

Development of an Ecotheology-Based Islamic Education Learning Model from the Perspective of Classical and Contemporary Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model based on ecotheology from the perspective of classical and contemporary Islamic education, as an effort to build learners' ecological awareness amid the global environmental crisis. The study is motivated by the fact that PAI learning has so far tended to be normative and textual, and has therefore not been able to contextually integrate ecological values into learners' lives. The study uses a *Research and Development* (R&D) approach with the ADDIE development model, covering the stages of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The results show that the ecotheology-based PAI learning model has a strong philosophical foundation in classical Islamic education through the concepts of *adab*, *akhlak*, and human responsibility as *khalifah fil ardh*, and is reinforced by a contemporary Islamic education approach that is integrative, contextual, and participatory. This learning model is characterized as integrative, contextual, participatory, spiritual-ecological, and oriented toward the formation of learners' character. Implementation of the model is carried out through curriculum integration, the use of active learning methods, the cultivation of a green school culture, teacher role-modeling, and collaboration with the community. Thus, the development of an ecotheology-based PAI learning model is expected to shape learners who possess not only spiritual piety, but also ecological awareness and social responsibility for environmental sustainability.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis in the modern era has become a multidimensional problem with major consequences for the continuity of human life (Windasari et al., 2024). Environmental damage such as global warming, air pollution, clean-water shortages, deforestation, and the excessive exploitation of natural resources shows that the relationship between human beings and nature has become seriously unbalanced. This problem is not only technological and economic in nature, but is also shaped by the weakening of human moral and spiritual awareness in understanding nature as part of God's creation. This condition indicates that ecological problems are, at their core, problems of humanity and spirituality that require solutions through an integrative and sustainable educational approach (Isfahani, 2025).

In this context, education holds a strategic position as an instrument of social transformation for building society's ecological awareness. Education functions not merely as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a medium for internalizing values, shaping character, and strengthening human moral responsibility toward the environment. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as an important part of the national education system, bears a major responsibility for instilling humanistic, spiritual, and ecological Islamic values in learners. In reality, however, PAI learning in many educational institutions still tends to emphasize cognitive aspects and formal religious ritual, and pays too little attention to the practical dimensions of social and environmental life (Alsi, 2025).

PAI learning has often been understood merely as the transmission of material on creed (aqidah), worship, morals (akhlak), and Islamic history in a normative way, without connecting it to contemporary problems, including the issue of environmental damage. As a result, the religious values taught have not yet been able to fully shape learners' ecological awareness (Ana et al., 2026). Yet Islam has very comprehensive teachings on the importance of maintaining the balance of nature and prohibiting damage on earth. In the Qur'an, human beings are described as *khalifah fil ardh* (vicegerents on earth), entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding and cultivating the earth. Allah states in Surah al-A'raf, verse 56:

"And do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set right."

This verse affirms that safeguarding the environment is part of humankind's theological responsibility as a servant and vicegerent of God on earth.

Awareness of the close relationship between religion and the environment has given rise to the concept of ecotheology as a paradigm that integrates divine values with ecological consciousness. Ecotheology views nature as a manifestation of the signs of God's power that must be respected, protected, and used wisely. This paradigm rejects the anthropocentric view that places human beings at the center of unlimited exploitation of nature. Instead, it emphasizes the principles of balance (*mīzān*), trusteeship (*amanah*), moral responsibility, and harmony among human beings, nature, and God. From the perspective of Islamic education, an ecotheological approach is highly relevant for development within PAI learning, in order to shape learners who possess both spiritual and ecological piety (Muflihini, 2026).

The development of an ecotheology-based PAI learning model is becoming increasingly important amid the challenges of globalization and modernization, which have brought major changes to society's patterns of life. Advances in technology and industrialization, while easing many aspects of human life, have also encouraged excessive consumerism and environmental exploitation. Islamic education is therefore required to present a learning paradigm oriented not only toward intellectual and spiritual development, but also toward sustainable ecological awareness. PAI learning needs to be reconstructed so that it becomes more contextual, applicable, and responsive to the socio-ecological problems of modern society (Assagaf, 2025).

