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REINTERPRETING THE CONCEPT OF *KHALĪFAH FĪ AL-ARḌ* THROUGH THE LENS OF ECOTHEOLOGY: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The global environmental crisis reveals that its root causes lie in human existence's ethical and spiritual dimensions, particularly greed and exploitation. In this context, the Islamic concept of Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ holds significant potential for shaping human ethics and behavior toward the environment. However, traditional interpretations often emphasize domination and utilitarianism, necessitating a critical reassessment of current ecological challenges. This philosophical study explores a reinterpretation of Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ through the lens of ecotheology, integrating religious values with environmental principles. Employing qualitative methods, this research utilizes literature review and textual analysis within hermeneutics, critical analysis, and comparative inquiry frameworks. The main findings indicate a paradigm shift from anthropocentric domination toward ecocentric responsibility, emphasizing preserving natural balance and ecological justice across species and generations. This reinterpretation also fosters environmental spirituality through understanding nature as ayatullah (signs of God's greatness) and motivates humans to act as agents of ecological transformation. The practical implications for contemporary Islamic Education (PAI) include the integration of Islamic environmental ethics into the curriculum, the adoption of innovative pedagogies such as project-based learning, enhancing PAI teachers' competencies, and developing ecotheology-based learning resources. This study is significant for cultivating an ecologically conscious and responsible Muslim generation.

Keywords: *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ, Ecotheology, Islamic Environmental Ethics, Anthropocentrism, Islamic Education*

Abstrak:

Krisis lingkungan global menunjukkan bahwa masalahnya berakar pada dimensi etis dan spiritual manusia, khususnya keserakahan dan eksploitasi. Dalam konteks ini, konsep *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* dalam Islam memiliki potensi besar untuk membentuk etika dan perilaku manusia terhadap lingkungan. Namun, pemahaman tradisional seringkali berfokus pada dominasi dan pemanfaatan semata, sehingga perlu ditinjau ulang di tengah tantangan ekologis kontemporer. Studi filosofis ini menganalisis reinterpretasi konsep *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* melalui lensa ekoteologi, yang menggabungkan nilai keagamaan dengan prinsip lingkungan hidup. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan studi pustaka dan analisis teks dengan kerangka hermeneutika, analisis kritis, dan komparatif. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa reinterpretasi menggeser paradigma dari dominasi antroposentris menuju tanggung jawab ekosentris, menekankan pemeliharaan keseimbangan alam dan keadilan ekologis antarspesies serta antargenerasi. Reinterpretasi ini juga mendorong spiritualitas lingkungan melalui pemahaman alam sebagai *ayatullah* (tanda-tanda kebesaran Tuhan) dan memotivasi manusia menjadi agen transformasi ekologis. Implikasi praktisnya bagi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) kontemporer meliputi integrasi etika lingkungan Islam dalam kurikulum, adopsi pedagogi inovatif seperti pembelajaran berbasis proyek,

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peningkatan kompetensi guru PAI, dan pengembangan sumber belajar berbasis ekoteologi. Kajian ini signifikan untuk membentuk generasi Muslim yang berkesadaran dan bertanggung jawab secara ekologis.

Kata Kunci: Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ, Ekoteologi, Etika Lingkungan Islam, Antroposentrisme, Pendidikan Agama Islam

INTRODUCTION

Today's world faces an unprecedented environmental crisis, an existential threat endangering the continuity of life on Earth. Phenomena such as the desiccation of major rivers, global warming, deforestation, water pollution, and escalating air pollution are clear indicators of severe ecosystem degradation. This condition worsens alarmingly despite remarkable technological advancements and sophisticated economic strategies. The rising demand for higher living standards exacerbates the exploitation of natural resources, contributing to disproportionate environmental damage (Hugo & Hugo, 2025).

According to several perspectives, the root cause of this crisis is not merely a failure of technology or economics but, rather lies in the fundamental nature of humankind. Human greed and interpersonal competition drive the rapid extraction of natural resources, ultimately undermining the ecological foundations of the planet. This indicates that effective solutions cannot rely solely on technical fixes or economic regulations but, must engage human behavior's deeper ethical and spiritual dimensions. A worldview that prioritizes short-term financial gain and human desire above all else has led to extensive environmental degradation (Hugo & Hugo, 2025).

