

Ecological Values in Islamic Religious Education Textbooks for Elementary Schools: An Islamic Ecotheology Perspective

Lilik Qonitah

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

lilikqonitahadib@gmail.com

Abstract

The global ecological crisis, marked by ongoing environmental degradation, demands a refined educational paradigm that is not only cognitively oriented but also ethically and spiritually oriented. In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, Islamic Religious Education and Character Building (PAI) textbooks in elementary schools play a strategic role in instilling ecological awareness based on religious values. This study aims to describe and analyze the representation of ecological values in Islamic Religious Education textbooks in elementary schools and evaluate implementation strategies and their impact on the development of students' ecological behavior. Using a qualitative approach and content analysis design, data were collected from official textbooks published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology for grades I through VI. The results show that values such as cleanliness (*taharah*), *amanah* (ecological responsibility), *khalifah* (stewardship), *mizan* (balance), and *ihsan* (ecological ethics) are represented through narrative texts, illustrations, and learning activities. However, the internalization of these values in the classroom still tends to be normative and not fully reflective-transformative. This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education textbooks in elementary schools have the potential to serve as instruments for ecotheological education, provided they are supported by reflective and experience-based pedagogy. These findings provide theoretical contributions to the development of an Islamic Ecotheology paradigm from an early age in elementary schools, as well as practical implications for reorienting Islamic Religious Education curricula toward sustainable and ecologically valuable Islamic education.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Islamic Ecotheology, Ecological Values, Elementary Islamic Religious Education Textbooks, Sustainable Education

Introduction

The global ecological crisis characterized by the phenomenon of continuous environmental damage has now become a multidimensional issue that not only impacts environmental sustainability, but also the education system and social morality of humanity. Education is a strategic tool in building ecological awareness across generations (Aquiye-Mansilla, 2025), including Islamic education whose management and development must be handled rationally with an orientation of Al-

Qur'an in order to overcome environmental problems (Aziz, 2013). In this regard, Islamic education has a strong potential to instill ecological ethics based on Islamic spiritual values (Mustofa et al., 2025), as a religion that emphasizes balance (*mizan*) and human responsibility as *khalifah fil-ardh*, providing a comprehensive normative framework for sustainable natural management. In Indonesia, the integration of environmental values into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum at the elementary school level has been emphasized in *the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka)*, particularly through the Pancasila student profile, which emphasizes the dimensions of faith, piety, and noble character (Nurzakun & Santoso, 2021). PAI textbooks serve as the primary instrument in the process of internalizing values, so it is important to examine the extent to which ecological dimensions are present in learning content (Ali & Bahtera, 2024; Subaidi et al., 2023)

In general, studies on environmental education in Indonesia focus on science and citizenship education, while the role of religious education remains elusive (Begum et al., 2021). However, recent studies have shown that *Islamic ecopedagogy approaches* in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and madrasah (Islamic schools) have been successful in fostering spiritually-based ecological awareness (Irawan, 2022; Kejora et al., 2025; Maghfiroh et al., 2024). Furthermore, Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah have also played a role in fostering ecological awareness based on religious values (Muhammad et al., 2024). However, most of these studies have focused on secondary and higher education, rather than primary education in public schools (Rosida et al., 2024). Furthermore, previous research on Islamic Religious Education textbooks has focused only on general ecological themes (Mumtaz & Hasanah, 2024), such as ecopedagogy, rather than the Islamic ecotheological values embedded in the narratives, illustrations, and learning activities within these textbooks (Azizah, 2024). This indicates a *research gap* in the systematic analysis of the representation of ecological values in Islamic Religious Education textbooks for elementary schools used national. Therefore, this research is crucial for bridging the gap between Islamic environmental ethics and basic, applicable pedagogical practices.