In the classical Islamic education tradition, ecological values have in fact long been an integral part of the concept of Islamic education. This tradition emphasizes the importance of *adab* (proper

conduct) toward all of God's creation, including the environment. Al-Ghazali affirmed that the purpose of education is the formation of good character and the purification of the soul, so that human beings can live in balance and harmony with both other people and the surrounding natural world. Ibn Khaldun, in his theory of civilization, further explained that the environment has a major influence on the formation of character and the development of human society. These classical ideas show that classical Islamic education emphasized not only spiritual matters, but also carried ecological and social dimensions highly relevant to the needs of modern education (Kamilah et al., 2024).

Contemporary Islamic education, meanwhile, has sought to develop a more integrative educational approach by combining Islamic values with science, technology, and environmental awareness. It emphasizes the importance of experiential learning, contextual learning, and education for sustainable development. In this context, the development of an ecotheology-based PAI learning model can become a strategic alternative for building an Islamic education system that is adaptive to the times without losing its spiritual values (Firnando & Setiawati, 2025).

Based on the description above, the development of an ecotheology-based PAI learning model from the perspective of classical and contemporary Islamic education is an important subject to explore. This study is intended to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of an integrative Islamic education paradigm that connects theological, pedagogical, and ecological values. In addition, it is expected to offer a practical solution for reconstructing PAI learning so that it becomes more contextual, humanistic, and responsive to the challenges of the global environmental crisis in the modern era.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is essentially a process of shaping human beings so that they attain a balance between the intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of life. PAI is directed not merely at forming individually pious human beings, but at enabling them to carry out their social functions and human responsibilities within community life. It must be oriented toward building a religious character capable of genuinely internalizing Islamic values in social life, rather than remaining at the level of theoretical understanding alone. In the context of modern education, PAI is also required to respond to contemporary issues, including environmental problems — which shows that it has considerable room to be developed further through the contextual integration of ecological values into the learning process (Setiawan, 2025).

Ecotheology itself is a paradigm of thought that connects the relationship between human beings, nature, and God within a single spiritual and ecological unity (Talengkera, 2025). It positions nature as part of the signs (ayat) of God that must be preserved. In Islam, the concept of ecotheology is rooted in the principle of tauhid (the oneness of God), namely the belief that the entire universe is God's creation, interconnected and maintained in a state of balance (mīzān). Human beings, as khalifah fil ardh, are therefore entrusted with safeguarding and preserving the environment and are forbidden from causing damage on earth. This paradigm becomes important in PAI learning because it can shape learners' ecological piety through the integration of religious values and environmental concern.

This study takes the position that the development of an ecotheology-based PAI learning model can be carried out by integrating the values of classical and contemporary Islamic education. The classical perspective provides a philosophical and spiritual foundation in the form of adab, akhlak, and God-consciousness, while the contemporary perspective offers an innovative and contextual pedagogical approach relevant to present-day challenges. In this way, the intended learning model is directed toward shaping learners who possess not only sound religious understanding, but also ecological awareness, social concern, and moral responsibility for environmental sustainability. Accordingly, this study aims to develop and describe an ecotheology-based PAI learning model that integrates classical and contemporary perspectives of Islamic education, using a Research and Development approach with the ADDIE model, and to outline its philosophical foundation, characteristics, and implementation strategy within PAI learning.

2. METHODS

This study uses a Research and Development (R&D) approach, a research method aimed at producing a particular product and testing its effectiveness in the field of education. The product developed in this study is an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model based on ecotheology, from the perspective of classical and contemporary Islamic education. The study adopts the R&D procedure adapted from the Borg and Gall model, simplified into the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for developing a learning model that is both conceptual and practical within the context of ecotheology-based Islamic education (Rahayu, 2025).

The research procedure consisted of five main stages. In the Analysis stage, the study identified learning needs, in particular the low level of learners' ecological awareness and the limited integration of ecotheological values in PAI learning. In the Design stage, the study formulated the design of the ecotheology-based PAI learning model by integrating classical and contemporary Islamic educational values, including the formulation of objectives, materials, strategies, and evaluation methods. In the Development stage, an initial version of the learning model was produced and then validated by experts in Islamic education, education ecology, and PAI teaching practice. In the Implementation stage, the revised model was piloted on a limited scale at an Islamic educational institution to observe its feasibility and learners' responses. In the Evaluation stage, the effectiveness of the learning model was assessed based on the results of observation, questionnaires, and learning reflection.

