

Islamic Religious Education in the Era of Environmental Crisis: Interfaith, Interdisciplinary, and Interplanetary Perspectives

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: July 3, 2025 Revised: November 9, 2025 Accepted: December 3, 2025</p> <p>Keywords: Islamic religious education; environmental crisis; interfaith; interdisciplinary; interplanetary</p>	<p>This study explores how Islamic Religious Education (<i>Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI</i>) teachers perceive, integrate, and respond to the environmental crisis in their teaching practices, and their openness to interfaith, interdisciplinary, and “interplanetary” approaches as an expansion of ecological consciousness. This research employed a qualitative design, utilizing in-depth interviews with eight PAI teachers. Data was analyzed using thematic coding to identify key patterns and themes. The findings indicate that most teachers possess a good awareness of the environmental crisis and ethically and theologically link it to Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, the implementation of ecopedagogy in PAI classes remains largely incidental due to curriculum limitations and insufficient support. Interestingly, teachers demonstrated considerable openness to interfaith and interdisciplinary approaches for enriching the PAI curriculum, viewing them as means to enhance PAI's relevance. While the “interplanetary” idea remains speculative, glimmers of cosmic awareness are present in their narratives, potentially opening new theological insights. The implications suggest the need for explicit integration of ecological ethics into PAI curriculum and comprehensive teacher training modules, alongside the potential development of PAI based on spiritual-cosmological ecopedagogy.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Almost every day, we are treated to news about the increasingly alarming climate change, from record-breaking heatwaves to flash floods that cripple cities to biodiversity loss at unprecedented levels.¹ These phenomena, which we often refer to as the global environmental crisis or ecocrisis, are no longer just fringe issues; they have transformed into fundamental challenges that threaten the sustainability of life on this planet. The term ecocrisis refers not only to environmental degradation but to a systemic crisis encompassing the biophysical, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of human existence. It reflects a breakdown in humanity's relationship with the natural world.² In our opinion, the urgency of this crisis not only demands a response from scientists or policy makers, but also calls for participation from various sectors of life, including, and perhaps this is what is often overlooked, the realm of religious education.³ This article begins from the conviction that environmental degradation is not only a scientific or political crisis but also a moral and educational one.

The apparent separation between environmental degradation and religious education reflects a narrow understanding of religion as merely ritualistic and spiritual. This conceptual gap is precisely where the critical insight emerges: religious education possesses formative ethical and cosmological resources that can cultivate ecological consciousness and responsibility. The history of human civilization shows that religion has often been a moral and ethical compass for millions of individuals.⁴ The values and teachings contained in religious traditions, including Islam, often explicitly or implicitly contain principles about the importance of maintaining the balance of nature, responsibility towards other living beings,⁵ and the concept of leadership (*khalifah*) that leads to conservation.⁶ This means, in our view,

¹ Columba Peoples, *Security in Crisis: Planetary Emergence and the Technopolitics of Crisis Management* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/9780191976292.001.0001>; Karol Kempa and Ashish Tyagi, "Climate and Environmental Impacts of Green Recovery: Evidence from the Financial Crisis," *World Development Sustainability* 6 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wds.2024.100194>.

² Devan Pillay, "Introduction: Ecological Threats and the Crisis of Civilisation," in *New South African Review 2: New Paths, Old Compromises?*, ed. John Daniel et al. (London: Wits University Press, 2012), 276–78, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/18C83232827A8BE03891F8A39628B498>; N Carmi and E Bartal, "Perception of Environmental Threat in the Shadow of War: The Effect of Future Orientation," *Human and Ecological Risk Assessment: An International Journal* 20, no. 3 (May 4, 2014): 872–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10807039.2013.798217>.

³ Husni Husni, Abdul Azis, and Selamet Selamet, "Implementing Sustainable Islamic Higher Education Campuses: A Practical Framework," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 1 (September 20, 2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.36667/jppi.v11i1.1216>.

⁴ Jonathan Fox, "The Rise of Religion and the Fall of the Civilization Paradigm as Explanations for Intra-State Conflict," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 361–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570701574022>.

⁵ Husamah et al., "Islam and Sustainability Issues, How Far Has the Relationship Progressed? A Bibliometric Analysis," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 12 (2025): 101703, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101703>; Munjed M Murad, "The Western Orientation of Environmentalism in the Islamic World Today," *Religion and Development* 2, no. 1 (2023): 41–62, <https://doi.org/10.30965/27507955-20230015>.