Despite the theoretical awareness that Islam has a holistic view of the relationship between humans and nature (Khobir et al., 2021), the implementation of these values in elementary school teaching materials has not been empirically analyzed (Bsoul et al., 2022). Initial analysis of the *Islamic Religious Education and Character Education textbook* (Kemendikbudristek 2021-2022) shows thematic narratives such as "Getting Used to Clean Living," "Love Cleanliness," and "Caring for the Environment" that potentially contain ecological values, but it is unclear to what extent these messages internalize ecotheological principles such as *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *tawazun*. Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyze ecological values in elementary school Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks. The derivative objectives are (1) to identify ecological values contained in elementary school Islamic Religious Education textbooks, (2) to evaluate strategies for implementing these values in classroom learning, and (3) to assess

their impact on students' ecological behavior. The main question to be answered is: how are ecological values represented, taught, and internalized through text, images, and activities in Islamic Religious Education textbooks in elementary schools?

The basis of this research is the framework of Islamic Ecotheology which views the relationship between humans and nature as a theocentric ethical relationship, where every ecological action is understood as a form of spiritual obedience and a reflection of individual piety (Fajarudin et al., 2024; Millah, 2023). In his article, Muhammad states that “In the view of Islamic ecotheology, the Qur'an explicitly prohibits human behavior that can damage environmental sustainability. Although nature was created to fulfill human needs, humans are still prohibited from treating the environment carelessly. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of maintaining ecological balance, prohibits *israf* (waste), and warns of punishment in the afterlife for those who damage the environment” (Muhammad et al., 2024). The content analysis approach is used to reveal the explicit and implicit representation of ecological values in elementary school Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks. By connecting theological, pedagogical, and ecological dimensions, this research contributes to the conceptualization of sustainability-oriented Islamic education, as well as providing an empirical basis for developing a curriculum that is responsive to the challenges of the environmental crisis in the modern era (Asyfa et al., 2025).

Methods

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach with a content analysis design, employing an interpretive paradigm. This approach was chosen because it allows for a contextual and hermeneutical exploration of the meanings contained in the textbook's text, images, and narratives. Content analysis within the framework of Islamic ecotheology focuses not only on the frequency of concept occurrence but also on the discourse structure that represents ecological values, both explicitly and implicitly. Islamic Ecotheology encompasses efforts to view ecological issues from an Islamic theological perspective based on the Qur'an and Hadith (Millah, 2023).

The main data source of this research is the Islamic Religious Education and Character Education textbook for Elementary Schools published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek, 2021–2022) which includes student books from grades I, II, III, IV, V and VI, because at this level there are topics directly related to issues of cleanliness, environmental awareness, and ecological responsibility such as “*Getting Used to Clean Living*,” “*Love Cleanliness*,” and “*Caring for the Environment*” (Kemendikbudristek, 2021; 2022). Each text is analyzed based on three units of meaning: (1) the main narrative (lesson content text), (2) visual elements (pictures, illustrations, and concept maps), and (3) learning activities (student assignments and reflections).

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis process was carried out through three stages: (1) data reduction, namely the identification and categorization of text elements that contain ecological values such as *amanah* (responsibility towards nature), *mizan* (balance), *ihsan* (ecological ethics), and *khalifah* (stewardship); (2) categorical-thematic analysis to map the relationship between theological values and ecological behavior; and (3) hermeneutic interpretation, namely interpreting the meaning of these values in the context of Islamic educational practices and the national curriculum.

Validity

The validity of the research results was maintained through conceptual and analytical triangulation, combining the results of the content analysis with ecotheological theoretical interpretations and comparing them with previous research in the field of environmentally conscious Islamic education. This research serves not only as an evaluation of the textbook's content but also as an epistemological reflection on how Islam shapes an ecological paradigm through basic education.

Results

After conducting a study of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks for elementary schools published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) for grades I to VI in 2021-2022, researchers found that the ecological content in these textbooks did not exceed 10%. Ecological values presented in narratives, images, and learning activities were not always presented in separate chapters, but were more often presented in subchapters or parts of subchapters. This indicates that efforts to foster ecological awareness in Indonesia through the inclusion of ecological values in nationally used Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks have been introduced in early education, namely at the elementary school level, but the portion is not too large.

