



Integration of Theology, Education, and Activism: Exploring Eco-Theological Discourse and Muhammadiyah's Environmental Engagement

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Abstract

Environmental degradation and climate change are urgent ethical and theological challenges prompting faith-based responses. In Islam, the principles of tauhid (oneness), khilafah (stewardship), and amanah (sacred trust) are reframed into an ecological ethic affirming environmental care as a religious duty. This study aims to explore how Muhammadiyah constructs its eco-theological discourse by analyzing peer-reviewed works from 2021 to 2024 through an integrative literature review and summary matrix. The analysis identifies three core dimensions: theology, education, and activism. Muhammadiyah expands al-Ma'un theology to include ecological justice, embeds environmental values in educational institutions, and promotes activism through legal advocacy, fatwas, and grassroots movements. These efforts position Muhammadiyah as an ethical force in environmental governance. Findings reveal a holistic, replicable model integrating theology, education, and civic action. The study also acknowledges limitations, including limited institutional resources and the absence of empirical evaluation of long-term impacts.

Keywords: Activism; Ecotheology; Environmental Education; Islamic Ecology; Muhammadiyah

A. Introduction

Environmental degradation and climate change constitute urgent ethical and theological challenges, prompting religious communities worldwide to develop faith-based responses to ecological crises. Scholars and practitioners have increasingly framed environmental stewardship as a moral obligation rooted in religious teachings ((Foltz et al., 2003); (Saniotis, 2012); (Haṭegan, 2021). Within Islamic discourse, classical concepts such as tauhid (Divine Oneness), khilafah (Earth stewardship), and amanah (sacred trust) have been reinterpreted to form the foundations of an emerging “Islamic ecology” paradigm (Wahdini, N., Kamsi, K., & Jubba, 2024). This paradigm positions environmental care as integral to Islamic belief and practice, emphasizing principles such as mizan (balance) and maslahah or istishlah (public welfare) in responding to ecological issues. These developments align with the broader intellectual trend of ecotheology, which mobilizes theological concepts to inform ethical responses and concrete actions on environmental issues.

In this context, Indonesia, as the world’s largest Muslim-majority country, offers a compelling case study. Major Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have historically prioritized community development, moral reform, and social services. However, until the last decade, environmental concerns remained peripheral to their institutional agendas (Amri, 2014; Heriadi, 2023). Issues such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change were largely absent from official religious discourse. In recent years, however, a growing “ecological consciousness” has emerged among Indonesian Islamic civil society actors, integrating religious values with global environmental concerns.

This transformation is particularly evident in Muhammadiyah, which evolving eco-theological discourse and praxis constitute the focus of this review. Founded in 1912 by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah is an Islamic modernist movement committed to education, health, and social welfare. Dahlan’ s legacy—especially the theology of al-Ma’un derived from Qur’an 107—advocates for a socially engaged interpretation of Islam that addresses the plight of the marginalized ((Foltz et al., 2003). Over the past century, Muhammadiyah has institutionalized this ethos through schools, clinics, hospitals, and philanthropic organizations, reflecting a tajdid (renewal) spirit and a persistent commitment to justice (Catanha, 2021; Hisyam et al., 2024; Indriana, R., Fauziah, A., 2023).

In recent years, this theological foundation has been extended to environmental issues. Muhammadiyah's leadership increasingly argues that ecological degradation exacerbates poverty and inequality, thereby reinforcing its social justice mandate. A major turning point occurred during the 47th Muhammadiyah Congress (2015), where the organization formally resolved to engage with global environmental challenges. This resolution acknowledged climate change and ecological destruction as pressing humanitarian issues, thus integrating environmental care into Muhammadiyah's institutional priorities alongside education, health, and economic empowerment.

