

Tawhid-Based Ecotheology and Environmental Conservation: The Role of Eco-Pesantren in Lampung, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how tawhid-based ecotheological values are constructed, internalized, and translated into environmental conservation practices at Pesantren Ushuluddin and Pesantren Matblaul Anwar in Lampung, Indonesia. The study adopts a qualitative approach using a multiple-case study design. Data were obtained through field observations, in-depth interviews with kiai and pesantren administrators, and analysis of relevant documents. A descriptive-interpretive analysis was employed to examine how theological principles shape environmental awareness and practices within the pesantren. The findings demonstrate that tawhid is understood beyond the theological affirmation of God's oneness as an ecological worldview that establishes a relationship between God, human beings,

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and nature. This understanding is reflected in the principles of *khalīfah*, *amānah*, *mīzān*, *maṣ laḥab*, and the avoidance of *isrāf* and *fasād*. These theological values are cultivated through *keiai* leadership, religious learning, exemplary conduct, communal activities, and the *pesantren*'s hidden curriculum. Their internalization is reflected in various environmental initiatives, including waste management, tree planting, organic farming, green-space development, environmental cadre formation, student empowerment, and institutional collaboration. Based on these findings, the study recommends integrating *tawhid*-based ecotheology more systematically into *pesantren* education, institutional governance, environmental programs, and community empowerment. The study further develops a Transformative *Tawhid*-Based Eco-*Pesantren* Model comprising four interconnected stages: theological construction, value internalization, ecological actualization, and social transformation. The model offers a conceptual framework for strengthening environmentally oriented Islamic education by connecting theological commitment with concrete ecological responsibility.

Keywords: *Tawhid-Based Ecotheology; Environmental Conservation; Eco-Pesantren; Islamic Environmental Ethics; Ecological Transformation.*

Introduction

Dialog on environmental theology (ecotheology) gained significant attention following Lynn White Jr.'s article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," published in *Science* in 1967.¹ White argued that the ecological crisis was closely related to the development of Western Christianity and its collaboration with modern science and technology. In his view, biblical teachings concerning human dominion over nature, when interpreted anthropocentrically, encouraged an instrumental attitude that treated nature merely as an object for human use.² Such anthropocentrism positioned human beings as the dominant power in the universe and regarded the world as if it had been created solely for their benefit.³ Consequently, nature became

¹ Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, 155.3767 (n.d.).

² Lynn White, "Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems", *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 37.2 (n.d.), 283–309.

³ Audrey R Chapman, Rodney L Petersen, and Barbara Smith -Moran, *Bumi Yang Terdesak Mizan Pustaka*, (2007), 87

subordinated to human interests and vulnerable to exploitation.⁴ Therefore, White's criticism demonstrates that the environmental crisis is not caused solely by technological development but is also influenced by religious interpretations and worldviews that shape the relationship between humans and nature.

White's argument received critical responses from Muslim thinkers, including Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. In *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1993) and *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996), Nasr argued that the environmental crisis emerged because modern science had been separated from the spiritual foundations of religion, leading humans to treat the Earth in destructive ways.⁵ Similarly, in *al-Lama'at*, particularly the chapter on nature and materialism, Nursi maintained that environmental destruction resulted from humanity's mistaken understanding of the universe and its position within creation.⁶ Both thinkers emphasize an ontological relationship between God, humans, and nature that cannot be separated. Their perspectives therefore demonstrate that the ecological crisis is not merely a scientific or technological problem but also a theological and moral concern.

From this perspective, ecological problems are also theological and moral problems. Ecotheology therefore integrates religious and ethical values to maintain the balance and sustainability of the Earth. Islamic theology provides normative guidance by presenting God in every aspect of life, including the use of natural resources and environmental management, while positioning human beings

⁴ Deborah Guess, 'An Ecotheological Exploration of the Thought of Arthur Peacocke', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 15.2 (2017), pp. 188–206, doi:10.1017/S1740355316000279.

⁵ Seyyed Hossain Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford University Press, (1996),. 136).

⁶ Ibrahim Ozdemir, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Approach to The Environment*, *Dalam A Contemporary Approach to Understanding The Qur'an: The Example of The Risale-i Nur*, Istanbul: , (Sozler Nesyriyyat, (2000), 98

as *kehalifah fi al-ard* who are responsible for protecting creation.⁷ This responsibility is increasingly urgent because the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment reported that approximately two-thirds of the ecosystem services supporting life had been degraded or used unsustainably due to human activity. Thus, ecological restoration requires not only scientific and technical measures but also a transformation of theological understanding, moral awareness, and human behavior toward nature.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr said:

*“Some human activity is straining the earth’s natural functions to such an extent that it is no longer possible to take for granted the planet’s ecosystems’ ability to support future generations of humans.”*⁸

The damage is very evident in the fact that the destruction and degradation of the environment, especially in natural systems, such as logging of natural forests, opening of ponds that eliminate mangrove ecosystems as a habitat for aquatic animals. And according to the records of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Indonesia has more than seventy-four types of ecosystems. Unfortunately, there is still a lot of human knowledge that does not understand the function of the ecosystem. Ecosystem changes can be known through the mediation of biological indicators (bio-indicators), the more an area changes, the more the biological indications in it will change.⁹ These changes can cause damage to the ecosystem of an area. So that many species are extinct and not found. Then environmental problems arise due to indifference to biodiversity.