The scientific structure of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subject consists of five elements, namely the *Qur'an and Hadits*, *Aqidah*, *Akhlak* (Morals), *Fiqih* (Jurisprudence), and *tarikh* (the History of Islamic Civilization), the composition of which in the textbook is always presented sequentially in each semester, namely Chapter 1 elements of the *Qur'an and Hadits*, Chapter 2 elements of *Aqidah*, Chapter 3 elements of *Akhlak* (Morals), Chapter 4 elements of *Fiqih* (Jurisprudence), and Chapter 5 elements of *tarikh* (the History of Islamic Civilization). In this case, the content of ecological values is more often presented in the element of *akhlak* (morals), and ecological values never appear in the elements of the *Qur'an and Hadits* and *tarikh* (History of Islamic Civilization). The following is a mapping table of the content of ecological values in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks for grades I to VI published by the Ministry

of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2021-2022 which are used nationally.

Table of the content of ecological values in PAI textbooks for grades I to VI

No	Class	Semester	Chapter	Sub-chapter	Element
1	I	I	-	-	-
2		II	Chapter 9: Getting Used to Clean Living	A. Clean Living	<i>Fiqih</i> (jurisprudence)
3	II	I	-	-	-
4		II	Chapter 8: I'm Happy to Have Good Morals	A. Clean Lifestyle	<i>Akhlak</i> (Morals)
5	III	I	Chapter 2: Let's Get to Know Our God	D. Beautiful Names of Al Wahhab - Appreciation of Asmaul Husna Al Wahhab by being grateful and caring for the environment	<i>Aqidah</i>
6		II	-	-	-
7	IV	I	Chapter 2: The Noble Example of Asmaul Husna	B. Have morals with the Five Asmaul Husna 3. Implementing an attitude of loving cleanliness as a way of emulating the Asmaul Husna Al Quddus	<i>Aqidah</i>
8		II	-	-	-
9	V	I	Chapter 3: I am a pious child	B. Humans as Caliphs	<i>Akhlak</i> (Morals)
10		II	-	-	-
11	VI	I	-	-	-
12		II	Chapter 8: Environmental care	A. Environmental Concept B. Benefits of Caring for the Environment C. Attitude of Caring for the Environment	<i>Akhlak</i> (Morals)

Discussion

Cleanliness as the Basis of Ecological Awareness

An analysis of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks for grades I, II, and IV shows that the themes "*Getting Used to Clean Living*," "*I'm Happy to Have Praiseworthy Morals*," and the behavior of "Love Cleanliness" as a form of exemplary behavior towards the Asmaul Husana *Al Quddus* are the foundation for forming children's ecological awareness through daily experiences such as washing hands, throwing out trash, and caring for the home environment (Abidin & Kusri, 2021; Faozan & Jamaluddin, 2021; Nurzakun & Santoso, 2021). Teachings about *taharah* (purification) and personal hygiene are positioned not merely as ritual

obligations, but also as ecological ethics that foster awareness of the connection between physical cleanliness, spirituality, and environmental health.

The pedagogical approach used is concrete and participatory. Children are encouraged to observe images, practice clean behaviors, and discuss their benefits. This aligns with the concept of experience-based *eco-pedagogy* (Begum et al., 2021). Furthermore, children are encouraged to connect these practices to Islamic values (Nur Hasanah & Kristiyah, 2023). Thus, cleanliness in Islamic Religious Education textbooks is not merely a moral discipline but also the first step in building faith-based ecological awareness.

The Concept of Caliph and Amanah as the Foundation of Environmental Ethics

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbook for fifth-grade elementary school consistently instills the theological idea that humans are God's *representatives* on earth who have a responsibility (*amanah*) for the preservation of nature. In chapters such as "*Caring for the Environment*" (grade VI), narratives are structured to emphasize the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature as emphasized in QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41 and Al-A'raf [7]: 56 which prohibit the destruction of the earth (Baedowi & Anwar, 2021). The value of *the caliph* is interpreted as ethical and spiritual leadership in managing natural resources with a full sense of responsibility as a caliph on earth.

Mizan and Ihsan: Balance and Care for Nature

The dimensions of *mizan* (balance) and *ihsan* (ecological goodness) are often found in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbook narratives, especially in sections discussing living a life full of gratitude, maintaining environmental cleanliness, not damaging nature, and maintaining social harmony (Abidin & Kusri, 2021; Faozan & Jamaluddin, 2021; Ghozali, 2021; Nazirwan & Abdullah, 2022). In this context, balance has not only an individual-spiritual meaning, but also an ecological one, namely the awareness to maintain the order of Allah SWT's creation.