⁶ Ali Mohamed Al-Damkhi, "Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles, Violations, and Future Perspectives," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 65, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 11–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207230701859724>; Muhammad Yaseen Gada, *Islam and Environmental Ethics, Elements in Islam and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/9781009308236>.

that there is great untapped potential in religious education to foster strong environmental awareness and ethics among the younger generation.⁷

When we are dealing with the complexity of ecocracy, whose root causes are not only technological or economic but also closely related to worldview and human behavior, the role of religious education becomes even more relevant.⁸ It offers a moral framework that can guide individuals to see nature not just as an object of exploitation, but as a manifestation of divine greatness that must be respected and protected.⁹ Of course, this idea may seem idealistic, but empirical experience often shows that lasting changes in behavior are often rooted in fundamental beliefs and values. Among various educational domains, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) possesses a distinctive capacity to frame ecological ethics within theological consciousness. Therefore, exploring how Islamic religious education can contribute to shaping ecological awareness becomes a necessity amidst the threats that continue to loom over the future of our earth.¹⁰

In this ecocritical era, PAI, according to our observations, is faced with a series of challenges that cannot be underestimated, but on the other hand, it also holds very promising opportunities to contribute significantly.¹¹ One of the main challenges is the PAI curriculum, which may, in many cases, not have fully integrated environmental issues explicitly and deeply. Often, existing materials focus more on the ritual, creedal, and interpersonal morality aspects, while the environmental ethics or “ecothology” dimensions of Islam may only be mentioned in passing, if at all. This means that PAI teachers may not have adequate guidance or specific training to teach how Islamic teachings can be a strong foundation for ecological awareness.¹² In addition, limited resources, be it textbooks, learning media, or even support from the school and government, can be a real obstacle in implementing ecopedagogy in PAI classes. Not to mention, there are internal challenges from the understanding of some people or even the teachers themselves, who may not fully see the environmental crisis as an integral part of religious teachings, but rather as a secular issue. This, in our opinion, is quite a big homework.

However, every challenge also presents opportunities, and within the context of PAI, these opportunities are substantial and diverse. First, the richness of the Islamic treasury itself, with concepts such as *tawhid*¹³ (the oneness of *God* which implies the unity of the

⁷ “Religious Education in Agricultural Environments: Integrating Islamic Teachings and Agricultural Practices for Holistic Student Development,” *Religious Education* 120, no. 1 (January 1, 2025): 58–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2024.2426318>.

⁸ Heather Marshall, “Integrating Sustainability into Religious Education,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 12, no. 1 (2025): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2025.2504983>.

⁹ Pravin Chavan and Anil Sharma, “Religiosity, Spirituality or Environmental Consciousness? Analysing Determinants of Pro-Environmental Religious Practices,” *Journal of Human Values* 30, no. 2 (January 20, 2024): 160–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09716858231220689>.

¹⁰ Fachruddin Majeri Mangunjaya, “Developing Environmental Awareness and Conservation through Islamic Teaching,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2011): 36–49, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etq067>.

¹¹ Mawi Khusni Albar, Tasman Hamami, and Sukiman Sukiman, “Ecological Pesantren as an Innovation in Islamic Religious Education Curriculum: Is It Feasible?,” *Edukasia Islamika* 9, no. 1 (2024): 17–40, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v9i1.8324>.

¹² Muh Idris et al., “Mengintegrasikan Pendidikan, Lingkungan, Dan Nilai-Nilai Islam Sebagai Upaya Meningkatkan Etika Dan Literasi Lingkungan,” *Journal of Islamic Education Policy* 7, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.30984/jiep.v7i2.1966>.

¹³ Agus Afandi et al., “Islamic Eco-Theology in Practice: Revitalizing Environmental Stewardship and

universe), *khalifah*¹⁴ (human mandate as guardian of the earth), *mizan*¹⁵ (balance), and the teaching of *ibsan*¹⁶ (doing good) to all creation, provides a very solid theological and ethical foundation for the development of ecopedagogy. This is not just a search for justification, but rather an exploration of the essence of the teachings that already exist.

Secondly, there is an increasing awareness among the public, including the Muslim community, about the importance of environmental issues. This creates a more conducive climate for PAI teachers to introduce and discuss these topics in class. Students who have grown up amidst the cacophony of environmental news may be more receptive to PAI materials that are relevant to their daily lives and the future of the planet. Third, the development of more innovative and participatory teaching methodologies also paves the way for PAI to not only teach theory, but also encourage action. Community-based projects that involve PAI students in environmental conservation activities, for example, directly applying Islamic values. This is a golden opportunity to make PAI more vibrant, relevant, and impactful in shaping a generation that is not only ritually pious but also ecologically responsible. Previous studies on eco-Islam and environmental ethics have offered theological frameworks, yet empirical insights into how PAI teachers translate these principles into classroom practice remain limited.¹⁷ Although the challenges are real, the opportunities for the transformation of PAI into the vanguard of environmental education are no less great.

