

ISLAMIC EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF FOSTERING ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS: A REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN THE QUR'AN

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Abstract

Ecological awareness has become an urgent necessity amid increasing environmental degradation that directly affects human quality of life. In the Islamic perspective, environmental preservation is not merely a social practice but an integral part of the education of iman (faith), Islam (practice), and ihsan (excellence), which guide humans to fulfill their responsibility as stewards (khalifah) on Earth. This study aims to examine the theological and ethical foundations within Islamic teachings that position environmental responsibility as a fundamental dimension of religious life, as well as to formulate the conceptual relationship between these three pillars and ecological behavior. Using a library research method, this study collects and analyzes various literature sources, including the Qur'an, hadith, Islamic scholarly works, and relevant scientific studies. The findings reveal that iman serves as a spiritual force that nurtures human awareness of the importance of safeguarding Allah's creation; Islam, through its legal and ethical system, provides practical guidance for maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability; while ihsan encourages individuals to act virtuously and sincerely toward the environment. Together, these values form a strong moral and religious foundation for building ecological awareness. This study concludes that environmental preservation is a comprehensive expression of religious devotion, and that Islamic education holds a strategic role in fostering environmental concern rooted not only in knowledge but also in spirituality and character. Integrating the values of iman, Islam, and ihsan within educational frameworks offers a conceptual solution for developing more holistic and sustainable ecological awareness.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Ecological Awareness, Environmental Ethics

Abstrak

Kesadaran ekologis merupakan kebutuhan mendesak di tengah meningkatnya kerusakan lingkungan yang berdampak langsung pada kualitas hidup manusia. Dalam perspektif Islam, pemeliharaan lingkungan bukan sekadar praktik sosial, tetapi bagian integral dari pendidikan iman, Islam, dan ihsan yang menuntun manusia untuk bertanggung jawab sebagai khalifah di bumi. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji landasan teologis dan etis dalam ajaran Islam yang menempatkan tanggung jawab ekologis sebagai salah satu dimensi keberagamaan yang utama, serta merumuskan hubungan konseptual antara ketiga pilar ajaran Islam tersebut dengan perilaku ekologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode library research dengan menghimpun dan menganalisis berbagai sumber literatur seperti Al-Qur'an, hadis, buku-buku keislaman, dan penelitian ilmiah relevan.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa iman berperan sebagai kekuatan spiritual yang menumbuhkan kesadaran manusia akan pentingnya menjaga ciptaan Allah, Islam sebagai sistem syariat memberikan pedoman praktik dalam menjaga kebersihan dan kelestarian alam, sementara ihsan membimbing manusia untuk berbuat baik kepada lingkungan secara ikhlas dan berkelanjutan. Ketiga nilai tersebut membentuk fondasi moral dan religius yang kuat untuk membangun kesadaran ekologis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemeliharaan lingkungan merupakan manifestasi keberagamaan yang utuh, sehingga pendidikan Islam memiliki posisi strategis dalam menumbuhkan sikap peduli lingkungan yang tidak hanya berbasis pengetahuan, tetapi juga berakar pada spiritualitas dan akhlak. Integrasi nilai iman, Islam, dan ihsan dalam pendidikan dapat menjadi solusi konseptual bagi pembangunan kesadaran ekologis yang lebih komprehensif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Islam, Kesadaran Ekologis, Etika Lingkungan

INTRODUCTION

Humans, animals, and plants are living organisms whose natural habitat is the Earth. Scientists estimate that the Earth is approximately five billion years old, and the world's human population continues to increase over time. Population density within a particular region affects various aspects of life, including food availability, housing, access to clean water, environmental quality, and education. Therefore, the environment must be preserved to remain sustainable and beneficial for all living creatures (Natsir, 2025). Because the environment is an inseparable component of human life, the healthier the environment, the higher the quality of human life. A healthy environment promotes both physical and mental well-being for those who live within it. It also provides a comfortable setting for carrying out daily activities. However, many environments receive inadequate attention from their owners or communities. If neglected, such conditions may lead to various diseases and other adverse consequences (Luang, Kasehung, & Aly, 2024). When individuals think, reflect, and behave by prioritizing the interests of the nation, environmental sustainability, and social, cultural, and political welfare over personal or group interests, they demonstrate the values of nationalism. Likewise, respecting the environment, conserving natural resources, loving one's homeland, and practicing discipline are among the core values embedded in nationalist character education (Jayadinata, Muqodas, & Ardiyanti, 2024).

