

## Ecotheology as a New Direction in the Politics and Policy of Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze ecotheology as a new direction in the politics and policy of Islamic religious education in Indonesia, particularly in responding to contemporary ecological challenges. This research employs a qualitative approach using library research. Data sources consist of policy documents issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, theoretical works on ecotheology, and scholarly articles and books related to Islamic education and ecological studies. Data were collected through a document review and a systematic literature review, focusing on themes of relevance. The data were analyzed using content analysis, which involved data reduction, thematic categorization, and drawing interpretative conclusions. The findings reveal that the integration of ecotheology has begun to appear in national educational policy, as reflected in programs such as Green Theology, forest endowment initiatives, and large-scale tree-planting movements. Challenges persist in the dominance of normative curricula and the limited capacity of educators. Yet, significant opportunities emerge through the roles of *pesantren*, religious leaders, and faith-based organizations as agents of ecological change. Theoretically, this study expands the discourse on Islamic education by positioning ecotheology as an ethical and political framework for understanding. Practically, the findings guide policymakers and Islamic educational institutions in designing more ecological, transformative, and sustainable learning policies and programs.

### Keywords

Ecotheology; Education Policy; Educational Politics; Environmental Sustainability; Islamic Religious Education

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Religious education plays a fundamental role in shaping learners' character, including their ability to respond to contemporary social and ecological dynamics (Mei Leani Olfah, Nia Virdayanti, 2024). In the Indonesian context, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the Asta Protas agenda, positions ecotheology as one of the strategic issues aimed at strengthening the relevance of religious education in responding to climate change, ecological crises, and the degradation of spiritual values (Islam, 2025). Ecotheology provides a theological foundation for understanding the human-nature relationship as part of the mandate of stewardship (*amanah khalifah*), making it highly relevant as a new direction in the development of Islamic religious education policy (Nazar & Hakim, 2023).



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Furthermore, the urgency of integrating ecotheology has become increasingly prominent, as the environmental crisis has evolved into a multidimensional problem that affects not only ecosystems but also social stability, the economy, and religious life (Mei et al., 2025). Reports from the IPCC and various international institutions show that global warming, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation have reached critical levels, requiring cross-sectoral responses—including from religious institutions (Susilawaty et al., 2025). In this context, religious education can no longer be positioned merely as a vehicle for transmitting spiritual values; it must evolve into a strategic instrument for cultivating faith-based ecological awareness (Mutiarra, 2025). Religious engagement with environmental issues has become a global trend—across Islamic, Christian, and Eastern traditions—emphasizing that environmental preservation is an integral part of modern human morality and spirituality (Galib & Abubakar, 2025). Therefore, positioning ecotheology as a key direction in Islamic religious education policy is a strategic step toward addressing contemporary needs while strengthening the prophetic function of education in caring for the Earth.

Although the discourse on ecotheology has begun to grow, its integration into the Islamic religious education system in Indonesia remains limited (Chayati et al., 2025). Most curricula and religious learning practices are still normatively doctrinal and have not systematically connected religious teachings with ecological responsibility (Mahrus, 2024b). In Fact, religious texts—such as the concepts of *khalifah*, *mizān*, and *‘imārat al-‘arḍ*—provide a strong spiritual framework for fostering ecological awareness (K. D. Saputra, 2023). The discontinuity between religious teachings and sustainability praxis is what creates a significant gap in the politics and policies of religious education (S, 2023).

This condition indicates the existence of an epistemological gap between theological teachings on ecological stewardship and their implementation in formal education (Gazali, 2025). The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum tends to position ecological verses as minor components within tafsir or creed studies, without developing their practical implications in the context of the environmental crisis (Mutiarra, 2025). Furthermore, learning approaches that emphasize memorization and verbal comprehension hinder the internalization of ecological values in students’ behavior (Nursyahada, 2025).

On the other hand, various studies show that concepts such as *khalifah* (the mandate of human stewardship over the earth), *mizān* (cosmic balance), and *‘imārat al-‘arḍ* (sustainability-oriented development) are foundational principles that are both normative and operational in shaping environmental ethics (Lestari et al., 2019). The limited integration of these concepts into religious education policy has resulted in Islamic religious education falling short as a catalyst for ecological awareness among younger generations (Dewi, 2021).