The complexity of the above problems has led to the impact of various institutions to make an approach in preserving nature and providing understanding to the community about the importance of preserving natural resources. One of the Islamic

⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, Oxford University Press, (1996). 136

⁸ Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*. 136

⁹ Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, ‘*Kekinian Keanekaragaman Hayati Indonesia*.’, LIPI, 2014. 34

religious institutions that pay attention to the environment and act in overcoming environmental problems is pesantren. The pesantren's attention to the environmental crisis can be seen from the emergence of an eco-friendly pesantren program (*eco-pesantren*) launched by the government for pesantren that play a role in environmental conservation efforts.¹⁰ The concept of eco-pesantren represents an institutional application of Islamic eco-theology within the educational, social, and cultural life of an Islamic boarding school. It refers not merely to a clean or green pesantren, but to an educational model that integrates Islamic teachings, environmental knowledge, institutional policies, and sustainable practices. Eco-pesantren combines Islamic values with environmentally friendly practice for sustainable and environmentally responsible.¹¹ Mangunjaya defines eco-pesantren as an environmentally oriented pesantren model designed to develop the ecological awareness and practical capacity of the pesantren community through religious education, institutional management, and environmental action.¹²

Within this framework, Islamic environmental values such as *tawhīd* (divine unity), *khalīfah* (human stewardship), *amānah* (responsibility), *mīzān* (balance), and the prohibition of *isrāf* (excessiveness) provide a theological foundation for environmentally responsible behavior. These principles enable eco-pesantren to connect Islamic environmental ethics with concrete ecological practices and to extend the role of pesantren beyond religious education toward environmental conservation and community empowerment. Thus, eco-pesantren can be understood

¹⁰ Herdis Herdiansyah, Hadid Sukmana, and Ratih Lestari, 'Eco-Pesantren as A Basic Forming of Environmental Moral and Theology', *KALAM*, 12.2 (2019), 303–26, doi:10.24042/klm.v12i2.2834..

¹¹ Subaidi et al., 'Eco-Pesantren: Islamic Education in Forest Conservation Landscapes', *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 16.4 (2023), 541–67, doi:10.1007/s40647-023-00386-w.

¹² Fachruddin Majeri Mangunjaya, *Ekopesantren: Bagaimana Merancang Pesantren Ramah Lingkungan?* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014), 30

as an institutional model in which theological consciousness, environmental education, and sustainable practices are integrated into the daily life of the pesantren.

Eco-pesantren therefore be understood as a bridge between Islamic environmental ethics and concrete ecological practices in the pesantren environment. This means that the scope of pesantren does not only focus on the field of education, but nowadays pesantren can become institutions that are concerned with environmental conservation and community empowerment. Eco-pesantren rests on the integration of three dimensions are theological consciousness, environmental education, and institutional practice.¹³ Such as Pondok Pesantren Pabelan in the field of organic farming and waste management, Pondok Pesantren Al Ittifaqiyah Bandung as an agricultural and plantation pesantren and many more pesantren that are organized in ecopesantren.¹⁴ Thus, eco-pesantren represents an integrated model that connects Islamic environmental ethics with education, conservation, and community empowerment.

Building on this context, this study examines the implementation of Islamic ecotheology at Pesantren Ushuluddin and Mathlaul Anwar in Lampung, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design, with data collected through field observations, in-depth interviews with kiai and pesantren administrators, and document analysis. The two pesantren were purposively selected because they demonstrate the integration of religious teachings, institutional policies, and practical activities related to environmental conservation. The multiple-case design enables this study to identify both the distinctive characteristics of each pesantren and the ways in which Islamic theological values

¹³ Jumardin La Fua and others, *Islamic Education on Formation of Environmental Awareness in Pondok Pesantren Indonesia*, IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science, 156 (2018), p. 012035, doi:10.1088/1755-1315/156/1/012035.

¹⁴ Mochammad Mizwar S, *Eco-Pesantren: Analisis Pemahaman Teologi Lingkungan di Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq*, Gunung Djati Conference Series, (2023), 24.

are understood, institutionalized, and translated into concrete ecological practices.

Previous studies have examined eco-pesantren from various perspectives. Mangunjaya conceptualizes eco-pesantren as an environmentally oriented Islamic educational institution that integrates religious instruction, institutional management, and community participation.¹⁵ La Fua and colleagues demonstrate that environmental education in pesantren contributes to the development of santri's ecological awareness through learning, habituation, and participation in conservation activities.¹⁶ Irawan further shows that environmental conservation in pesantren is closely associated with Islamic spirituality and Sufi traditions, through which care for nature is understood as an expression of worship and moral responsibility before God.¹⁷ Other studies have examined institutional strategies, leadership, environmental policies, and practical programs, including waste management, sanitation, tree planting, and the conservation of water and energy.¹⁸ Collectively, these studies have significantly contributed to understanding the role of pesantren in Islamic environmental education and conservation by demonstrating how religious values can support environmentally responsible practices.

However, existing studies predominantly focus on the observable forms, institutional strategies, and behavioral outcomes of environmental programs, while providing limited explanation of

¹⁵ Fachruddin Majeri Mangunjaya, *Ekopesantren: Bagaimana Merancang Pesantren Ramah Lingkungan?*, 24

¹⁶ Fua and others, 'Islamic Education on Formation of Environmental Awareness in Pondok Pesantren Indonesia',¹²

¹⁷ Bambang Irawan, 'Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren), Sufism and Environmental Conservation Practices in Indonesia', HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 78(4), A7073, published online 2022, doi:<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7073>.

¹⁸ Rusli Ismail Moh. Ahsan S. Mandra, 'Eco-Pesantren Implementation Strategy Supports the Environmental Behavior of Islamic Boarding School Students in South Sulawesi', *Atlantis Press SARL*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 654 (2022), 28.

how pesantren communities construct the theological meaning of nature and how such meanings are internalized and transformed into sustained ecological behavior. This gap is particularly evident in the limited attention given to the relationship between three interconnected processes: the construction of tawhid-based environmental theology, the internalization of theological values through pesantren education and culture, and their actualization in the ecological practices of santri and surrounding communities. Moreover, comparative evidence from pesantren with different institutional characteristics, particularly in Lampung, remains limited. Consequently, it is not yet sufficiently understood why similar Islamic teachings may generate different environmental practices or how factors such as kiai leadership, curriculum, habituation, institutional policies, and community participation mediate the transformation of theological beliefs into ecological action. This study addresses this gap by examining how tawḥīd-based ecotheological values are constructed, internalized, and translated into environmental conservation practices in Pesantren Ushuluddin and Mathlaul Anwar in Lampung, Indonesia.