Today, Muhammadiyah is actively articulating a progressive Islamic ecotheology, seeking to interpret Islamic teachings in ways that respond to contemporary ecological crises. This transformation goes beyond rhetoric and is operationalized through educational programs, organizational guidelines, and public activism. The present study critically reviews this ongoing transformation, focusing on how Muhammadiyah's eco-theological discourse is being enacted across three interconnected dimensions: (1) Theological foundations, including the reinterpretation of Islamic ethical principles related to ecology; (2) Educational practices, especially in schools, pesantren, and universities that embed ecological values; and (3) Activist engagement, ranging from legal advocacy and fatwas to grassroots environmental campaigns.

Recent eco-theological studies in 2025 have deepened the discourse on integrating faith and environmental responsibility within Islamic education and activism. The rise of ecotheology in Indonesia marks a transformative phase where faith-based movements like Muhammadiyah reinterpret Islamic values to address contemporary ecological crises (Manalu, 2025). Eco-theological education has also been implemented in Muhammadiyah's green schools, integrating Qur'anic principles of stewardship (*khilafah*) with sustainable environmental practices (Suhardin, 2025). Religious education plays a critical role in reorienting spirituality toward ecological ethics, linking theology and pedagogy as tools for moral-ecological reform (Sakdiah et al., 2025). Collectively, these recent studies substantiate the timeliness of this review (2021-2025), showing how Muhammadiyah's theological, educational, and activist frameworks continue to evolve toward a comprehensive Islamic model of environmental engagement.

By synthesizing literature on Muhammadiyah's environmental thought and practice, this study explores how the organization integrates Islamic theology with ecological ethics in both pedagogy and sociopolitical engagement. It also builds

upon and expands earlier research on Islamic environmentalism in Indonesia (Efendi et al., 2021; Freathy, 2018; Indriana, R., Fauziah, A., 2023; Naidoo, 2012; Ulum & Arifullah, 2024). This growing scholarly interest reflects the increasing centrality of ecotheology in contemporary Islamic thought. Integrative concepts such as tauhid, khalifah, and amanah are no longer confined to doctrinal exegesis but are increasingly applied to socioreligious praxis. Research has shown that the notion of khalifah serves as a critical ethical driver for Muhammadiyah members in promoting environmental awareness (Wijsen & Anshori, 2023). Religious narratives around climate change are also being used to frame faith-based responses to ecological disasters (Hidayat, 2023).

Notably, the Muhammadiyah Environmental Council (Majelis Lingkungan Hidup) plays a pivotal role in translating al-Ma'un theology into practical ecological programs (Efendi et al., 2021; Setiawan et al., 2022). In educational settings, Qur'anic learning in pesantren has been instrumental in cultivating conservation ethics grounded in faith (Karman et al., 2023) while local leaders such as Lora contribute significantly to ecological literacy (Hasan et al., 2023). Moreover, Islamic ecological principles have been integrated into national discourses on religious moderation (Rahman & Putra, 2023) and have even inspired forms of "ecological jihad" through interfaith coalitions such as Green-Faith Indonesia and Eco-Bhinneka (Institute, 2024). Muhammadiyah's approach to progressive da'wah also incorporates environmental concerns into interfaith and multicultural dialogues (Abdullah & Syarif, 2024), reinforcing the role of Islamic ecotheology as a relevant and dynamic force within Indonesia's religious landscape (Nugroho, 2024). Thus, Islamic ecotheology in the Indonesian context is not merely a theological abstraction but a socially embedded practice—positioning religion as a transformative agent in addressing the environmental crises of the twenty-first century.

Consistent with this view, ecological awareness in Islam underscores the role of humans as khalifah entrusted to maintain the balance of nature through education and civilizational social action (Imron et al., 2025). Humanistic values within Islamic education serve as the foundation for developing an ecological ethic oriented toward sustainability (Saekan, 2017), while the internalization of Islamic values through the hidden curriculum strengthens students' ecological character (Irzum, F., & Nurani, 2017). Efforts to cultivate environmental awareness based on religious humanism highlight the importance of Islamic education as a social movement (Karim, 2018), while the transformation of pesantren demonstrates a

concrete manifestation of ecological activism which is responsive to contemporary educational and environmental challenges (Wathoni, 2023).