This reinforces the point that the main problem does not lie in the lack of ecological doctrine in Islam, but rather in the weak institutionalization of ecological values within the religious education system. Therefore, reformulating PAI policy has become increasingly urgent so that the ecotheological discourse does not remain at the theoretical level, but is instead implemented comprehensively through curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional culture.

Previous studies have examined the concept of *Fiqh Bi’ah* (Environmental *Fiqh*) and environmental education grounded in Islamic values (A. S. Saputra, 2020). One concrete application of this approach is the *Eco-Pesantren* model, an Islamic boarding school-based educational framework that integrates principles of sustainability and environmental awareness into the daily practices of students (Arifah et al., 2022). However, most of these studies focus on institutional praxis or the development of micro-level educational models, rather than on the macro-level examination of the political direction and policy framework of Islamic religious education at the national level. Moreover, earlier research has not explicitly analyzed ecotheology as an ethical–political framework capable of shaping a new orientation for national education policy, particularly under the authority of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs.

These limitations indicate that the existing literature remains fragmentary and tends to place ecological issues within the realm of individual morality or localized institutional programs (Fitriah Artina, 2024). The *Eco-Pesantren* approach, for example, has succeeded in internalizing ecological values within a limited community context, but it has not yet provided a clear picture of how the same ecological principles can be institutionalized through national policies that are binding and systematic (Gunawan & Alfarisi, 2023). This suggests a gap in research that explores the structural relationship between environmental theology, state policy, and the direction of Islamic education development.

In fact, integrating ecotheology into the policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs carries broad implications (Jamal, 2025). Such as the formulation of ecological learning competency standards, ecopedagogy-based teacher training, the mainstreaming of ecological *da'wah*, and the development of institutional programs such as Green Schools and Green Mosques. By analyzing ecotheology as an ethical-political framework, this study offers a new perspective: ecology is not merely an area of individual morality. Still, it can be institutionalized as public policy that shapes the national direction of Islamic religious education. Therefore, this research seeks to fill that gap and emphasizes the need for a policy approach that integrates ecological values comprehensively into the religious education system.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative analysis that positions ecotheology not merely as a moral and spiritual discourse, but as a new direction in the politics and policy of Islamic religious education in Indonesia. This research fills a gap in the literature by mapping how ecotheology can serve as a transformative paradigm in policy development, aligned with the principles of sustainability, religious moderation, and the nation's development vision (Januaripin & Rahtikawati, 2024). This approach also broadens the scope of Islamic religious education—from focusing solely on individual character to encompassing collective ecological responsibility grounded in spiritual values.

Furthermore, this study offers an important conceptual contribution by presenting an analytical framework that connects the three main levels of Islamic religious education: the theological level (ecotheological values and teachings), the pedagogical level (curricular transformation and learning practices), and the political level (public policies that guide educational direction). Existing literature on religious ecology tends to move between two poles: theological studies that discuss environmental texts and doctrines, and pedagogical studies that focus on ecological learning models. This research bridges these two approaches through the lens of state policy, demonstrating that ecological transformation can be pursued not only through strengthening values in classrooms or communities but also through the systematic formulation of religious education policies. By integrating ecotheology into public policy discourse, this study advances a new paradigm that ecology is not an auxiliary issue in religious education, but an integral part of Islam's prophetic mission in fostering civilizational sustainability. This approach provides a strong academic foundation for restructuring Islamic religious education to become more visionary, relevant, and responsive to global environmental challenges.

Academically, this study enriches the contemporary literature on Islamic religious education by offering a new perspective on the integration of theology and ecology within the design of public policy. Practically, this research is relevant for policymakers, educators, and Islamic educational institutions in responding to the demands of sustainability-oriented learning. Presenting ecotheology as a policy framework enables religious education to assume a more strategic role in addressing the global environmental crisis (Wasil & Muizudin, 2023).

This academic contribution is significant because studies on religious education have largely focused on normative, dogmatic, and pedagogical aspects. At the same time, ecological issues are often positioned outside the scope of Islamic education. This research shifts that orientation by demonstrating that the environmental crisis contains theological dimensions that cannot be overlooked in curriculum development or educational policymaking. By integrating the concept of ecotheology into public policy, this study provides a methodological foundation for future research to examine how Islamic values can

serve as the basis for more humane and sustainable environmental policies. This approach also enriches the discourse on Islamic education by introducing a cross-disciplinary analysis that brings together theology, policy studies, and ecology into a single, coherent scholarly framework.