This study of Ecopesantren is still interesting to do as an effort to encourage the sustainability of nature for three reasons,¹⁹ First, ekopesantren is able to create pioneers and activists who not only have knowledge and skills in Islamic teachings, but also an understanding of ecology. Second, pesantren can develop not only in the field of education, but also in fields related to science and technology. Third, increasing the religious value of environmental awareness and practicing environmentally friendly Islamic education. These three factors underlie the choice of the focus of the study on ecopesantren, an implementation of echo-theology thinking in pesantren.

¹⁹ Subaidi and others, '*Eco-Pesantren: Islamic Education in Forest Conservation Landscapes*', 45

Pesantren and Environmental Responsibility

The mandate of human creation is a noble goal that must be realized in life. A Muslim should make the mandate of creation as the foundation in navigating life in the world. Being a representative of Allah on earth is pursued through the field of worship as a form of pure servitude to the creator. With true servitude, man becomes a person who deserves to be called God's representative on earth.²⁰ Worship for Muslims is not limited to the matter of ibadah mahdah, daily activities are also regulated and strived for worship, including livelihood activities can also be placed in the context of worship to achieve the Allah's Blessing. Achieving Divine of Allah by farming is certainly without ignoring the sustainability of the environment where humans reside on it, in fact farming for santri can have a dimension of worship if balanced with ecological preservation efforts. Because the purpose of creation in essence makes humans aware of their existence as servants from whom they are entrusted with the mandate as caliphs on earth.

In Islam, humans are considered as khalifah (managers) on earth. This responsibility includes protecting and caring for the environment and natural resources given by God. In an effort to care for the environment, Pesantren has a role in the form of responsibility to protect it. Pesantren not only functions as an institution that focuses on the religious field but must be able to become a social institution that participates in responding to problems in the surrounding environment including environmental awareness. Nature conservation efforts carried out by pesantren will be very helpful in developing understanding and increasing public awareness related to the environment²¹Islam teaches

²⁰ Munawir Sazali, 'Pesantren dan Konservasi Lingkungan (Studi Kasus di Pondok Pesantren Darumhyiddin NW Debok Lombok Timur)', *PALAPA, Jurnal Studi Keislaman Dan Kependidikan*, 11.1 (2023), 568–91.

²¹ Endang Syarif Nurulloh, 'Pendidikan Islam dan Pengembangan Kesadaran Lingkungan', *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 7.2 (2019), p. 237, doi:10.36667/jppi.v7i2.366.

environmental conservation not because of the depletion of nature, but environmental conservation is an original command in the Quran.

This verse shows that the damage in question is not only in *shirk*, but also in the basic things for survival, namely the environment. In agriculture, for example, if forest destruction continues or littering is relentless, it will be difficult to grow rice and other plants that can benefit humans. This is because one of the effects of littering is that it pollutes water and can damage plants. This needs to be taken seriously. That attention is full of human awareness to carry out maintenance properly. This verse shows that the damage in question is not only in *syirk*, but also in the basic things for survival, namely the environment. In agriculture, for example, if forest destruction continues or littering is relentless, it will be difficult to grow rice and other plants that can benefit humans. This is because one of the effects of littering is that it pollutes water and can damage plants. This needs to be taken seriously. That attention is full of human awareness to carry out maintenance properly.²² As a continuation, things about the environment need to be conveyed to students and even the community around the pesantren. Because the geographical condition of Pesantren Ushuluddin is located in the southern hills of Penengahan South Lampung, by utilizing this geographical location as an effort to eliminate the intention of “*Tabdzīr*” so that it can be more useful and productive sustainable.

Environmental conservation begins with an awareness that develops within individuals and is consistent with the Qur’anic emphasis on human responsibility toward creation. As Ust. Hasan explained, the eco-pesantren initiative represents the response of pesantren to contemporary environmental challenges. Within the pesantren context, the environmental crisis is manifested

²² Kiai Rofiq, Pengasuh Pesantren Ushuluddin, wawancara semi-terstruktur oleh penulis, Lampung Selatan, 15 April 2024.

not only in declining vegetation or rising temperatures but also in the lack of awareness among students and teachers regarding the cleanliness and environmental quality of the institution.²³ In response to these challenges, the leadership of Pesantren Mathlul Anwar involves all members of the pesantren community in environmental conservation through both individual responsibility and organized collective activities. Environmental education is provided through seminars, workshops, and discussions on environmental issues to strengthen awareness of the importance of nature conservation. This educational approach is complemented by practical activities, including greening programs, tree planting, reforestation, and responsible waste management. The pesantren also encourages sustainable consumption by promoting local and organic products while discouraging the use of products that may harm the environment.

These practices demonstrate that environmental conservation can be implemented through simple activities within the daily life of the pesantren. However, their sustainability requires consistency, exemplary behavior from teachers, and continuous supervision of santri. Similar practices can be observed at Pesantren Darul Quran Pesawaran, where tree planting and waste management are undertaken to maintain the cleanliness and environmental quality of the pesantren and its surroundings. These practices indicate that addressing the environmental crisis requires more than technical interventions; it also requires a deeper understanding of the importance of environmental stewardship. Through religious awareness, environmental education, habituation, and exemplary conduct, santri are encouraged to develop greater sensitivity toward the cleanliness, order, and sustainability of their environment.