This study introduces three conceptual openings, interfaith, interdisciplinary, and interplanetary, as a theoretical triad that expands ecological consciousness in Islamic education. Specifically, the problem formulation that we want to answer in this article is: “How do Islamic Religious Education teachers in Ciamis Regency understand, integrate, and respond to environmental crisis issues in their teaching practices, and to what extent are they open to interfaith, interdisciplinary, and 'interplanetary' approaches as an expansion of ecological awareness?” This question, in our opinion, tries to explore several important layers. *First*, we are interested in teachers' understanding and awareness of the environmental crisis itself. Do they see it as a problem relevant to religious teachings? *Second*, we want to look at their teaching practices. How do they translate that understanding into the PAI classroom? Are there any concrete, albeit small, initiatives that they have taken? This is the essence of “ecopedagogy” in the context of PAI. *Third*, we are curious about their openness to innovative approaches, such as *interfaith* and *interdisciplinary*. Could PAI collaborate with

Tawhidic Principles in Agricultural Community,” *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 7, no. 2 (2024): 257–82, <https://doi.org/10.37680/muharrik.v7i2.6477>.

¹⁴ Shahrul Hussain, “Khalifah, the Environment and Recycling Copies of the Holy Qur'an: A Symbolic Sematic Consideration,” *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law & Practice* 16, no. 1 (2020): 162.

¹⁵ İbrahim Özdemir, “The Concept of Al-Mizan (Balance) as a Framework for a New Ethics of Environment and Sustainability,” in *Creation-Transformation-Theology: International Congress of the European Society for Catholic Theology (August 2021-Osnabrück/Germany)*, vol. 30 (LIT Verlag, 2022), 421.

¹⁶ Munib Munib et al., “Conservation Environmental Sustainability in the Perspective of Islamic Legal Philosophy,” *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (2022): 556–72, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.12411>.

¹⁷ Najma Mohamed, “Revitalising an Eco-Justice Ethic of Islam by Way of Environmental Education: Implications for Islamic Education” (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.1200.3687>; Dina M Abdelzaher, Amr Kotb, and Akrum Helfaya, “Eco-Islam: Beyond the Principles of Why and What, and into the Principles of How,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 155 (2019): 623–43, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3518-2>.

other disciplines or even learn from other religious traditions to strengthen environmental messages? And *finally*, perhaps most speculative but no less interesting, is their response to the idea of “interplanetary” –a metaphor for the expansion of consciousness beyond conventional boundaries, embracing the cosmic dimension of environmental ethics in Islam.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative design was adopted to enable an in-depth exploration of PAI teachers’ subjective interpretations of the environmental crisis and the pedagogical strategies through which they incorporate ecological concerns into their teaching. To achieve this depth of understanding, the main data collection technique we used was in-depth interviews with eight Islamic Religious Education teachers in Ciamis District, West Java. The criteria for participants were Islamic Religious Education teachers who actively teach at various school levels (ranging from SD/MI to SMA/MA) in Ciamis District. We sought diversity in their teaching experiences and educational backgrounds, to the extent possible, to obtain a broader spectrum of views. It is important to note that to maintain the anonymity and privacy of the participants, we used pseudonyms. In this article, the eight teachers we interviewed will be referred to as Par-1, Par-2, Par-3, Par-4, Par-5, Par-6, Par-7, and Par-8. This helps readers to trace the quotes without revealing their real identities.

We used a thematic coding approach. This process started with reading the transcriptions repeatedly to get an overview. Next, we did *open coding*, which involved identifying key concepts or ideas that emerged from the data and labeling (*coding*) the relevant segments of text. Then, these codes were grouped into broader categories (*axial coding*), and finally, we identified key themes that emerged repeatedly and significantly (*selective coding*). For example, the theme of “rigid curriculum” or “theological motivations for environmental stewardship” might emerge from several different codes. This approach helped us to organize the rich and unstructured data into a coherent and meaningful narrative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Religious Education and Ecological Responsibility

When we talk about environmental ethics in Islam, we are actually opening a very rich treasury of thought, although it may not have been fully explored in practice. Islamic literature, from the Qur'an and Sunnah to the works of classical and contemporary scholars, provides a comprehensive framework for human relationships with nature.¹⁸ For example, the concept of *tawhid*, which affirms the oneness of Allah, implicitly teaches that all of creation—humans, animals, plants, and the universe—is part of a single entity created by the One True Being.¹⁹ The implication is clear: destroying one part of creation means destroying the unity, and indirectly, denying the greatness of the Creator.