Ecological awareness is essential because it constitutes an integral part of Islamic education, encompassing the dimensions of *iman* (faith), *Islam* (submission to God), and *ihsan* (spiritual excellence). Islamic education serves as a medium through which society becomes aware of the importance of environmental preservation, consistent with its primary objective of cultivating faith, piety, and noble character (Kahfi, Akbar, & Thobroni, 2025). Furthermore, Islamic education aims to develop balanced individuals by integrating moral, intellectual, and social dimensions (Mushofa, Sabda, Fidzi, & Yaqin, 2024). Its objectives also include shaping individuals who are just, wise, and responsible in their daily lives (Hawari, Istiqomah, & Bakar, 2024). These objectives encompass helping others and protecting the environment, as caring for fellow human beings and preserving nature are manifestations of strong faith, Islam, *ihsan*, purity of

heart, and a high level of social responsibility (Makmur, 2025). Islamic education is therefore understood as a process of preparing individuals through teaching, guidance, and training to internalize and implement the authentic teachings of Islam in both personal and social life, enabling them to attain well-being in this world and the hereafter (Firmansyah, 2022).

The environment must be carefully protected because the Islamic principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation) calls for its practical implementation. This concept signifies that Islam brings mercy to the entire universe, including the environment, animals, plants, and all humanity regardless of religion, ethnicity, social group, or civilization (Ismail & Makmur, 2025). By preserving green environments, humanity safeguards the sustainability of essential natural resources such as forests, rivers, and oceans (Effendi, 2023). Moreover, the stronger the relationship between humans, nature, and other living beings, the greater the benefits they receive; conversely, environmental degradation ultimately harms human life itself.

To provide a comparative perspective, several previous studies are reviewed. First, Agustin et al. (2023), in their study entitled *Environmental-Based Islamic Education: Building Ecological Awareness Through Islamic Values*, concluded that Islamic education possesses considerable potential to foster ecological awareness through the integration of Islamic principles. Values such as *amanah* (trust and responsibility), *khalifah* (stewardship), and *ihsan* (benevolence) provide a strong foundation for cultivating environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviors. Through the internalization of these values, learners develop an understanding that environmental conservation is part of their religious responsibility as Muslims.

Second, Susanto and Al-Alhsani (2023), in their study entitled *Fostering Community Environmental Awareness in Rembang Hamlet, Banjar Village, Banyuwangi*, concluded that environmental awareness campaigns successfully increased community participation in maintaining environmental cleanliness. These initiatives were designed to enhance public awareness regarding environmental hygiene and the preservation of village assets. Infrastructure development supporting environmental sanitation included the implementation of the *Clean Friday* community service program, the construction of waste disposal facilities, and environmental clean-up activities involving drainage systems, overgrown vegetation, and public spaces. Through active community participation, the researchers collaborated with local residents to establish a cleaner environment and reduce unsanitary conditions.

Third, Hidayat et al. (2023), in their qualitative study entitled *Students' Ecological Awareness Development Through the Adiwiyata School Program*, concluded that the Adiwiyata Program at SMP Negeri 4 Parepare made a significant contribution to fostering students' ecological awareness. The findings revealed that most students not only understood the importance of environmental cleanliness and conservation but also began internalizing and practicing sustainability values in their daily lives. Programs such as

Clean Friday and *Tree Friends* effectively promoted positive environmental habits among students. Nevertheless, ensuring consistent participation by all students remained a challenge, indicating the need for more practical and participatory strategies to promote ecological awareness more broadly. The study also emphasized that support from families and local communities plays an essential role in reinforcing environmental education beyond the school setting.

The novelty of the present study lies in its distinctive approach, which explicitly positions environmental stewardship as an integral component of the education of *iman*, *Islam*, and *ihsan*—a perspective that has not been comprehensively explored in previous studies. Unlike earlier research emphasizing general Islamic values, community empowerment, or environmentally based school programs, this library research develops a theological and ethical framework asserting that environmental preservation constitutes a direct manifestation of these three fundamental pillars of Islamic teachings. Consequently, this study offers a new contribution by demonstrating that ecological behavior is not merely a social practice but also a holistic expression of religious commitment.