From an implementation standpoint, this study offers significant practical implications. Policymakers within the Ministry of Religious Affairs can utilize these findings as a foundation for strengthening programs such as Green Theology, *eco-pesantren*, forest *waqf*, and tree-planting movements as integral components of Islamic religious education. For educators, the findings serve as a reference for developing ecological learning methods that are more contextual, reflective, and applicative. Meanwhile, for Islamic educational institutions, this study opens opportunities to cultivate a more environmentally friendly institutional culture through internal policies, infrastructure management, and ecology-based religious activities. In other words, ecotheology is not merely a theoretical concept but also an operational framework that can guide the transformation of Islamic education to become more relevant to the needs of global civilization.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to analyze how ecotheology can serve as a new direction in the politics and policy of Islamic religious education in Indonesia by examining its conceptual foundations, its relevance to sustainability issues, and its potential to transform the future orientation of religious education. This investigation is crucial for clarifying the role of ecotheology as a strategic approach in reforming Islamic religious education. Accordingly, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: 1) How is the concept of ecotheology integrated into the politics and policy of Islamic religious education in Indonesia?, 2) What are the challenges and opportunities in implementing an ecotheological approach within the Islamic religious education system?, 3) What are the implications of integrating ecotheology for the transformation of learners' values, character, and ecological awareness within Islamic religious education?.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. This approach was chosen to examine the concept of ecotheology in depth and its relevance to the political direction and policy of Islamic religious education in Indonesia. The analysis is carried out by reading, reviewing, and synthesizing various relevant scholarly sources.

The data sources in this research are classified into two main categories: primary and secondary data. Primary data consist of official policy documents issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, including Asta Protas, regulations on religious education, circular letters, green theology programs, and other strategic documents, as well as theoretical works on ecotheology, particularly the ideas of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ecological hermeneutics, and eco-religious approaches. Secondary data comprises journal articles, academic books, and previous studies that discuss ecotheology, environmental *fiqh*, Islamic religious education, and ecological education, as well as official reports, scientific publications, and other relevant literature that support the research focus.

Data collection is conducted through documentation techniques, which involve systematic literature searches using scholarly journal databases, the collection of policy documents from the official Ministry of Religious Affairs website, and the identification and selection of literature based on thematic relevance, keywords, and alignment with the study's objectives. The selection process prioritizes the credibility of sources, the year of publication, and the extent to which the materials are connected to issues of ecotheology and religious education policy.

Data analysis employs content analysis carried out through three interconnected stages. The first stage is data reduction, which involves selecting relevant literature and organizing information according to key aspects of ecotheology, educational policy, and ecological issues. The second stage is data presentation, in which the findings are systematically categorized into major themes, including the

theoretical foundations of ecotheology, practices of religious education, and policy orientations. The final stage is conclusion drawing, where the synthesized data are interpreted to formulate the strategic position of ecotheology in the development of Islamic religious education, politics, and policy. The analysis is conducted interpretively to generate a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the issues examined in this study.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Findings

The integration of ecotheology into Islamic religious education is not merely a curricular innovation but also a normative response to global challenges such as environmental crises, ecosystem degradation, and climate change (Widiastuty & Anwar, 2025). Religious education, particularly Islamic religious education, is expected not only to strengthen individual spirituality and the memorization of sacred texts but also to foster ecological awareness and social transformation (Muntoha, 2024).

Moreover, the integration of ecotheology reaffirms the prophetic function of religious education as an instrument of social transformation (Firdaus et al., 2025). In the Islamic perspective, moral teachings, creed, and worship cannot be separated from ecological ethics that govern how humans care for God's creation (Miftahuddin et al., 2024). As environmental crises reach critical levels—such as air pollution, clean water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and global warming—religious education becomes less relevant if it focuses solely on rituals and abstract concepts without preparing learners to face complex ecological realities (Ghozali, 2025). Thus, ecotheology serves as a bridge between spirituality and ecological reality, demanding changes in mindsets, behaviors, and social structures.