¹⁸ Suud Sarim Karimullah, “Reflections on Human-Nature Relations: A Critical Review in Islamic Humanities,” *Jurnal Adabiyah* 23, no. 2 (2023): 189–206, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jad.v23i2a5>; Asmawati Muhamad, Abdul Halim Syihab, and Abdul Halim Ibrahim, “Preserving Human–Nature’s Interaction for Sustainability: Quran and Sunnah Perspective,” *Science and Engineering Ethics* 26, no. 2 (2020): 1053–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-020-00192-7>.

¹⁹ Afandi et al., “Islamic Eco-Theology in Practice: Revitalizing Environmental Stewardship and Tawhidic Principles in Agricultural Community.”

Equally important is the idea of *khalifah* or the caliphate mandate given to humans.²⁰ The Qur'an explicitly refers to humans as caliphs on earth (Al-Baqarah, [2]: 30). This is not just a title of honor, but a great mandate to guard, manage, and preserve the earth and its contents, not to exploit it without limits. There is also the concept of *mizân* (balance), which emphasizes the importance of maintaining harmony and proportion in all aspects of life, including in interactions with nature.²¹ When this balance is disturbed, whether by pollution, deforestation, or overconsumption, damage results. In addition, many traditions of the Prophet Muhammad explicitly teach compassion for animals, the prohibition of destroying trees, and the recommendation to plant and care for the environment. In short, we argue that Islamic environmental ethics is not an imposed new idea, but rather a reaffirmation of principles that have long existed in religious traditions. How is all this relevant to the role of PAI in shaping students' ecological awareness? It is where PAI finds its strategic field of work. PAI, as a discipline that teaches Islamic values, morals, and ethics to the younger generation, has a unique position to instill the understanding that protecting the environment is an inseparable part of faith (*imân*). It is no longer just an additional subject, but a crucial dimension of character education based on religion. PAI can be a bridge between sacred texts and the reality of the contemporary environmental crisis.

Through PAI, students can be invited not only to understand the concept of *khalifah* theoretically, but also to internalize it as a personal responsibility that must be realized in daily actions, from not littering, saving energy, to engaging in conservation movements. PAI teachers, with their moral and pedagogical authority, can inspire students to see the beauty of nature as a sign of God's power (*ayât Allah*) and thus foster a sense of gratitude and a desire to protect it. Indeed, this requires a paradigm shift, from the mere transfer of religious knowledge to the formation of a holistic ethic and praxis, where concern for the environment becomes a tangible manifestation of a Muslim's piety.²² This is a great potential that we must maximize.

Interfaith and Interdisciplinary Approach

The *interfaith* approach refers to dialogue, cooperation, and shared learning between individuals or communities from different religious backgrounds.²³ The aim is to build understanding, tolerance, and solidarity for a common cause. In an environmental context, this means that Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, or other faith traditions can sit together, share their spiritual perspectives on nature, and work together on environmental

²⁰ Hussain, "Khalifah, the Environment and Recycling Copies of the Holy Qur'an: A Symbolic Sematic Consideration."

²¹ Özdemir, "The Concept of Al-Mizan (Balance) as a Framework for a New Ethics of Environment and Sustainability."

²² Robert Jackson, "Paradigm Shift in Religious Education? A Reply to Gearon, or When Is a Paradigm Not a Paradigm?," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 39, no. 3 (2018): 379–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2018.1469327>.

²³ Anke I Liefbroer et al., "Interfaith Spiritual Care: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Religion and Health* 56 (2017): 1776–93, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0369-1>; Mehrdad Massoudi, "A System Theory Approach to Interfaith Dialogue," *Intercultural Education* 17, no. 4 (2006): 421–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980600971442>.

conservation initiatives.²⁴ We can see examples of this in international forums that bring together religious leaders to discuss climate change issues, or at the local level, communities of different faiths working together to clean up rivers or plant trees. The point is, despite different doctrines, universal values about caring for creation can often be a powerful common ground.²⁵

On the other hand, an *interdisciplinary* approach involves integrating knowledge, methods, and perspectives from different disciplines to understand and solve a problem.²⁶ This means that PAI does not stand alone, but can dialogue with biology, ecology, sociology, economics, and even art.²⁷ For example, a PAI teacher can collaborate with a biology teacher to explain the forest ecosystem, then connect it with Qur'anic verses about the balance of nature. Or, a lesson on zakat can be linked to circular economy principles that aim to reduce waste. An example could also be a student project that combines scientific research on water pollution with a religious value-based awareness campaign.²⁸ The key to this approach is to see that environmental problems cannot be confined to a single domain; they require a holistic understanding and integrated solutions from various disciplines. What is the potential of integrating this approach into the PAI curriculum? In our opinion, this is a golden opportunity to enrich and rejuvenate PAI. With an interfaith approach, PAI can encourage students to see that concern for the environment is a universal value that transcends religious boundaries. This not only fosters ecological awareness but also builds attitudes of tolerance and interfaith cooperation, a skill that is especially relevant in this increasingly connected world. Students can learn how other religions also have strong teachings on the environment, thus fostering mutual respect and strengthening motivation for action.