The data were then analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach combined with simple quantitative analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while quantitative data were used to assess the level of feasibility and effectiveness of the model based on questionnaire results and expert assessment. Model validation was carried out through expert judgment to assess content, language, pedagogical quality, and conformity with the principles of ecotheology in Islamic education. The results of this validation served as the basis for revision before the model was implemented on a limited scale.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Basic Concept of Ecotheology in Islamic Education

Ecotheology is a paradigm of thought that connects divine teachings with human responsibility toward the universe. From the Islamic perspective, the concept of ecotheology is rooted in the teaching of tauhid, which places God as the Creator of the entire universe and human beings as khalifah entrusted with maintaining the balance of the earth. Ecotheology-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has emerged as a response to the increasingly alarming global ecological crisis, such as environmental damage, pollution, the exploitation of natural resources, and climate change. Islamic education is therefore oriented not only toward individual piety, but also toward ecological piety.

The Qur'an explains that the universe is a sign of God's greatness that must be preserved by human beings. Allah states in Surah al-A'raf, verse 56:

"And do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set right."

This verse shows that damaging the environment constitutes a moral and spiritual deviation from the human trust given by God. Accordingly, ecotheology-based PAI learning aims to shape learners who possess both spiritual awareness and ecological responsibility.

In classical Islamic education, the relationship between human beings and nature has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun. Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of a balanced life and the control of desire, so that human beings do not exploit nature excessively, while Ibn Khaldun observed a close relationship between environmental conditions and

the development of human civilization. These ideas show that ecological awareness has, in fact, long been part of the treasury of Islamic education since the classical period (Rizqi, 2025).

3.2. Urgency of Developing the Ecotheology-Based PAI Learning Model

The development of the modern era has given rise to various ecological problems that cannot be resolved through technological approaches alone. A spiritual and moral approach is needed so that human beings develop an ethical awareness of the environment. In this context, Islamic Religious Education has a strategic role in shaping learners' ecological character. Developing an ecotheology-based PAI learning model is important because PAI learning has so far tended to be normative and textual, and has therefore paid too little attention to real-life issues, including environmental concerns. PAI material has tended to emphasize ritual worship without integrating ecological values into daily life.

Islam places strong emphasis on the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy for all creation), which applies not only to human beings but to all living creatures and the universe as a whole. The development of an ecotheology-based PAI learning model can therefore serve as a solution for instilling environmental concern through a religious approach. From the contemporary education perspective, ecotheology-based learning is in line with the concept of education for sustainable development, which emphasizes the integration of social, economic, and environmental aspects in the educational process. In this way, PAI learning is expected to produce learners who are not only spiritually pious, but also possess a high degree of ecological awareness (Nafi'ah., 2026).

3.3. The Classical Islamic Education Perspective on Ecotheology

Classical Islamic education viewed nature as an integral part of the human learning process. Classical scholars did not separate religious knowledge from natural science; in the classical Islamic tradition, studying nature was regarded as a form of *tadabbur* (contemplation) of God's creation. Ibn Sina, for instance, developed knowledge based on the observation of nature as a way of strengthening faith, while al-Farabi positioned education as a means of building a virtuous society in harmony with both the social environment and the natural world.

The concept of *khalifah fil ardh* in classical Islam became the main foundation for the development of ecotheology. Human beings were entrusted by God with safeguarding the earth and managing it wisely — a trust that carries moral, spiritual, and social dimensions to be realized in daily life. Classical Islamic education therefore placed strong emphasis on the formation of *akhlak* as the core of education. Within an ecotheological framework, environmental ethics becomes an important part of what must be instilled from an early age. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ set an example in caring for the environment, such as prohibiting the indiscriminate felling of trees, encouraging tree planting, water conservation, and the maintenance of environmental cleanliness. These values form the main foundation for the development of the ecotheology-based PAI learning model.

3.4. The Contemporary Islamic Education Perspective on Ecotheology

Contemporary Islamic education has developed various integrative approaches that connect religious values with the realities of modern life. One such approach is Islamic eco-pedagogy, an educational model that instills ecological awareness grounded in Islamic spiritual values. From the contemporary perspective, PAI learning is no longer oriented solely toward the transfer of religious knowledge, but also toward social and ecological transformation. Learners are directed to be able to understand the relationship between Islamic teachings and global environmental issues.

