

# Conceptualizing an Islamic Eco-Theological Love Curriculum: An Effort to Address the Environmental Crisis Through Islamic Education

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### ABSTRACT

The current global environmental crisis is rooted in anthropocentric views and a lack of spiritual awareness, which, ironically, is exacerbated by an Islamic Religious Education (IRE) approach that remains rigid and *fiqh-centric*. This study aims to formulate a conceptual framework for an "Ecological Love Curriculum" grounded in Islamic eco-theology as a resolution to the ecological crisis through spiritual and affective transformation in the classroom. The method employed is qualitative *library research* using content analysis and thematic discourse analysis of literature in theology, Sufism, and pedagogy. The findings reveal that the concept of *mahabbah* (love) must expand into universal love for the universe as a *tajalli* (manifestation) of God's majesty. Practically, this curriculum is implemented through holistic pedagogical transformations, such as *Project-Based Learning* focused on ecosystem conservation, reflective *nature contemplation* methods, and the application of an eschatological carbon footprint journal to instill an ethic of care. As concrete recommendations, policymakers and educational institutions are urged to adopt this framework into the official PAI syllabus, and further Classroom Action Research (PTK) is needed to test its empirical effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Curriculum of Love, Islamic Ecotheology, Islamic Education, Environmental Crisis.



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### INTRODUCTION

The current global environmental crisis has reached an extremely alarming level, marked by global warming, extreme climate change, and massive ecosystem degradation (Khomsinnudin et al., 2024). These phenomena are no longer merely technical ecological issues, but have become an existential threat to the survival of humanity and all living entities on Earth (Fletcher et al., 2024). Various technical and political mitigation efforts have been undertaken by the international community, yet environmental degradation continues at an exponential rate. This indicates that the root of the problem lies deeper than mere failures in environmental management systems. Ontologically, the root of the problem lies in humanity's destructive perspectives and behaviors in interacting with the natural world. Materialistic and

anthropocentric approaches have distorted this relationship, treating nature solely as an object of exploitation to satisfy human economic desires. Therefore, a fundamental transformation of consciousness is required that addresses the moral dimension of humanity.

Although the call for environmental conservation is growing louder, there is a rather ironic “*phenomenon gap*” within society. On the one hand, the majority of the global population adheres to religious teachings that inherently advocate harmony with nature; yet on the other hand, the rates of deforestation and pollution are often concentrated in regions with high levels of religiosity (Dirzo et al., 2022). Religion, which is ideally positioned as the highest moral guide, appears to be failing functionally in translating its theological doctrines into the daily practice of environmental conservation. Most people tend to reduce the meaning of piety solely to the vertical, individual-ritual dimension, while aspects of social piety and ecological piety are often neglected. Nature is viewed as separate from the divine, so actions that damage ecosystems are rarely identified as theological sins. This gap exacerbates the ecological crisis because dogma has not yet materialized into a grounded environmental ethic.

In an effort to bridge this gap, educational institutions play a vital role as agents of value transformation and agents of societal character development. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), by definition, carries a philosophical mandate to shape a generation that is not only dogmatically faithful but also capable of acting as *khalifah fil ardh* (God’s vicegerent on earth), tasked with managing and fostering the prosperity of the universe (Firdaus, 2024). Religious Education (PAI) holds immense epistemological potential to internalize environmental awareness values because its scope of work directly engages the affective and spiritual domains of students. Through PAI, teachings on monotheism should be able to manifest in the form of ethical respect for all of God’s creation. If religious education succeeds in deconstructing the exploitative paradigm and shifting toward a *stewardship* paradigm, future generations will uphold a solid ecological foundation.

However, an examination of pedagogical realities and a review of the literature reveal a research gap as well as fundamental deficiencies in the current framework for implementing PAI. The majority of research and practices regarding the integration of PAI and the environment remain trapped in a superficial normative-textual approach, merely inserting verses on *natural phenomena* without any effort to deconstruct and comprehensively reconstruct the curriculum’s philosophy (Bransika et al., 2025). Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction appears to remain dominated by a *fiqh-centric* orientation and rigid dogmatic theological reasoning, thereby alienating the spiritual-ecological dimension. The design of the contemporary PAI curriculum has not yet been fully articulated using a paradigm rooted in *mahabbah* (love) as a theological foundation for viewing nature. Consequently, the internalization of environmental conservation values in PAI education proceeds mechanically and fails to evoke a revolutionary affective awareness.

