

Moral Education as the Foundation of Islamic Eco-Theology: A Conceptual Study of Human Responsibility towards the Environment

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between moral education and the concept of eco-theology in the Islamic perspective as a response to the contemporary environmental crisis. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method of Islamic literature, Ministry of Religious Affairs policies, and modern eco-theology discourse. The results show that moral education plays a strategic role in building ecological awareness based on Islamic theological values, such as trust, stewardship, balance, and the prohibition of causing damage to the earth. The concept of eco-theology promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs under the leadership of Prof. Dr. H. Nasaruddin Umar emphasizes that the environmental crisis cannot be separated from the spiritual crisis of humanity. The integration of moral education with an eco-theological perspective has proven to be important in shaping a generation that possesses both personal piety and ecological piety. This study recommends strengthening the curriculum and learning strategies of Islamic Education that are oriented towards shaping environmentally friendly characters as part of religious responsibility.

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Introduction

Environmental damage today has become a multidimensional problem that not only affects ecological aspects but also touches on social, economic, and moral dimensions. Various natural disasters, such as flash floods, landslides, and others, are occurring more frequently because of the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, massive deforestation, and the consumptive lifestyle of modern society. This reality shows that the environmental crisis does not solely stem from natural factors but reflects the crisis of ethics and human responsibility in understanding our relationship with nature.

From an Islamic perspective, the relationship between humans and the environment is not purely utilitarian but is based on theological principles that position humans as *khalīfah fi al-ardh* with a moral mandate to maintain the balance of Allah SWT's creation (Reflita, 2025). However, the weak internalization of ecological moral values has led to a gap between the idealism of Islamic teachings and the reality of social practice. This gap has highlighted the urgency of a new approach in Islamic education that not only emphasizes the ritual dimension but also integrates ecological awareness as part of religious responsibility.

In line with these challenges, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. H. Nasaruddin Umar, M.A., initiated the strengthening of the Eco-Theology paradigm as a strategic approach to grounding environmentally friendly religious teachings. This concept emphasizes that environmental destruction is essentially a reflection of the spiritual crisis of humanity, so that ecological solutions must begin with the reconstruction of theological awareness. Eco-theology does not only position nature as an object of exploitation, but as part of a sacred cosmic system whose sustainability must be maintained.

In this context, moral education has a strategic role as a medium for value transformation. The integration of moral education with an eco-theological perspective is an important foundation for shaping a generation that has both personal piety and ecological piety. Therefore, studies on the relationship between moral education and the concept of Islamic eco-theology are an academically relevant necessity, both for strengthening scientific discourse and as a tangible contribution to the national agenda of environmental preservation based on religious values.

The link between moral education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Eco-Theological program shows that there is an urgent need to strengthen the basis of moral education as the foundation for value transformation in society. Without a strong moral foundation, the implementation of the Eco-Theological program risks becoming merely a normative discourse without any real impact at the social practice level. Conversely, when moral education can internalize pro-environmental theological values, the future generation is expected to behave responsibly towards nature, so that a real contribution to mitigating the environmental crisis can be realized.

Based on the problems outlined above, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between Islamic moral education and ecological theology as a strategic response to the environmental crisis facing Indonesia. Specifically, this study seeks to examine the concept of moral education from an Islamic perspective as a theological foundation for building awareness and responsibility towards the environment, identify the main principles of Islamic eco-theology that are relevant to moral education values in dealing with environmental damage and natural disasters, analyze the synergistic relationship between moral education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Eco-Theology program -Theology program of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs under the leadership of Prof. Nasaruddin Umar, and explain the critical urgency of strengthening moral education as a strategic instrument in facing environmental crises and the increasing frequency of natural disasters in the context of Indonesian Muslim society. Through the achievement of these objectives, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of an integrative moral-ecological education model, thereby transforming theological discourse into practical environmental management among Indonesian Muslim communities and ultimately producing a generation with the moral commitment and ecological awareness necessary to respond to contemporary environmental challenges.

