce a young generation that cares about and is responsible for the environment.

Several studies have shown the relationship between Islamic teachings and environmental awareness. For example, research by Susanto et al. (Susanto, Rohmah, et al. 2023) concluded that the level of religiosity has a positive correlation with pro-environmental behavior among Muslim students. Another study by Musdalifah (Musdalifah 2023) highlights the importance of integrating environmental education into the madrasah curriculum, but has not explored thematic approaches based on Al-Quran values specifically. The study by Hamid et al. (Hamid, Pangestu, and Muhammad 2022) suggested strengthening ecological material in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects, but have not detailed applicable implementation strategies in the field. Therefore, there are still academic and practical gaps to develop a holistic ecologically oriented Islamic education model.

This study aims to explore and analyze the role of Islamic education in building ecological awareness among the younger generation. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify ecological values in Islamic teachings that are relevant to education; (2) examine the extent to which current Islamic education has internalized these values in learning; and (3) formulate Islamic learning strategies and models that are able to foster holistic ecological awareness among students.

This research is important to conduct considering the increasingly urgent global ecological crisis that requires a multidisciplinary approach, including a religious approach. In the context of Indonesia, which is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Islamic education has a strategic role in forming a sustainable ecological paradigm. Furthermore, this research is expected to contribute to the development of an Islamic education curriculum that is more relevant to the challenges of the times, while strengthening the position of Islam as a religion that cares and is responsible for the sustainability of the universe. Without ecological awareness that grows from religious values, education will only produce people who are intellectually intelligent but spiritually dry and do not care about the environment.

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with literature study methods and in-depth interviews (Huberman and Jhonny 2014). Data were obtained from classical and contemporary literature in Islamic studies that discuss environmental ethics, madrasah and pesantren curriculum documents, and interviews with educators and students at Islamic educational institutions (Sugiyono 2015). The analysis was conducted thematically to identify key values and educational practices that can support the formation of ecological awareness.

This study also adopted an eco-theological education approach, which emphasizes the importance of uniting spirituality with ecological responsibility.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of Islamic education and ecological awareness as a comprehensive pedagogical approach. This study not only discusses Islamic values theoretically, but also proposes practical strategies in learning based on ecological spirituality. In addition, the Islamic ecopedagogy approach developed in this study is contextual and can be applied to various levels of education, from madrasahs to modern Islamic boarding schools. Thus, this study is expected to be a new contribution in the field of Islamic education that is responsive to global ecological challenges.

2. METHODS

This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach which aims to explore in depth how Islamic education contributes to building ecological awareness among the younger generation. (Huberman and Jhonny 2014; Creswell 2022). This approach was chosen because it was considered the most relevant to understanding the meaning, values, and religious practices related to environmental concerns, especially in the context of Islamic spirituality and ethics. This study combines field studies and literature studies. Field studies were conducted in several Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and integrated Islamic schools that have integrated environmental values into their educational activities. Meanwhile, literature studies were conducted by reviewing classical and contemporary literature that discusses ecological values in Islam, including interpretations of verses of the Qur'an about nature, the Prophet's hadith about the environment, and scientific works that study Islamic education and the environment.

The subjects of this study included Islamic Religious Education teachers, ustadz/ustadzah, managers of Islamic educational institutions, and students or santri who are active participants in educational activities. The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques, namely deliberately selecting individuals who are considered to have insight, experience, and involvement in the development of environmentally friendly Islamic education. Data collection techniques used included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore the views and experiences of informants related to Islamic education practices that support ecological awareness. Observations were conducted to directly record learning activities, environmental programs, and social

interactions that show concern for nature. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect written data such as curriculum, syllabus, learning modules, and records of school or Islamic boarding school activities related to environmental issues.