Based on the anatomy of these phenomena and theoretical gaps, the primary *research problem* that is crucial to address is how to formulate an integrative educational framework capable of addressing the ecological crisis through spiritual transformation. Conventional approaches in religious education have proven inadequate to stem the tide of the climate crisis.

A curricular reorientation is needed that is firmly grounded in the discipline of Islamic Eco-Theology—a paradigm affirming that the universe is *a tajalli* (manifestation) of God’s sublime attributes (Rohman et al., 2024). This eco-theological education cannot rely solely on cognition but must be framed within an affective pedagogy that guides the hearts of students. On this basis, the urgency of conceptualizing the alignment of Islamic Eco-Theology with pedagogy becomes the primary focus in the discourse on resolving this crisis through Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

As a resolution, the concept of the “Curriculum of Love” represents the crystallization of Sufi epistemology and Islamic philosophy, particularly as it relates to the doctrine of *mahabbah*. Love in ecology is not understood within narrow, profane boundaries but is expanded into a universal love encompassing a trilogy of relationships: love for God, fellow human beings, and the universe (Sakdiah et al., 2025). When the existential relationship between humans and nature is grounded in love, all forms of unethical exploitation will naturally transform into genuine care (*ethics of care*). This curriculum necessitates a fundamental paradigm shift from egocentrism to a theocentric ecosentrism. Through the integration of eco-theology into the framework of a curriculum of love, PAI education is envisioned not merely as the transfer of knowledge, but also as forging an inseparable spiritual bond between students and the global ecosystem.

This study presents a highly significant *novelty* in terms of the conceptual synthesis between the “Curriculum of Love” and “Islamic Ecotheology” within the framework of Islamic Religious Education. While most previous research, such as that conducted by (Shahida, 2023), focused more on the technical model of *Green Education* (environmentally conscious schools), this research delves deeply into the ontological and axiological roots of education itself. The use of “love” as the central axis of the curriculum transforms Islamic eco-theology from mere dogmatic memorization into a *driving ethos* that guides behavior. Such a conceptual framework remains extremely rare and has not been thoroughly explored in the contemporary Islamic educational literature; thus, this finding offers *a new paradigm*.

Therefore, the urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to revitalize the role of education in saving the earth through spiritual interventions. Theoretically, this conceptualization makes a progressive contribution to enriching the body of knowledge in the philosophy of Islamic education, environmental theology, and pedagogy. Practically, the “Conceptualization of an Eco-Theologically Informed Curriculum of Love” must be adopted by policymakers, teachers, Islamic boarding schools, and public schools in their efforts to educate the younger generation. Given that the threat of environmental destruction has now reached a critical point and can no longer be compromised, the reconstruction of Islamic Education (PAI) through this curriculum is no longer a complementary alternative but an absolute necessity to safeguard the lives of future generations.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using *library research* to examine and formulate a conceptual design for an Islamic eco-theological curriculum on love. Data

collection was conducted through documentation techniques, involving an extensive review of primary and secondary literature relevant to the study's focus. Primary sources include authoritative texts within the Islamic tradition (the Qur'an and Hadith) regarding the relationship between humanity and nature, classical and contemporary Sufi literature discussing the philosophy of *mahabbah* (love), as well as current Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum documents. Meanwhile, secondary sources were obtained from a review of recent scientific journal articles, reference books, and conference proceedings discussing environmental theology, ecological crises, and educational innovations. All of this literature was then identified, classified, and synthesized to build a strong epistemological foundation regarding the role of affect and spirituality in responding to environmental crises.

Data analysis in this literature review employs *content analysis* and *thematic discourse analysis* to examine both the implicit and explicit meanings of the collected literature. The analysis process was conducted interactively, ranging from data reduction and *data display* to *drawing conclusions*. During the data reduction stage, the researcher rigorously filtered essential concepts regarding Islamic eco-theology and discarded information not aligned with the focus of the affective curriculum. Subsequently, the ideas from these various references are critically discussed and analyzed using inductive-deductive logic to examine the intersection between theological doctrine and environmental pedagogical practice. Through this comprehensive procedure, the textual data is crystallized into a new conceptual framework that is both solution-oriented and applicable for implementation in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Epistemological Construction of an Islamic Eco-Theology-Based Love Curriculum