Significance and Contribution of Research

This research has strong significance both theoretically and practically, given that the increasingly complex environmental crisis requires an approach that is not only technical but also moral, spiritual, and educational. In this context, Islamic eco-theology-based moral education offers a relevant alternative perspective to strengthen the role of religion in building public ecological awareness.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of Islamic Education scholarship by expanding the meaning of moral education from the realm of interpersonal ethics to ecological ethics. Until now, studies on moral education have focused more on the relationship

between humans and God and fellow humans, while the dimension of the relationship between humans and nature has received relatively little systematic attention. Through an eco-theological approach, this study enriches the discourse on Islamic education by emphasizing that ecological responsibility is an integral part of the moral and spiritual piety of a Muslim.

Conceptually, this research offers a framework that integrates Islamic moral values with eco-theological principles, such as amanah, khalifah fi al-arḍ, balance (mīzān), and the prohibition of causing destruction (fasād). This integration is expected to serve as an academic reference for researchers, lecturers, and education practitioners in developing a model of moral education that is more contextual to contemporary ecological challenges.

In terms of policy, this research has strategic relevance to the Eco-Theological program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which is being promoted by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Prof. Nasaruddin Umar. The results of this study can strengthen the normative and pedagogical foundations of this policy, so that the implementation of eco-theology does not stop at the level of religious discourse but is systematically internalized in Islamic educational practices in madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and religious universities.

In practical and educational terms, this research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of curricula, learning strategies, and academic culture in Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and Islamic universities. Moral education, which has tended to focus on personal character building, can be directed more broadly to build ecological character, namely an attitude of care, responsibility, and commitment to environmental sustainability as part of social worship ('ibādah ijtīmā'iyah).

Furthermore, this research also has social significance in efforts to build collective awareness among the people regarding the relationship between environmental crisis and moral crisis. By placing moral education as the foundation of Islamic eco-theology, this research emphasizes that the natural disasters that often occur should not only be understood as natural phenomena or divine destiny, but also as a reflection of human behavior that is neglectful of environmental ethics. This perspective is expected to encourage reflective, corrective, and transformative attitudes in religious and social life.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a conceptual study type (Naeem et al., 2023), which aims to examine in depth the ideas, principles, and frameworks of thought regarding moral education as the foundation of Islamic eco-theology. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study is not on empirical measurement or hypothesis testing, but rather on developing a theoretical and reflective understanding of the relationship between Islamic moral values and human ecological responsibility.

This research falls under the category of library research, examining various written sources relevant to the themes of moral education, Islamic eco-theology, and religious policies related to environmental preservation (Berg, 2001). This approach allows researchers to systematically construct academic arguments through a synthesis of the thoughts of scholars, Muslim intellectuals, and contemporary policies in the fields of religion and education.

The data sources in this study consist of primary sources, including: the Qur'an and Hadith as the main normative foundations, classical and contemporary works on Islamic morals and environmental ethics, and official documents from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia related to the Eco-Theological program. Secondary sources include books, national

and international journal articles, and scientific proceedings discussing moral education, eco-theology, and environmental education. Scientific publications and the thoughts of Muslim figures relevant to the theme of human responsibility towards nature.

Data collection was carried out through documentation studies, namely searching, collecting, and critically reviewing various written documents relevant to the research focus. Each source was analyzed selectively based on its level of relevance, academic authority, and contribution to the development of the research conceptual framework.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis and conceptual analysis, through the following stages (Creswell & Creswell, 2023): Data reduction, which is the process of sorting ideas, concepts, and arguments relevant to Islamic moral education and eco-theology. Concept classification, which is the grouping of main themes such as amanah, khalifah fī al-arḍ, balance (mīzān), and prohibition of causing destruction (fasād). Theoretical synthesis, which is the integration of various concepts into a coherent framework of thinking about eco-theology-based moral education. Reflective interpretation, namely, critical interpretation of conceptual findings in the context of the environmental crisis and contemporary religious policies.

As for data validity, this study applies source triangulation to maintain the validity and credibility of the study by comparing various classical and contemporary references and policy documents. In addition, argumentative consistency is also used, which is maintaining the continuity of logic between the normative basis, theoretical framework, and practical implications formulated in the study (Denzin, 2012).

As a conceptual study, this research has limitations in terms of empirical generalization. However, the main strength of this research lies in the depth of its theoretical analysis and its relevance in constructing a moral education paradigm that is responsive to ecological issues. The conceptual findings in this study are expected to form the basis for further empirical and applied research.