The integration of ecotheology also reinforces the idea that ecological awareness cannot be cultivated solely through scientific or technocratic approaches, but requires a strong moral and spiritual foundation (Munawar-rachman, 2024). Students and *santri* learn not only how to protect the environment as a social obligation but also understand it as an act of worship and a manifestation of *tawhīd* (Zaleha, 2024). When learners view nature as *ayat kauniyah*—signs of God's greatness—environmental concern emerges from internal awareness rather than mere compliance with external regulations. This is what distinguishes ecotheology from conventional environmental education: it embeds ecological values within a framework of faith that touches deeper aspects of inner life and character. The findings of this study are as follows:

#### *Integration of Ecotheological Concepts into the Politics and Policy of Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia*

The findings indicate that the integration of ecotheology has begun to emerge in the policies and programs of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, such as green theology initiatives, forest *waqf*, and the movement to plant one million matoa trees (*Gaungkan Wakaf Hutan Untuk Kelestarian Lingkungan, Kemenag Gagasan Program Green Theology*, 2025). These findings show that Islamic religious education is being directed toward strengthening ecological awareness and human responsibility as *khalifah fil-ard* (stewards of the Earth).

Religious texts that emphasize the balance of nature (Q.S. Ar-Rūm: 41), the wise management of resources (Q.S. Al-A'rāf: 31), and the prohibition of causing destruction (Q.S. Al-An'ām: 141) serve as the normative foundation for these policies (Aripin & Mardani, 2024). This paradigm broadens the focus of religious education from merely ritualistic and normative aspects toward a transformative aim that connects faith, ethics, and ecology.

Furthermore, the integration of these policies indicates an epistemological shift in understanding the relationship between religion and the environment. Whereas environmental issues were previously positioned primarily within the domains of science or social activism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs

now frames them as part of a religious mandate that must be fulfilled through both formal and non-formal education (Kementerian Agama, 2025). This approach affirms that Islam not only speaks about ritual worship but also regulates human relations with the environment as a form of social worship.

In the context of public policy, this shift is reflected in the Ministry's efforts to reorient the curriculum, develop a narrative of religious moderation with an ecological perspective, and encourage Islamic educational institutions to serve as centers for sustainability advocacy (Gazali, 2025). Policies such as Green Theology also signal the emergence of a new paradigm in which spirituality and ecology are not separate entities but mutually reinforcing foundations for shaping national character.

In addition, the integration of ecotheology into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) policy strengthens the position of religious education as a strategic instrument in sustainable development. This aligns with the direction of the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and the vision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which places religious moderation, environmental literacy, and ecological ethics as key components of human resource development (Istiqomah & Hidayah, 2023). Thus, religious education is no longer understood merely as a space for teaching moral values but also as a vehicle for societal transformation toward an ecological culture grounded in spirituality. Policy formulations such as forest *waqf*, eco-*pesantren*, and tree-planting movements serve as evidence that ecotheology has been translated into concrete actions capable of encouraging collective behavioral change.

This integration also has far-reaching implications for the overall direction of Islamic education. When state policies begin to incorporate ecological dimensions into the structure of religious education, Islamic educational institutions are encouraged to reformulate curricula, pedagogy, and institutional culture to become more environmentally friendly. This opens opportunities for the development of new models of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), such as ecological action-based learning, thematic Qur'anic studies with an environmental perspective, and the strengthening of religious practices aligned with sustainability principles.

Thus, the findings of this study affirm that ecotheology is no longer merely a moral narrative but has evolved into a strategic policy instrument capable of shaping the future direction of Islamic religious education in Indonesia.

### ***Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Ecotheology***

The subsequent findings indicate that the implementation of ecotheology in religious education still faces various obstacles. The PAI curriculum continues to be dominated by normative-doctrinal approaches, while teachers have limited access to training, reference materials, and ecological learning methodologies (Menag Tekankan Pentingnya Ekoteologi Dalam Menjaga Lingkungan, 2025).

However, the study also finds significant potential within religious institutions such as *pesantren*, *ulama*, and faith-based NGOs as agents of ecological transformation (Wasil & Muizudin, 2023). The role of *pesantren* in eco-philanthropy, environmental conservation, and ecological *da'wah* demonstrates clear opportunities to strengthen ecotheological values grounded in religious wisdom.