The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, namely by identifying the main patterns and themes that emerged from the results of interviews, observations and documentation (**Sugiyono 2016**). The analysis process is carried out systematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To maintain the validity of the findings, the source and method triangulation technique is used, namely comparing the results from various sources and data collection techniques. With this approach, it is hoped that the research will be able to produce a complete and in-depth understanding of how Islamic education can be an effective means of instilling ecological awareness among the young generation of Muslims.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Konsep dan Nilai-Nilai Ekologis Diajarkan dalam Pendidikan Islam

The increasingly worrying global environmental crises, such as climate change, deforestation and pollution, demand a holistic approach to building ecological awareness (**Yahuda et al. 2024**). Islamic education, as an educational system that emphasizes the integration of science and spiritual values, has great potential in instilling environmental awareness in the younger generation. In Islamic teachings, humans are positioned as caliphs on earth, who are responsible for maintaining and caring for Allah's creation. Therefore, Islamic education can be an effective instrument in forming character and behavior that cares about the environment. Islamic teachings contain strong ecological values, which are reflected in the Qur'an and Hadith. Concepts such as caliph (leader), amanah (responsibility), and ihsan (goodness) emphasize the importance of maintaining the balance and sustainability of nature (**Herdianti, Janah, and Susanto 2025**). The Qur'an states that everything on earth was created in balance and full of wisdom, and humans are given the mandate to maintain this balance. In Surah Al-A'raf verse 56, Allah says: "And do not cause damage to the earth after (Allah) has repaired it."

In addition, the Prophet Muhammad SAW set an example in protecting the environment, such as encouraging planting trees, managing water economically, and prohibiting the waste of natural resources (**Susanto 2024**). The hadith narrated by Bukhari states that planting trees that are beneficial to living things

will be an act of charity whose rewards will continue to flow. These values show that protecting the environment is an integral part of worship and spiritual responsibility in Islam. Islamic education has a strategic role in internalizing ecological values to students. Integration of these values can be done through the curriculum, teaching methods, and extracurricular activities. In the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, material on the environment can be included in Fiqh, Aqidah Akhlak, and Tafsir lessons. For example, in Fiqh lessons, students can be taught about the laws related to environmental conservation, such as the prohibition of destroying nature and the recommendation to maintain cleanliness.

However, research shows that the integration of ecological values in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is still not optimal. Many schools have not adopted this approach systematically, and environmental material is often only touched upon in passing (**Sampurna and Jannah 2025**). Therefore, efforts are needed to develop a curriculum that is more responsive to environmental issues, by including ecological values explicitly and in a structured manner. In addition to the curriculum, teaching methods also play an important role in forming ecological awareness. Active and participatory learning approaches, such as environmental projects, group discussions, and field studies, can help students understand and apply ecological values in everyday life. For example, students can be involved in tree planting activities, waste management, or environmental cleanliness campaigns.

Teachers can also use audiovisual media to support learning, such as videos about the importance of preserving the environment from an Islamic perspective. The use of this technology can increase students' interest and understanding of environmental issues. In addition, training for teachers on how to effectively integrate ecological topics into Islamic Religious Education learning is also needed to improve the consistency and effectiveness of implementation. Islamic educational institutions, such as madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools, have an important role in shaping the character of students who care about the environment. Through a holistic approach that combines spiritual, moral, and practical aspects, these institutions can create an environmentally friendly school culture. For example, by implementing the "Green School" program that involves all school residents in maintaining cleanliness, saving energy, and managing waste wisely.

In addition, cooperation between Islamic educational institutions and environmental organizations is also important in protecting the environment. By

supporting each other and exchanging knowledge, both can achieve better results in carrying out their respective missions. The mass media also has an important role in spreading ecological awareness among Muslims (**Herdianti, Janah, and Susanto 2025**). Although there is great potential in integrating ecological values into Islamic education, there are several challenges that need to be addressed. One of them is the lack of relevant and structured teaching materials on the environment. Many teachers feel that they do not have enough resources or guidance to teach the topic comprehensively. In addition, high workloads and dense curricula make it difficult to insert ecological topics in an integrated and comprehensive way.

To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to develop more structured teaching materials and practical guidance for teachers to support the integration of ecological values in learning. This development should include clear guidance and practical activities that link religious teachings with everyday environmental applications (**Firoza, Barlnty, and Mokhamad 2025**). In addition, training for teachers on how to effectively integrate ecological topics into Islamic Religious Education learning is also needed to improve the consistency and effectiveness of implementation. Islamic education has great potential in forming ecological awareness among the younger generation. By integrating ecological values into the curriculum, teaching methods, and school activities, Islamic education can create a generation that is not only faithful and pious, but also has a strong ecological responsibility (**Susanto, Yahuda, et al. 2023**). This effort requires support from various parties, including curriculum developers, educators, and other stakeholders, to ensure that ecological values become an integral part of Islamic Religious Education learning. Thus, Islamic education can contribute significantly to overcoming the global environmental crisis and realizing the sustainability of our planet.

