

## **Islamic Environmental Education as an Effort to Cultivate a Sustainable Generation**

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### **Abstract**

Islamic environmental education is an approach that integrates Islamic values with ecological awareness. This form of education emphasizes a harmonious relationship between humans and nature as part of the amanah (stewardship) entrusted to them as khalifah on earth. This article aims to analyze the concept of environmentally oriented Islamic education and its implementation in realizing a sustainable generation. The research method employed is a literature review by analyzing sources related to Islamic education, environmental ethics, and sustainable education. The results indicate that Islamic environmental education can be developed through strengthening the value of tawhid, ecological ethics, green curriculum integration, habituation of environmentally friendly behavior, and the development of a sustainable school culture. Thus, Islamic environmental education has great potential to create a generation that is not only spiritually and intellectually competent but also caring and responsible for environmental preservation.

**Keywords:** islamic education, environment, islamic ecotheology, sustainable generation

### **Introduction**

The environmental crisis is a global issue of increasing concern, especially in recent decades. Climate change, global warming, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and marine ecosystem degradation are phenomena that threaten the sustainability of human life. The latest IPCC report (2022) shows that global temperatures are rising significantly, and if consumption patterns and environmental exploitation remain unchanged, the impacts will be even more severe for future generations. In the Indonesian context, floods, droughts, and air pollution have become part of the ecological problems that require serious attention.

Islam, as a comprehensive and holistic religion, has long emphasized the importance of maintaining the balance of nature. The Quran states that humans are appointed as "khalifah" (vicegerents) on earth (Quran, Al-Baqarah: 30), thus obligating them to preserve the environment and prevent damage. However, reality shows that ecological awareness in Muslim societies still needs to be strengthened,

particularly through education. Therefore, environmentally conscious Islamic education is highly urgent as a religious-values-based solution to foster ecological awareness from school age.

Environmentally conscious Islamic education integrates spiritual and moral values with modern ecopedagogy. Amidst the demands of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to quality education (Goal 4) and climate action (Goal 13), Islamic education must play a strategic role. Challenges such as the lack of a green curriculum, inadequate teacher training, and a school culture that is not yet environmentally friendly are obstacles that need to be addressed through a systematic and integrative approach.

In addition to global ecological challenges, Indonesia's environmental situation highlights the urgency of introducing an environmentally conscious approach to education within the framework of Islamic values. Data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) (2023) shows that Indonesia produces more than 18 million tons of plastic waste annually, while air quality in several major cities is considered unhealthy. Furthermore, low environmental literacy among students creates a gap between ecological understanding and practice. This situation demonstrates that Islamic religious education serves more than just as a means of spiritual formation, but also as a medium for building the ecological character of students from an early age.

Furthermore, the national education paradigm, which emphasizes the Pancasila Student profile, provides space for the development of ecological intelligence through mutual cooperation, independence, and critical thinking. This aligns with Islamic values, which emphasize moderation (*wasathiyah*) in the use of natural resources. Therefore, the integration of Islamic education and environmental education is an urgent need to address current socio-ecological dynamics.

In a global context, UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that sustainable education must be the primary framework for developing 21st-century learning systems. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions have a significant opportunity to play a strategic role as pioneers of environmentally friendly education based on faith values. Through an Islamic ecopedagogy approach, students are expected to not only understand theory but also be able to practice ecological behavior consistently and responsibly.

This article aims to analyze the concept of environmentally conscious Islamic education and strategies for realizing it in the formation of a sustainable generation. This study is significant because it provides a theoretical and practical foundation for Islamic schools, Islamic boarding schools, and other educational institutions to develop ecological curricula and cultures relevant to the contemporary context.

In Islam, tawhid not only signifies the recognition of the oneness of God, but also implies that all creation is a manifestation of His wisdom and power. Thus, nature is not merely an object of exploitation, but rather a sign (verse) of God that must be respected and protected. Nasr (1968) argues that the modern environmental crisis arises because humans have separated themselves from the sanctity of nature and forgotten their spiritual connection with the Creator.

Ecological monotheism positions humans as stewards, tasked with maintaining the balance of nature. Islamic education needs to internalize this value so that students understand that protecting the environment is not merely a social obligation but also a form of worship and devotion to God.

The concept of ecological monotheism can be reinforced through learning activities such as interpreting Kauniyah verses, discussing the relationships between living things, and spiritual reflection on environmental conditions. These strategies are expected to foster ecological awareness rooted in spiritual values, not merely technical knowledge.

The Quran contains many ecological principles. The verse prohibiting causing damage to the earth (Quran, Al-A'raf: 56) demonstrates that destructive behavior is contrary to Islamic teachings. The concept of balance (*mīzān*) mentioned in Quran, Ar-Rahman: 7–9, emphasizes the importance of moderation and balance in utilizing natural resources.

The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW also provides ecological examples, such as the recommendation to plant trees, the prohibition on wasting excessive water, and the command to do good to others. The ecological message in this hadith provides a strong foundation for the development of environmentally conscious Islamic education.