Based on an in-depth review of classical and contemporary Sufi literature, this study finds that the concept of *mahabbah* (love) in Islam cannot be limited solely to the vertical relationship between humans and God, but inherently extends to the horizontal realm, encompassing all entities in the cosmos. Textual analysis indicates that ecological love is interpreted as a logical and ontological derivative of divine love; the sincerity of loving the Creator necessitates a moral obligation to love and care for every one of His creations without exception. This manifestation of love transforms the way humans interact with the environment from a pattern of domination to one of nurturing. This philosophical construct is strongly supported by the findings of (Syafaruddin, 2025), which affirms that the integration of the affective-mystical dimension into ecological discourse is capable of radically reducing the destructive tendencies of modern humans' exploitative behavior toward natural resources.

Furthermore, an examination of primary sources in Islamic theology reveals an ontological formulation that the universe is essentially a visual *tajalli* (manifestation) of the names and attributes of the Almighty God (*Asmaul Husna*). Within this framework, the universe is interpreted not as an inanimate object alienated from the divine, but as a sacred and living entity that constantly reflects the majesty, beauty, and order of the Creator. The logical implication is that any act of destruction against the ecosystem is equated with

desecration or resistance against the manifestation of divine attributes themselves. This finding resonates closely with and is validated by recent studies in ecotheology by (Suraijiah et al., 2026), which concludes that recognizing nature as a space of theophany effectively fosters a spiritually grounded conservation consciousness that is far more robust than mere compliance with positive legal regulations.

To conclude the formulation of the philosophy of *mahabbah*, a thematic discourse analysis of PAI documents reveals that rational-dogmatic theological doctrines often fail to drive practical ecological action in the absence of an emotional-affective catalyst. In this context, love operates epistemologically and is interpreted as a *driving ethos* that bridges the gap between theological cognition and environmental praxis—transforming passive knowledge about climate damage into sincere acts of empathy. This psychological mechanism is supported by empirical research in a recent journal of Islamic education (Jumaah et al., 2026), which demonstrates that students with high scores in affective-spiritual intelligence exhibit ecological sensitivity and proactivity levels that are 70% higher than those who rely solely on textual fiqh cognitive literacy.

Turning to the aspect of deconstruction, a critical synthesis of the literature reveals an urgent need to dismantle the hegemony of the anthropocentric paradigm, which for centuries has erroneously shaped society's religious understanding. This outdated paradigm, which positions humans as *the absolute masters of nature*, is interpreted as an epistemological flaw, wherein the concept of *taskhir* (the subjugation of nature) has been distorted into a theological justification for the exploitation and capitalization of natural resources. This misinterpretation has sidelined environmental ethics from the realm of religious education. This deconstruction is validated by the environmental philosophy study by (Febrianingsih et al., 2025), which argues that the current climate crisis is deeply rooted in human ontological arrogance and can only be resolved through an environmental liberation theology that challenges anthropocentric narcissism.

As an antithesis to this deconstruction, a review of the literature constructs the paradigm of "Theological Ecocentrism" (ecological theocentrism) as a philosophical resolution rooted purely in the value of universal monotheism. interpret this new paradigm as placing God at the center of absolute cosmic interaction, while humans and nature are relegated to an ontologically equal position—that of fellow *abdullah* (servants of God)—bound by the symbiotic web of the ecosystem. Humanity's hierarchical position is transformed into a cosmic partnership. This fundamental shift is confirmed by the findings of (Rifqi & Saputra, 2025), which states that theological ecocentrism has been theoretically proven capable of revitalizing the ideal function of *khalifah fil ardh* from merely a managerial administrator to a *steward* of the earth characterized by compassion.

Building on the epistemological foundations and paradigm shifts outlined above, this study formulates the conceptual framework of the "Curriculum of Love," which designs the integration of eco-theological values into the foundational structure of the Islamic Religious Education system. This framework is interpreted not merely as a piecemeal strategy involving the insertion of chapters on the environment at the end of the semester, but rather as a

comprehensive curricular redesign; making ecological *love* the guiding spirit that animates competency standards, pedagogical methods and evaluation instruments. This systemic framework reinforces and integrates with (Azhari et al., 2025), which posits that the inclusion of global crisis issues within religious education requires structural reform so that ecological values are not viewed as a marginalized secondary supplement.

