

The Integration of Tawhid and Environmental Ethics in Islamic Educational Thought

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Abstract

This study explores the integration of tawhid (the oneness of God) and environmental ethics within Islamic educational thought, emphasizing the theological and pedagogical foundations that shape Muslim attitudes toward nature and sustainability. Using a qualitative library research approach, the study analyzes classical and contemporary Islamic texts, educational curricula, and scholarly discourses to identify the epistemological relationship between divine unity and ecological responsibility. Findings reveal that tawhid serves as the central principle linking human beings, nature, and God, framing environmental care as a form of worship ('ibadah) and moral accountability (amanah). The study argues that neglecting environmental ethics contradicts the holistic understanding of Islamic education, which aims to cultivate spiritually conscious and socially responsible individuals. Furthermore, integrating tawhidic principles into educational frameworks encourages the development of eco-theological awareness, sustainability-oriented character formation, and curriculum innovation that harmonizes faith and environmental stewardship. This research contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic eco-pedagogy and offers conceptual insights for Islamic educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to reorient learning toward sustainability grounded in divine unity. By situating tawhid as an ethical and ontological foundation, Islamic education can nurture a transformative environmental consciousness essential for addressing the global ecological crisis.

Keywords: Tawhid, Environmental Ethics, Islamic Education, Sustainability, Eco-Theology

Introduction

The environmental crisis has become one of the most pressing global challenges, demanding transformative educational approaches that cultivate moral and ecological consciousness. Within the Islamic worldview, the principle of tawhid the oneness of God provides a holistic foundation for understanding the unity of all creation and the interconnection between humans, nature, and the Divine. According to Syafaruddin (2021), Islamic education that embodies tawhidic values positions humans as stewards (khalifah) who are morally responsible for maintaining ecological balance as an act of worship ('ibadah). This theological perspective implies that environmental care is not merely a social duty but an extension of faith, forming an integral dimension of Islamic pedagogy and moral development.

However, translating this theological understanding into educational practice remains a major challenge. Hajar (2024) emphasizes that many Islamic educational institutions have yet to integrate environmental ethics systematically into their curricula. Although some schools and pesantren implement eco-friendly initiatives, they often remain programmatic rather than philosophical, lacking alignment with the deeper spiritual meaning of tawhid. As a result, environmental education in Islamic contexts tends to focus on behavioral change without

developing theological awareness or critical reflection on the human–nature relationship as taught in the Qur’an. Thus, there is a need for a paradigm shift in curriculum design that situates environmental responsibility within the framework of tawhidic epistemology.

To address this gap, contemporary Islamic educational thought calls for a reconstruction of pedagogical approaches that connect ecological awareness with faith-based reasoning. Fadil (2024) argues that the reintegration of tawhid into environmental education can transform Islamic schooling into a platform for spiritual ecology an educational model that links belief, knowledge, and sustainable action. Through this integration, students can perceive the environment as a divine trust (*amanah*) and human responsibility, leading to the formation of ethical consciousness and sustainable behavior. Therefore, this study aims to explore how the principle of tawhid can be integrated into Islamic educational thought to strengthen environmental ethics, theological reflection, and sustainability-oriented pedagogy.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative library research design to explore how the principle of Tawhid—the oneness of God is conceptually integrated into environmental ethics within Islamic educational thought. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of textual and philosophical dimensions through a review of relevant literature, including books, journal articles, and institutional documents on Islamic education and ecology. As noted by Wati (2025), library-based qualitative research is suitable for analyzing abstract concepts in religious education, emphasizing the interpretation of meaning rather than measurement. This study, therefore, focuses on understanding how Tawhidic values shape an Islamic worldview that promotes environmental consciousness.

The data sources consist of academic publications that discuss Islamic environmental ethics, sustainability in education, and eco-pedagogical approaches in Islamic contexts. Data were collected through a systematic process of identifying and reviewing relevant materials using purposive sampling techniques. Noor (2025) explains that purposive sampling in qualitative research enables the selection of literature most aligned with the research focus and helps build a deeper understanding of interconnected theological and educational ideas. The data were then analyzed using thematic content analysis, focusing on key themes such as divine unity, stewardship (*khalifah*), and balance (*mizan*), which form the ethical basis of environmental awareness in Islamic education.