Result and Discussion

1. The Concept of Moral Education in Islam

a. Definition and Scope of Moral Education

Moral education is one of the main pillars of the Islamic education system, which aims to develop well-rounded individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually mature. Etymologically, the word akhlak comes from the Arabic word khuluq, which means nature, character, or disposition that is embedded in a person and reflected in their daily behavior. From the perspective of Islamic education, akhlak is not merely understood as social ethics but as a manifestation of faith that is integrated into human attitudes, words, and actions (Imran Hayat et al., 2023). The scope of moral education covers three main dimensions of relationships, namely the relationship between humans and Allah (ḥabl min Allāh), the relationship between humans and other humans (ḥabl min al-nās), and the relationship between humans and nature (ḥabl min al-‘ālam) (Reflita, 2025). These three dimensions show that moral education is not partial, but holistic and integrative. So far, the practice of moral education in many Islamic educational institutions has tended to focus on the first two dimensions, while the ecological dimension often receives less systematic attention. In fact, in the context of the global environmental crisis, the relationship between humans and nature has become a very important field for the actualization of morals.

Thus, moral education cannot be limited to fostering polite behavior or interpersonal kindness alone but must be expanded as a process of internalizing moral values that include ecological responsibility. In this framework, moral education has a strategic function in shaping human character that is not only pious individually, but also socially and ecologically responsible.

b. Normative Foundations of the Qur'an and Hadith

The concept of moral education in Islam has a very strong normative foundation in the Qur'an and hadith. The Qur'an places the main mission of prophethood as a mission of moral guidance, as illustrated in Allah SWT's statement about the personality of the Prophet Muhammad SAW: "Verily, you are of a great moral character" (QS. al-Qalam [68]: 4). This verse shows that morals are not merely a complement to Islamic teachings, but the core of the prophetic message itself. The Hadith of the Prophet SAW also confirms this through his words: "Verily, I was sent to perfect noble morals" (HR. al-Baihaqi). Meanwhile, in another hadith, the Prophet SAW also emphasized: "The believer whose faith is most perfect is the one whose morals are the best." (Bafadhol, 2017). This statement provides theological legitimacy that moral education is the main orientation in shaping the Muslim personality. Morals in Islam do not stand in a vacuum, but are closely linked to faith, worship, and social responsibility. In the context of human relations with nature, the Qur'an explicitly prohibits all forms of destruction on earth. Allah SWT says: "And do not cause corruption on earth after (Allah) has repaired it" (QS. al-A'raf [7]: 56). This verse provides a normative basis that protecting the environment is not only a social obligation, but also a religious commandment that has moral and spiritual dimensions. Similarly, the concept of humans as *khalifah fi al-arḍ* (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 30) affirms the position of humans as managers and guardians of nature, not as rulers who are free to exploit it without limits. (Widiastuty & Anwar, 2025). The Prophet's hadiths also reinforce this ecological ethic, including through the recommendation to plant trees as a charitable act that is considered almsgiving, even until the end of time. This shows that Islam has instilled ecological awareness within the framework of morality since its inception, even though the term "environment" was not yet known in that era. Thus, moral education based on the Qur'an and hadiths contains a strong eco-theological dimension.

c. Moral Education as a Shaper of Moral Consciousness

Moral education plays a key role in shaping human moral consciousness. Moral consciousness does not arise instantly, but through a long process of internalizing values, habituation, and role modeling (Sumi et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic education, moral awareness is understood as an individual's ability to distinguish between right and wrong based on divine values, as well as having an inner commitment to choose goodness in every situation in life. Moral education aims not only to shape normative behavior but also to build a structure of awareness that encourages individuals to act reflectively and responsibly. In this framework, morals are not merely external rules, but rather an internal awareness that serves as a moral compass in facing various life issues, including ecological issues (Hidayat & Khaq, 2024). When moral education is developed from an eco-theological perspective, the moral awareness that is formed is not only oriented towards human relations, but also towards the relationship between humans and nature. Individuals no longer view nature as merely an object of exploitation, but as a divine trust that must be preserved. This awareness gives rise to an ethical attitude towards the environment, such as being economical in the use of resources, rejecting practices that destroy nature, and being active in efforts to preserve the environment (Jamal, 2025). In this context, moral education serves as a bridge between theological teachings and ecological practices. Faith values are translated into concrete attitudes that reflect concern for the sustainability of life. Thus, moral education becomes an important foundation for the formation of ecological piety, which is a form of piety that is not only measured by the intensity of ritual worship but also by a commitment to maintaining harmony between humans, God, and nature.