Therefore, the integration of Islamic ecotheology, education, and activism—as reflected in Muhammadiyah’s movement—reveals that environmental preservation is not merely a moral dimension but a manifestation of faith (*iman*) and righteous action (*‘amal ṣāliḥ*) in building a civilized and sustainable society.

B. Methods

This study employed an integrative literature review to examine Muhammadiyah’s environmental engagement through the interrelated perspectives of Islamic ecotheology, education, and activism. The integrative approach was selected to enable the synthesis of diverse scholarly materials across conceptual, theological, and empirical dimensions. Both foundational and recent scholarship were analyzed to ensure analytical depth and contemporary relevance.

The corpus of literature was compiled from three primary sources. First, the review drew upon the core research article by (Efendi et al., 2021), which comprehensively discussed Muhammadiyah’s ecological movement and provided an extensive list of references on Islamic environmentalism and socio-theological reform. Second, additional literature cited within that article’s references was systematically extracted in successive stages to cover major works published during the 2000s and 2010s, thereby extending the historical and theoretical scope of the analysis. Third, more recent peer-reviewed studies published between 2021 and 2024 were included, sourced from Scopus and other reputable academic databases, focusing on themes such as Muhammadiyah, Islamic environmentalism, ecotheology, and religious education.

To maintain methodological transparency, the review incorporated only previously verified and documented sources; no new or untraceable materials were added. The literature search employed a set of targeted keywords including “Muhammadiyah,” “Islamic ecology,” “ecotheology,” “environmental education,” “fiqh al-bi’ ah,” and “Indonesia.” This comprehensive search strategy yielded a wide range of studies encompassing theological reinterpretations, institutional reforms, and community activism. Among these were discussions on Muhammadiyah’s legal activism and ecological fatwas, case studies on Islamic environmental education in *pesantren* and formal schools, as

well as theological innovations such as the organization's Fiqh of Water guidelines and eco-theological curricula.

All collected sources were then reviewed systematically and organized into three thematic clusters aligned with the objectives of this study: (1) Theological Discourse, (2) Educational Praxis, and (3) Activism and Policy Engagement. Each source was classified according to its dominant analytical focus. For instance, studies examining eco-friendly educational programs and curriculum reform were grouped under Educational Praxis, while research addressing fatwas, legal advocacy, or climate policy was categorized under Activism and Policy Engagement. Special emphasis was placed on identifying materials that explicitly explored the educational dimensions of Muhammadiyah's environmental initiatives, recognizing Islamic pedagogy as a key driver in the organization's ecological transformation.

To support the thematic synthesis, a summary matrix—later presented in the Results section—was developed to map each source's focus, research method, and relevance to Islamic education. This matrix enabled cross-comparison among studies, facilitating the identification of emerging patterns, innovations, and conceptual gaps. The analytical process combined descriptive synthesis and critical comparison. Initially, descriptive data were extracted—such as theological principles, pedagogical models, and forms of environmental activism—while ensuring proper academic attribution following APA citation conventions. Subsequently, comparative analysis was conducted to assess how scholars interpret Muhammadiyah's eco-theological effectiveness and its translation into social praxis.

For example, the concept of eco-jihad (environmental struggle), initially proposed within a conceptual framework by (Amri, 2014), was compared with empirical evidence presented by (Wahdini, N., Kamsi, K., & Jubba, 2024) to construct a holistic understanding of Islamic activism in ecological contexts. Through this triangulation, the review connected theoretical and practical perspectives, providing a comprehensive interpretation of Muhammadiyah's environmental engagement.

By the conclusion of the review process, a cohesive narrative was established following the IMRaD format, in which the Results section presented the core findings organized by thematic cluster, supported by literature-based evidence and visual summaries, while the Discussion section critically reflected on

the implications of these findings within broader discourses in Islamic studies, environmental ethics, and religious education.