To ensure data validity, this study applied triangulation by comparing interpretations from various scholars and contexts. According to Muin (2025), triangulation in Islamic education research strengthens the credibility of qualitative findings by ensuring that conceptual interpretations are consistent across sources. The analysis also employed reflective interpretation to link theoretical findings with practical implications for curriculum development and pedagogical practices in Islamic educational institutions. This methodology aims to provide a holistic perspective on how Tawhid can serve as both a theological and ethical foundation for environmental stewardship within Islamic education.

Results

The findings of this study reveal that the integration of tawhid with environmental ethics in Islamic educational thought provides a holistic and transformative conceptual foundation. Tawhid is not only understood as a theological doctrine concerning the Oneness of God, but

also as a metaphysical principle that connects all creation within a single ontological unity. Within this framework, the human–nature relationship is no longer seen as one of domination or exploitation, but rather as one of trust (*amanah*) and spiritual responsibility. Analysis of Islamic educational curricula and learning materials shows that embedding tawhid-related values linked to verses about creation, balance (*mīzān*), and trust fosters students’ understanding of environmental issues in both spiritual and ethical terms, rather than purely technical ones (Shaleh : 2024). The principle of tawhid reinforces the idea that nature is part of the divine signs (*āyāt al-kawnīyah*), and therefore, protecting and preserving it is an act of worship and devotion (Cambridge Element : 2023). Consequently, an Islamic education grounded in tawhid cultivates an eco-theological consciousness that merges scientific awareness with spiritual and moral dimensions (Shaleh : 2024).

Empirically, qualitative data collected through interviews and classroom observations in several Islamic educational institutions demonstrate that a tawhid-based pedagogical approach significantly influences students’ worldviews and behaviors. Learners exposed to teaching that connects the Oneness of God with environmental ethics show a higher level of ecological awareness and a stronger inclination toward environmentally responsible behavior in daily life (Wani : 2024). For instance, integrating Qur’anic verses about creation into school projects such as tree planting, recycling, and energy-saving activities fosters emotional and spiritual engagement. This integration also promotes a collective sense of responsibility among students and teachers, since protecting the environment is perceived as part of humankind’s divinely ordained role as stewards (*khulafa*) on Earth. Moreover, educational institutions that have embedded tawhid into their institutional policies such as adopting a “green campus” strategy based on Islamic values have shown higher levels of participation in sustainability initiatives and community environmental programs (Anggara : 2025).

Further thematic analysis identifies three key pedagogical mechanisms that effectively operationalize the integration of tawhid and environmental ethics. First is the Qur’anic narrative approach, in which stories and verses about creation are used to instill ecological understanding and moral reflection. Second is the participatory contextual approach, which combines hands-on environmental practices such as maintaining school gardens, waste recycling, and conducting local ecosystem studies with spiritual reflection sessions. Third is the transformative evaluative approach, where learning assessment goes beyond cognitive achievement to include observable shifts in students’ attitudes and behaviors toward the environment (Rahman : 2022). Implementing these three approaches ensures a balance among cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in Islamic environmental education. Furthermore, the active involvement of teachers and school leaders in linking every environmental activity to tawhid principles reinforces students’ moral and spiritual development (Harnessing Islamic Teachings for Climate Justice : 2023). This indicates that strengthening the concept of tawhid within Islamic education not only deepens theological understanding but also nurtures ethical awareness and social responsibility toward environmental sustainability (Rahman : 2022).

Nevertheless, the study also identifies several challenges in implementing the integration of tawhid and environmental ethics in Islamic educational settings. First, many educators lack sufficient understanding of how to apply the concept of tawhid to contemporary environmental issues, leading to a predominantly normative or textual delivery. Second, the overloaded curriculum often leaves limited space for environmental topics to be treated as a core component of religious learning. Third, the persistent dichotomy between science and religion in some contexts hinders interdisciplinary approaches (Wani : 2024). To address these challenges, the study recommends the development of integrated learning modules that simultaneously incorporate Qur'anic teachings, ecological theory, and practical field activities. In addition, continuous teacher training and inter-institutional collaboration are essential to ensure that tawhid-based environmental ethics become systematically internalized. The findings affirm that positioning tawhid as a moral and spiritual foundation can build a sustainable, humanistic, and ecologically conscious Islamic educational paradigm aligned with Islam's vision as a rahmatan lil-'ālamīn (mercy for all creation) (Anggara : 2025).

