

The Contribution of Islamic Education Teachers in Instilling Environmentally Caring Behavior in Students

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Abstract

Environmental degradation has become one of the most urgent global challenges, requiring educational institutions to play a strategic role in shaping environmentally responsible behaviour among younger generations. In the Indonesian context, schools are expected to cultivate ecological awareness not only through scientific instruction but also through value-based education. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers hold a crucial position in this process due to their responsibility in guiding students' moral and spiritual development. Islamic teachings provide strong ecological foundations such as the concepts of *khalifah*, *amanah*, *tawazun*, and the prohibition of *israf* which can be effectively integrated into classroom learning and school culture. This study aims to examine the contribution of PAI teachers in fostering environmental awareness and environmentally responsible behaviour among students. Employing a library research method, the study analyses scientific articles, books, policy documents, and previous research related to Islamic education and environmental ethics. The findings indicate that PAI teachers contribute significantly through four domains: modelling environmentally responsible behaviour, integrating ecological values into religious instruction, facilitating environmentally oriented habituation programs, and serving as key initiators in school-based environmental activities. Several instructional strategies such as project-based learning, contextual teaching, and thematic integration of Qur'anic verses are identified as effective approaches. The study concludes that PAI teachers play an essential role in shaping students' eco-literacy and environmental morality. Strengthening their competence and integrating environmental education into PAI curricula are necessary steps to promote sustainable environmental consciousness among students.

Keywords: PAI Teacher, Environmental Awareness, Eco-Literacy, Islamic Environmental Ethics

Introduction

Environmental issues are increasingly becoming a global concern due to their tangible impacts on various aspects of human life from climate change and depletion of natural resources to increasing ecological disasters such as floods, droughts, and forest fires.(Insani, 2023) Nationally, Indonesia faces serious ecological challenges due to population growth, industrialization, urbanization, and low public awareness of environmental conservation. This reality demands a more intensive educational strategy to develop the ecological character of the younger generation.(Mahardhika dkk., 2024)

Schools, as formal educational institutions, are a strategic space for instilling environmental values from an early age.(Zahroh & Afrianingsih, 2024) Education not only serves to transfer academic knowledge but also to shape students' character, behavior, and moral awareness.(Yunanto & Kasanova, 2023) In this context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers hold a crucial role. PAI is not merely a subject related to religious rituals but also encompasses moral, ethical, and spiritual development, which lays the foundation for fostering environmental awareness.(Judrah dkk., 2024)

In Islamic teachings, the concept of the environment has received significant attention. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes that humans were created as *khalifah fil ardh* (vicegerents on earth),(Rohana,

2023) that is, leaders and guardians of the earth. This mandate is not only spiritual but also practical, namely, how humans must protect, preserve, and not damage the environment. Several verses of the Quran, such as Surah Ar-Rum: 41, Surah Al-A'raf: 56, and Surah Al-Baqarah: 30, emphasize that damage to the earth is caused by human actions. This reinforces the notion that the environment is a moral issue, not just a scientific one.(Dwijaya & Rigiанти, 2024)

Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers have a moral and scientific responsibility to instill environmental values in students through teaching, role modeling, and instilling habits in school life.(Ma'arif & Mawardi, 2024) Islamic Religious Education teachers are seen as central figures who can integrate religious teachings with environmental realities, so that learning is not merely cognitive but also touches the affective and psychomotor domains.(Mahardhika dkk., 2024)

However, in reality, various studies show that students' environmental awareness is still relatively low.(Maulidah & Ridlwan, 2025) Students often litter, overuse water, show little concern for classroom cleanliness, and are not accustomed to maintaining plants or school facilities. This problem can be caused by a lack of integrated environmental education, a lack of habituation programs, and weak role models in the school environment.(Ishaki dkk., 2024)

This is where the contribution of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers becomes crucial.(Atul dkk., 2023) PAI teachers not only teach religious theory but also guide students to internalize the values of cleanliness, tidiness, a sense of responsibility for nature, and thrift in resource use.(Afriana & Hidayat, 2022) Therefore, this article aims to analyze in-depth the contribution of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in instilling environmentally conscious behavior through a literature review. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the PAI teacher contribution model, learning strategies, and challenges faced in its implementation.

Methods

This research uses a literature review approach, which involves collecting, reading, and analyzing various literature sources relevant to the topic of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' contributions and environmental education. This literature review was chosen because the topic of moral and environmental education is richly discussed in academic literature, allowing researchers to conduct in-depth analysis without the need for fieldwork.

The first stage of the literature review is source identification. The sources used come from national scientific journals, Islamic religious education books, environmental education books, policy documents such as curricula, and previous research findings. These sources were selected to provide a strong theoretical framework.

The second stage is literature selection. Not all literature is relevant to the focus of the study. Therefore, selection was based on three criteria: relevance to the theme of environmental education and PAI, and scientific credibility. Literature that did not meet these criteria was excluded from the analysis.

The third stage is thematic analysis, which is the process of grouping literature based on themes such as the role of PAI teachers, environmental values in Islam, learning strategies, and implementation challenges. Through this method, researchers identify patterns of relationships between concepts and systematically construct scientific arguments.

The final stage is literature synthesis, which involves synthesizing the findings into conceptual conclusions regarding the contribution of Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling environmentally conscious behavior. The results of this synthesis form the basis for the discussion in the following section.

Results

1. Islamic Values as the Foundation for Environmentally Concerned Behavior

The literature shows that Islam provides a very strong theological foundation for environmental issues.(Mutiara, 2025) Key relevant values include:

- a. Khalifah: Humans are guardians of the earth, not absolute rulers.
- b. Amanah: Nature is a trust that must be safeguarded.
- c. Tawazun (balance): Humans are obligated to maintain the balance of the ecosystem.
- d. Israf: Wastefulness and environmental damage are prohibited.
- e. Ihsan: Doing good even towards non-human beings.