The findings further demonstrate that the santri have developed positive attitudes and ethical commitments toward

²³ Hasan, coordinator of the eco-pesantren program at Pesantren Mathlul Anwar, semi-structured interview conducted by the author, South Lampung, April 22, 2024.

preserving nature and their surrounding environment. At Pesantren Ushuluddin, this ecological awareness is actualized through tree planting, waste management, organic farming, and efforts to reduce the use of single-use plastics by encouraging santri to bring reusable shopping bags and select products with minimal packaging.²⁴ The santri also collect and separate paper, plastic, and metal waste for recycling and participate in community-based waste-management activities. These practices indicate that environmental awareness has progressed beyond cognitive understanding and has become part of the santri's daily ethical conduct. Karim argues that environmental education becomes more effective when ecological knowledge is integrated with religious awareness because religion provides the moral motivation necessary to challenge anthropocentric views and promote responsible behavior toward nature.²⁵ In this context, environmental conservation at Pesantren Ushuluddin is not merely a technical response to waste and land-management problems but also reflects the internalization of Islamic ethical values.

From a theological perspective, these practices represent the actualization of *tawhīd*, *amānah*, *mīzān*, and the human responsibility as *khalīfah fī al-ard*. Tree planting can be understood as an effort to sustain God's creation, organic farming as a manifestation of respect for ecological balance, and waste reduction as an application of the prohibition against *isrāf* and *fasād*. Ahmad's study similarly demonstrates that religious and spiritual values can mobilize Muslim communities to undertake climate mitigation and environmental adaptation, showing that ecological action can emerge from the transformation of belief into collective responsibility.²⁶ Thus, the

²⁴ Kiai Rofiq, Pengasuh Pesantren Ushuluddin, wawancara semi-terstruktur 15 Mei 2024.

²⁵ Abdul Karim, 'Integration of Religious Awareness in Environmental Education', QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies), 10.2 (2022), p. 415, doi:10.21043/qijis.v10i2.14404.

²⁶ Maghfur Ahmad, 'Three Sufi Communities Guarding the Earth: A Case Study of Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change in Indonesia', Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies, 57.2 (2019), pp. 359–96, doi:10.14421/ajis.2019.57.2.359-396.

environmental practices of the santri at Pesantren Ushuluddin illustrate a process of theological internalization in which belief in God is translated into ecological ethics, habitual discipline, and concrete conservation practices.

The findings show that the development of eco-pesantren in Lampung began with the pesantren's identification of strategic socio-ecological problems affecting surrounding communities. These problems included the transition of local livelihoods from farming to migrant labor, ineffective use of agricultural land, limited agricultural knowledge and innovation, declining youth interest in farming, falling prices of cassava and corn, and crop failures associated with increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather. These conditions have not only weakened the local agricultural economy but have also contributed to changes in community lifestyles, including increased consumerism, reduced attention to children's education, and the declining attractiveness of agriculture to younger generations. The eco-pesantren program can therefore be interpreted as a religiously inspired response to interconnected environmental, economic, and social vulnerabilities. Karim argues that environmental education becomes more effective when ecological knowledge is integrated with religious awareness because religious values provide a moral foundation for correcting anthropocentric attitudes and mobilizing collective environmental responsibility.²⁷ In this context, the initiatives of Pesantren Ushuluddin and Pesantren Mathlul Anwar demonstrate that pesantren can transform Islamic teachings from normative religious discourse into practical responses to local socio-ecological problems.

Pesantren Mathlul Anwar, for example, developed a "melon school" using a greenhouse system to provide young people and community members in Cintamulya Village with education and practical training in cultivating Inthanon melons. The training is

²⁷ Karim, 'Integration of Religious Awareness in Environmental Education'.418

conducted periodically and covers seed preparation, planting, crop maintenance, land preparation, and production management. The greenhouse enables the community to regulate environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and light, thereby reducing some of the risks associated with seasonal uncertainty. More importantly, the program seeks to transform young people's perceptions of agriculture by presenting farming as a field that requires knowledge, technology, creativity, and entrepreneurship. This finding is consistent with Fanani and Pohl's study, which demonstrates that Islamic values can be operationalized through transformative fiqh to empower farmers, strengthen agrarian ethics derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, apply *maṣlaḥah* to sustainable agroecological practices, and establish participatory resource management.²⁸ Accordingly, the melon school should not be understood merely as an agricultural training program but as an expression of transformative ecotheology that connects religious values, technological adaptation, economic empowerment, and ecological sustainability.

Environmental transformation initiated by Pesantren Ushuluddin and Pesantren Mathlaul Anwar is manifested in at least five interconnected forms. *First*, the pesantren develops critical community awareness through religious gatherings, sermons, and learning activities that encourage santri and community members to understand environmental problems as moral and theological concerns. *Second*, the pesantren forms environmental cadres by involving santri and young people in the melon school and other ecological programs. *Third*, it provides education on organic and environmentally responsible farming to reduce dependence on synthetic chemical inputs, maintain soil fertility, and preserve ecological relationships in agricultural land. *Fourth*, it utilizes

²⁸ Muhyar Fanani and Florian Pohl, 'Fiqh-Based Social Transformation in Farmer Empowerment: A Participatory Action Research Approach', *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 62.2 (2024), pp. 305–35, doi:10.14421/ajis.2024.622.305-335, iAl-Jamiuc0u8217ah: Journal of Islamic Studies, 62.2 (2024)

previously unproductive pesantren land through collaborative cultivation and greenhouse-based farming. *Fifth*, it strengthens institutional support through cooperation with Bank Indonesia and the Lampung chapter of the Pesantren Business Economic Association (Himpunan Ekonomi Bisnis Pesantren or Hebitren). Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate that environmental conservation in the two pesantren has evolved from individual awareness into an integrated process of educational, social, economic, and institutional transformation.