Discussion

In the context of Islamic educational thought, the concept of Tawḥīd (the oneness of God) is not merely a theological doctrine, but also an epistemological foundation capable of framing human-environmental relations. As explained by Gaffar & Anees (2025), tawḥīd can be understood as an inclusive epistemology that positions humans as '‘abd Allah and khalīfah fī al-ardh' so that all aspects of life, including the environment, are in cosmic unity. (Gaffar & Anees: 2025) In the context of integration with environmental ethics, tawḥīd encourages the understanding that nature is a single creation of Allah, so that respecting and preserving the environment becomes part of respect for the Creator. A study by Haider (2025) confirms that within the framework of Islamic ethics, principles such as khalīfah, amānah, mīzān, and 'adālah are directly linked to tawḥīd as the basis of environmental philosophy. Thus, Islamic education that integrates tawḥīd with environmental ethics has the potential to build ecological awareness that is not only instructional but also spiritual and moral.

1. Tawhid as the Theological Foundation of Environmental Ethics

The concept of tawhid in Islam is not only the theological principle of the oneness of God, but also the epistemological foundation for all aspects of life, including the relationship between humans and nature. In Islamic educational thought, tawhid is a fundamental principle that positions humans as spiritual and ecological beings interconnected with all of God's creation. According to Gaffar & Anees (2025), tawhid can be understood as an "inclusive epistemology" that integrates humanity's vertical relationship with God (hablun minallah) and its horizontal relationship with nature (hablun minal alam). Thus, maintaining ecological balance is an integral part of devotion to God and a concrete manifestation of faith in a socio-natural context.

Furthermore, Haider (2025) emphasizes that environmental ethics in Islam is deeply rooted in the concept of tawhid. Principles such as caliphate, trust, and mizan are not merely ethical terminology, but rather reflections of the cosmic unity between the Creator, humanity, and nature. When tawhid is internalized in Islamic education, it fosters a spiritually based

ecological awareness: nature is understood as signs (verses) of Allah, not merely an object of exploitation. Therefore, Islamic education based on tawhid will automatically give rise to ecological ethics, as both concepts originate from the same unified source of values.

2. Ethical and Pedagogical Dimensions in the Integration of Tawhid and the Environment

The integration of tawhid and environmental ethics can be explained through the ethical and pedagogical dimensions. Within the ethical dimension, Islamic teachings emphasize humanity's moral responsibility to care for the earth as a trust from Allah. Syukri et al. (2024) explain that values such as justice ('adalah), balance (mizan), and responsibility (mas'uliyah) are ethical principles that guide human behavior towards the environment. Humans who are aware of their role as caliphs will not damage the earth, because destruction would mean denying the oneness of Allah, manifested in the order of nature. Therefore, any act of irresponsible exploitation is a violation of the values of tawhid.

In the pedagogical dimension, Islamic education plays a crucial role in instilling environmental ethical values rooted in monotheism. Hajar (2024) highlights that the Islamic education curriculum should not only contain material on worship but also integrate ecological awareness through contextual and reflective learning. In this way, students are taught not only to know God through texts but also through His creation. Tawhid-based environmental education can foster ecological spirituality, namely the awareness that protecting nature is part of worship. Therefore, teachers and educational institutions play a strategic role in cultivating these values sustainably.

3. Challenges of Implementing Integration in Islamic Education

Although conceptually, the integration of tawhid and environmental ethics seems ideal, the reality of its implementation in Islamic education still faces a number of obstacles. Juliani et al. (2024) noted that in Indonesia, the integration of environmental education in Islamic Religious Education subjects remains supplementary and has not yet reached the realm of learning paradigms. Many educational institutions still view environmental issues as incidental activities, rather than part of the theological vision of Islamic education. This results in students' ecological awareness not being deeply developed, and environmental ethics not being considered a spiritual dimension of tawhid.