The central research problem concerns the lack of a clearly articulated explanation of how the concepts of *iman*, *Islam*, and *ihsan* serve as theological and pedagogical foundations for developing ecological awareness, as well as why these three pillars of Islamic teaching have not yet been fully understood as the basis for environmentally responsible behavior within the context of religious education. Based on this problem, the study proposes the hypothesis that environmental stewardship represents an integral manifestation of *iman*, *Islam*, and *ihsan*. Accordingly, the stronger an individual's understanding of these three dimensions, the greater the ecological awareness and environmental responsibility that will emerge. In line with this problem statement and hypothesis, the objectives of this study are to examine comprehensively the theological and ethical foundations of Islam that position environmental responsibility as an essential component of faith-based education, to formulate the conceptual relationship between the three pillars of Islamic teachings and ecological behavior through a literature review, and to develop a theoretical framework demonstrating that environmental stewardship constitutes a holistic manifestation of Islamic religiosity.

METHOD

This study employed a library research approach, in which data were collected through a systematic review of various library resources, including reference books, previous studies on related topics, scholarly articles, research notes, Qur'an and Hadith applications, as well as both print and online academic journals relevant to the research problem. This approach involves systematically collecting, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing information using appropriate research methods and techniques to identify solutions to the research questions under investigation (Sari & Asmendri, 2020).

Furthermore, library research is defined as a research activity conducted by gathering information and data from a variety of supporting sources available in libraries, such as

reference books, previous studies, scholarly articles, research notes, and academic journals that are relevant to the problem being investigated (Prayudi, Fathirma'ruf, Supriyaddin, Arifin, & Jama'ah, 2023).

This research method has become widely recognized in the field of Islamic studies because it provides a fundamental basis for examining the revealed guidance of Allah SWT as preserved in written sources, particularly the Qur'an. It has long been acknowledged that virtually every type of scientific inquiry begins with a review of the relevant literature, from which concepts, theoretical frameworks, and research propositions are developed and subsequently examined through other research approaches (Zed, 2008).

In conducting this research, the study also recognizes the human intellectual capacities bestowed by Allah—namely hearing, sight, reason, and conscience—as essential means for acquiring and processing knowledge. These God-given faculties enable researchers to collect information from various sources, critically evaluate and select data relevant to the research objectives, organize and analyze the information, and ultimately generate new insights and ideas (Fajri, 2023). After collecting the literature relevant to the selected research topic, the researchers analyzed the data using descriptive qualitative analysis. This analytical approach was employed to systematically interpret, synthesize, and develop the findings from the reviewed literature, thereby constructing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Islamic theological principles and environmental stewardship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review conducted in this study, it can be understood that protecting and preserving the environment is an act of worship that earns rewards from Allah SWT because environmental stewardship is a divine command. Every command of Allah serves as a form of education that must be implemented by humankind, encompassing the three fundamental dimensions of Islamic education: *iman* (faith), *Islam* (submission to God), and *ihsan* (spiritual excellence).

From a terminological perspective, *iman* refers to a firm conviction that resides deeply within the heart, characterized by complete certainty without doubt, and manifested in one's worldview, behavior, and daily actions. Thus, faith is not merely a verbal declaration, a collection of outward actions, or simply knowledge of the pillars of faith (Mustofa, 2020). Faith constitutes the fundamental element of religious life because it motivates all other aspects of worship and moral conduct. Once faith is firmly rooted in the human heart, it becomes a dynamic force that continuously shapes positive attitudes and righteous behavior. Faith influences every dimension of human life, both individually and socially. Therefore, faith should not be understood solely from a theological perspective but also from a sociological perspective, as it provides the foundation for the practical application of religious values in everyday life. Obedience becomes a source of spiritual satisfaction for believers, whereas sinful behavior brings temporary pleasure

only to those who reject divine guidance. Indeed, sin and its consequences are highly destructive in both this world and the Hereafter. When sinful behavior becomes widespread, it is not surprising that various disasters and calamities befall humanity. Although such events may appear to be merely natural phenomena, both the Qur'an and the Hadith contain numerous accounts demonstrating that many disasters result from human disobedience and moral corruption (Novita, Pratiwi, Sormin, Zulfahmi, & Wismanto, 2024).