Meanwhile, cross-disciplinary integration can make PAI much more relevant and interesting for students.²⁹ Imagine a PAI that doesn't just revolve around lectures, but also involves simple experiments, field trips, or projects that involve scientific data and problem-solving. This would help students see that religious teachings are not something separate from scientific reality, but rather provide an ethical foundation for applying scientific knowledge responsibly. PAI can be a platform to integrate theological understanding with scientific understanding of the earth, strengthening the argument for conservation through empirical evidence as well as morals. Of course, this requires creativity and willingness on the part of curriculum developers and teachers, but the potential impact on forming a more environmentally conscious and open-minded generation is enormous.

The Interplanetary Idea

²⁴ Abdul Mufid et al., "A Religious Discourse on Water and Environmental Conservation Issues: An Interfaith Approach," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 44, no. 1 (2023): 2822, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v44i1.2822>.

²⁵ Dina Biscotti and Nicole Woolsey Biggart, "Organizing Belief: Interfaith Social Change Organizations in the Religious-Environmental Movement," in *Religion and Organization Theory* (London: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2014), 413–39.

²⁶ Matthias Jarke, X Tung Bui, and John M Carroll, "Scenario Management: An Interdisciplinary Approach," *Requirements Engineering* 3, no. 1 (1998): 155–73, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s007660050002>.

²⁷ Ranjan Kumar Datta, "Practice-Based Interdisciplinary Approach and Environmental Research," *Environments* 4, no. 1 (2017): 22, <https://doi.org/10.3390/environments4010022>.

²⁸ Datta.

²⁹ Daniela Marsili, "A Cross-Disciplinary Approach to Global Environmental Health: The Case of Contaminated Sites," *Annali Dell'Istituto Superiore Di Sanità* 52, no. 4 (2016): 516–23, https://doi.org/10.4415/ANN_16_04_10.

The term “interplanetary” does not refer to physical travel to another planet.³⁰ Rather, the concept of “interplanetary” is an expansion of spiritual and ecological consciousness, an awareness that transcends the terrestrial boundaries of the world, that goes beyond a narrow focus on earth alone, and begins to see ourselves as part of a much larger cosmos.³¹ It is an invitation to think beyond the usual horizon, to imagine how our understanding of the universe can enrich, even deepen, our environmental ethics.³² If we realize that the earth is just a speck in a vast universe, then our sense of awe and responsibility towards this little “home” might increase dramatically. It is about cultivating a cosmic perspective that makes us feel more connected to the rest of creation.

How does this relate to the earlier discussion on cosmic consciousness and cosmoethics in Islam? As it turns out, Islam has a very strong foundation for this idea, although it may not have been explicitly explored in modern ecological frameworks. The Qur'an and hadith often invite humans to contemplate the creation of the heavens and earth, the stars, and the movement of celestial bodies as signs of Allah's greatness (*ayât Allah*). For example, verses speak of the orderly creation of the universe (*sunnat Allah*), of the universe as an open book to be read, or of awe at the vastness of His creation. These all indicate an inherent cosmic consciousness in the Islamic worldview.

From this cosmic consciousness, we can develop what we call cosmoethics.³³ While traditional environmental ethics are earth-centered, cosmoethics extends its scope to the universe. This means that our responsibility as stewards is not only limited to the earth's local or global ecosystem, but also includes an understanding that we are part of a larger cosmic order. This idea encourages us to think about the implications of our actions on a broader scale, not just for future generations on Earth, but also in the context of our existence in the universe. Is there an “ethics” to exploring space? How do we ensure that space exploration is conducted with the Islamic principles of *mizân* (balance) and responsibility? We are aware that this “interplanetary” idea may sound ambitious. However, we believe that it is an exciting new frontier to explore in PAI. It can spark deep philosophical discussions among students, taking them beyond classroom boundaries and even planetary boundaries, to reflect on their place in the universe and how their faith demands an ethic that transcends terrestrial boundaries.³⁴ A PAI that dares to venture into the “interplanetary” realm is a PAI that is not only relevant to the current environmental crisis but is also prepared for a future that may take us far beyond what we can imagine.

³⁰ Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction* (Wesley: Wesleyan University Press, 2014).

³¹ John Hart, “Cosmic Commons: Contact and Community,” *Theology and Science* 8, no. 4 (2010): 371–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2010.517637>.