Visual illustrations in the book show students planting trees, cleaning classrooms, and maintaining the cleanliness of places of worship, which serve as pedagogical symbols of *ecological ihsan practices* (Nur Hasanah, 2023). Thus, the Islamic Religious Education textbook contributes to building *an ethical ecology* that instills moral sensitivity to the environment in an integrated manner through text, images, and learning activities.

Ecotheological Pedagogy and the Challenges of Implementation in Schools

The analysis shows that although ecological values are widely represented in textbooks, their implementation in the classroom still faces pedagogical challenges. Teachers often teach cleanliness as a moral routine, rather than as part of a reflective ecotheological awareness (Ali & Bahtera, 2024). Subaidi and Tantowi (2022) emphasize the importance of *eco-pedagogical mediation*, connecting religious teachings with contemporary environmental issues, to prevent learning from becoming trapped in merely normative aspects. The evaluation also

shows that most learning activities are reproductive, emphasizing memorization and concrete behavior without encouraging critical reflection.

To address this, it is necessary to integrate a *reflective ecology approach* into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, where students are not only encouraged to "do good" but also to understand why ecological actions are part of their faith and religious responsibility. This perspective aligns with the concept of *Islamic ecoethics*. (Muhammad et al., 2024) emphasizes the integration of faith, knowledge, and practice in building critical and transformative ecological awareness. Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks have the potential to become strategic media for sustainable Islamic education, provided they are supported by dialogical and reflective pedagogy.

Conclusion

Elementary school Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks already contain a strong foundation of ecological values, such as cleanliness, *amanah*, (trustworthiness), *mizan* (equality), and *ihsan*. However, conceptual and pedagogical deepening is still needed to transform these values into an ecological awareness rooted in Islamic spirituality. With an ecotheological analysis, Islamic religious education (PAI) in elementary schools can play a role not only in shaping personal morals but also as a vehicle for developing ecological citizens who are aware of their spiritual responsibility to nature.

Through a content analysis approach based on Islamic ecotheology, this study found that the ecological dimension is not only a moral discourse but can also be understood as a form of *spiritual ecology*, namely the awareness that protecting the environment is part of obedience to God (Fajarudin et al., 2024). However, there is still a gap between the values taught in textbooks and their practical internalization in the classroom. Ecological awareness in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools is still normative, not fully reflective and transformative as the ideal of sustainability-oriented Islamic education (Bsoul et al., 2022; Zabidi et al., 2021).

References

- Abidin, A. Z., & Kusri, S. (2021). *Pendidikan Agama Islam & Budi Pekerti SD/MI Kelas II*. Kemendikbudristek.
- Ali, M., & Bahtera, M. (2024). Islam in Agricultural Islamic Boarding Schools to Promote Ecosophy (Ecological Philosophy) for Environmental Protection. *MIKHAYLA : Journal of Advanced Research*. <https://doi.org/10.61579/mikhayla.v1i1.171>
- Aquije-Mansilla, M. (2025). Analysis of Theoretical Foundations on Environmental Awareness in Early Childhood Education: A Systematic Review. *Health Leadership and Quality of Life*. <https://doi.org/10.56294/hl2025650>