The environmental conservation model developed by these pesantren therefore represents more than an institutional response to ecological degradation. It constitutes a form of transformative ecotheology in which belief in God fosters critical awareness, social responsibility, and collective ecological action. Environmental education is embedded within the pesantren's *hidden curriculum* through the exemplary leadership of the kiai, religious instruction, communal discipline, land-use practices, agricultural training, and direct participation in environmental conservation activities. Through this process, santri and community members do not merely learn about environmental preservation; they experience it as an expression of *tawhīd*, *amānah*, *maṣlahah*, and humanity's responsibility as *khalīfah fī al-ard*. Thus, the practices observed at both pesantren illustrate how Islamic theological values can be internalized and translated into sustained ecological behavior and collective environmental responsibility.

Integrating Islamic Teachings with an Understanding of Nature and The Environment

Ecotheology is understood as a branch of science that examines the relationship between religious teachings and environmental issues, and how the spiritual and ethical principles of a religion can be applied to preserve and protect the environment. Ecotheology seeks to integrate religious perspectives with

ecological understanding to create awareness and actions that support environmental sustainability. The universe was created and governed by God as evidence of love and consideration for the sustainability of human life. Nature serves as a reminder of God's presence and power. Given the knowledge that nature is God's creation, while caring for and preserving it is the practice of the human soul's faith in God. Thus, if there is behavior that destroys the environment, it means there is disbelief in God. As humans have been given responsibility and have their needs met.²⁹ Unfortunately, religion and the environment are often understood separately. Many think that religion is only a relationship between God and His creatures, even limited to covering only worship activities as the pillars of Islam. Such an understanding is very incorrect, because religion provides the value of awareness and teaches humans to protect the earth in order to avoid natural disasters.³⁰ Religious contributions also have an influence on human behavior, such as the ability to preserve the environment, avoid damage and pollution of the environment by humans, because they believe their actions can bring calamities that will return to humans due to their actions.

The concept of ecotheology encompasses several interconnected dimensions. *First*, religious teachings and the environment, namely exploring religious texts to find teachings that support the protection of nature and biodiversity. *Second*, environmental ethics by compiling ethical principles based on religious teachings that encourage responsible behavior towards the environment. *Third*, the value of Spirituality and Nature by raising spiritual awareness regarding human relationships with nature,

²⁹ Ahmad Said Saputra and Muhammad Zulham, *Implementasi Program Ekopesantren dalam Mewujudkan Pondok Pesantren Ramah Lingkungan (Studi kasus: Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Darunnajah Braja Selehah, Lampung)*, 8.1 (2024),28

³⁰ Andi Rafida Ali Mursyid Azisi and Muhammad Jamaluddin, 'ISLAM DAN EKOTEOLOGI (Telaah Terhadap Pesan Al-Qur'an untuk Menjaga Kearifan Lingkungan)', *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 6.3 (2023),87-101

seeing it as an integral part of God's creation. *Fourth*, activism and practice by encouraging concrete actions in conservation and environmental protection, including advocacy for environmentally friendly policies. *Fifth*, when necessary interfaith dialog activities by facilitating dialog between various religious traditions to unite in efforts to preserve the earth. Thus, this understanding of Ecotheology seeks to bridge between religious beliefs and the environmental challenges facing humanity, with the hope of building collective awareness and more responsible action towards the earth.

The integration of religion and environmental understanding is strongly affirmed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in *Religion and the Order of Nature*. Nasr argues that religion should provide the metaphysical and ethical foundation through which humans understand the natural world, because the contemporary environmental crisis is inseparable from the spiritual crisis of modern humanity.³¹ The desacralization of nature, reinforced by secular humanism and modern science detached from sacred knowledge, has encouraged an anthropocentric worldview in which nature is treated primarily as an object to be controlled and exploited for human interests. Nasr therefore maintains that technological and regulatory solutions alone are insufficient unless accompanied by the restoration of a sacred understanding of nature and the reconstruction of the relationship between God, humanity, and the cosmos.

From the Islamic perspective, nature is not an autonomous material reality but a manifestation of divine signs through which God reveals His wisdom, power, and unity. Revelation is therefore encountered through both the written signs contained in the Qur'an (*āyāt qur'āniyyah*) and the cosmic signs manifested in nature (*āyāt kawniyyah*). This understanding is consistent with Qur'anic passages that invite human beings to contemplate the

³¹ Seyyed Hossain Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, 136

creation of the heavens and the earth. (Q.S. 3:190–191), observe God’s signs in the horizons and within themselves (Q.S. 41:53), and reflect upon the signs present on the earth and in human existence (Q.S. 51:20–21).³² Consequently, preserving the environment is not merely a social or technical obligation but a theological responsibility arising from the recognition of nature as a sacred sign and trust from God. Contemporary research also confirms that integrating religious awareness into environmental education can challenge anthropocentric assumptions and strengthen moral commitment to ecological conservation.³³ Thus, reconnecting religion and ecology is essential for transforming environmental protection from a pragmatic activity into an expression of faith, spiritual consciousness, and responsibility toward creation.

Implementation of The Understanding of Ecotheology in Pesantren

Ecotheology can be understood as a transformative theological approach that seeks to reconnect religion and nature by emphasizing their interrelationship. It is grounded in the awareness that the natural world constitutes the macrocosm within which human beings live, depend upon, and sustain their existence. This perspective calls for a reinterpretation of theological understandings that have traditionally separated human spiritual concerns from their relationship with the natural environment.³⁴ At its core, ecotheology addresses the interconnected relationship among God, humanity, and nature. These three dimensions must be maintained in harmony and balance, as the disruption of one

³² Harda Armayanto and others, ‘*The Ecological Crisis and Worldview: An Analytical Study of Secular and Islamic Perspective*’, Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam, 10.1 (2026), pp. 175–209, doi:10.21111/tasfiyah.v10i1.8.