Religion is critical in shaping worldviews and individual behaviors in this urgent context. As a comprehensive guide to life, religion holds significant potential in offering solutions and perspectives on global issues, including the climate crisis. Religious teachings often advocate for the responsible use of resources and instill values of compassion and respect for all living beings (lpminstitute.com, 2023). If core principles, such as responsible environmental stewardship, care for others, and warnings against greed and material excess, are actively internalized, many of today's environmental crises might have been avoided (Hugo & Hugo, 2025). Islam, as the majority religion in Indonesia and across the globe, holds a unique and significant position in mobilizing collective awareness and action for environmental preservation (Mursalin, Mu'ti, & Amirrachman, 2024).

In Islamic teachings, humans are entrusted with a central role as *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ*, or vicegerents of God on Earth. This concept underscores the human responsibility to protect and sustain the environment. In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30), Allah SWT declares His intention to appoint humankind as *Khalīfah* on Earth, a trust that encompasses the protection of all living beings and natural resources (Atikawati, Gunawan, & Sunarto, 2019). As *Khalīfah*, humans are endowed with intellect and capability to manage and utilize the Earth and its contents optimally and by Sharia, with the ultimate aim of prospering the planet (Mubarak, Eriza, & Lubis, 2024).

Historically, traditional understandings of *Khalīfah fī al-Ard* have often leaned toward domination or the extensive use of natural resources. Some early interpretations promoted an anthropocentric view, placing humans as the pinnacle of creation and thereby justifying environmental exploitation for economic gain and human needs. This perspective, which centers moral consideration around human beings and views nature through a utilitarian lens, can lead to excessive exploitation and ecological degradation. Prioritizing human desires may result in the depletion of natural resources and the destruction of habitats (Bahr, 2024).

However, deeper analysis of Islamic primary sources, such as the Qur'an and Hadith, reveals that the concept of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* possesses strong foundations for an ecocentric perspective, emphasizing the intrinsic value of nature, *Mīzān* (balance), *Amānah* (trust), and *ʿAdl* (justice) (Atikawati et al., 2019). Islam explicitly rejects all forms of anthropocentrism by affirming the transcendence of God, who is entirely distinct from His creation. Humans, like all other creatures, are part of God's creation, inherently interconnected with every entity in the universe (Rizvi, 2010). This suggests that the problem is not in the *Khalīfah* concept itself, but in its incomplete interpretation or misapplication. Reinterpretation is therefore necessary to restore the ecocentric essence embedded in the concept of *Khalīfah*, which more anthropocentric understandings may have distorted.

Although the concept of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* has long been part of Islamic teaching, its implementation in addressing the global ecological crisis remains suboptimal. A significant gap exists between the ideal teachings on human responsibility toward nature and the continuing reality of environmental destruction (Mursalin et al., 2024). Much of this damage is a direct result of human behavior that contradicts Islamic principles of environmental preservation and balance (Husna & Sarjan, 2024).

Here, ecotheology is introduced as a relevant framework to revisit and enrich the understanding of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ*. Ecotheology is defined as an approach that integrates religious values with environmental principles, affirming the human role as guardians of nature (Seci Vella & Ahmad Rizal, 2024). This discipline explores the interrelationship between religion and nature, particularly in addressing environmental issues, and seeks to uncover theological foundations for a proper relationship between God, humanity, and the cosmos. Ecotheology emerges as a response to the spiritual void in environmental discourse, rejecting the notion that environmental exploitation is an inevitable consequence of development, and instead promotes a paradigm where actual development aligns with divine values and sustainability (suntara.or.id, 2025).

It is important to note that the Qur'an places significant emphasis on the welfare of the Earth. The term *Al-Ard* (the Earth) appears over 450 times in the Qur'an, far more frequently than words related to ritual worship such as *salat* or *zakat* (lpminstitute.com, 2023). This frequency quantitatively demonstrates that environmental concern is not a peripheral issue in Islam, but an integral part of its core teachings. It confirms that Islam harbors a deep and inherent concern for

ecological well-being, providing a strong theological basis for ecotheological approaches in reinterpreting the *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* concept.

