

Implementation of the Concept of *Khalifah Fil Ardh* in Religious Activities at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the urgency of internalizing the value of *khalifah fil ardh* in Islamic educational institutions as a response to the moral crisis, environmental degradation, and weak spiritual awareness among students. The concept of *khalifah* places humans as representatives of Allah SWT with spiritual, social, and ecological responsibilities, thus requiring an educational model that can integrate these three dimensions into daily practice. This study aims to analyze the implementation of *khalifah fil ardh* values in religious activities at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City and to identify the factors that support and hinder the internalization process. The research method used a descriptive qualitative approach through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model. The results show that the implementation of the *khalifah* value is realized through three main programs, namely worship habits (spiritual dimension), cleanliness and environmental movements (ecological dimension), and religious social activities (social dimension). These programs have proven to be effective in shaping the discipline, social awareness, and ecological awareness of students. Supporting factors include the leadership of the madrasah principal, teacher commitment, religious culture, and community involvement, while the main obstacles include time constraints, the influence of digital media, and minimal infrastructure. This study concludes that the internalization of *khalifah fil ardh* values can be optimized through continuous habit formation and direct experience, but requires adequate institutional and environmental support.

Keywords: *khalifah fil ardh*, religious activities, student character, Islamic education, eco-pedagogy

Introduction

The concept of *khalifah fil ardh* is a fundamental idea in Islamic intellectual tradition that places humans as representatives of Allah SWT on earth. As *caliphs*, humans have an obligation to prosper the earth and maintain environmental balance, as emphasized in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30. In the perspective of Islamic education, this concept includes spiritual, moral, and socio-ecological dimensions that encourage students to play an active role in realizing a sustainable and virtuous life. Islamic education does not only focus on cognitive development, but also facilitates character building and strengthening ecological awareness as an integral part of servitude to Allah SWT. (Muzakki, 2023) .

In an institutional context, madrasahs, as part of the Islamic education system, have a strategic role in internalizing the values of *khalifah*. These values are instilled through religious activities and daily habits, such as reciting the

Qur'an, community service, social service, and school environmental management. Various activities are effective means of developing the moral and ecological responsibility of students (Arsyad & Hasanah, 2025). Through these activities, students not only learn about religious rituals, but also build ethical awareness in maintaining harmonious relationships with fellow human beings, nature, and God. MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah, as an educational institution under the auspices of Nahdlatul Ulama, has a special characteristic, namely instilling the values of moderate, inclusive, and socially oriented Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah Islam. This character is relevant to the concept of *khalifah*, which emphasizes social responsibility, spirituality, and commitment to the common good.

The urgency of this research arises as a response to various contemporary challenges, including moral crisis, environmental degradation, and the weak internalization of Islamic values in the daily practices of students in educational institutions. Various studies show that the meaning of *khalifah* covers two main dimensions. First, the individual dimension related to worship and obedience to Allah SWT. Second, the socio-ecological dimension that affirms human responsibility in maintaining environmental balance and the welfare of living things (Munawir, 2021). This theological reconstruction forms the basis for the development of the concept of Islamic eco-theology, which places environmental stewardship as an indicator of faith. However, most previous studies have been theoretical and normative in nature, thus failing to provide an empirical picture of the implementation of *khalifah* values in the context of formal education, particularly at the madrasah tsanawiyah level (Yusuf, 2020).

Previous studies show efforts to integrate *khalifah* values into education through environment- and social-based activities. For example, the *eco-pesantren* program at Pesantren Annuqayah Sumenep instills environmental awareness through recycling, organic farming, and the habit of maintaining cleanliness (Khalimah, 2021). Similarly, a study on *the living Qur'an* at the Bumi Langit Foundation in Yogyakarta shows that spirituality-based agricultural practices are an application of the concept of *khalifah* (Muzakki, 2023). However, both studies focus more on non-formal institutions and therefore do not provide a comprehensive picture of the practice of *khalifah* values in formal education such as madrasahs.