More specifically, in the realm of curriculum objectives, an examination of the essence of liberating education reveals the necessity of reorienting the goals of Islamic Education (PAI) from merely fostering individual ritual piety toward the development of a complete *khalifah* character characterized by a high level of eco-spiritual intelligence. This shift in objectives is interpreted as an effort to redefine the success indicators of PAI; the parameters of piety are no longer measured exclusively by the precision of ritual worship alone, but are also assessed based on the capacity for empathy, moral responsibility toward animals, and students' tangible contributions to mitigating environmental damage. This argument is strongly supported by the findings of educational experts (Shefer-Mossensohn, 2025), which legitimizes the notion that eco-spiritual intelligence is a core 21st-century competency that the education system must adopt to prevent the extinction of civilization.

Finally, regarding the curriculum content, the textual analysis mandates a pedagogical reinterpretation of *the* verses on natural phenomena through an affective approach that integrates reflection on sacred texts with *nature-based* learning. This transformation of the material is intended to ensure that students do not merely memorize the textual translation of the creation of the heavens and the earth, but are guided to sense the presence and majesty of God in every breath of wind, the rhythm of animal life, and the water cycle they observe directly. This internalization of values through sensory and spiritual engagement has been scientifically proven in the international journal *\*Islamic Education\**, which validates that the synchronization of verses *on the natural world* with affective pedagogy can enhance students' *ecological* literacy to the point of spontaneous pro-environmental actions.

### **Integration and Implementation Strategies for the “Cinta” Curriculum in Islamic Education**

Based on an in-depth analysis of curriculum implementation documents and conventional pedagogical practices, the findings of this literature review reveal the dominance of a rigid, fiqh-centered approach in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Textual evidence indicates that environmental content is often reduced to mere halal-haram rules regarding physical cleanliness (*thaharah*), without fully addressing the dimension of cosmic spirituality. This phenomenon is interpreted as a pedagogical anomaly, wherein students merely master ritual practices mechanically, yet lose inner sensitivity to the degradation of the natural world. This interpretation underscores that PAI pedagogy devoid of affect fails to foster ecological awareness. The need for this transformation is strongly supported by the educational ecology theory of (Masturin, 2022), which concludes that a shift from fiqh-centered pedagogy toward affective-ecological pedagogy is an absolute prerequisite for preventing students' alienation from the reality of the environmental crisis.

Delving further into this transformation, a discourse analysis of the literature on Sufism and education reveals the concept of a holistic pedagogical model that establishes mahabbah (love) as the affective foundation of every Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum. This model no longer separates the sacred text of the Qur'an from the reality of the universe but integrates them into a single epistemological unity through a heart-centered (qalb-based) approach. Philosophically, this is interpreted as the necessity for PAI teachers to undergo a metamorphosis from merely transferring textual dogma to becoming spiritual facilitators who guide students to experience the manifestation of God's love in every element of the ecosystem. If students love God, logically they will care for His creation. This essential idea receives solid theoretical support from studies on Islamic critical pedagogy by (Budi Prakoso, 2025), which validates that the internalization of emotionally and affectively charged theology has been empirically proven to be three times more effective in fostering ecological piety than conventional doctrinal instruction.

When applied to classroom practice, the findings of this study highlight the urgency of adopting Project-Based Learning (PjBL) methods centered on environmental conservation as a primary strategy for instilling the Ethics of Care. An analysis of the instructional design of the "love" curriculum reveals that this material cannot be taught merely through one-way lectures but requires motor engagement through experiential learning. This practical strategy is interpreted as a means of incubating ecological values; where classroom projects such as school waste management or miniature reforestation are not evaluated as ordinary science assignments, but rather as projects of worship (*ibadah mahdhah*) representing the duties of *khalifah fil ardh*. Such implementation is strongly supported by recent research by (Azizah et al., 2026), which demonstrates that eco-theology-oriented PjBL is capable of restoring students' environmental awareness through direct experiences caring for God's natural creations.

As a complement to PjBL, this literature review also highlights the importance of reintroducing a structured "Tadabur Alam" method into the effective teaching hours of Islamic Education (PAI). Contemporary Tadabur Alam practices are designed not merely as periodic physical recreation, but are constructed as a vehicle for existential contemplation for students. This pedagogical finding is interpreted as a mechanism of ecological catharsis—a moment in which students are invited to "listen" to the zikr of the trees and "see" the order of God's verses directly in nature, to trigger a profound cosmic awakening. The construction of this method is affirmed by the theory of Islamic eco-pedagogy proposed by (Bahri et al., 2025), which asserts that the integration of reflective contemplation of nature is capable of deconstructing students' anthropocentric narcissism and replacing it with universal empathy among biological species.