In response to the identified gaps and urgency, this philosophical study explicitly aims to critically analyze how the meaning of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* can be enriched through an ecotheological perspective, while also exploring its practical implications for contemporary Islamic Education (PAI). The reinterpretation of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* through the lens of ecotheology carries multidimensional significance, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study contributes to filling the gap in the literature that has yet to systematically integrate contemporary environmental ethics, such as those developed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, with Islamic environmental principles (Anggara & Muttaqin, 2024). Many previous studies have tended to separate ethical discussions from practical application in sustainability contexts, often neglecting how such theories can be translated into concrete actions. This research seeks to bridge that divide by offering new insights into the practical application of environmental ethics rooted in Islamic teachings.

Practically, this reinterpretation holds significant implications in the educational sphere, particularly in Islamic Education (PAI). PAI plays a vital role in shaping students' character and environmental worldview. Integrating a reinterpreted understanding of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* into the PAI curriculum is expected to foster strong environmental awareness and ethics among future generations. Education based on ecotheological principles can prepare students to become agents of change who are mindful and responsible toward Earth's ecosystems, translating religious values into real action for planetary sustainability (Nabila & Abrianto, 2025). This aligns with global efforts to address the environmental crisis and build a more sustainable future.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative philosophical approach, chosen for its depth in seeking the essence of phenomena (Qomari, Basit, & Suparjo, 2025), including the relationship between religion and the environment, beyond surface-level descriptions. As a qualitative inquiry, this research explores meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, and symbols, utilizing narrative and descriptive analysis rather than numerical data. This approach aligns with the objective of philosophical research, which is to understand the inner or esoteric dimensions of religious texts.

Data were collected through a comprehensive literature review, gathering and analyzing various sources. These sources include primary religious texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith, which serve as the foundation for Islamic environmental ethics, philosophical and theological works in Islam concerning *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* and environmental ethics, ecotheological literature relevant to the Islamic context, as well as academic journals and scholarly books on Islamic Education (PAI) and environmental education.

The collected data were analyzed using three main frameworks. Hermeneutics was applied to interpret religious texts in depth, uncovering

deeper meanings relevant to contemporary contexts (Zuchdi & Afifah, 2021). Critical analysis was used to evaluate traditional anthropocentric understandings of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* , identify the gap between ideal teachings and practical implementation, and examine theories of environmental ethics (Umrati & Wijaya, 2020). Lastly, comparative analysis was employed to contrast traditional interpretations of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* with the proposed ecotheological perspective, highlighting the paradigm shift from domination to ecocentric responsibility, and comparing various interpretations offered by scholars and Islamic thinkers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reinterpreting the Concept of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* Through the Lens of Ecotheology

The reinterpretation of the *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* concept through the ecotheology lens necessitates a fundamental paradigm shift from an anthropocentric worldview toward ecocentric responsibility. The anthropocentric perspective positions humans at the center of the universe, where the value of nature is measured solely by its utility to human beings, thereby often legitimizing unchecked exploitation. Nature is thus reduced to a mere object of economic development and wealth accumulation, with little regard for its long-term ecological consequences. In contrast, the ecocentric perspective, aligned with the reinterpretation of *Khalīfah*, recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and ecosystems, emphasizing the interdependence between humans and nature (Nome, Tuan, & Lawalata, 2023). Within this framework, humans are understood not as sovereign rulers over nature, but as integral participants within a broader ecological system.

A central emphasis in this reinterpretation is preserving natural balance, or *Mīzān*. In Islamic theology, *Mīzān* refers to the balance and perfect proportion inherent in the divine creation of the universe by Allah SWT (Ashtankar, 2016). The Qur'an explicitly refers to *Mīzān* on multiple occasions, such as in Surah Ar-Rahman (55:7–9), where it is stated that the heavens were raised and balance was established so that humans would not transgress that balance (Azzahra & Masyithoh, 2024). This underscores that maintaining ecological equilibrium is a divine mandate, entrusted to humankind as a moral and spiritual duty. Environmental degradation, in this context, constitutes a violation of God's creation and a betrayal of the divine trust bestowed upon humanity.