C. Result and Discussion

Result

a. Theological Foundations of Muhammadiyah's Ecological Discourse

Muhammadiyah's engagement with environmental issues is grounded in a theological framework that reinterprets core Islamic doctrines in light of contemporary ecological challenges. Central to this framework is the belief that environmental care constitutes a religious obligation. Recent scholarship affirms that Muhammadiyah's epistemology aligns closely with the paradigm of Islamic ecology, emphasizing principles such as tauhid (the unity of God and creation), khilafah (human stewardship over the Earth), and amanah (the entrustment of natural resources) as theological imperatives. These concepts construct nature as a divine trust to be preserved and managed responsibly. For example, a 2024 study on Muhammadiyah and environmental policy identified tauhid, khilafah, and amanah—along with ethical concerns regarding halal and haram environmental conduct—as central to Muhammadiyah's ecological stance. Complementary values such as mizan (cosmic balance) and maslahah (public interest) were also invoked, extending Islamic legal principles toward the pursuit of environmental justice.

A distinctive feature of Muhammadiyah's ecotheology is the expansion of al-Ma'un theology—originally centered on social justice—to encompass environmental concerns. Rooted in Qur' ān 107, al-Ma'un theology traditionally inspires charitable activities such as feeding the poor and caring for orphans, and has long served as the moral foundation of Muhammadiyah's identity. Contemporary interpretations, however, extend this theology to environmental ethics by highlighting the disproportionate impact of ecological degradation on vulnerable populations. According to (Efendi et al., 2021), “poverty can be caused by ecological damage,” thus requiring al-Ma'un to be reinterpreted in light of environmental justice. In this framework, protecting ecosystems becomes a form of ibadah (worshipful service), fulfilling the Qur'anic imperative to safeguard the welfare of all creation. (Setiawan et al., 2022) further assert that Muhammadiyah's environmental activism constitutes “a manifestation of the theology of al-Ma'un,” embedding ecological compassion within its broader religious narrative.

Another theological dimension increasingly evident in Muhammadiyah's discourse is the Qur'anic ideal of *rahmatan lil- 'alamin*, mercy to all creation. While not unique to Muhammadiyah, this concept resonates with Islamic ecotheology by extending compassion beyond human beings to encompass animals, plants, and ecosystems. The Majelis Lingkungan Hidup (Environmental Council, MLH) has institutionalized these values through official documents such as *Teologi Lingkungan: Menyelamatkan Bumi melalui Perbaikan Akhlak dan Pendidikan Lingkungan* (2016). This publications underscore that ecological degradation stems from moral decay—manifested in greed, excess, and negligence—and calls for moral reform (*islah al-akhlak*) as the foundation of environmental ethics. It promotes character traits such as humility, moderation, and empathy as essential for ecological stewardship. This moral-ethical framing aligns with broader Islamic discourses on *Fiqh al-Biah* (jurisprudence of the environment), which cite prophetic traditions on the prohibition of waste and the care for non-human beings as doctrinal bases for sustainable living (Muhammadiyah, 2001, 2016a, 2016b).

It is important to note that Muhammadiyah's eco-theological discourse has evolved gradually, reflecting an institutional learning process. As (Efendi et al., 2021) et observe, Muhammadiyah initially did not adopt the “green Islam” narratives prominent among global Islamic environmental movements. Throughout much of the 20th century, Muhammadiyah has prioritized theological purification (*tanzih*) and socio-economic reform, with environmental issues remaining marginal. Early organizational documents rarely have addressed topics such as climate change or biodiversity. However, growing awareness of environmental crises—amplified by global discourses on climate justice and liberation theology—has prompted Muhammadiyah to reexamine its theological commitments. A significant milestone has occurred at the 47th Muhammadiyah Congress (2015), which formally declaring environmental degradation a humanitarian concern and integrating ecological issues into its strategic programs.