Research related to the internalization of religious values and the strengthening of character education in secondary madrasahs shows that the habit of religious activities, such as congregational prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, and commemoration of Islamic holidays, has a significant contribution to the formation of discipline and responsibility among students (Kharis, 2023). However, these studies have not explicitly linked religious activities with *caliphate* values. In addition, research on the integration of eco-theology in school culture shows a positive impact on students' ecological behavior, but does not highlight the aspect of spiritual leadership as a manifestation of the role of *khalifah* (Sabtina & Mahariah, 2025). Therefore, there is a gap in research that comprehensively links the theological values of *khalifah fil ardh* with formal religious activities in madrasahs.

This study aims to answer questions about how the concept of *khalifah fil ardh* is implemented through religious activities at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City. Initial observations show that religious activities such as congregational prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, recitation of sholawat nariyah, and NU activities not only function as rituals but also as a means of character building, leadership, and social awareness. However, to date, there has been no empirical study that systematically assesses the extent to which these activities reflect the values of responsibility, trustworthiness, and leadership of students as *khalifah*.

In line with this, this study has two main objectives. First, to analyze the implementation of the concept of *khalifah fil ardh* in religious activities at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City. Second, to identify the factors that support and hinder the internalization of *khalifah* values in the madrasah culture. Academically, this study contributes to the development of eco-theology-based Islamic education theory and provides new empirical evidence regarding the integration of theological values in religious education practices at the madrasah tsanawiyah level.

The research hypothesis states that religious activities carried out routinely at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah reflect the values of leadership and responsibility as *khalifah fil ardh*, in religious, social, and ecological aspects. However, the level of actualization of these values is greatly influenced by teacher support, school culture, and community participation. Based on the theoretical explanation and literature review, this study is expected to strengthen the Islamic education model that not only focuses on religious rituals but also emphasizes the moral and ecological responsibilities of humans as *khalifah fil ardh*.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a field study method. This approach is oriented towards revealing the meanings, perceptions, and values that underlie actions and policies based on Islamic spirituality (Creswell, 2018). The research subjects included the head of the madrasah, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and students of MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City. The selection of research participants was carried out using *purposive sampling*, which is selecting informants based on certain considerations and the relevance of their knowledge to the implementation of religious activities and the application of Islamic educational values in the madrasah environment (Sugiyono, 2020).

The research was conducted at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City through three main stages. The first stage was the preparation stage, which included literature study, problem formulation, and the preparation of research instruments in the form of interview guidelines and observation guides. The second stage was the research implementation stage, which included data collection activities through participatory observation of religious activities, in-depth interviews with teachers, madrasah principals, and students, as well as the collection of relevant documentation. The third stage is data analysis and conclusion drawing, which is carried out through the process of data organization,

thematic analysis, and interpretation of research results based on the concept of *khalifah fil ardh* and the theory of sustainable Islamic education (Moelong, 2019).

The data collection techniques in this study consisted of three main techniques. First, observation to obtain an empirical picture of the implementation of religious activities in madrasahs. Second, in-depth interviews to explore the perceptions, experiences, and meanings understood by madrasah principals, teachers, and students regarding the implementation of the value of *khalifah fil ardh*. Third, documentation includes activity records, madrasah archives, and supporting photographs used to reinforce the findings of observation and interviews.

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three main stages. First, data reduction, which involves the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. Second, data presentation, which is the process of compiling data in the form of narratives and themes to facilitate interpretation. Third, drawing conclusions, which is the process of formulating substantive findings regarding the implementation of the value of *khalifah fil ardh* and its internalization in the religious activities of students. The entire analysis process was carried out continuously from the beginning of data collection until the final conclusions were obtained (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

Results and Discussion

1. Forms of Implementation of the Concept of *Khalifah fil Ardh* at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah

Based on interviews with the principal, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers, students, and field observations, it was found that the implementation of the *khalifah fil ardh* value at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City was carried out through three main programs, namely worship habits, cleanliness and environmental movements in the madrasah, and religious social activities. These three forms of implementation illustrate the madrasah's efforts to simultaneously integrate spiritual, ecological, and social values into the educational process.

a. Habituation of Worship (Strengthening the Spiritual Dimension as the Foundation of the Character of *Khalifah*)

Interviews with the Head of the Madrasah revealed that worship activities are structured and carried out every day. Activities include congregational Zuhur prayers, Quran recitation (before lessons by reading Surat Yasin and after congregational Zuhur prayers by reading Surat Al-Waqiah), recitation of shalawat nariyah, and istighasah every month. The PAI teacher emphasized that these activities are not merely rituals, but are methods of instilling discipline, responsibility, and spiritual awareness in students as part of the mandate of the caliphate.