From an ecotheological perspective, the human-nature relationship is characterized by partnership rather than domination. Allah has entrusted humans (Amānah) to protect and care for the environment. This trust entails ethical and moral obligations to utilize natural resources wisely and sustainably. Islam firmly prohibits actions that lead to environmental destruction (*fasad*) and wastefulness (*israf*) (Ali & Agushi, 2024). Qur'anic verses such as Al-A'raf (7:56) and Al-Baqarah (2:205) explicitly prohibit causing corruption on Earth after God set it in order, affirming that environmental harm is a serious transgression.

The principle of *Tawhid* (the oneness of God) is the fundamental

theological basis for Islamic environmental ethics. *Tawhid* implies that all creation manifests God's unity and power; thus, everything in the universe is interconnected and possesses inherent sanctity due to its origin in the Creator. As part of this creation, humans maintain an intrinsic relationship with every other entity in the cosmos (Zuhdi, Bilhaq, & Putri, 2024). Consequently, the role of humans as *Khalīfah* arises directly from the recognition of *Tawhid*. If Allah is the sole Creator and all creation reflects His unity, then to harm creation is, in effect, to violate the sanctity of the Creator Himself. This forms a deep causal relationship between theology and ethics, wherein understanding *Tawhid* inherently demands ecological responsibility.

Table 1: A Comparative Framework of the Concept of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* (Traditional vs. Ecotheological Perspectives)

Aspect	Traditional Understanding (Anthropocentric)	Ecotheological Understanding (Ecocentric)
Human Role	Domination over and unlimited exploitation of natural resources; humans as absolute rulers.	Guardians, stewards, and responsible partners in maintaining ecological balance; humans are integral components of the ecosystem.
Value of Nature	Instrumental: nature is valued solely for its utility to humans (resources, recreation, aesthetics).	Intrinsic/Sacred: nature possesses inherent value as a sign (*āyātullāh*) of God's greatness, deserving of reverence regardless of human interest.
Moral Responsibility	Limited to human welfare, often neglecting the impact on other species or ecosystems.	Extended to all creation, encompassing interspecies, intergenerational justice, and biodiversity preservation.
Purpose of Interaction	Economic gain and development without regard for environmental carrying capacity leads to degradation.	Ecological balance, sustainability, and harmony between humans and nature are acts of worship and

		fulfillment of divine trust.
Core Principles	Power, exploitation, and unrestrained fulfillment of human desires.	*Mīzān* (balance), *Amānah* (trusteeship), *ʿAdl* (justice), *Iḥsān* (benevolence), and *Raḥmah* (compassion).

The concept of justice (*ʿAdl*) in Islam is expanded through the lens of ecotheology to encompass ecological justice, which is not limited to interpersonal relations but extends to interspecies and intergenerational justice. This notion demands fair treatment and the protection of the rights of all living beings, recognizing that every creation of God has the right to exist and thrive on Earth (Ali & Agushi, 2024). To harm nature is to violate the rights of God's creations and betray the trust (*amānah*) bestowed upon humankind.

Ecological justice in Islam is also deeply intertwined with the socio-economic implications of environmental degradation, particularly its impact on vulnerable communities. Environmental degradation, such as pollution and resource scarcity, disproportionately affects the poor and marginalized, giving rise to what is referred to as environmental injustice (Al-Jayyousi, 2023). For instance, communities living near waste disposal sites or in areas severely affected by climate change often contribute the least to these problems yet bear the heaviest burdens.

