

Implementation of the ecotheological approach in Islamic religious education learning at IAIN Kendari

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Abstract

The issue of environmental damage and the global ecological crisis demand the integration of environmental values into education, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. The ecotheological approach is a strategic alternative for instilling ecological awareness based on Islamic teachings. This study aims to examine the implementation of the ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education learning at IAIN Kendari. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Data collection techniques include interviews with PAI lecturers, observation of the learning process, and documentation studies of learning tools. Data analysis is carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that the ecotheological approach is implemented through the integration of Islamic values about the environment in teaching materials, the use of contextual learning methods, and the habituation of environmental care attitudes in student academic activities. This approach contributes to increasing student understanding of the relationship between Islamic teachings and ecological responsibility. However, the implementation of the ecotheological approach still faces obstacles such as limited references, suboptimal ecotheology-based learning designs, and variations in lecturer and student understanding. This study concludes that the ecotheological approach has significant potential in strengthening the environmental ethics dimension in Islamic Education learning in Islamic higher education.

Keywords

Ecotheological approach, Islamic religious education, Environmental values into education

Introduction

Global environmental crises such as climate change, ecosystem destruction, and overexploitation of natural resources pose serious challenges to the sustainability of human life [1]. This phenomenon is caused not only by technical and economic factors, but also by a crisis of values and morals in viewing the relationship between humans and nature [2]. Therefore, education plays a strategic role in developing ecological awareness based on ethical and spiritual values.

Published:
May 04, 2026

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the 7th BIS-HSS 2025 Committee

From an Islamic perspective, humans are positioned as khalifah fi al-ardh (vicegerents on earth) with a moral and theological responsibility to preserve the environment [3]. These values should be systematically internalized in the educational process, particularly through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction. However, PAI learning practices have tended to emphasize ritualistic and normative aspects, while the ecological dimension of Islamic teachings has not been optimally integrated.

The ecotheological approach emerges as a paradigm that links Islamic theological teachings with ecological awareness and responsibility [4]. This approach emphasizes that environmental concern is an integral part of faith and worship of Allah SWT [5]. The implementation of an ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at universities is crucial, considering that students are agents of change expected to bring sustainable values to their social and professional lives.

As an Islamic religious university, IAIN Kendari holds a strategic position in developing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning that is responsive to contemporary issues, including environmental concerns. The integration of an ecotheological approach into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at IAIN Kendari is expected to shape students' character, not only spiritually religious but also ecologically aware and socially responsible. However, the implementation of this approach still faces various challenges, such as limited references, varying understandings among lecturers, and the lack of systematic integration of ecotheology into the curriculum and learning practices.

Based on these conditions, this research is crucial to examine in depth the implementation of an ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education learning at IAIN Kendari, the strategies used, and the obstacles encountered during the implementation process.

The novelty of this research lies in the following aspects: First, Integration of an Ecotheological Approach in Islamic Religious Education Learning at Islamic Higher Education Institutions. This research specifically examines the application of an ecotheological approach in the context of Islamic Religious Education learning at Islamic higher education institutions, a practice that remains relatively limited in academic studies. Second, Contextualization of Ecological Issues with Islamic Theological Values. This study positions environmental issues not merely as social issues, but as part of theological responsibilities, thereby enriching the perspective of Islamic Religious Education learning based on faith values and ecological ethics. Third, Contribution of an Ecotheology-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Model. This research has the potential to produce recommendations or a conceptual model for ecotheology-based Islamic Religious Education learning that can serve as a reference for curriculum development and learning in Islamic higher education institutions.

Method

This research was conducted qualitatively using a case study approach [6]. The case study approach was chosen to examine in-depth and comprehensively the implementation of the ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at IAIN Kendari as a unified, integrated system in a real-world context.

This research was conducted at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kendari. The location was chosen based on IAIN Kendari's commitment to developing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning that is responsive to contemporary issues, including environmental and ecotheological issues. The research was conducted over a period of time tailored to the data collection needs.

The research subjects were determined using purposive sampling, selecting informants deemed to have knowledge and direct involvement in the implementation of the ecotheological approach. The informants included: 1) Lecturers in Islamic Religious Education; 2) Heads of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study programs; 3) Students in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study programs; 4) Stakeholders involved in academic policy development.

Data collection was conducted using several techniques, namely: 1) In-depth interviews, to explore the understanding, experiences, and strategies of lecturers and students regarding the application of an ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning; 2) Learning observations, to directly observe the learning process, methods, media, and interactions between lecturers and students that integrate ecotheological values; 3) Documentation studies, including Semester Learning Plans (RPS), teaching materials, modules, syllabi, and relevant academic policy documents.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using an interactive analysis model, which included: 1) Data collecting; 2) Data reduction, by sorting and focusing data relevant to the research objectives; 3) Data presentation, in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices; 4) Conclusion drawing and verification, to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the implementation of the ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education learning [7].

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and technique triangulation, member checking, and diligent observation. These steps were taken to ensure the credibility and validity of the research findings.

Results

The results of this study comprehensively describe the implementation of an ecotheological approach in Islamic Religious Education learning at IAIN Kendari. The research findings were obtained from interviews, learning observations, and documentation studies, and were analyzed to uncover the practices, meanings, and challenges of implementing this approach.