In addition to these structural barriers, publications on ecotheology within the context of religious education remain relatively limited, resulting in many teachers lacking adequate methodological references for implementing ecological learning relevant to Islamic teachings. The minimal integration of environmental issues in PAI textbooks and learning modules further aggravates this condition. Teachers are often not provided with training on how to interpret ecological versus contextual information or how to develop action-based learning that can shape students' ecological character.

Another obstacle lies in the institutional culture of many educational settings, which tends to maintain traditional patterns of religious instruction—focused heavily on memorization and ritual—so that environmental discussions are perceived as supplementary material rather than core Islamic

teachings. Limited budgetary support and the lack of evaluation tools for ecological learning also hinder the sustainability of ecotheology implementation in many educational institutions.

On the other hand, opportunities for the transformation of ecotheology are increasingly wide open as global awareness of the importance of sustainability-oriented education continues to rise. *Pesantren*, mosques, and religious organizations possess strong moral legitimacy to promote ecological values as part of religious teaching. *Pesantren*, in particular, have social capital in the form of close community ties, students' obedience to *kiai*, and collective culture that can be leveraged to build more organized environmental movements.

Initiatives such as eco-*pesantren*, tree *waqf*, water charity programs, land conservation, and environmentally themed *da'wah* demonstrate that religious institutions can act effectively as catalysts for ecological change at the grassroots level. When these movements are strengthened by public policies from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the implementation of ecotheology can progress from the micro level (educational practice) to the meso and macro levels (institutional culture, curriculum standards, and national policy). Thus, the opportunities for implementing ecotheology lie not only in individual awareness but also in the social and institutional structures that support religious education in Indonesia.

### ***Implications of Ecotheology Integration for the Transformation of Learners' Values and Character***

The third finding suggests that integrating ecotheology into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a significant impact on transforming students' ecological values and character. Approaches such as ecological Qur'anic exegesis (e.g., Q.S. Ar-Rūm: 41 and Q.S. Al-A'rāf: 141), eco-faith, and ecological hermeneutics demonstrate strong potential in shaping a religious-ecological identity (Sidqy, 2025). Curricular and extracurricular action-based activities—such as reforestation, water conservation, waste management, and tree charity programs—implemented in schools and *pesantren* serve as concrete examples of building eco-spiritual character (Arifah et al., 2022).

This integration also shows that religious education oriented toward ecological values is capable of shifting students' paradigm from a ritualistic form of religiosity to a more substantive one—namely, a religiosity that views environmental preservation as a manifestation of faith. Through ecological narratives found in the Qur'an and Hadith, learners can understand that the duty to protect the earth is not only a social obligation but also part of divine ethics. This awareness shapes the mindset that caring for the environment means safeguarding God's trust, whereas environmental destruction is understood as a form of moral and spiritual injustice.

Such a paradigm shift is essential, as it encourages students to view the environment not merely as an object of exploitation but as an entity possessing intrinsic value within Islamic teachings. Thus, the integration of ecotheology helps build a strong moral foundation for younger generations to engage in environmentally responsible behavior consistently.

In addition, the ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also strengthens the affective and social dimensions of learners. Action-based ecological learning not only enhances students' knowledge but also cultivates ecological empathy—the ability to feel an emotional connection with nature. This value is reinforced through collective practices such as tree charity programs, community clean-ups, and community-based conservation efforts, which teach that protecting the environment is an expression of *ukhuwah insāniah* (human solidarity) and *ukhuwah kauniyah* (cosmic awareness).

These practices serve as arenas for internalizing character values such as responsibility, trustworthiness, ecological integrity, and concern for future generations. With the support of institutional policies such as green schools, eco-*pesantren*, and ecological *da'wah* movements, these values become institutionalized, helping to form a sustainable ecopedagogical culture. This suggests that the transformation of students' ecological character does not occur instantly, but rather through the

interaction of policy, learning environments, and intentionally directed religious practices aimed at fostering ecological consciousness.