³² Vladimir V M Tobin and A Randall Olson, “An Eastern Orthodox Theological Basis for Interplanetary Environmental Ethics,” *Theology and Science* 9, no. 3 (2011): 341–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2011.587666>.

³³ Salma Monani, “Science Fiction, Westerns, and the Vital Cosmo-Ethics of the 6th World,” in *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies* (Routledge, 2016), 62–79.

³⁴ Whitney A Bauman, *Religion and Ecology: Developing a Planetary Ethic* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2014).

Teachers' Awareness of the Environmental Crisis

The first thing that caught our attention when analyzing the teachers' narratives was their level of awareness of the environmental crisis. In general, we found that PAI teachers are not unfamiliar with environmental issues. They not only know, but also feel and observe the impact of this crisis in their daily lives, although with varying intensity of understanding.

The teachers' narratives of experiences and views are often colored by their personal observations. For example, Par-3, who teaches in an area that experiences drought quite often during the dry season, shared her experience with a tone of concern: *"In the past, the river near the school was very clear, sir. Now? Ouch, during the dry season, it's dry. If it rains just a little, it immediately becomes murky and smelly. The children can't play there anymore. It makes me think, what is wrong with our nature?"* Simple observations like these, we think, show that the environmental crisis is no longer just distant news, but has seeped into their real experiences.

Par-1, a senior teacher, also highlighted the changing weather. *"I feel that the heat nowadays is extraordinary. It used to not be like this. The rain is also sometimes suddenly very heavy, flooding everywhere. This must have something to do with human activity, right? The forests up there used to be thick, but now many of them are deforested,"* he says, as if recalling a greener past.

In terms of theological and ethical attitudes towards the ecological crisis, the majority of teachers explicitly link the environmental crisis with Islamic teachings. They do not see it as a separate issue from religion. Par-5, for example, explicitly stated, *"The environment is God's creation. If we destroy His creation, it is the same as being ungrateful. This is a sin, in my opinion."* This statement reflects a strong understanding of the concepts of *tawhid* and *gratitude* as the basis of environmental ethics.

We had a little further dialogue with Par-7 about this. "Sir, do you think this environmental damage has anything to do with one's faith?" we asked. Par-7 nodded firmly. *"Obviously, there is. If a person has strong faith, they will love nature. Our prophet taught us not to destroy, even during war; there is a prohibition against destroying trees. So, if there are Muslims who litter and destroy forests, we need to question their faith. That is a reflection of morality."* Similarly, Par-2 emphasized the concept of *khalifah*: *"We are given the mandate as leaders on earth. The leaders should protect, not destroy. The earth is a trust from Allah for our children and grandchildren. If we destroy it now, how will they live?"* Narratives like this show the internalization of theological concepts into ethical principles that are relevant to ecological responsibility.

However, not all views are uniform. There are also teachers, such as Par-4, who, while acknowledging the existence of environmental problems, still tend to see them more as ordinary natural phenomena or technical problems. *"Yes, it's hot now, but it's also called climate change. Maybe it's just a natural cycle. The important thing is that we try to live clean,"* he said, suggesting that a theological understanding of the crisis may not have been as strong as the other teachers' or at least, not yet a top priority in his framework for thinking about the environment. Nonetheless, in general, there is a common thread that shows that PAI teachers in Ciamis have a basic awareness of the environmental crisis, and most of them attempt to connect this issue with Islamic values and teachings. This is a very important initial foundation for further development of ecopedagogy in PAI.

Ecopedagogy Teaching Practices in PAI

We found that the teachers' initiatives in implementing ecopedagogy in PAI classes varied, ranging from simple to more structured, although generally still incidental. Par-6, for example, a relatively young teacher, shared her experience: *"When learning about cleanliness, I always relate it to taking care of the environment, throwing garbage in its place. I invite the children to do a class picket, and if there is trash in the yard, I ask them to pick it up. At the same time, I remind them that cleanliness is part of faith."* This kind of direct approach, linking daily hygiene practices with religious teachings, is one of the most basic forms of integration we found.

Par-8 has a similar, but slightly more in-depth approach. *"When discussing short suras, such as Al-Fil about the elephant army, I like to mention how Allah destroys people who are arrogant and destructive. I say, 'Be careful, son, if we destroy nature, Allah can be as angry as with the elephant army.'"* This shows an attempt to draw ecological meaning from the Qur'anic stories, which we found quite creative. Some teachers try more practical initiatives. Par-5 recounts: *"We had made a 'Clean Friday' program at school, every Friday morning, the PAI children participate in cleaning the school environment, from the prayer room to the garden. I always remind them that cleaning is an act of worship."* Although still limited to the school environment, this is a real step in applying religious values in environmental action.