From an Islamic perspective, ecological justice cannot be separated from social and economic justice. The absence of a "social compass" within society can lead to ecological degradation (*fasād*) and human and social alienation. Islam emphasizes equitable distribution of resources, public participation (*shūrā*), and a profound concern for future generations as the foundations of sustainable development. Concepts such as *maṣlaḥah* (public good), *iḥsān* (excellence in doing good), and *waqf* (charitable endowment) may serve as instruments for achieving ecological justice and socio-economic sustainability (Al-Jayyousi, 2023). For example, a *waqf* can be an enduring financial mechanism to support environmental conservation and sustainable development initiatives. This illustrates that addressing environmental issues in Islam inherently involves tackling poverty, inequality, and ensuring the just distribution of resources, thus offering a holistic framework of justice.

Table 2: Islamic Environmental Ethical Principles and Their Relevance to Ecotheology

Islamic Principle	Definition	Ecotheological Relevance	Supporting Verses/Hadiths
Tawhid	The oneness of	Cultivates	QS. Al-Baqarah

	God; all creation is a manifestation of His greatness and is interconnected within a divine unity.	awareness of the sacredness of nature and the interdependence of all beings within a divine whole, rejecting anthropocentrism.	(2:164), QS. Al-An'am (6:38), QS. Ar-Rum (30:41)
Mīzān	Balance and perfect proportion in the creation of the universe by God.	Emphasizes the necessity of maintaining the ecological balance ordained by God and avoiding disruptions that threaten the harmony of life.	QS. Ar-Rahman (55:7–9), QS. Al-Hijr (15:19–20), QS. Al-Qamar (54:49)
Amānah	Humans are trustees and vicegerents of God on Earth, entrusted with managing and caring for the environment.	Encourages responsible stewardship, wise use of resources, and refraining from environmental degradation.	QS. Al-Baqarah (2:30), QS. Al-Ahzab (33:72)
ʿAdl	Justice; ensuring fair treatment and protection of the rights of all living beings, including interspecies and intergenerational justice.	Expands the concept of justice to include the environment, highlighting the impacts of environmental destruction on vulnerable communities and future generations.	QS. Al-A'raf (7:31), QS. An-Nahl (16:90), QS. Al-An'am (6:152)
Iḥsān	Excellence and perfection in all actions, including	Promotes not only the avoidance of harm but also	QS. Al-Baqarah (2:195), Hadith from Bukhari

	interactions with nature.	active efforts in restoration, maintenance, and conservation of the environment as an act of worship.	(on planting trees
Rahmah	Compassion and mercy are divine attributes of God extended to all of creation.	Fosters empathy and compassion for all life forms, nurturing respect and care for animals, plants, and ecosystems.	QS. Al-Anbiya (21:107), QS. Al-An'am (6:38)

The reinterpretation of the *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* concept profoundly engages the dimension of environmental spirituality. In Islamic thought, the universe is not a lifeless entity nor merely a repository of resources, but rather *ayatullah*, divine signs that manifest God's greatness and sovereignty throughout creation. More than 750 verses in the Qur'an reference nature, portraying it as a divine gift that sustains the lives of humans and other organisms. Observing and reflecting upon the beauty and order of nature fosters awareness of the Creator's presence and majesty.

The development of environmental spirituality encourages practices aligned with nature, such as *tafakkur* (contemplation) and *tadabbur* (deep reflection). *Tafakkur* involves cognitive, emotional, perceptual, imaginative, and intellectual engagement that influences moral development toward virtue. Through *tafakkur*, individuals recognize God's grandeur as manifested in the natural world, cultivating exemplary moral character (*akhlaq*). *Tadabbur*, a deeper form of reflection, allows for a more profound understanding of the meanings and wisdom embedded within God's creation. These practices not only reinforce an individual's spiritual connection with the Divine but also nurture a sense of reverence and responsibility toward the environment (Akhir & Sabjan, 2015).

The Islamic concept of the sacredness of nature stems from the premise that nature is a sacred sign and a trust from God. Ashtankar notes that the earth is presented in Islamic sources as a mother to human beings, since humans were created from it and will return to it. Humans are placed on Earth to care for it and to use its resources without abuse or waste, in keeping with the trust they have been given (Ashtankar, 2016). Recognizing nature as both an object of worship and a manifestation of *Tawhid* (the oneness of God) motivates Muslims to regard environmental preservation not merely as a secular obligation but as an act of devotion and obedience to Allah (Hashmi, 2024). Islamic spirituality, in its holistic form, satisfies humans' physical and spiritual needs, guiding

individuals toward the highest ideals and virtues, including in their interaction with the natural world (yaqeeninstitute.org, n.d.).