These field findings are in line with the *habit formation* theory proposed by Lickona (1991), which states that character is formed through consistent moral habits between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. From an Islamic educational perspective, this practice is also part of

the *ta'dib* method as explained by Al-Attas (1999), which is the process of internalizing manners through habit formation and role modeling. Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 30 emphasizes that humans are appointed as *caliphs* on earth, so that congregational worship activities become the basis for shaping students' awareness of their position as servants and bearers of divine trust. Through this habit formation, students show behavioral changes in the form of increased discipline, solidarity, and the ability to remind others to do good.

b. Madrasah Cleanliness and Environment Movement (Implementation of the Value of Stewardship in the Ecological Dimension)

Interviews with the head of the madrasah and field observations show that MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City has developed a culture of cleanliness that includes class duty, cleanliness competitions, and the integration of environmental education into science lessons. Science teachers indicate that environmental management is linked to Islamic principles regarding the prohibition of causing damage to the earth and the obligation to maintain the balance of nature.

The observation results support the interview findings that cleanliness activities have become a living culture in the madrasah. Students appear enthusiastic and have a sense of responsibility for environmental cleanliness.

These findings are in line with the concept of Islamic eco-pedagogy, namely environmental education based on the values of monotheism, trust, and ecological responsibility. Andini (2021) emphasizes that the meaning of *khalifah fil ardh* is not only related to authority but also includes the moral responsibility to preserve nature. This is reinforced by Hasanah (2020), who shows that the integration of Islamic values in environmental education in madrasahs is effective in shaping students' ecological awareness. From a progressive education perspective, this practice is in line with the theory of *learning by doing* (), where direct experience is an effective means of instilling ecological responsibility values. Therefore, the cleanliness program not only results in a well-organized madrasah environment but also shapes an environmentally conscious character as part of the khalifah mandate.

c. Social and Religious Activities (Strengthening Values of Care and Social Justice)

Interviews with PAI teachers and student council administrators revealed that madrasahs routinely organize social programs such as zakat fitrah collection, orphan assistance, sadaqah jariyah, and social service. Students are actively involved in all stages, from fundraising to distribution of aid. The head of the madrasah emphasized that these activities aim to instill empathy, solidarity, and awareness that being a *caliph* means benefiting others.

This practice is relevant to *service learning*-based character education, which combines social activities with moral reflection in order to foster a sense of responsibility and social sensitivity in students (Josiah &

Oghenerho, 2015) . From an Islamic perspective, this activity is an implementation of the values of *al-'adl* (justice) and *al-ihsan* (goodness), as emphasized by the Prophet's hadith that the best of people are those who are most beneficial to others. Thus, religious social activities become a strategic means to shape students who have social awareness and the ability to contribute to the welfare of society.

Based on the results of the study, the implementation of the *khalifah fil ardh* concept at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City was carried out through a holistic approach that included three main dimensions, namely:

- a. The Spiritual Dimension through the habit of worship that strengthens the relationship between students and Allah (*hablun min Allah*).
- b. Ecological dimension through cleanliness and environmental culture movements that reflect human responsibility towards nature (*hablun min al-alam*).
- c. Social dimension through religious social activities that develop concern for others (*hablun min an-nas*).

2. Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Implementation of *Khalifah Fil Ardh*

a. Supporting Factors for the Implementation of the *Khalifah fil Ardh* Concept

Based on interviews with the principal, teachers, and several students at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City, it was found that the implementation of the *khalifah fil ardh* concept in religious activities was quite effective. This success was supported by a number of interrelated internal and external factors.

1) Madrasah Principal Leadership and Teacher Commitment

The visionary leadership of the madrasah principal is one of the key elements in strengthening the values of *khalifah fil ardh*. The madrasah principal has a clear orientation in shaping the character of students to be religious, environmentally conscious, and responsible. Teachers' commitment to guiding students in worship habits, such as congregational prayers, tadarus, recitation of shalawat nariyah, istighasah, and environmental activities through a culture of cleanliness, including class cleaning duties and cleanliness competitions, accelerates the internalization of moral values and spiritual " ." These findings are in line with Mulyasa's (2013) view, which emphasizes that the success of character education implementation is greatly influenced by the quality of the principal's leadership and the active participation of teachers in building a conducive school culture.