Environmental ethics in Islam is both normative and applicable. Islamic education must present studies that connect these values to modern contexts such as water conservation, plastic waste reduction, and climate change mitigation. Integrating religious texts with scientific approaches is crucial for developing rational and spiritual ecological awareness.

Sustainable education emphasizes the importance of balance between social, economic, environmental, and spiritual aspects. From an Islamic perspective, sustainability concerns not only the preservation of nature but also the continuity of values, morals, and civilization. Islam views the environment as a trust that must be passed on to future generations. Therefore, environmentally conscious Islamic education has the long-term goal of producing individuals with sustainable life skills. Abdullah (2014) emphasized that sustainable Islamic education must integrate aspects of faith, worship, morals, and natural resource management.

Educational models such as project-based learning, eco-living practice, and the integration of ecological values into religious learning can shape a generation

that is not only religious, but also has a high level of concern for environmental quality. Islamic ecotheology is a study that places the relationship between humans and nature within the perspective of monotheism and spiritual awareness. According to Harun Nasution (2019), Islamic ecotheology seeks to restore humanity to its natural awareness that nature is part of God's mandate. Nature is seen not only as a physical object but also as a *kauniyah* verse containing ethical, spiritual, and moral messages. This perspective emphasizes that acts of environmental destruction are contrary to the principles of faith and piety (Nasr, 1968).

The basic principles of Islamic ecotheology include: 1) *Tawhid* (Realizing that all creatures are in one system of creation), *Khilafah* (Humans are responsible for maintaining the earth's trust), *Amanah* (Utilizing resources without destroying the balance (*mīzān*)), *'Adl* (justice) (Avoiding exploitation that harms other creatures). Thus, Islamic education needs to integrate this understanding of ecotheology into the learning process so that students understand the environment as part of worship (*'ubudiyah*).

Ecopedagogy is a critical educational approach that aims to create ecological awareness through contextual learning. Freire (1970) emphasized the importance of pedagogy that liberates humans from structural unconsciousness, including environmental indifference. In an Islamic context, ecopedagogical principles can be adapted through the integration of spiritual values into learning activities.

There are three main principles of ecopedagogy in Islamic education: 1) Critical-reflective, namely assessing the impact of human behavior on the environment. 2) Real contribution, namely inviting students. Participate in ecological activities. 3) Local wisdom, promoting environmentally friendly practices based on Indonesian Muslim culture, such as planting traditions, mutual cooperation, and water management. This approach combines experiential learning with religious values, resulting in deeper ecological character formation.

*Kauniyah* verses in the Quran are an important tool for developing ecological spirituality. For example, Surah Ar-Rum: 41 explains that "damage on land and sea is the result of human actions." This verse can be used to encourage students to analyze the causes of ecological damage such as air pollution, plastic waste, and deforestation.

*Kauniyah* verse-based learning not only improves religious literacy but also hones students' critical thinking skills in examining the relationship between human behavior and natural phenomena (Yusuf, 2019). Teachers can develop thematic interpretation-based learning models to deepen discussions on nature, animal, water, and energy conservation.

## **Methods**

This research uses a library research approach. Data were obtained from books related to Islamic ecotheology, research journals on environmental education, articles on curriculum development, and international policy documents such as UNESCO and the SDGs. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive-analytical techniques, outlining the concepts of environmentally conscious Islamic education and then connecting them to sustainable education theory. The analysis focused on theoretical elaboration, integration of Islamic values, and implementation strategies in educational institutions. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for developing in-depth conceptual studies and developing a strong argumentative framework as a basis for further research or implementation of environmentally conscious Islamic education policies.

## **Discussion**

### **The Concept of Environmentally Aware Islamic Education**

Environmentally conscious Islamic education is a learning process that integrates Islamic values with ecological principles. This concept emphasizes that humans are part of the ecological system and have a moral responsibility to protect it. Abdullah (2014) stated that Islamic education must be directed toward developing ecologically sound characters.

There are three main dimensions to environmentally conscious Islamic education: the cognitive dimension (understanding ecological theory based on Islamic values), the affective dimension (cultivating a love for the environment as a manifestation of faith), and the psychomotor dimension (real-world practice through environmentally friendly activities). These three dimensions form a holistic education and build ecological awareness based on spiritual values.

The current acceleration of environmental degradation demands a more responsive educational paradigm. Environmentally-minded Islamic education is presented as a response to the crisis. This is because it combines spiritual values and a scientific approach. In the context of modern education, this paradigm aligns with the “green school” and “education for sustainable development” movements promoted by UNESCO (Tilbury, 2011).

However, the strength of Islamic education lies in its strong ethical foundation. The values of tawhid (Islamic unity) and ecological morality serve as an internal driving force for students to protect the environment. Unlike secular approaches that emphasize ecological benefits, Islam fosters awareness that protecting the environment is part of obedience to God.

### **Integration of Environmental Values in the Islamic Education Curriculum**

To develop an environmentally aware curriculum, Islamic educational institutions need to take the following strategic steps:

- a. Cross-subject integration, for example the relationship between ecological verses and science.
- b. Project-based learning, such as composting, hydroponics, and waste banks.
- c. Utilizing the environment as a learning laboratory, so that students understand natural phenomena directly.
- d. Authentic assessment that emphasizes the evaluation of students' ecological behavior.