## Discussion

Policies within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) have begun to shift toward integrating ecotheology. This aligns with Seyyed Hossein Nasr's view that the ecological crisis is rooted in the loss of human spiritual consciousness toward the cosmos (Vella & Rizal, 2024). Studies by Affandi et al (Affandi et al., 2022) and Pangihutan & Jura (Pangihutan & Jura, 2023) Further support the idea that religious values can serve as a foundation for ecological conservation. However, this study offers a distinct contribution by positioning ecotheology not merely as a cultural program but as a new direction in the politics and policy of Islamic religious education—an area that has not been comprehensively examined in previous research

Furthermore, this policy shift indicates that the state has begun to view ecological spirituality as a strategic component of national development. In addition to Nasr, theological–ecological ideas are also discussed extensively by scholars such as Tucker & Grim, who emphasize the importance of integrating religious ethics into global environmental policy. This perspective reinforces the argument that religious education can serve as a normative force capable of shaping a broad, ecologically oriented culture within society.

In the Indonesian context, policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs—such as Green Theology, forest *waqf*, eco-*pesantren*, and tree-planting movements—are not merely symbolic moral initiatives but reflect an educational policy direction that recognizes the environmental crisis as both a religious issue and a matter of public policy. Thus, this study expands the horizon of ecotheology discourse beyond moral narratives and *pesantren*-based practices to map how ecological values can be systematically institutionalized through PAI policy. These findings simultaneously fill the gap in previous research, which has not sufficiently explored the structural relationship between environmental theology, state policy, and the reform of Islamic religious education.

These findings are also consistent with the principles of transformative religious education, which views religious education as a driver of social reconstruction (Chye, 2018). However, this study expands that framework by demonstrating that social reconstruction can be achieved through public policy pathways, not merely through instructional practices (Indri, 2024).

The transformative religious education conceptually asserts that religious education is not merely intended to instill theological teachings, but also to shape agents of social change who are capable of responding to human and environmental problems. In the Freirean tradition, transformative education is always oriented toward critical consciousness and liberatory action, encouraging learners to understand social realities holistically and to take action to improve them. When this perspective is placed within the context of ecotheology, environmental crises are understood as forms of ecological injustice that must be addressed through the internalization of religious values and the development of public policies that support sustainability.

Thus, this study demonstrates that ecological transformation cannot be realized solely at the pedagogical level or through school activities; it must be reinforced through state policy structures that regulate curriculum direction, school culture, and institutional programs. This approach enriches previous literature, which has tended to situate transformational education within the classroom, by emphasizing that significant ecological change requires synergy between religious discourse, educational praxis, and state policy orientation.

The main obstacles to implementing ecotheology—such as the dominance of normative curricula, limited teacher resources, and the lack of ecological pedagogy—are consistent with the findings of Mahrus (Mahrus, 2024a) and Usman (Usman, 2022). However, this study finds that the potential for change becomes significantly stronger when the ecotheological approach is mainstreamed through the



policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the roles of *pesantren*, *ulama*, and religious organizations, as well as context-based programs such as eco-*pesantren*, forest *waqf*, and conservation initiatives.

Furthermore, this study shows that these obstacles are largely structural rather than merely weaknesses at the level of instructional practice. The dominance of normative curricula, for example, reflects an educational paradigm that treats religious texts rigidly without opening space for dialogue with contemporary ecological issues. Teacher capacity limitations are also linked to the lack of practical ecological training—a condition widely identified in studies of Islamic religious education across various regions.

However, a policy-based approach enables change to occur more systematically, as new directions set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs can drive the standardization of ecological curricula, the provision of teacher training, and the strengthening of ecological learning ecosystems in Islamic educational institutions. On the other hand, the presence of *pesantren* and religious organizations as socio-religious forces offers significant opportunities for context-based implementation of ecotheology, as these institutions possess moral authority and broad community influence. These findings expand upon previous research that has tended to highlight pedagogical barriers, demonstrating that transformation is, in fact, more effective when initiated through regulatory and public policy structures.

These findings are more comprehensive than those of Wasil (Muizudin, 2023) and Mayyadah & Usman (Usman, 2022). This discussion focuses on ecological implementation at the community level. This study situates those findings within the framework of national policy, thereby offering a new contribution to understanding the relationship between religion, ecology, and public policy.

The significance of these findings lies in the fact that community-based approaches—such as eco-*pesantren*, local conservation movements, and eco-philanthropic practices—indeed have direct impacts at the grassroots level. Yet, they offer limited insight into how ecological values can be structurally institutionalized within the religious education system. Previous studies have tended to view ecotheology as a moral movement or cultural initiative that develops organically within religious communities, resulting in changes that are fragmentary and dependent on local capacity.