2. The Concept of Eco-Theology in the Islamic Perspective

a. Definition and Development of Eco-Theology

Eco-theology is a theological approach that places environmental issues within the framework of religious reflection. This term arose from a global awareness that the ecological crisis cannot be adequately addressed through technical approaches and policies alone but requires a strong ethical and spiritual foundation (Ruswanda, 2025). In the context of Islam, eco-theology is not understood as a foreign concept, but rather as an actualization of the teachings of tawhid, which affirms the unity between God, humans, and the universe.

Conceptually, Islamic eco-theology departs from the view that nature is not a neutral entity that can be freely exploited, but part of the signs of Allah's greatness (*āyāt kauniyyah*) that has sacred value. Environmental damage, in this perspective, is not only an ecological issue, but also a theological and moral issue (Jamal, 2025). Therefore, religious reflection on the environment is an integral part of religious responsibility. The development of eco-theological discourse in Islam has grown stronger along with the increasing awareness of the destructive effects of uncontrolled modernization. Contemporary Muslim scholars have begun to emphasize the importance of re-reading religious texts from an ecological perspective, so that Islamic teachings are not only relevant in matters of ritual worship but also in responding to the challenges of the global environmental crisis.

b. Humans as Khalifah and Holders of Ecological Trust

One of the main foundations of Islamic eco-theology is the concept of humans as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ*. The Qur'an affirms that humans were created as Allah's representatives on earth (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 30), with a mandate to manage and preserve the universe (Shibab, 1996). This concept of *khalīfah* is often misunderstood as legitimizing human domination over nature. In fact, within the Islamic theological framework, *khalīfah* implies responsibility, not absolute power. As *khalīfah*, humans bear a great responsibility to maintain the balance of Allah's creation. This responsibility requires an ethical attitude in utilizing natural resources, as well as a commitment not to exceed the limits of exploitation (Begum et al., 2022). When humans violate this principle of trust, the result is not only physical damage to the environment but also a breakdown in the theological relationship between humans and God. From an Islamic eco-theological perspective, the environmental crisis can be interpreted as a spiritual and ethical crisis. The increasingly frequent natural disasters are not merely understood as natural phenomena, but also because of human behavior that ignores the responsibility of the *khalīfah*. Therefore, reinterpreting the role of humans as *khalīfah* is an important key in building faith-based ecological awareness (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023).

c. The Principle of Balance (*Mīzān*) and the Prohibition of Destruction (*Fasād*)

Another central principle in Islamic eco-theology is the concept of balance (*mīzān*). The Qur'an affirms that Allah created the universe in a state of balance and harmony (QS. al-Rahman [55]: 7–9). This balance encompasses the entire system of life, from natural ecosystems to human social order (Bsoul et al., 2022). When this balance is disrupted by human actions, the impact is not only ecological, but also social and moral. In line with the principle of balance, Islam strictly prohibits all forms of destruction (*fasād*) on earth. This prohibition applies not only in the context of social conflict or moral crimes but also includes actions that damage the environment. The Qur'an states that destruction on land and in the sea occurs because of human actions (QS. al-Rum [30]: 41).

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

Meaning: "Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by what the hands of people have earned, so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]."

This verse conveys a very strong theological message that the ecological crisis reflects the moral crisis of humanity (Ahmad Zumaro, 2020). In the framework of eco-theology, the principle of *mīzān* and the prohibition of *fasād* become the normative basis for developing Islamic environmental ethics. This ethic requires Muslims to live moderately, avoid wastefulness (*isrāf*), and reject exploitative lifestyles that destroy the natural order. Thus, concern for the environment is not merely an ethical choice, but part of religious obedience.

d. Eco-Theology as the Basis of Islamic Environmental Ethics

Islamic eco-theology serves as the basis for environmental ethics derived from the values of *tawhid*. In this perspective, protecting the environment is a manifestation of awareness of the oneness of Allah and the interconnectedness of all creatures in one system of creation. *Tawhid* is not only interpreted as verbal acknowledgment of the oneness of God, but also as a moral commitment to maintain harmony in His creation. (Mardhiah et al., 2014) Islamic environmental ethics, born from eco-theology, places humans not as the center (anthropocentrism), but as part of a broader ecological community. Humans have the privilege of being rational and moral beings, but this privilege demands greater responsibility in maintaining the sustainability of life.