An integrated green curriculum will help students understand the concept of ecology not as additional knowledge, but as part of Islamic teachings that must be practiced. The curriculum is a crucial instrument in developing environmentally conscious education. Integrating environmental values can be achieved through:

a. **Intracurricular Integration**

Every subject in Islamic education can incorporate environmental values: Akidah Akhlak (the concept of ecological trust, morality towards nature), Fiqh (rules for water use, land management, prohibitions on israf), SKI (the history of Muslim figures who have contributed to environmental science), Quran Hadith (study of ecological verses). This integration needs to be carried out systematically so that students are able to understand the relationship between Islam and the environment as a whole.

b. **Co-curricular Integration**

Activities such as scouting, environmental social service, or waste management workshops can serve as a means of internalizing values. Co-curricular learning helps students understand ecological concepts through hands-on experience.

c. **Extracurricular Integration**

Programs such as the “green school movement”, eco-clubs, or organic farming classes can be a more practical means of forming ecological character.

**Environmentally Friendly Behavior Habits**

Habituation is a crucial aspect of Islamic education. Moral values are not simply taught theoretically; they require practice and routine. Environmentally friendly behavior can be cultivated through: the Clean Friday movement, 3R waste management, electricity and water conservation, the use of tumblers to reduce plastic, and reforestation and plant care programs. These habits are part of the formation of ecological morality, so students become accustomed to consistently protecting the environment.

Teachers' role models are a key factor in internalizing environmental values. Teachers who are disciplined about disposing of waste, conserving water, and demonstrating environmental concern will influence student behavior (Huda, 2020). Therefore, educational institutions need to develop an ecological code of ethics for teachers and students to create a more environmentally friendly school culture.

Habituation can be achieved through daily programs such as class duty, waste donation activities, caring for classroom plants, green class competitions, and the "minimize plastic" movement. These programs not only support learning but also shape students' ecological character.

### **Sustainable School Culture Development**

Tilbury (2011) emphasized that a sustainable school is a school that integrates ecological principles into all aspects. In the context of Islamic education, a sustainable school culture includes:

- a. school policies that support environmental programs
- b. provision of facilities such as separate trash bins, school gardens and trash banks
- c. the habit of relevant worship, for example a prayer before studying that touches on the mandate to protect the environment.
- d. learning activities outside the classroom to bring students closer to nature

A supportive school environment will strengthen students' internalization of ecological values. Sustainable schools encompass not only physical aspects but also an environmentally conscious social community. Educational institutions can collaborate with parents, green communities, mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and local governments to develop environmental programs. Activities such as mosque-based environmental campaigns, green Islamic boarding schools, and oxygen charity programs can expand the reach of environmentally conscious Islamic education.

### **The Role of Teachers and Educational Institutions**

Teachers play a role as role models and facilitators in environmental learning. They need to provide concrete examples of ecological behavior, develop innovative learning methods, connect Quranic verses to ecological phenomena, and utilize a project-based learning approach. Meanwhile, educational institutions need to provide supporting policies and facilities, such as renewable energy, school gardens, and collaboration with environmental communities.

### **Implementation Challenges and Opportunities**

Key challenges include low environmental literacy in the community, an unsustainable curriculum, and limited teacher training. However, significant opportunities arise from Islamic values that strongly support environmental conservation, growing global awareness of the climate crisis, and the significant potential of Islamic schools and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as agents of change. By leveraging this potential, environmentally conscious Islamic education can be implemented more effectively.

The main challenges include: the lack of Indonesian-language literature that examines Islamic ecotheology in an applied manner, limited green facilities in small schools, and low teacher competency in environmental literacy.

However, the opportunities are enormous, particularly through the use of digital technology, which can serve as a medium for Islamic-based environmental learning. Digital platforms can be used to create educational videos, interactive modules, and ecological learning simulations based on the Kauniyah verses.

### Conclusion

Environmentally conscious Islamic education is a relevant and strategic approach to addressing global ecological challenges. This education is rooted in the values of monotheism, the ecological ethics of the Quran and Hadith, and the principles of sustainability. Its implementation includes the integration of a green curriculum, the instilling of environmentally friendly behavior, the development of a sustainable school culture, and the active role of teachers and educational institutions. Thus, Islamic education serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a vehicle for character transformation, creating a caring, responsible, and committed generation committed to preserving the earth. Overall, environmentally conscious Islamic education holds great potential in developing a sustainable generation that possesses not only spiritual and intellectual intelligence but also the ability to adapt to global ecological challenges. The values of monotheism, ecological ethics, and principles of sustainability provide a solid foundation for developing an environmentally friendly character. Integrating a green curriculum, fostering habits, teacher role models, and a sustainable school culture are crucial strategies for strengthening the implementation of environmental education in Islamic educational institutions. By strengthening the policies and commitments of educational institutions, environmentally conscious Islamic education can become a transformational movement that produces a generation that loves nature, protects its sustainability, and is responsible for the future of the earth.

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