However, it cannot be denied that there are many obstacles in ecological praxis at school that these teachers feel. One of the most dominant obstacles is the limitations of the formal curriculum. Par-1 honestly admitted, *"The material in the book is just like that. There is no special chapter on the environment. So, if you want to teach about the environment, you have to be smart to insert it in between other materials. It takes more effort."* This statement confirms that teachers do not have explicit curriculum support for ecopedagogy, so integration often relies on their personal initiative.

In addition, the lack of training and resources is also an obstacle. Par-3 complained, *"Honestly, we PAI teachers have never received special training on how to teach the environment from a religious perspective. Supporting materials are also rare. We have to look for it ourselves if we want to know more."* This indicates a gap between teachers' awareness and the availability of professional support to translate that awareness into effective practice.

We also noticed a lack of support from the school or the wider education ecosystem. Par-4, although pro-environment, felt there were limitations. *"If you want to do a big activity involving the environment, it needs funds, it needs time. Not to mention that sometimes there are people who think, 'This is a religious lesson, why are you taking care of waste?' Such perceptions sometimes make us feel reluctant too."* This suggests that ecopedagogy may not have been fully recognized as a priority on the school agenda or even among fellow teachers and parents. As a result, PAI teachers' initiatives are often still individual and not yet integrated into a systematic school program. Despite efforts, there is still a long way to go towards equitable and structured ecopedagogy in PAI.

Attitudes towards Interfaith and Interdisciplinary Approaches

In general, teachers' responses to interfaith dialogue and collaborative approaches show an interesting spectrum, from warm acceptance to some hesitation. Par-7, for example, welcomed the idea of interfaith with enthusiasm. *"Oh, if it's about that, I totally agree! This*

environmental problem is not just a Muslim problem, but a problem of all of us, humans on this earth. If other religions have equally good teachings about the environment, why don't we study them or work together? In fact, that's good, we can strengthen each other." This view reflects a mature understanding of the urgency of issues that transcend religious barriers, as well as optimism about the potential for synergy.

Par-2 agrees, but with a caveat. *"If it's just learning or collaboration in protecting the environment, for example, cleaning the river together, that's no problem. Religion teaches universal kindness. But if it has entered the realm of faith, that's different. There must be a limit."* This response shows caution, a reasonable concern in the context of interfaith dialogue, but still opens the door for practical collaboration.

Regarding cross-disciplinary approaches, teachers showed greater openness, perhaps because it felt more 'practical' and directly relevant to teaching and learning. Par-6 highlighted the benefits of collaboration with other subjects: *"I think it is very important that PAI lessons can be combined with science or social studies. For example, when discussing the verse about the creation of the universe, the science teacher can explain how the process is scientific. So the children know, oh, this is the connection between religion and science. It makes more sense."* This shows a desire to make PAI more contextual and relevant to students' general knowledge. Par-3 also added, *"If possible, PAI teachers should not only be in class. Take the children outside, look directly at the environmental conditions, and then relate them to the Qur'anic verses. Maybe we can collaborate with Scout or Sports teachers for outdoor activities. It will be more memorable."* This implies that teachers see great potential in applying a cross-disciplinary approach for field activities and more experiential learning.

Regarding openness to the enrichment of the PAI curriculum, the majority of teachers implicitly or explicitly expressed the need for adaptation. They realize that the current curriculum may not be fully adequate to address the challenges of ecocracy. Par-5 argued, *"There should be special material on environmental fiqh or environmental ethics in Islam in the PAI curriculum. So that we teachers also have clear guidelines. Right now, we have to take our own initiative."* This statement clearly indicates a desire for structural support in curriculum enrichment.

It cannot be ignored that there is also a sense of caution that emerges from some teachers regarding curriculum changes that are too drastic. Par-4 had voiced, *"Just don't let too much new material make students dizzy. It still has to be proportional. The core of PAI is still morals, worship, and faith."* This shows a realistic concern about students' learning load and the essence of PAI itself. However, in general, there was consensus that curriculum enrichment, especially those that integrate environmental issues with a collaborative approach, is positive and necessary. They see it as a way to make PAI more adaptive and relevant to contemporary issues.

The "Interplanetary" Imagination: Is it Possible in PAI?

This is the most challenging and interesting part of our exploration, as it pushes the boundaries of conventional thinking in PAI. After discussing more "down-to-earth" matters such as teaching practices and collaboration, we now turn to a more abstract idea: the "interplanetary" imagination.³⁵ The question is simple, yet provocative: Is this idea possible

³⁵ Bauman.

to integrate into PAI? In this speculative analysis, we try to find traces of cosmic ecological awareness in teachers' narratives.³⁶ Frankly speaking, none of the teachers explicitly used the terms “interplanetary” or “cosmoetic” in their interviews. This is natural, given that these terms are our conceptual constructs. However, we did find some cues, flashes of thought that point to an awareness of scales larger than just Earth.