The development of an ecotheology-based learning model can be carried out by integrating environmental content into various PAI themes, such as creed (*aqidah*), morals (*akhlak*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and the history of Islamic civilization. For example, material on the jurisprudence of ritual purity (*thaharah*) can be linked to water conservation, while material on

akhlak can be connected to environmental ethics. In addition, a contextual learning approach is highly relevant for application in ecotheology-based PAI learning. Learners can be involved directly in practices such as school greening, waste management, energy conservation, and other environmental and social activities. Such an approach produces a more meaningful and applicable learning experience.

3.5. Characteristics of the Ecotheology-Based PAI Learning Model

The ecotheology-based PAI learning model has several main characteristics. It is integrative, combining Islamic values with ecological awareness so that learners understand that caring for the environment is part of worship. It is contextual, connecting learning material with the environmental realities surrounding learners so that learning becomes more relevant and applicable. It is participatory, actively involving learners in environmental conservation activities so that learning is not merely theoretical. It is spiritual-ecological, instilling the awareness that environmental damage constitutes a betrayal of the human trust as God's vicegerent on earth. Finally, it is oriented toward character formation, aiming to build learners' character of environmental care, discipline, responsibility, and love for nature as a manifestation of faith. These characteristics show that ecotheology-based PAI learning has a holistic dimension covering the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

3.6. Implementation of the Ecotheology-Based PAI Learning Model

Implementation of the ecotheology-based PAI learning model can be carried out through several strategies:

- **Curriculum Integration** — ecotheological values are systematically and structurally incorporated into the PAI curriculum.
- **Active Learning Methods** — teachers apply discussion, environmental projects, problem-based learning, and experiential learning.
- **Fostering a Green School Culture** — schools build an environmentally conscious culture through cleanliness programs, greening, and waste management.
- **Teacher Role-Modeling** — teachers serve as role models in caring for the environment, providing learners with concrete examples.
- **Community Collaboration** — learning involves the community in social and environmental conservation activities.

Through this implementation, PAI learning is expected to become more contextual, humanistic, and relevant to today's global challenges.

3.7. Implications of Developing the Ecotheology-Based PAI Learning Model

The development of the ecotheology-based PAI learning model has broad implications for the world of Islamic education. First, it can expand the orientation of Islamic education from merely shaping individual piety toward shaping social and ecological piety. Second, it can make Islamic education more responsive to global issues. Third, ecotheology-based learning can shape a generation of Muslims who possess spiritual, intellectual, and ecological awareness in a balanced manner. Accordingly, the development of the ecotheology-based PAI learning model represents a strategic effort to reconstruct Islamic education so that it remains relevant to the challenges of the modern era without abandoning classical Islamic values.

4. CONCLUSION

The development of an ecotheology-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model is a strategic effort to reconstruct Islamic education so that it remains relevant to the challenges of the global environmental crisis in the modern era. This learning model arises from the need to present

PAI learning that is oriented not only toward cognitive and ritual religious aspects, but is also capable of shaping learners' ecological awareness through the integration of spiritual, moral, and social values in daily life. The concept of ecotheology in Islam affirms that human beings, as *khalifah fil ardh*, are entrusted with maintaining the balance of nature and are forbidden from causing damage on earth. Safeguarding the environment is therefore not merely a social responsibility, but also a form of devotion and worship to God. From the perspective of classical Islamic education, ecological values have in fact long been an integral part of the concept of Islamic education; the thought of al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun, and other classical scholars shows that education aims not only to develop intellectual ability, but also to build moral character, proper conduct, and harmony between human beings and the environment. Contemporary Islamic education, meanwhile, emphasizes a more integrative, contextual, participatory, and experience-based learning approach to address the problems of modern life, including the ecological crisis. The integration of these classical and contemporary perspectives forms an important basis for developing the ecotheology-based PAI learning model. The findings of this study show that the model is characterized as integrative, contextual, participatory, spiritual-ecological, and oriented toward character formation. Its implementation can be carried out through curriculum integration, the use of active learning methods, the cultivation of a green school culture, teacher role-modeling, and collaboration with the community. Through this approach, PAI learning is expected to produce learners who possess not only spiritual piety, but also ecological piety and social responsibility for environmental sustainability.

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