³³ Karim, ‘*Integration of Religious Awareness in Environmental Education*’, 418

³⁴ Fikri Mahzumi, S.Hum., M.Fil.I, ‘*Kalam Rimba (Ekoteologi Transformatif Di Pesantren Walisongo Tuban)*’, THE 16th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ISLAMIC STUDIES (AICIS). 2016, 8

inevitably affects the others. From this perspective, ecological sustainability requires not only responsible human interaction with nature but also a theological understanding of humanity's relationship with God and the created world.

In practice, the pesantren understands human beings as *khalifah fi al-ard* (stewards of the Earth), a role that entails the responsibility to protect, manage, and preserve the natural environment. The Qur'an encourages human beings to contribute to the cultivation and preservation of the Earth in order to sustain life for present and future generations. This responsibility requires the development of interconnected relationships among human beings, God, and nature. As *khalifah*, human beings are entrusted by God with the responsibility to care for the environment and are prohibited from causing destruction on the Earth. A reciprocal and interdependent relationship exists between humanity and nature, making the responsible treatment of the environment essential to the sustainability of both.³⁵ From this perspective, environmental conditions can reflect the ethical and theological consciousness of a community, while environmental conservation can serve as an expression of faith in practice. Accordingly, the kiai plays an important role in cultivating this awareness among santri and community members by emphasizing the theological foundations and moral significance of the ecological initiatives developed by the pesantren.

The understanding of humanity's role as *khalifah fi al-ard* is instilled in santri through both classroom instruction and everyday activities within the pesantren. This understanding is generally conveyed through religious lectures, *maulid*, classroom learning, discussions of environmental fiqh, Qur'anic verses and hadith related to the environment, institutional rules, discipline, and exemplary behavior demonstrated by teachers and fellow santri.³⁶ At Pesantren

³⁵ Maslani, 'Eco-Theology: Islamic Ethics and Environmental Transformation in Islamic Boarding Schools', *Edukasi Islam*, 12.04 (2023).94-102.

³⁶ Hasan, Pengelola program ecopesantren, 24 Mei 2024

Mathlaul Anwar in Lampung, environmental values are integrated into the education of santri through the teaching of environmental fiqh, Qur'anic and hadith-based teachings on environmental responsibility, and practical activities related to environmental care and personal and institutional cleanliness. This educational process aims not only to develop the santri's understanding of environmental issues but also to empower them to become agents of change who are capable of applying environmental knowledge and practices after completing their education at the pesantren. This commitment is further reinforced through practical greening programs, including tree planting, greenhouse maintenance, and participation in waste-management and recycling activities. These practices provide concrete opportunities for santri to translate the concept of *khalifah* into everyday action by assuming responsibility for protecting and maintaining the environment.

At Pesantren Ushuluddin, the theological understanding of humanity's responsibility toward nature is similarly translated into practical environmental activities. Santri participate in tree planting, greenhouse maintenance, organic gardening, and waste-management programs as part of their daily educational experience. Greenhouse maintenance, for instance, is organized through a rotating duty system, while santri involved in the *basatin* program are entrusted with caring for crops during the planting season under the supervision of teachers. These activities provide direct experience in environmental stewardship while developing practical skills that can be applied beyond the pesantren. Outdoor learning and other structured institutional programs further strengthen santri's engagement with nature by combining religious understanding with direct ecological experience. Through the integration of theological values, environmental education, practical engagement, and exemplary behavior, pesantren cultivate environmentally conscious young people who understand environmental protection not merely as a technical responsibility but as an expression of faith and humanity's role as *khalifah fī al-ard*. In this way, environmental

education contributes to the development of santri as agents of change capable of promoting environmental conservation and sustainability within their wider communities.

In addition, the implementation of an understanding of ecotheology can also be carried out with discussions and studies for students. Organizing discussions and studies on verses and hadiths related to the environment can open insights and increase interest in protecting the environment. The next implementation of ecotheology is in the collaboration efforts of pesantren with the community.³⁷ This means that the pesantren moves to invite the community to participate in the ecotheology program implemented by the pesantren, so that the community is able to benefit from this activity more broadly. As the Mathlul Anwar pesantren did by making a melon school for students and the outside community. Thus, ecotheological implementation at the pesantren extends beyond individual learning to promote collective environmental awareness and community empowerment.

The internalization of theological values serves as a foundation for environmental conservation at the pesantren. This process begins with formal classroom instruction in which teachers introduce the sacred and spiritual dimensions of nature as part of the learning material. This understanding is continued outside the classroom such as in dormitories and in the pesantren environment. Then, the deepening of this understanding is then supported by the real work of the ustadz and kiai in caring for and watering the plants. That is where the teacher becomes a direct example for Santri. Not only listening but also involved in carrying out environmental conservation activities. The strategy of applying the values of sacredness and spirituality above is a means of implementing faith. Kyai Rofiq said that the form of human spirituality and monotheism in the context of the

³⁷ Saputra and Zulham, *Implementasi Program Ekopesantren dalam Menujudkan Pondok Pesantren Ramah Lingkungan (Studi kasus: Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Darunnajah Braja Selebah, Lampung)*. Jurnal Himmah, 8.1 (2024), 857-876

environment is likened to incomplete worship. We cannot worship Allah, implement our faith in a dirty, chaotic and even destroyed environment, while we are still given the strength and power to act, the invitation to preserve the environment is purely because of the orders of Allah Swt. and Rasulullah saw.³⁸ Thus, environmental conservation at Pesantren Ushuluddin is understood as a direct expression of faith, embodied through education, exemplary conduct, and daily practice.