- Asyfa, S. A., Khoidir, K., & Lubis, R. Y. (2025). Functions Of The Islamic Education Environment. *Journal of Sustainable Education*. <https://doi.org/10.63477/jose.v2i2.175>
- Aziz, E. (2013). *Upaya Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup Melalui Pendidikan Islam*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Azizah, H. N. (2024). Ecopedagogy dalam buku teks pendidikan agama islam tingkat sma. *Uin Syarif Hidayatullah*, 10(5).
- Baedowi, S., & Anwar, H. M. (2021). *Pendidikan Agama Islam & Budi Pekerti SD/MI Kelas V*. Kemendikbudristek.
- Begum, A., Liu, J., Marwat, I., Khan, S., Han, H., & Ariza-Montes, A. (2021). Evaluating the Impact of Environmental Education on Ecologically Friendly Behavior of University Students in Pakistan: The Roles of Environmental Responsibility and Islamic Values. *Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131810188>
- Bsoul, L. A., Omer, A., Kucukalic, L., & Archbold, R. (2022). Islam's Perspective on Environmental Sustainability: A Conceptual Analysis. *Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11060228>
- Fajarudin, A. A., Muttaqin, A. I., Darwis, M., & Artikel, I. (2024). DESIGNING AN ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION BASED ON PESANTREN. *Proceeding of International Conference on Education and Sharia*. <https://doi.org/10.62097/ices.v124.85>
- Faozan, A., & Jamaluddin. (2021). *Pendidikan Agama Islam & Budi Pekerti SD/MI Kelas IV*. Kemendikbudristek.
- Ghozali, M. (2021). *Pendidikan Agama Islam & Budi Pekerti SD/MI Kelas III*. Kemendikbudristek.
- Irawan, B. (2022). Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), Sufism and environmental conservation practices in Indonesia. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7073>
- Kejora, M. T. B., Komariah, A., Herawan, E., & Sudarsyah, A. (2025). Ekopesantren: An Ecology-Based Education Model with Local Wisdom Supports the Sustainable Development Goal's. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i1.6246>
- Khobir, A., Sopiah, S., & Hasanah, F. N. (2021). A Holistic Model for Character Education in Schools (An Alternative Educational Model). *Edukasia Islamika*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v6i2.4731>
- Maghfiroh, M., Iryani, E., Yani, M. T., Zaini, N., & Mahfud, C. (2024). Promoting Green Pesantren: Change, Challenge and Contribution of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 409–435. <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4668>
- Millah, A. S. (2023). *Green Islam*. CV. Istana Agency.
- Muhammad, M., Yaqin, M. Z. N., Mahfud, F. K. R., & Alahmadi, F. M. S. (2024). Freedom that is not Absolute: Ecological Ethics and Human-Nature Relationship in the Qur'an. *Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae*, 22(4), 17–27. <https://doi.org/10.21697/seb.5821>
- Mumtaz, A. M., & Hasanah, F. N. . (2024). Analisis Keterampilan Dasar Guru dalam Meningkatkan Efektivitas Proses Pembelajaran di MII Subah. *Edu*

- Global: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 4(2), 45–52.
- Mustofa, M. L., Zenrif, M. F., & Barizi, A. (2025). Towards an Islamic Ecotheology: Indonesian Muslim Organizations in Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Efforts. *Problemy Ekorozwoju*, 20(2), 21–31. <https://doi.org/10.35784/preko.7089>
- Nazirwan, & Abdullah, K. (2022). *Pendidikan Agama Islam & Budi Pekerti SD/MI Kelas VI*. Kemendikbudristek.
- Nur Hasanah, F. (2023). Optimalisasi Kompetensi Pedagogik Calon Guru PAI Melalui Implementasi Flipped Classroom Berbasis Moodle pada Microteaching. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 4(2), 261–271. <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i2.448>
- Nur Hasanah, F., & Kristiyah, K. (2023). The Effect of Using the Sharing Application (Tik-Tok) on the Character Development of Elementary School Children. *Attadrib: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.54069/attadrib.v6i1.400>
- Nurzakun, M., & Santoso, J. (2021). *Pendidikan Agama Islam & Budi Pekerti SD/MI Kelas I*. Kemendikbudristek.
- Rosida, N., Ansyafani, N., Azzah, M., Agustin, D. A., & Hasanah, F. N. (2024). Implementation of Problem-Based Learning Methods in Babalanlor Primary School. *International Conference on Islam and Education (ICONIE)*, 3(1), 837–841.
- Subaidi, Tantowi, A., Cholid, N., Junaedi, M., Waluyo, & Nursikin, M. (2023). Eco-pesantren: Islamic Education in Forest Conservation Landscapes. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 16, 541–567. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-023-00386-w>
- Zabidi, F. N. M., Rahman, N. A., & Halim, L. (2021). Integration of Islamic Values for Environmental Conservation: An Analysis of School Textbooks. *Religions*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070509>