Lecturers' understanding of the ecotheological approach

The research results show that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lecturers at IAIN Kendari have diverse understandings of the ecotheological approach. Some lecturers interpret ecotheology as the integration of Islamic theological teachings with values of environmental concern, which positions humans as khalifah fi al-ardh (vicegerents of God). This understanding is reflected in efforts to link material on faith, worship, and morals with environmental issues. However, some lecturers still understand ecotheology in a limited way, as a reinforcement of general moral values, without developing a systematic pedagogical framework.

Integration of ecotheological values in learning materials

The research findings reveal that the ecotheological approach is implemented through the integration of environmental values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) materials, such as discussions of Quranic verses about the universe, the concepts of ecological trust and responsibility, and the ethics of natural resource utilization. This integration is carried out contextually by linking the teaching materials to local environmental issues in Southeast Sulawesi, such as waste management, forest destruction, and environmental pollution.

Ecotheology-based learning strategies and methods

The research results show that lecturers use various learning strategies to implement an ecotheological approach, including discussion methods, case studies, project-based learning, and critical reflection. Students are encouraged to analyze environmental issues from an Islamic perspective and formulate solutions based on religious ethics. This strategy is considered effective in increasing student engagement in the learning process.

The role of contextual and reflective learning

The ecotheological approach at IAIN Kendari is also implemented through contextual and reflective learning. Students are encouraged to reflect on the relationship between Islamic teachings and the ecological realities around them. Observations indicate that this reflective approach encourages students to understand that environmental awareness is part of their religious responsibility, not simply a social or technical issue.

The impact of implementing an ecotheological approach on students

Research findings indicate that the implementation of an ecotheological approach has a positive impact on students' understanding and attitudes. Students demonstrated increased ecological awareness, a shift in perspective on environmental issues, and a growing sense of moral responsibility for preserving nature. However, concrete changes in ecological behavior still require reinforcement through habituation and ongoing programs.

Challenges in implementing an ecotheological approach

This study identified several challenges in implementing an ecotheological approach, including limited ecotheology-based references and teaching materials, the absence of curriculum guidelines that explicitly integrate ecotheology into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, and differences in students' backgrounds and levels of ecological awareness. Another challenge is limited learning time, which prevents the integration of ecotheological values from being optimal.

Efforts to Strengthen the Implementation of the Ecotheological Approach

The research results demonstrate efforts by lecturers and academic administrators to strengthen the implementation of an ecotheological approach, such as the development of contextual teaching materials, academic discussions among lecturers, and the integration of environmental values into student activities. These efforts are seen as initial steps in building an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning ecosystem oriented toward ecological awareness.

Discussion

Ecotheological approach as a paradigm for islamic education learning

The research results show that ecotheology is understood by lecturers as an approach that emphasizes the theological relationship between humans, God, and nature. This interpretation aligns with the Islamic concept of humans as khalifah fi al-ardh (vicegerents) who have a moral responsibility to preserve the environment [8]. The integration of an ecotheological approach into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning broadens the learning orientation from merely transferring religious knowledge to developing students' ethical and ecological awareness.

Integration of ecotheological values in materials and curriculum

Research findings indicate that ecotheological values have been integrated into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning materials by linking Quranic verses, hadiths, and concepts of faith and morals to environmental issues. This practice demonstrates efforts to contextualize Islamic teachings with the ecological realities faced by society. However, this integration remains partial and dependent on individual lecturer initiative, necessitating strengthening at the curriculum level and more systematic learning planning.

Pedagogical strategies and contextual learning

The research results show that lecturers use contextual pedagogical strategies, such as discussions of environmental issues, case studies, and critical reflection. These strategies align with the principles of active and constructivist learning, which position students as the subjects of learning. An ecotheological approach through contextual learning has been shown to increase student engagement and encourage them to understand environmental issues as part of their religious responsibilities.

Impact on student awareness and attitude

Research findings indicate that the implementation of an ecotheological approach has a positive impact on increasing students' ecological awareness. Students begin to view environmental issues not merely as technical or social issues, but as part of their worship and the practice of Islamic values. However, this change in attitude has not yet fully manifested in consistent ecological behavior, requiring ongoing habituation and reinforcement outside the classroom.

Challenges of implementing an ecotheological approach

This research identified several challenges, including limited ecotheology-based references and teaching materials, the absence of curriculum guidelines that explicitly accommodate an ecotheological approach, and variations in understanding among lecturers and students. These challenges indicate that implementing ecotheology in Islamic Religious Education learning requires institutional policy support and ongoing lecturer capacity development.

Conclusion

This study concludes that an ecotheological approach has been implemented in Islamic Religious Education learning at IAIN Kendari through the integration of Islamic values with environmental issues. This implementation is realized by linking material on faith, worship, and morals with the concept of human ecological responsibility as khalifah fi al-ardh (vicegerent) and through the application of contextual and reflective learning. The ecotheological approach has had a positive impact on increasing students' ecological understanding and awareness, particularly in viewing the environment as part of their religious responsibilities. Students not only understand Islamic teachings normatively but are also able to relate them to ecological issues faced in real life. However, this change in awareness has not been fully internalized into consistent ecological behavior. This study also found that the implementation of the ecotheological approach still faces various obstacles, including limited teaching materials and ecotheological references, the lack of systematic integration of this approach into the curriculum, and variations in understanding among lecturers and students. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen institutional policies, develop lecturer competencies, and develop a more structured and sustainable ecotheology-based PAI learning design.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses his deepest gratitude and appreciation to the leadership of the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kendari for granting permission and support for this research. He also thanks the lecturers in Islamic Education who generously shared their time, experiences, and valuable information regarding the implementation of the ecotheological approach in the learning process.

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