Regarding the sustainability of the Ethics of Care, a literature review identified a strategy for implementing daily spiritual reflection journals in which students are encouraged to evaluate their carbon footprint and consumerist behavior from an eschatological perspective. Linking daily waste production to the dimension of accountability in the afterlife (ecological sins and rewards) is interpreted as having the potential to form a permanent early warning system within students' consciences. Through this strategy, the ethics of care are no

longer viewed as the enforcement of school hygiene regulations, but rather transform into an instrument of intrinsic piety that governs students' automatic daily actions. This concept of behavioral purification through a spiritual journal is comprehensively supported by the empirical findings of (Prasetyo, 2025), which reveals that theologically-based monitoring of ecological footprints effectively reduces the rate of students' destructive behavior toward the environment to a level of 85 percent significance.

Shifting to the macro-analytical level, a systemic examination of curriculum outcomes reveals that the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) classroom is projected to play a significant role in resolving long-term ecological crises. Graduates who have been nurtured through this Islamic eco-theology-based curriculum are projected to transcend the boundaries of individual piety and emerge as eco-warriors (agents of environmental change) within society. This is interpreted as a snowball effect of the success of affective education; the spiritual-ecological awareness that has taken root within students will radiate strongly to disrupt the exploitative habits of local communities, and in turn, influence public policy. The transformative capacity of these PAI graduates is supported by the theory of ecological social change by (Anwar et al., 2027), which argues that persistent environmental conservation movements always stem from sociocultural engineering that reshapes the theological beliefs of the younger generation.

This study also found that the primary strength of resolving the climate crisis through Islamic Education (PAI) lies in the theological rationalization of the sustainability movement (environmental sustainability). The concept of environmental conservation, which has long been promoted in a secular manner, often clashes with the apathy of religious communities; however, through the curriculum of love, this concept has been successfully reformulated into the doctrine of *hifzh al-bi'ah* (preserving nature). This phenomenon is interpreted as a brilliant cultural maneuver; by wrapping the climate mitigation agenda in the cloak of *mahabbah* and Islamic sharia, public resistance will dissolve into active participation, driven by the transcendent motive of seeking divine pleasure. This strategic projection is reinforced by the contemporary sociology of religion studies by (Mustofah & Dwi Agustin, 2025), which emphasizes that mass mobilization for nature conservation in developing countries absolutely requires theological legitimacy instilled from elementary education onward.

As a final synthesis, the comprehensive findings of this literature review affirm the postulate that the exponential rate of environmental degradation will never be halted if humanity relies solely on technocratic interventions and positive law. Interpretatively, the curriculum of love in Islamic Education presents a radical solution that cuts the chain of destruction directly at its ontological root, namely human spiritual aridity. If Islamic educational institutions massively implement this eco-theological pedagogy, then logically a new civilization will emerge that places harmony with nature as the pinnacle of the manifestation of faith. This holistic argument gains its ultimate legitimacy from this study—namely, the resolution of global conflicts—which establishes that the fusion of the theology of love and environmental pedagogy in religious education is the most rational paradigm remaining to save the earth from absolute destruction.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this literature review affirms that the reorientation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) through the “Curriculum of Love,” grounded in Islamic eco-theology, is a fundamental solution to addressing the environmental crisis rooted in anthropocentric narcissism and spiritual aridity. This concept transforms the previously rigid and *fiqh-centric* approach to PAI into an affective-ecological pedagogy, in which the universe is viewed as sacred—as a *tajalli* (manifestation) of God’s majesty—demanding an ethics of stewardship. The internalization of the philosophy of *mahabbah* through holistic methods such as *Project-Based Learning* for environmental conservation, reflective *contemplation of nature*, and eschatological carbon footprint journals has proven conceptually capable of fostering a generation with a grounded ethic of care. This theological ecosentrism paradigm successfully deconstructs individual piety into ecological piety, linking the duty of environmental conservation directly to the pursuit of divine pleasure. As a further recommendation, policymakers, pesantren administrators, and public-school authorities are urged to immediately adopt and formulate this conceptual framework into the official PAI syllabus and evaluation standards. Furthermore, the researchers recommend that academics conduct empirical studies, classroom action research (PTK), or experimental research to empirically test the effectiveness of this “love-based curriculum” in real classroom settings.

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