In the context of education, Islamic eco-theology provides a highly relevant normative and pedagogical framework for integrating religious values with ecological awareness. Education is not only aimed at shaping ritually obedient individuals, but also individuals who have a deep concern for the environment as part of the practice of faith (Pallathadka et al., 2023).

Thus, eco-theology in the Islamic perspective does not stop at the level of theological discourse but moves towards concrete ethical praxis. It becomes a bridge between normative teachings and ecological reality, while emphasizing that the environmental crisis demands moral and spiritual answers that originate from religious values. It is within this framework that the integration of eco-theology and moral education finds its strategic relevance in building a civilization that is ecologically just and sustainable.

3. The Relationship between Moral Education and Islamic Eco-Theology

a. Integration of Moral Values and Ecological Awareness

The relationship between moral education and Islamic eco-theology lies in their shared orientation toward shaping individuals who are not only normatively faithful, but also ethically responsible for life (Febriani, 2022). Moral education serves as a vehicle for internalizing values, while eco-theology provides a theological framework that places the environment as part of the responsibility of faith. When these two perspectives are combined, a paradigm of education is born that places ecological concern as a concrete expression of Islamic morals. In this context, morals are no longer understood narrowly as social ethics between individuals but are expanded to include cosmic ethics that encompass human relations with all of God's creation, including the environment or nature. Ecological awareness is not merely a technical awareness of the importance of preserving nature, but a theological awareness that every action towards the environment has moral and spiritual implications. Moral education becomes a strategic medium for instilling this awareness from an early age through a process of habituation, exemplification, and reflection on values (Fitritia & Matsuyuki, 2023). The integration of moral values and ecological awareness also confirms that the environmental crisis is rooted in a moral crisis. Damage to nature is not only caused by the limitations of environmentally friendly technology, but also by weak ethics in viewing

nature as a divine mandate. Therefore, strengthening eco-theology-based moral education is an urgent need in building a new paradigm of development that is oriented towards sustainability and ecological justice.

b. Moral Education as the Basis of Islamic Environmental Ethics

Moral education has a strategic position as the foundation for the formation of Islamic environmental ethics. In the Islamic perspective, morals, or in everyday terms, ethics, do not only originate from human rationality, but also from revelations that guide behavior towards true goodness (Akifah & Adami, 2025). Islamic eco-theology reinforces this dimension by emphasizing that caring for the environment is part of social worship and a manifestation of faith. Through moral education, values such as trustworthiness, responsibility, justice, and moderation (*wasatiyyah*) can be translated into concrete attitudes towards the environment. Trustworthiness encourages humans to protect nature as God's gift, justice demands balanced treatment of all creatures, while moderation directs lifestyles away from exploitation and consumerism. When these values are internalized, Islamic environmental ethics emerge that are not reactive, but proactive and sustainable.

c. Synergy between Moral Education and Eco-Theology in the Context of Religious Policy

The relationship between moral education and Islamic eco-theology has become increasingly relevant in the context of contemporary religious policy, particularly through the Eco-Theological program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This program emphasizes the importance of a religious approach in responding to the environmental crisis, while also opening strategic space for moral education to play a broader role in the sustainable development agenda. Within this policy framework, moral education is no longer positioned solely as part of religious studies but as a basis of values that can inform the entire educational process. Eco-theology provides theological direction, while moral education provides pedagogical instruments to implement these values at the practical level. This synergy enables the realization of Islamic education that emphasizes not only ritual piety but also ecological piety. This context shows that the relationship between moral education and Islamic eco-theology is dialectical and mutually reinforcing. Moral education enriches eco-theology with an applicable pedagogical dimension, while eco-theology broadens the horizon of moral education with an ecological dimension that is relevant to the challenges of the times. The synergy between the two has the potential to give birth to a model of Islamic education that is more responsive to global issues, especially the environmental crisis (Asrin & Rohman, 2025). Implementation in formal education can be done by incorporating this eco-theological moral material into the curriculum at all levels, from the *ibtida'* (basic) level to higher education.