The literature findings indicate that these values can form a strong foundation for ecological ethics to be instilled in Islamic religious education.(Mery dkk., 2023) When students understand that protecting the environment is part of their worship, they are more likely to internalize environmentally conscious behavior.(Sabtina & Mahariah, 2025)

2. The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Environmental Education

Based on the literature, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling environmentally conscious behavior can be categorized into four categories.

- a. Teachers as Role Models (Uswah Hasanah)

Islamic Religious Education teachers are highly respected by students. Their exemplary behavior, such as disposing of trash properly, using sufficient water during ablution, reducing paper use, and maintaining classroom cleanliness, has a significant impact on students. Exemplary behavior is more effective than theoretical lectures.(Latifah, 2023)

- b. Teachers as Value Transformers

Islamic Religious Education teachers link the teachings of the Quran and Hadith to environmental issues. For example:

- 1) when teaching the chapter on purification, they link it to water conservation,
- 2) when teaching morals, they link it to the responsibility to protect nature,
- 3) when teaching verses about Kauniyah, they link it to awe of God's creation.

This approach helps students understand that environmental values are inseparable from religious teachings.

- c. Teachers as Facilitators of Habits

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in fostering habits, such as:

- 1) Clean Friday activities,
- 2) waste donation drives,
- 3) reforestation and garden maintenance,
- 4) clean and green classroom competitions,
- 5) respect for nature during outdoor activities.

Habits are the most important element in developing ecological character.(Muadzin, 2021)

d. Teachers as School Environmental Leaders

The literature shows that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are often the driving force behind the Adiwiyata program, the development of environmental regulations, and religious activities related to cleanliness and environmental conservation.(Nisa' & Rachmawati, 2022)

3. Eco-Literacy Based Islamic Education Learning Strategy

A literature review shows that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has great potential for integrating environmental values through various pedagogical approaches. One effective strategy is Project-Based Learning (PJBL). In this context, Islamic Religious Education teachers guide students in hands-on activities such as making compost, planting medicinal plants, or maintaining school gardens.(Abhari, 2022) These projects help students understand the concepts of trust and environmental responsibility in practical, not theoretical, ways.(Siskayanti & Chastanti, 2022)

Furthermore, the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is also relevant because it connects religious teachings with ecological realities. Teachers, for example, can link ablution (wudu) with water conservation or explain that the teachings of zakat (alms) and sadaqah (charity) reflect the principle of ecological justice. Through this context, students realize that Islamic teachings are inseparable from the importance of maintaining the balance of nature.(Imamah dkk., 2022)

Another strategy identified is Problem-Based Learning (PBL), in which students are invited to analyze real-life cases such as river pollution or the accumulation of plastic waste. Islamic Religious Education teachers then direct this analysis to Quranic values, such as the prohibition on israf (traveling) and the command to safeguard the common good. This approach develops students' critical thinking skills regarding environmental issues. Inquiry Learning also allows students to investigate natural phenomena around them. Simple activities like observing the types of waste generated at school or recording changes in environmental vegetation can strengthen ecological awareness through direct experience.(Sagala dkk., 2024)

Finally, storytelling about the Prophet Muhammad and his companions is also an effective strategy. Stories about the Prophet Muhammad's concern for animals, plants, and environmental cleanliness can inspire students while instilling ecological values emotionally and spiritually.(Nasution, 2024)

4. Implementation Challenges

The implementation of environmental education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning still faces several major obstacles. First, teachers' competency in environmental education is still limited, so the integration of ecological values into PAI materials has not been optimal.(Pardede, 2025) Second, limited school facilities, such as a lack of green spaces and waste management facilities, prevent consistent implementation of environmental practices.(Muslim dkk., 2021)

Furthermore, a school culture that does not fully support environmentally friendly behavior is also a barrier. Without a clean culture and a sound environmental system, it is difficult to develop student habits. Another challenge is students' lack of discipline in environmental stewardship, requiring a more intensive approach to habituation.(Nurhayati dkk., 2024) Finally, the curriculum integration between PAI and environmental education is still not optimal, requiring teachers to take the initiative to develop their own learning approaches.(Naziyah dkk., 2021)

Discussion

A literature review shows that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers make a significant contribution to instilling environmentally conscious behavior in students. The integration of Islamic values and environmental education provides a holistic approach, addressing spiritual, moral, emotional, and intellectual aspects.(Nawawi dkk., 2024) Learning does not stop at knowledge but fosters awareness and habituation.

Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have significant potential because they are respected as role models. When PAI teachers demonstrate environmentally conscious behavior, students tend to emulate them. This demonstrates that environmental education is inextricably linked to the power of personal example.(Ashuri dkk., 2021)

However, this study also indicates that the contribution of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers still faces several obstacles. Lack of supporting facilities and minimal curriculum integration are key issues.(Munarun dkk., 2025) Therefore, training Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in eco-literacy and support for the school system through environmentally friendly policies are needed.(Zulkarnain dkk., 2022)

Conclusion

This study confirms that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in instilling environmentally conscious behavior through role models, integrating Islamic ecological values into learning, and fostering environmentally friendly practices in schools. Various learning strategies, such as PjBL (Problem-Based Learning), CTL (Context-Based Learning), and strengthening Qur'anic values, have proven effective in developing students' eco-literacy. However, implementation still faces obstacles, including limited teacher competency, school facilities, environmental culture, and curriculum integration. Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity and school support are key to realizing sustainable environmental education through PAI.

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