This reinterpretation also emphasizes the active role of individuals and communities in addressing environmental crises, moving beyond passive acknowledgment to meaningful ecological action. As God's vicegerents (*Khalīfah)* on Earth, humans are responsible for managing and caring for the environment wisely. This duty involves refraining from environmental harm and actively attempting to restore and protect the natural world. The role of *Khalīfah* as ecological agents of change includes adopting sustainable lifestyles and advocating for environmental justice. Sustainable living entails reducing single-use plastic, recycling, minimizing waste, conserving water and energy, and engaging in tree planting initiatives (Khoir & Rusik, 2024). Though seemingly small, these actions serve as tangible expressions of the moral and spiritual duties of the *Khalīfah*.

Both locally and globally, Muslim communities possess significant potential to serve as pioneers in environmental movements. In Indonesia, for instance, various religious and civil society actors have initiated notable efforts in climate preservation (lpminstitute.com, 2023). Utilizing charitable funds such as *infak* and *sadaqah* to support sustainable environmental projects presents a practical strategy with theological grounding. These initiatives affirm that environmental concern is an integral part of Islamic faith and the human mandate as God's stewards on Earth, urging both practical action and theological reflection to confront the global ecological crisis (Anggara & Muttaqin, 2024).

Implications of Reinterpreting *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* for Contemporary Islamic Education (PAI)

The reinterpretation of the *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* concept through an ecotheological lens carries transformative implications for contemporary Islamic Education. As a fundamental pillar in shaping the character and morality of future generations, PAI can serve as a vanguard in cultivating strong environmental awareness and ethics. This study suggests that PAI can operationalize the reinterpretation of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* through several concrete strategies, as outlined below:

A. Integration into the PAI Curriculum: Islamic Environmental Ethics and Quranic Verses on Nature

Integrating Islamic environmental ethics into the PAI curriculum is crucial to ensure that students understand the importance of environmental stewardship within Islamic teachings. The curriculum must include in-depth discussions on Islamic ecological principles, such as *tawhid*, *Amānah* , *Mīzān*, *ʿAdl*, *Iḥsān*, and *rahmah* (Hashmi, 2024). It should also incorporate Qur'anic verses and hadiths explicitly related to the environment, such as QS. Al-Baqarah (2:30), QS. Ar-Rum (30:41), QS. Al-A'raf (7:56), and the hadith regarding planting trees as charity (Saifudin, 2023).

This integration must not remain purely theoretical but should facilitate the practical application of Islamic values in students' daily lives. A dynamic

curriculum transcending rote learning is needed to support students' intellectual, spiritual, and social development. For example, introducing environment-themed project-based learning (PBL) can deepen students' understanding and engagement. However, challenges such as rigid curricular frameworks and limited resources must be addressed through adaptive policy reforms and adequate capacity building (Khoir & Rusik, 2024).

B. Innovative Pedagogical Approaches: Project-Based Learning and Case Study Methods

To foster genuine ecological awareness and behavior, PAI must adopt innovative pedagogical approaches. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is effective when centered on environmental themes. Through PBL, students engage actively in learning by undertaking projects that connect Islamic teachings with environmental stewardship, thereby developing both conceptual understanding and real-world skills (Rahmawati, Saputra, Yanto, & Istan, 2024). Examples of projects may include *Clean Friday* activities (*Jum'at Bersih*), school-based planting and gardening, or waste management programs. Such approaches promote critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and 21st-century skills.

In addition to PBL, real-life case studies involving environmental degradation and Islamic-based solutions can further enrich student learning. These case studies help students analyze environmental issues and formulate responses grounded in Islamic values, such as avoiding wastefulness and maintaining cleanliness. Field visits to ecotourism sites or environmentally conscious communities can also provide powerful experiential learning opportunities, shifting students' perspectives on the relationship between religion and the natural world. This pedagogical model yields short-term gains in student awareness and lays a foundation for long-term ecological sustainability (Habin Sagala, Orlando, Ahmad Syawaluddin, Syahputra Siregar, & Fitra Yana, 2024).