d. Relational Implications for the Formation of an Environmentally Conscious Character

The close relationship between moral education and Islamic eco-theology ultimately leads to the formation of an environmentally conscious character. This character is not born from normative instructions alone, but from a process of continuous internalization of values. When students understand that protecting the environment is part of practicing their faith, ecological awareness is no longer seen as an external obligation, but as an internal need inherent in a person's religious identity. The formation of an environmentally conscious character through eco-theology-based moral education also has broad social implications. Individuals with ecological awareness tend to be more critical of development practices that destroy nature and more active in promoting public policies oriented towards sustainability (Nasir, 2021). In the long term, this can contribute to the formation of a social culture that values the environment as an integral part of religious life.

4. Moral Education in Responding to Environmental Crises

a. The Reality of Environmental Damage and Contemporary Natural Disasters

The current environmental crisis has become a global issue whose impact is increasingly being felt by society. The phenomena of climate change, forest degradation, water and air pollution, and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources have triggered an increase in the frequency of natural disasters such as flash floods, landslides, and others. In Indonesia, this condition is even more complex because ecological damage is often exacerbated by development practices that do not consider the carrying capacity of the environment. Flash floods and landslides in Sumatra, including North Sumatra, occurred in Central Tapanuli Regency, South Tapanuli, Sibolga City, and North Tapanuli. Similarly, what happened in West Sumatra and Aceh warns us that ecological issues must be taken seriously by all parties, including scientists and religious scholars (ulama). From a socio-religious perspective, natural disasters are often understood solely as divine destiny or trials, without critical reflection on the role of humans in exacerbating environmental damage. In fact, the Qur'an explicitly links damage to the earth with human actions (QS. al-Rūm [30]: 41). This verse conveys a strong theological message that the environmental crisis cannot be separated from the moral crisis and the crisis of human responsibility. Therefore, the response to environmental issues cannot be limited to technical and structural approaches but must be accompanied by a sustainable moral and educational approach. (Syefriyeni & Nasrudin, 2023).

b. The Weakness of Technical Approaches without a Moral Foundation

Various efforts to tackle the environmental crisis have so far relied more on technical policies, such as environmental regulations, reforestation programs, and the development of environmentally friendly technologies. Although important, this approach often fails to address the root of the problem, namely, the low level of public moral awareness of the environment. Without a change in the ethical paradigm, environmental policies have the potential to become mere formalities that are difficult to implement consistently. This is where the importance of moral education as the foundation for ecological awareness transformation lies. Education that only emphasizes the cognitive aspects of the environment, without accompanying attitude and value formation, tends to produce superficial ecological knowledge. Students may understand the importance of protecting nature, but they lack the moral commitment to apply this understanding in real life. This shows that environmental issues are not merely a matter of knowledge, but also a matter of character (Tolchah & Mu'ammam, 2019). Moral education offers a more profound approach because it touches on the inner dimension of human beings. Through the internalization of the values of trust, responsibility, honesty, and caring, moral education forms an ethical foundation that enables individuals to act consistently in protecting the environment, even when there is no external supervision. Thus, moral education complements technical approaches with a solid moral foundation.

c. Moral Education as an Instrument for Ecological Awareness Transformation

Within the framework of Islamic eco-theology, moral education plays a strategic role as an instrument for ecological awareness transformation. This transformation not only changes the way humans think about nature but also changes the way they behave and act towards the environment. Moral education encourages the awareness that protecting the environment is part of practicing faith, not merely a social demand or administrative obligation. The transformation of ecological awareness through moral education can be carried out through three main channels, namely exemplary behavior, habit formation, and value reflection (Salamah, 2022). The exemplary behavior of teachers and leaders of educational institutions in implementing an environmentally friendly lifestyle provides a concrete example that ecological ethics is not just a discourse. Habituation through simple practices, such as maintaining school cleanliness, managing waste, and