Methods and Strategies Used by Islamic Educational Institutions in Forming Ecological Awareness

Ecological awareness is an important aspect of Islamic education, considering that Islamic teachings emphasize the responsibility of humans as caliphs on earth to protect and preserve the environment. Islamic educational institutions, such as madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and integrated Islamic schools, have a strategic role in forming ecological awareness among the younger generation (**Herdianti, Janah, and Susanto 2025**). Through the integration of Islamic values with environmental conservation principles, these institutions can create a generation that is not only faithful and pious, but also

has a strong ecological responsibility. One method used is the integration of environmental education into the Islamic education curriculum (**Fulan Puspita 2015**). Subjects such as Fiqh, Ethics, and Aqidah can be integrated with environmental concepts. For example, in Fiqh lessons, students are taught about the laws related to the sustainable use of natural resources. Ethics lessons emphasize the importance of good behavior towards the environment, such as maintaining cleanliness and reducing waste. In Aqidah, it is explained that preserving nature is part of monotheism, because nature is Allah's creation that must be respected and preserved.

In addition, an interdisciplinary approach is also applied in the Islamic education curriculum. Subjects such as science, geography, and social studies are integrated with Islamic values to provide a comprehensive understanding of the importance of preserving the environment. For example, in science lessons, students learn about the impacts of pollution on health and the environment, while in geography lessons, they understand the importance of conserving natural resources. This approach helps students see the connection between science and Islamic teachings in the context of environmental conservation (**Junaedi 2022**). The learning methods used also play an important role in forming ecological awareness. Active and participatory learning approaches, such as environmental projects, group discussions, and field studies, can help students understand and apply ecological values in everyday life. For example, students can be involved in tree planting activities, waste management, or environmental cleanliness campaigns. Teachers can also use audiovisual media to support learning, such as videos on the importance of protecting the environment from an Islamic perspective. The use of this technology can increase students' interest and understanding of environmental issues.

The role of teachers is very important in shaping students' ecological awareness. Teachers must be role models in preserving the environment and integrating ecological values into every aspect of learning. They need to have adequate ecological knowledge and awareness and be able to create a conducive learning environment for students to internalize the values of ecological preservation (**Susanto and Afif 2023; Yahuda et al. 2024**). Teachers must also be able to design an ecological-based Islamic religious education syllabus and use appropriate learning methods and media, according to the needs and objective conditions of their students. Islamic educational institutions also implement strategies for habituating environmentally friendly behavior in everyday life at school. For example, by implementing the "Green School" program that involves

all school residents in maintaining cleanliness, saving energy, and managing waste wisely. Activities such as community service, waste sorting, and greening the school environment are part of the routine that forms the character of students who care about the environment. In addition, Islamic educational institutions can also collaborate with environmental organizations to hold seminars, training, and social activities that support environmental conservation.

Ecological-based education evaluation is also an important part of the strategy for forming ecological awareness. Evaluation is carried out to determine the extent to which students understand and practice environmental conservation values. This can be done through assessments of environmental projects carried out by students, observations of daily behavior, and reflections and discussions on environmental issues. With proper evaluation, Islamic educational institutions can continue to improve the effectiveness of the environmental education programs they run (**Susanto, Ali, and Hidayat 2024**). By implementing these methods and strategies, Islamic educational institutions can play an important role in shaping ecological awareness among the younger generation. Integrating Islamic values with environmental conservation principles in the curriculum, learning methods, and daily life in schools will create a generation that not only has a strong understanding of religion, but also has a high ecological responsibility. This effort requires support from various parties, including curriculum developers, educators, and other stakeholders, to ensure that ecological values become an integral part of Islamic education learning.

4. CONCLUSION

Islamic education has significant potential in fostering ecological awareness among youth through its rich spiritual and moral teachings. The concepts of *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, *mizan*, and *tawazun* offer a strong theological foundation for environmental stewardship. The study found that while these principles are present in Islamic doctrine, their integration into educational practices is still limited and often informal. Through curriculum development, active learning methods, and institutional practices such as green school programs, Islamic educational institutions can transform these values into lived experiences for students. Educators also play a crucial role as role models and facilitators of environmental ethics grounded in Islamic teachings. Ultimately, Islamic education must evolve to address the ecological crisis by embedding environmental consciousness as a core element of religious education. This will

help nurture a generation of Muslims who are spiritually grounded and ecologically responsible.

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