Since that turning point, environmental themes have been incorporated into Muhammadiyah's broader project of *Islam Berkemajuan* ("Progressive Islam"). This theological orientation positions the organization as reformist, rational, and forward-looking, with a commitment to engaging contemporary global challenges. Trace this vision to early 20th-century reformist roots, where theological renewal was linked to anti-colonial resistance and educational reform. In the current context, environmental engagement is framed as a continuation of

this progressive ethos, not a departure from it. Accordingly, environmental stewardship becomes both a theological mandate and a marker of Muhammadiyah's evolving identity as a socially responsive Islamic movement. (Arifin et al., 2022)

b. Integration of Ecological Ethics in Islamic Education

Education lies at the heart of Muhammadiyah's reformist mission, and integrating ecological ethics into its schools, universities, and pesantren has become central to operationalizing its eco-theological values. These institutions increasingly function as eco-Islamic educational spaces, where environmental consciousness is cultivated alongside religious learning. A notable example comes from pesantren, where faith and ecological practice intersect. A qualitative study by (Putri et al., 2023) in two Muhammadiyah eco-pesantren in Banten use social construction theory to describe how ecological devotion is built through three stages:

Table 1. Stages of Ecological Service Development in Islamic Boarding Schools

No	Stage	Process Description	Examples of Implementation in Pesantren
1	Externalization	Theological and Islamic values about the environment are introduced conceptually by Kyai or teachers through the teaching of Qur'anic verses and Hadith.	Teaching Qur'anic verses such as Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 on stewardship, Hadith such as 'cleanliness is part of faith,' and beginning fiqh classes with ṭahārah to emphasize environmental responsibility as a religious duty.
2	Objectification	Ecological values are institutionalized through practical activities and pesantren policies, making them part of institutional culture.	Tree-planting, composting, and water conservation programs are implemented as forms of ibadah (worship) and ṣadaqah jāriyah (ongoing charity).
3	Internalization	Ecological values are internalized by students, becoming part of their personal behavior and daily practice.	Students establish eco-clubs, conserve water during ablution, and carry environmentally friendly habits into their homes and communities.

The result at Putri et al. showed that term “ecological devotion” –a sustained, faith-driven environmental ethic has embedded in school culture and personal identity. Muhammadiyah’s universities also contribute through research and community outreach. For instance, Palangkaraya Muhammadiyah University addresses deforestation and peatland fires via conservation programs. In South Kalimantan, the publication of *Islam dan Lingkungan* (2013) reflects environmental advocacy grounded in Islamic teachings. The translation of the *Fiqh of Water* into English in 2016 marked Muhammadiyah’s effort to internationalize Islamic environmental jurisprudence and participate in global sustainability dialogues.

At the general education level, Muhammadiyah schools contextualize national curricula by embedding Islamic environmental ethics into religious studies and extracurriculars—such as halaqah on nature verses, hadith on animal care, and “Green Sunday” programs (Efendi et al., 2021). These align with the *Pedoman Hidup Islami Warga Muhammadiyah* (Abdillah, 2001), which urges members to avoid waste, keep the environment clean, and promote public welfare. Post-2005 updates further reinforced ecological responsibilities within organizational guidelines.

Importantly, Muhammadiyah’s educational model embraces intercultural perspectives. A 2024 study by Hisyam et al. explored the compatibility of *Tri Hita Karana* (THK), a Balinese Hindu concept promoting harmony between humans, nature, and the divine, with Islamic ecological ethics. The study concluded that THK’s ethical values—such as stewardship and cooperation—are compatible with Islamic teachings on tauhid, mizan, and khilafah, provides ritual elements remain distinct. This enables Muhammadiyah schools in pluralistic areas like Bali to integrate local ecological wisdom within an Islamic ethical framework, fostering interfaith collaboration and mutual respect (Hisyam et al., 2024).