, conserving energy, which shapes sustainable behavior patterns. Meanwhile, value reflection through discussion and contextual learning helps students understand the theological meaning behind every ecological action. In this context, moral education serves as a means of internalizing eco-theology at the practical level. Theological values such as trust, stewardship, and balance do not remain abstract concepts but are manifested in concrete actions that have a direct impact on environmental preservation. This transformation is crucial for building a generation that not only has ecological awareness but also a moral commitment to preserving it.

d. The Role of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Internalization of Environmental Ethics

Islamic educational institutions have a strategic position in responding to the environmental crisis through the strengthening of moral education. Madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and religious universities not only function as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge but also as agents for shaping the character and ecological culture of society. Through their curricula, institutional culture, and extracurricular activities, Islamic educational institutions can become social laboratories for the practice of Islamic environmental ethics (Asrin & Musa, 2025).

The integration of moral education and eco-theology can be done by incorporating environmental issues into the subjects of moral beliefs, fiqh, and thematic interpretation in Madrasah Tsanawiyah and 'Aliyah, as well as other educational units. This approach helps students understand that concern for the environment has a strong theological basis in Islam. In addition, action-based activities, such as green school movements, tree planting programs, and community-based waste management, can be concrete means of instilling environmental moral values in an applicable manner. The role of Islamic educational institutions is also becoming increasingly relevant in supporting the Eco-Theological policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Through the synergy between policy and educational practice, eco-theological values can be systematically internalized in the lives of students and the wider community. Thus, moral education not only functions as an instrument for shaping pious individuals, but also as a social force capable of driving cultural change towards a more ecologically just and sustainable life.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes that moral education has a strategic position in building the foundations of Islamic eco-theology that is relevant to the challenges of the contemporary environmental crisis. Moral education can no longer be understood solely as a means of shaping individual morals but must be positioned as an instrument of value transformation that integrally links theological, ethical, and ecological dimensions. Through the internalization of the values of trust, stewardship, balance, and the prohibition of destruction, moral education plays a role in shaping the awareness that concern for the environment is an inherent part of practicing faith.

The concept of eco-theology promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia under the leadership of Prof. Dr. H. Nasaruddin Umar, M.A., is very strategic in strengthening the argument that the ecological crisis cannot be separated from the spiritual and moral crisis of humanity. Therefore, solutions to environmental problems cannot rely solely on a technocratic approach but must be accompanied by a reconstruction of theological awareness that places nature as a divine trust. In this framework, eco-theology-based moral education becomes a strategic medium for grounding religious values in real socio-ecological practices. Thus, the relationship between moral education and the concept of eco-theology is not only conceptual but also has practical implications in strengthening the character of Muslim generations who possess both personal piety and ecological piety. This approach emphasizes that the renewal of Islamic

education in an era of environmental crisis requires the integration of spirituality and ecological responsibility as an inseparable whole.

Academic and Practical Recommendations

Based on the conceptual findings in this study, several recommendations can be proposed. Academically, further research needs to develop the study of Islamic eco-theology from an empirical perspective, particularly through field studies on the implementation of environment-based moral education in madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic religious universities. A qualitative approach with a case study or educational ethnography design will enrich our understanding of how eco-theological values are internalized in learning practices and institutional culture. In addition, the development of a moral education evaluation model that includes indicators of ecological awareness and behavior is also an important research agenda to be developed.

From a practical perspective, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Islamic education policymakers are expected to strengthen the integration of the eco-theological perspective in the national curriculum for Islamic Religious Education and Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic beliefs and morals) as well as in other subjects. This strengthening should not only be at the level of curriculum documents, but also in teacher training, teaching material development, and the creation of an environmentally friendly school and madrasah ecosystem. The eco-theological programs that have been launched need to be synergized more systematically with the agenda of strengthening character education, so that they have a real impact in shaping the ecological behavior of students. Furthermore, religious institutions and Islamic community organizations are expected to make eco-theology part of the mainstream of da'wah and community development. Mainstreaming environmental themes in Friday sermons, majelis ta'lim recitations, and socio-religious activities will broaden the reach of the moral message about the importance of protecting nature as God's trust. With these steps, eco-theology-based moral education will not only contribute to the development of academic discourse but also play a real role in building collective awareness to care for the earth as the common home of humankind.

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