2) Religious Culture and Institutional Support

A strong religious culture embedded in the madrasah environment is another important factor. Routine activities such as commemorating Islamic holidays, providing assistance to orphans, giving alms, and social service create a religious atmosphere that supports the practice of the values of trustworthiness, caring, and responsibility. Institutional support

in providing a forum for these practices demonstrates the role of institutions as a foundation for character building. These findings reinforce Suyatno's (2020) view that a religious culture that is systematically integrated into schools serves as an effective medium for shaping the spiritual and moral values of students.

3) Student Involvement and Community Participation

The involvement of students in religious and social activities contributes greatly to shaping their awareness as *caliphs* on earth. Students are given the opportunity to become committee members, social activity organizers, and environmental cleaners, so that the values of leadership and responsibility develop naturally. In addition, the involvement of parents and the local community through mutual cooperation and social support strengthens the implementation of educational values. This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of education, which explains that character formation is influenced by interactions in microenvironments such as the family, school, and community.

b. Factors Hindering the Implementation of the *Khalifah fil Ardh* Concept

Despite various efforts, the implementation of the *khalifah fil ardh* concept still faces a number of challenges that impact the optimization of the program.

1) Limitations of Time and Learning Schedule

A busy learning schedule is an obstacle for teachers in carrying out supporting activities such as religious mentoring and *tadabbur alam* (contemplation of nature). These activities actually have a strategic role in instilling spiritual values and ecological awareness. This problem is in line with Lestari's (2021) findings, which state that time constraints and curriculum load are often the main obstacles in the implementation of religious value-based character education.

2) Influence of External Environment and Social Media

Exposure to digital culture and the external environment also pose challenges in character building for students. Some students show consumptive, individualistic tendencies and a lack of concern for the environment due to the influence of social media, which is not in line with Islamic values. Teachers need to improve character building and digital literacy to overcome these external influences. These findings are in line with Nasution's (2020) opinion that the development of information technology without moral guidance can weaken the internalization of spiritual values in students.

3) Limited Facilities and Infrastructure

Limited facilities, such as green open spaces and waste management facilities, hinder the implementation of the *khalifah fil ardh*-based environmental program. The availability of adequate facilities is an important requirement in contextual learning related to

environmental awareness. This is in line with Fadlillah (2014), who emphasizes that the success of character education is greatly influenced by the availability of facilities and infrastructure that support learning activities.

Overall, the interview results show that the implementation of the *Khalifah fil ardh* concept at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah has been successful through the synergy between educational elements, namely the principal, teachers, students, and the community. A strong religious culture is also an important foundation in creating a learning atmosphere that supports the cultivation of spiritual, social, and ecological values. However, a number of obstacles, such as time constraints, digital culture challenges, and a lack of infrastructure, are factors that need serious attention. More flexible time management, improved madrasah facilities, and the strengthening of digital literacy and Islamic character are important aspects in efforts to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of *the khalifah fil ardh* concept in the future.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the implementation of *the khalifah fil ardh* concept at MTs Isthifaiyah Nahdliyah in Pekalongan City was successfully carried out through three main programs, namely worship habits, environmental cleanliness movements, and religious social activities. These three programs effectively integrated spiritual, ecological, and social dimensions to shape the character of students as servants of Allah and stewards of the earth. These findings prove that the internalization of the values of *khalifah fil ardh* can be achieved through continuous habit formation, direct experience, and the active involvement of students in religious and social activities.

Theoretically, this research reinforces Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib*, Lickona's character formation theory, and the Islamic *ecopedagogy* approach. Practically, the implementation of these programs improves students' discipline, social awareness, and ecological awareness. However, a number of obstacles, such as time constraints, the influence of digital media, and a lack of infrastructure, still limit the optimization of the implementation of the values of *khalifah*.

This study has limitations in its narrow contextual scope and qualitative methods that cannot be generalized broadly. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the study location and combine quantitative methods to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Pedagogically, the results of this study emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual, ecological, and social values into the Islamic education curriculum to strengthen the character of students as *caliphs* on earth.

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