In sum, Muhammadiyah’s educational institutions play a critical role in transforming eco-theological values into lived environmental practice. Through curriculum, school culture, public outreach, and intercultural dialogue, they promote a holistic, faith-based environmental awareness rooted in both Islamic principles and contextual wisdom.

c. Synthesis and Implications

In summary, Muhammadiyah has actively pursued the integration of ecological ethics across multiple levels of its educational system: from grassroots inculcation in pesantren and day schools, to policy-driven initiatives at the university level, and through organizational guidance that shapes community norms. These initiatives reflect a coherent strategy to internalize environmental consciousness within the Muhammadiyah community and beyond. Students trained under this model often carry their ecological commitments into broader society, creating a ripple effect of environmental awareness and practice.

While challenges remain such as variability in implementation, resource constraints, and limited teacher training the existing models provide a blueprint for faith-based environmental education. Importantly, these efforts reaffirm Muhammadiyah’s longstanding role as a reform-oriented Islamic movement, now expanded to include ecological transformation. As detailed in Table 1 (Results section), key studies and initiatives are summarized by theme, methodology, and educational relevance, illustrating the breadth and depth of Muhammadiyah’s contributions to environmental education in Indonesia.

Table 2. includes research studies

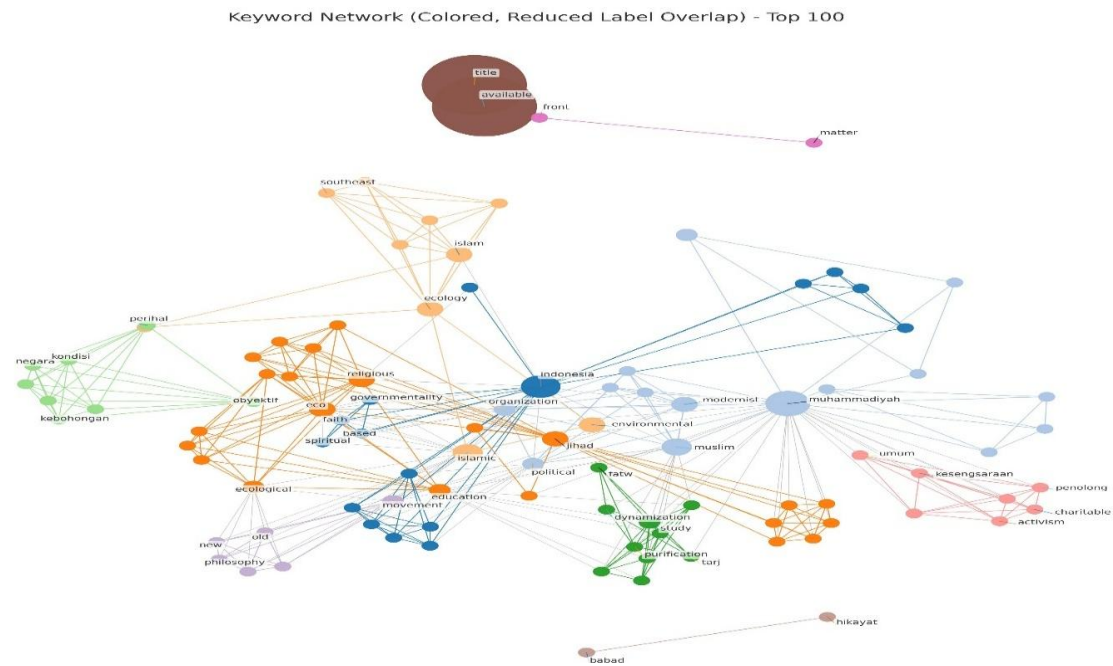
Study (Author, Year)	Topic / Focus	Methodology / Approach	Educational Relevance
(Efendi et al., 2021)	Ecological movement of Muhammadiyah post-1998: from fiqh to political advocacy	Qualitative, historical and theological analysis	Muhammadiyah’s reformist theology is being expanded to include environment; growing inclusion of ecology in Muhammadiyah programs and education.
(Arifin et al., 2022)	Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam) in Muhammadiyah roots and development	Documentary and historical study; critical construction of theological perspectives	Illuminates theological foundations (Ahmad Dahlan teachings) that inform Muhammadiyah educational philosophy and environmental ethics.
(Wahdini et al., 2024)	Contestation between Muhammadiyah and the State in Indonesian ecological	Normative legal research; comparative analysis	Provides context for civic education and environmental stewardship by critiquing secular vs. religious policy