The implementation of ecotheology in pesantren begins with an understanding of humanity's role as *khalīfah fī al-ard*, which is subsequently translated into environmental conservation practices within the pesantren and collaboration with external organizations. These efforts aim to foster broader environmental transformation. In Lampung, the implementation of pesantren-based ecotheology by santri and teachers is manifested through several interconnected practices. *First*, pesantren develop critical environmental awareness by encouraging santri to cultivate a sense of responsibility toward nature and to maintain the pesantren environment as a shared space for learning and communal life. Environmental learning is designed to provide santri with direct practical experiences that complement their religious education and equip them with knowledge and skills applicable beyond the pesantren.

Second, collaboration with external institutions strengthens both environmental initiatives and the institutional capacity of pesantren. Such partnerships provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, skills development, and community empowerment while also supporting pesantren economic independence. Pesantren Ushuluddin and Pesantren Mathlaul Anwar, for example, have established collaborative initiatives with institutions such as Bank Indonesia and have participated in the Pesantren Business Economics Association (Himpunan Ekonomi Bisnis Pesantren or

³⁸ Kiai Rofiq, Pengasuh Pesantren Ushuluddin, wawancara semi-terstruktur, 15 April 2024

Hebitren). Their connections with other environmentally oriented pesantren, including Pesantren Al-Ittifaq in Bandung, further expand opportunities for learning and institutional development. These collaborations enable pesantren to extend the benefits of environmental programs to both santri and surrounding communities.

More broadly, the implementation of ecotheology in these pesantren seeks to transform spiritual awareness, Qur'anic understanding, and engagement with contemporary environmental issues into concrete ecological practices. Through this process, divine values are internalized as a foundation for cultivating harmony among God, humanity, and nature. The internalization of *tawhid* fosters a sense of mutual responsibility and care in human relationships with God, other human beings, and the natural environment. These theological values are further reinforced through formal education, daily religious activities, and direct engagement in environmental practices. Thus, ecotheology moves beyond theoretical understanding and becomes embodied in everyday behavior, linking theological commitment with environmental responsibility and sustainable living.

Ecopesantren: Efforts To Preserve The Pesantren Environment

Islam is a religion that pays great attention to the environment. There are so many verses of the Qur'an and as-Sunnah that contain discussions about the environment. The messages conveyed by the Qur'an about the environment are very clear and prospective. These messages contain orders to protect and care for the environment that must be carried out by humans. In the Islamic perspective, humans and the environment do have a very close relationship. God created the universe, including humans and the environment, in balance and harmony.³⁹ Survival in nature will be disrupted if one

³⁹ Ahmad Fatoni, AL-AFKAR : Journal for Islamic Studies, *Islam Dan Lingkungan*

of the components is disturbed. In other words, each component of life exerts an interrelated influence.

All damage to nature that has a major impact on the future of the world can only be done by humans, not animals or others. Therefore, the role of humans in the balance of nature is an important factor. Humans with the power of science and technology and the power of industry, have started the destruction of nature, so it is humans who can stop and fix it. The low level of human awareness to protect is influenced by two factors, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors are influenced by the low level of human awareness in protecting the environment. While external factors are government interference in providing signs in the form of ineffective and solutive laws and regulations.⁴⁰ In an effort to increase human awareness in order to protect the environment from various damages, one solution is to return to the doctrine of Islam which has directed its people how to behave friendly to the environment. The long-term goal is that the values taught by Islam regarding the urgency of environmental conservation can be reflected in the theological beliefs of Muslims.

Human awareness to save the environment and build a balanced ecosystem is still very low. Indonesia showed that people have little responsibility to protect and preserve the environment. Beautiful city layouts, green space areas such as reforestation land, construction of river waterways are destroyed for the sake of consumption.⁴¹ As stated by Ning Nurul Hikmah as the caregiver of PP. Tribakti Attaqwa that currently there are many environmental problems. Almost evenly distributed in this area. Moreover, our area is indeed some dry and barren. So we planted a garden with

Hidup, 7.2 (2024), pp. 320–31, doi:10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i2.1123.Islam.

⁴⁰ Siti Zulaikha, 'Kelestarian Lingkungan Hidup Perspektif Hukum Islam Dan Undang-Undang', *AKADEMIKA: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 19.2 (2014), 243.

⁴¹ Munawir Sazali, 'Pesantren dan Konservasi Lingkungan (Studi Kasus di Pondok Pesantren Darumuhiddin Nw Debok Lombok Timur)', *PALAPA, Jurnal Studi Keislaman Dan Kependidikan*, 11.1 (2023), 568–591

fruits with super and good seeds. For local residents and we sell directly to fruit shops that already have cooperation. Environmental stewardship with a system of planting plants is very helpful for greening around the pesantren. Even more than just greening, Kiai Rofiq explained that planting trees both with greenhouses and open land is a form of obedience to Allah through plants. How do humans take care of plants, so that later it will return to humans a lot of goodness. Even if not, humans still get rewards from Allah for planting and caring for plants, especially for the Pesantren itself can greatly help the economic and social fields of the Pesantren.⁴²

At Pesantren Ushuluddin, he teaches Islamic values that are closely related to the obligation of a Muslim in protecting the environment. Therefore, at the Ushuluddin Islamic Boarding School, the management of environmental management carried out by santri and santriwati has a big contribution to environmental conservation. This environment-based education was certainly initiated by Kiai Rofiq through his boarding school. As one example of the example taught by Kiai Rofiq to students and teachers at Ushuluddin Islamic Boarding School in particular is to start a tree nursery in the pesantren environment. Both tree nurseries, tree planting and waste management activities in the Pesantren are carried out by the students after being initiated and exemplified to them as part of the *da'wah bil-hāl* for the students. The same thing was also done by Ust Hasan at Pesantren Mathlul Anwar, he also studied environmental maintenance and plant nurseries before delivering them to his students. With the collaboration of various parties, Pesantren Mathlul Anwar has a big share in environmental conservation. So that in one of the visions and missions of the pesantren, Pesantren Mathlul Anwar organizes environment-based education, realized by the commitment and consistency of the teachers in practicing environmental maintenance. One of Pesantren's visions is to organize environment-based education,

⁴² Kiai Rofiq, Pengasuh Pesantren Ushuluddin, wawancara semi-terstruktur, 15 April 2024

so this can be an answer and an effort to conserve the pesantren environment. ⁴³And this is in line with current needs. So that ecopesantren in Mathlaul Anwar has developed well.