For example, Par-1, when talking about the greatness of God, said, *“God is the Greatest Creator, not just creating us, but the heavens and the earth, the stars. If we look at the stars at night, we feel so small. So, taking care of the earth is part of appreciating all of God's vast creations.”* Although it doesn't directly mention “interplanetary,” this phrase contains the essence of cosmic consciousness—that our existence on earth is connected to the larger scale of the universe, and a sense of responsibility arises from an awareness of the infinite power of creation.³⁷ Par-8 also touches on Qur'anic verses about the creation of the heavens and the earth, the circulation of the sun and the moon. *“These verses are not just stories. They show the orderliness of the universe. If the universe is so orderly, why is our Earth so chaotic because of human actions? We should learn from the orderliness of His creation.”* This statement, we believe, implies an ethic drawn from observing the cosmic order. It is not just about taking care of the earth because “it is forbidden to destroy,” but because the earth is part of a larger system, a manifestation of divine order that must be respected.³⁸

Theoretically, this study contributes to Islamic Education Science by expanding the concept of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) into a form of spiritual-cosmological ecopedagogy. It introduces the triadic framework of interfaith, interdisciplinary, and interplanetary approaches as theoretical openings for rethinking Islamic pedagogy in the age of ecological crisis. Practically, the findings provide empirical insights that can guide the development of PAI curricula explicitly incorporating ecological ethics, the design of teacher training modules on Islamic ecopedagogy, and policy formulation for sustainable Islamic education. Indeed, this narrative is still a seed of thought, not yet a mature concept. However, this is precisely what opens the door for conceptual discussions towards opening new theological insights. This “interplanetary” idea challenges us to see PAI not only as terrestrial moral education, but as a place to foster theological awareness that transcends the borders of the earth. What are the implications? If PAI can consciously integrate the idea of the vast universe as “signs of God's power,” then it can foster a deep sense of awe and humility in students. These feelings, according to some environmental thinkers, are key drivers of a genuine conservation ethic. Students will not only be encouraged to take care of the environment because of religious injunctions, but also because they see themselves as a small part of a grand cosmic dance, where every element has a place and value.

This means PAI can encourage reflection on the role of humans in the wider universe, not only as *caliphs* on earth, but also as responsible entities in the larger cosmic order. Questions such as: “How should we interact with the possibility of extraterrestrial life, should it ever be discovered?” or “How is our ethics in space exploration in line with Islamic

³⁶ Tobin and Olson, “An Eastern Orthodox Theological Basis for Interplanetary Environmental Ethics.”

³⁷ Hart, “Cosmic Commons: Contact and Community.”

³⁸ Afandi et al., “Islamic Eco-Theology in Practice: Revitalizing Environmental Stewardship and Tawhidic Principles in Agricultural Community.”

principles?” may sound far-fetched, but they can be discussion-starters that stimulate critical thinking and visionary ethics. Of course, it requires courage on the part of curriculum developers and teachers to step into unexplored territory, but the potential for creating a generation of Muslims who have an ecological awareness that is not only global but also cosmic is enormous. It is an exciting frontier that deserves our continued reflection.

CONCLUSION

Our main findings show that PAI teachers have a good awareness of the global environmental crisis, and most of them theologically and ethically relate it to Islamic teachings. However, the practice of ecopedagogy in Islamic Education classrooms still tends to be incidental and personalized, with significant barriers in the form of curriculum limitations, lack of training, and lack of systematic support from the institution. Interestingly, teachers show a high degree of openness to interfaith and interdisciplinary approaches to enriching the PAI curriculum, which is seen as a way to make PAI more relevant. Furthermore, although the notion of “interplanetary” is still unfamiliar, there are seeds of cosmic awareness in their narratives that could be a starting point for the opening of new theological insights.

This finding has significant implications for the development of the PAI curriculum in the future. It is time for PAI to not only focus on ritual and interpersonal moral aspects, but also explicitly integrate ethics and ecological responsibility as the main pillars. The PAI curriculum needs to be enriched with materials that explicitly discuss the concepts of *tawhid*, *kehalifah*, *mizân*, and *ihśân* in the context of the environmental crisis, and provide space for real ecological practices. Based on these findings and implications, we have several policy recommendations and further research. For policy, the government and educational institutions need to formulate PAI curriculum guidelines that are more explicit about ecopedagogy, accompanied by the development of comprehensive training modules for PAI teachers in this field. For further research, it would be interesting to further explore the effectiveness of integrated PAI ecopedagogy models, or how cosmic awareness, what we call “interplanetary,” can be measured and developed pedagogically.

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