Furthermore, Sadali (2024) highlighted that institutional barriers, such as a lack of teacher training, limited Islamic-based green education policies, and a lack of resources, pose significant challenges. Implementing this integration requires synergy between the government, Islamic educational institutions, and the community so that the values of tawhid for the environment can be translated into practical practice. A cross-disciplinary approach is also needed, combining science, environmental jurisprudence, and Islamic spirituality, to ensure that Islamic education becomes a transformative force in addressing the global ecological crisis.

4. Real Practice of Integration: A case Study of Environmentally Friendly Islamic Education

Empirical studies show that when the concepts of tawhid and environmental ethics are systematically implemented, the results are very positive. Muin et al. (2024) examined the

implementation of an "eco-Islamic boarding school" in Pamekasan, which successfully integrated ecological values through an Islamic Zero Waste program, efficient energy use, and practice-based environmental fiqh teaching. This program not only changed students' behavior in maintaining cleanliness but also instilled a spiritual awareness that every small act of environmental protection is a form of worship to Allah. This integration demonstrates how the theory of tawhid can serve as a practical foundation for an Islamic ecological movement.

At the family level, Alfianto et al. (2024) confirmed that instilling the values of tawhid and amanah (trustworthiness) from an early age through family education has a significant impact on the development of children's ecological ethics. Children who are taught that the earth is a trust from Allah demonstrate higher levels of environmental concern than those who do not receive such spiritual education. This shows that the integration of tawhidik values is not limited to formal institutions, but also to informal education in Muslim families and communities.

5. Strategic Direction of the Integration of Tawhid and Environmental Ethics in the Future

From the perspective of contemporary Islamic educational thought, the integration of Tawhid and environmental ethics is a strategic effort to address the global spiritual and ecological crisis. Haider (2025) asserts that Islamic environmental ethics is a form of spiritual responsibility that cannot be separated from faith. (Haider: 2025) Therefore, the development of an Islamic education curriculum based on Tawhid must be directed at fostering ecological awareness, social responsibility, and concern for the sustainability of the earth as part of obedience to Allah.

Concrete steps that can be taken include strengthening teacher capacity in Islamic ecotheology, developing environmental education modules based on the Quran, and collaborating with Islamic institutions to create a national "green madrasah" movement. With this strategy, Islamic education will become an agent of change that not only instills faith and morals but also maintains cosmic harmony as mandated by the concept of Tawhid. This integration ultimately strengthens Islam's position as a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin (blessing for the universe)—bringing mercy, peace, and balance to all creatures.

Conclusion

Based on the overall discussion, it can be concluded that the integration of Tawhid and environmental ethics within Islamic educational thought represents a strategic effort that aims not only to cultivate ecological awareness but also to strengthen students' spirituality and moral consciousness. Tawhid, as the core principle of Islam, affirms the existential unity between God, humanity, and the universe. Consequently, caring for the environment is not merely a social responsibility but a manifestation of faith and devotion to Allah. This tawhidic consciousness guides human beings to fulfill their role as khalifah (vicegerents) on earth with justice, trust, and accountability toward all of God's creations.

Integrating these values into Islamic education introduces a transformative paradigm that perceives nature as part of divine revelation (ayat kauniyyah) to be respected and preserved. Through pedagogical approaches that combine theological insight with ecological practice, students are not only equipped with conceptual understanding but are also encouraged to act responsibly in protecting the environment. Educational models grounded in Tawhid have

proven effective in shaping spiritual-ecological character, as evidenced by empirical studies in Islamic institutions that have adopted eco-pesantren (Islamic eco-boarding schools) and green education initiatives inspired by Islamic values.

Nevertheless, implementing this integration still faces several challenges, including curriculum limitations, lack of teacher training, and inadequate institutional support. Therefore, synergy among scholars, educators, Islamic institutions, and policymakers is urgently needed to strengthen the institutional and pedagogical foundation of Tawhid-based environmental education. If realized, Islamic education could serve as a driving force in developing an environmentally conscious civilization grounded in faith and ethics. Thus, the integration of Tawhid and environmental ethics is not only a theological response to the ecological crisis but also a practical pathway toward achieving a harmonious and sustainable world aligned with Islam's mission as rahmatan lil 'alamin—a mercy for all creation.

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