C. The Role of PAI Teachers as Agents of Change: Competency and Role Modeling

PAI teachers are pivotal as agents of change in embedding ecotheological environmental ethics. Enhancing their competency in environmental issues and ecotheology is essential. Teachers must be well-versed in environmental crises, Islamic environmental principles, and pedagogical strategies for integrating these into classroom instruction (Laksono, 2022). Such competencies include delivering content effectively, employing engaging methods, and encouraging critical and reflective thinking.

Beyond technical proficiency, PAI teachers must embody environmentally friendly lifestyles. Their example, maintaining cleanliness, conserving energy, and participating in environmental activities, can profoundly influence students' character formation and ecological concern (Ma'arif & Mawardi, 2024). Thus, Teachers serve as knowledge transmitters and role models who inspire students to translate Islamic values into tangible actions for environmental preservation.

D. Development of Ecotheology-Based Learning Resources: Modules, Media, and Supplementary Materials

Developing PAI learning resources that embed ecological values is critical to supporting curricular and pedagogical innovation. These resources may include textbooks, instructional modules, and multimedia content explicitly addressing Islamic environmental ethics. Educational materials should reflect the ecotheological framework found in the Qur'an and Hadith, covering the purpose of creation, the human role as khalifah, ethical use of natural resources, and prohibitions against environmental harm.

Additional materials such as documentaries, inspiring stories from Islamic history on environmental care, and ecotheology-based educational applications can enrich the learning experience. Ecology-oriented media, such as educational videos or outdoor learning using nature as a teaching medium, can make learning more interactive and meaningful. These resources should deepen students' ecological awareness and empower them to act responsibly. High-quality, contextually relevant resources are essential for PAI to effectively cultivate ecological consciousness and shape a generation committed to Earth stewardship (Laksono, 2022).

PAI can effectively nurture ecological awareness through these strategic approaches and shape a morally and theologically committed generation to environmental responsibility. This aligns with global efforts to address environmental crises and build a more sustainable future. PAI thus functions not merely as a vehicle for knowledge transmission, but as a catalyst for behavioral transformation and character formation centered on ecological ethics.

CONCLUSION

The escalating global environmental crisis demands a profound and holistic response that transcends mere technocratic solutions. This study has demonstrated that Islam, through its fundamental teaching of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* , holds significant potential to serve as a driving force in addressing ecological challenges. The reinterpretation of *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ* through an ecotheological lens shifts the paradigm from anthropocentric domination toward an ecocentric responsibility, positioning humans as stewards and partners of the ecosystem rather than absolute rulers. This paradigm shift is rooted in core Islamic principles such as *Tawhid*, which affirms the interconnectedness of all creation; *Mīzān*, which requires the maintenance of natural balance; *Amānah*, which mandates responsible stewardship; and *ʿAdl*, which extends justice across species and generations.

Ecotheology functions as a powerful bridge between Islamic spirituality and environmental action. By understanding nature as *ayatullah*, divine signs, and internalizing spiritual practices such as *tafakkur* and *tadabbur*, Muslims can cultivate a profound awareness of nature's sacredness and become motivated to act as agents of ecological transformation. This entails shifting from passive comprehension to active participation in sustainable living, environmental advocacy, and community-based initiatives.

The implications of this reinterpretation for contemporary Islamic Education (PAI) are substantial. PAI holds a strategic role in fostering

environmental consciousness and character among younger generations. Integrating Islamic environmental ethics into the PAI curriculum, adopting innovative pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning and case studies, enhancing the competence of PAI teachers as role models and agents of change, and developing ecotheology-based learning resources are concrete steps that can be taken. Through these efforts, PAI can cultivate a generation of Muslims who not only grasp religious teachings theoretically but also internalize environmental values and translate them into tangible actions for the sustainability of the Earth.

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