Islam encompasses every aspect of human life, including religion, worship, creed, knowledge, culture, education, social life, economics, health, politics, and work. Consequently, Islamic studies constitute a comprehensive academic discipline that addresses human life from a holistic perspective. Islamic studies may be defined as the systematic effort to understand Islam in depth, including its teachings, historical development, and practical implementation in everyday life. This discipline demonstrates that Islamic values provide meaningful solutions to a wide range of contemporary social, cultural, political, and economic issues (Darwis, Sultani, & Dewi, 2025).

Islam is capable of addressing diverse challenges faced by humanity according to the specific circumstances and contexts in which they arise. This capability stems from the comprehensive yet detailed scope of Islamic scholarship, encompassing fields such as Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), and many other disciplines. Throughout its historical development, Islam has become not only an object of scientific inquiry but also a social and cultural force that shapes communities throughout the world, ultimately reflecting the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*—Islam as a mercy to all creation. Within an academic framework, Islamic studies will continue to play an important role in shaping global understanding of Islam, facilitating the integration of Muslim communities within diverse societies, and contributing to solutions for contemporary global challenges. Moreover, this scholarly approach promotes innovation in Islamic thought while ensuring the continued relevance and vitality of the Islamic intellectual tradition in responding to the complexities of the modern world (Mahmudah, 2025).

Ihsan is commonly understood as excellence in worship and obedience to Allah. According to Imam Al-Baidhawi, one implication of *ihsan* is the cultivation of moral values through education (Tsalis, Sarjana, & Fadlurrahman, 2023). *Ihsan* means performing good deeds for oneself and for others. However, it is not merely about pleasing other people, giving material assistance, or performing acts of kindness for social recognition. Rather, *ihsan* involves doing good sincerely without seeking praise, appreciation, admiration, or honor from others. It is founded upon complete sincerity (*ikhlas*), seeking only the pleasure of Allah. Consequently, *ihsan* toward the environment refers to sincerely caring for, preserving, and protecting nature solely for the sake of Allah. Such an attitude encourages individuals to love nature, maintain its sustainability, and appreciate the beauty of Allah's creation while recognizing the injustice of environmental destruction caused by human negligence. The concept of environmental

ihsan may be implemented through various practical actions grounded in both ethical reasoning and authentic scriptural evidence (*dalil naqli*) (Lazuady, Da'i, & Kemuning, 2022).

Within Islam, the values of *iman*, *Islam*, and *ihsan* constitute the three principal pillars for developing character founded upon *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah) and noble morality. *Iman* strengthens spiritual conviction, *Islam* regulates outward conduct through adherence to Islamic law, and *ihsan* guides individuals to perform righteous deeds consciously and sincerely. Together, these three principles establish harmony in human development across cognitive, affective, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions (Yunita, Bilqis, & Qudsi, 2025). Accordingly, caring for and preserving the environment contributes directly to strengthening one's *iman*, deepening the practice of *Islam*, and cultivating the virtue of *ihsan*. Environmental stewardship is therefore not merely an ecological responsibility but also a comprehensive manifestation of faith, religious devotion, and spiritual excellence in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that environmental stewardship is an integral component of Islamic education, encompassing its three fundamental pillars: *iman* (faith), *Islam* (submission to God), and *ihsan* (spiritual excellence). Through a comprehensive literature review, the study found that ecological behavior is not merely a social activity but also an act of worship and a manifestation of strong faith, adherence to Islamic law, and the principle of *ihsan*, which encourages individuals to perform acts of kindness sincerely toward all of Allah's creation. The Qur'an and Islamic values provide clear theological and ethical foundations affirming that preserving the natural environment is both a religious obligation and an expression of humanity's responsibility as *khalifah* (stewards) on Earth. Therefore, Islamic education plays a strategic role in cultivating ecological awareness among Muslims, enabling environmental stewardship to become a holistic and sustainable expression of religious commitment.

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