Practices and real movements in the greening of pesantren are needed as an effort to save and improve the pesantren economy. Saving and improving the pesantren economy cannot stand alone without the contribution of parties outside the pesantren, namely the community. What needs to be built in the community is public awareness to protect the environment. Starting from being responsive to environmental issues around the house. Pesantren teaches environmental fiqh to the community through lectures and mentoring Melon nurseries at Pesantren Mathlaul Anwar. And Pesantren invites community members to continuously build an attitude of humanism and preserve the environment as a place to live. By expanding human values to support environmental conservation efforts and to create a more just, inclusive and sustainable society.

An easy thing to do for Pesantren residents in environmental conservation efforts is frugal behavior in Pesantren. Thrifty does not have to be interpreted as material, but energy saving is also a good deed to do. Frugal means not wasteful or the act or nature of wasting or squandering resources, such as money, time, or goods, without any clear benefit. The term is often used in a negative context, to describe inefficient and unwise behavior in using something. From the efforts in protecting the environment, it will be in harmony between religious commands and conscious efforts to prevent excessive plastic consumption, which can certainly damage the environment. Therefore, the real implementation of the postulates of Islamic texts and fiqh laws that apply in terms of protecting the environment is highly expected to be applied by Muslim communities.

⁴³ Hasan, Pengelola program ecopesantren, 24 Mei 2024

Ecopesantren for Pesantren Economic Independence

The ecopesantren program is an initiative that aims to integrate the principles of ecology and sustainability in the life of pesantren and the surrounding community. The ecopesantren program is a plan designed to raise the standard of Islamic education and build a green, self-reliant, and environmentally conscious society. To overcome the difficulties facing the Islamic world and Indonesia today, such as environmental degradation and climate change, the boarding school combines Islamic teachings with scientific knowledge about nature and the environment. It is intended that a new generation of Muslims will be born through the ekopesantren program who are pious, resilient, and able to understand the message of Islam that provides mercy for the universe.

The discussion of ecopesantren and society cannot be separated from efforts to empower human resources. Community empowerment is a social transformation process that involves forming and organizing communities. By empowering this community, they learn how to be responsible, dedicated and able to maintain survival. They also learn how to solve problems and impact environmental changes that affect their quality of life.⁴⁴ Community empowerment is there to teach and empower learners to manage and maintain their environment. This is also done for the benefit of their food security while in the Lodge.

In addition to human resources, sustainable natural resource management also needs to be considered. Sustainable natural resource management means cooperation between the government, communities and the private sector to develop policies and measures that support the wise use and protection of the environment. Public education and awareness on the importance of natural

⁴⁴ Sari Tri Anjani and Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, *Ekopesantren Sebagai Pemberdayaan Komunitas Pesantren Dalam Menjaga Dan Melestarikan Lingkungan (Studi Kasus: Pondok Pesantren Daar El-Istiqomah Kampus 2, Serang, Banten)*, vol.8 no. 1 (2024). 34

resource protection should also be improved to encourage more responsible behavioral change and prevention of environmental pollution and damage. Exploitation of natural resources often has negative impacts on the environment, such as water pollution, forest destruction, or loss of biodiversity. In this context, Muslims should strive to prevent or limit the negative impacts resulting from the overuse and waste of natural resources. Fourth, the development and application of environmentally friendly technologies. Muslims are encouraged to seek innovative solutions that reduce the consumption of natural resources and result in lower environmental impacts. It is also important for pesantren and communities to collaborate to encourage reforestation to eliminate the greed of mankind through a full understanding of religious teachings.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the environmental initiatives of Pesantren Ushuluddin and Pesantren Mathlaul Anwar constitute a Tawhid-Based Transformative Eco-Pesantren Model, rather than merely a collection of conservation programs. The model consists of four interrelated processes: theological construction, value internalization, ecological actualization, and social transformation. The theological foundation is constructed around *tawḥīd*, *khalīfah*, *amānah*, *mīzān*, and the prohibition of *isrāf* and *fasād*. These values are internalized through religious instruction, kiai leadership, habituation, exemplary conduct, and the pesantren's hidden curriculum, and are subsequently actualized through waste management, tree planting, greenhouse cultivation, organic farming, and environmental cadre formation. At the level of social transformation, these practices extend into agricultural education, youth empowerment, productive land utilization, community engagement, and institutional collaboration.

The central finding is that, within the contexts examined, environmental conservation becomes more sustainable when it is understood as an expression of faith and humanity's responsibility as *kehalifah fi al-ard*, rather than merely as a technical or economic activity. This finding extends existing eco-pesantren research by demonstrating how theological values are constructed, internalized, and translated into collective ecological practices through educational, institutional, and community mechanisms. The study therefore contributes a conceptual framework that connects Islamic theology, pesantren education, ecological practice, and community empowerment. The model may serve as an adaptable reference for pesantren seeking to develop faith-based environmental education and sustainable ecological practices, while further research is needed to examine its applicability across pesantren with different social, institutional, and ecological contexts.[]

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