In contrast, this study shifts the orientation of ecotheology research to a more strategic level by demonstrating that integrating ecotheology into national policy enables the creation of standards, program directions, and regulatory instruments that are widely applicable and effective. A national policy framework provides space for the institutionalization of ecological values into the curriculum, teacher supervision, educational accreditation, as well as the direction of *da'wah* and religious empowerment.

Thus, this study not only complements literature that focuses on community practices but also offers a new perspective on how the state, religious institutions, and Muslim communities can build synergy in addressing the ecological crisis through religious education policy. This approach asserts that ecological transformation necessitates simultaneous cultural change and structural reform, rendering the contribution of this study substantive in strengthening ecotheology as a public policy discourse.

The integration of ecotheology into religious education has been proven to shape learners' eco-spiritual character—that is, individuals who view environmental preservation as an integral part of faith. This finding reinforces the ideas of Nasr and the concepts of ecofaith and ecological hermeneutics, which argue that the environmental crisis is fundamentally spiritual and moral (Siti Ulfiani, 2023).

However, this study presents a distinction by demonstrating that ecological character transformation does not occur solely through pedagogy, but is also influenced by curriculum designs based on ecological Qur'anic exegesis, environmentally friendly religious programs (green mosques and green schools), integrated institutional policies, and eco-philanthropy as a form of socio-ecological *fiqh* practice. This builds upon previous studies that have focused solely on theological or pedagogical

aspects, thereby affirming that effective ecological transformation requires both policy-based ecopedagogy and theological ecology to operate in tandem.

Furthermore, the integration of ecotheology into religious education suggests that the development of an ecological character is a multidimensional process involving cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social-practical aspects within learners. At the cognitive level, a curriculum that incorporates ecological Qur'anic exegesis enables students to understand that concepts such as *mīzān* (cosmic balance), *fasād* (environmental destruction), and *khalīfah fil-ard* are not merely moral doctrines but theological mandates with direct implications for ecological behavior.

At the affective and spiritual levels, environmentally friendly religious practices in mosques and schools foster a sense of religious habituation that encourages learners to develop a spiritual connection with nature. Meanwhile, at the social-practical level, eco-philanthropy programs—such as tree *waqf*, water conservation, and waste management based on ecological *fiqh*—situate religious values within concrete actions that generate community impact.

This integrative model suggests that the formation of ecological character cannot rely solely on pedagogical approaches; it requires systemic policy support that shapes institutional structures, school culture, and the learning ecosystem as a whole. Thus, this study reinforces the argument that ecotheology provides a crucial foundation for reorienting Islamic religious education toward a more ecological, transformative, and sustainable direction.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that ecotheology holds a strategic position as a new approach in the development of politics and policy within Islamic religious education in Indonesia. The integration of ecological values derived from religious texts—such as the concepts of *khalīfah fil-ard*, *mīzān* (balance), and the prohibition of environmental destruction—encourages a shift in the orientation of religious education from a normative–doctrinal pattern toward an ethical–transformational paradigm that is more responsive to the global environmental crisis. Policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, such as Green Theology, forest *waqf*, and tree-planting initiatives, indicate the growing ecological orientation within religious education policy.

The findings also affirm that the implementation of ecotheology in practice continues to face challenges, particularly in terms of curriculum, teacher capacity, and the limited availability of ecological learning methodologies. Nevertheless, this study identifies significant opportunities through strengthening the roles of *pesantren*, *ulama*, religious organizations, and through synergizing ecotheology with eco-religious approaches, ecofaith, and ecological hermeneutics. Together, these approaches have the potential to cultivate collective ecological awareness grounded in spiritual values and to encourage the formation of religious–ecological character among learners.

Overall, this study concludes that ecotheology is not only relevant as a theological discourse but also serves as a conceptual foundation and policy direction for reforming Islamic religious education to become more ecologically, humanistically, and sustainably oriented. The integration of this perspective is expected to strengthen the religious education system in shaping a generation that is not only spiritually devout but also ecologically responsible, with a genuine commitment to environmental preservation as part of devotion to God.

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