	law and policy		approaches.
(Setiawan et al., 2022)	Eco-theological movement of Muhammadiyah Environmental Council (MLH)	Descriptive qualitative study using liberation theology and ecotheology frameworks	Guides educational and activist movements within Muhammadiyah; MLH publications educate members on environmental duties.
(Putri et al., 2023)	Development of 'ecological devotion' in Muhammadiyah pesantren	Qualitative field study; interviews and observation in eco-pesantren using social construction theory	Demonstrates effective environmental education grounded in Islamic values with pro-environment behavior outcomes.
(Amri, 2014)	Eco-jihad: Islamic civil society and climate change in Indonesia	Conceptual analysis and case study	Introduces eco-jihad as a form of religious duty; informs curriculum development and motivates youth activism.
(Mangunja ya & Praharawati, 2019)	Islamic environmental fatwas in Indonesia and their impact	Qualitative analysis of fatwas and case studies	Fatwas used for community education on environmental issues; influences sermons and extracurricular activities.
(Abdillah, 2001)	Religion-Friendly Environment: a Qur'anic Perspective	Theological exegesis and analysis of environmental messages in the Qur'an	Foundational for eco-Islam education; cited in Muhammadiyah literature and school guidance.
(Hisyam et al., 2024)	Tri Hita Karana and Islamic teachings cross-religious environmental principles	Comparative theology and ethics; text-based analysis	Suggests incorporating universal environmental values into Islamic curricula; enhances interfaith understanding.
(Haʼtegan, 2021)	Eco Trends, Counseling, and Applied Ecology in Environmental Health	Descriptive study on environmental health education and counseling trends	Provides insight into integrating ecological awareness with counseling and education practices.
(Naidoo, 2012)	Ministerial formation of theological students in multi-faith contexts	Conceptual and reflective analysis	Explores theological student preparation for ministry in diverse religious environments.
(Heriadi, 2023)	The importance of community social theology in religious education	Descriptive qualitative study	Highlights community theology as a basis for integrating faith and social responsibility in education.
(Catanha,	Critical engagement	Theoretical critique and	Suggests reforming

2021)	with theological education in Africa	policy review	theological education to align with local cultural and social contexts.
(Freathy, 2018) (2018)	Theology in multi-faith Religious Education: curriculum implications	Curriculum analysis in multi-faith religious education	Proposes incorporating theology meaningfully into religious education curricula in diverse settings.

*Note: The table includes both research studies and influential writings relevant to Muhammadiyah’s eco-theological discourse. “Educational Relevance” highlights how each work contributes to or can be applied in Islamic educational settings.

Figure 1. Illustrating the breadth and depth of Muhammadiyah’s contributions to environmental education in Indonesia



d. Environmental Activism and Sociopolitical Engagement

Parallel to its theological and educational work, Muhammadiyah has developed into a key player in Indonesia’s environmental activism, leveraging Islamic moral reasoning and legal mechanisms in what it terms *jihad konstitusi* (constitutional jihad). Unlike secular or technocratic models, Muhammadiyah’s activism is faith-driven, blending doctrinal authority, grassroots mobilization, and policy advocacy.

A major breakthrough has come with its legal challenge to Law No. 7/2004 on Water Resources, which enable water privatization. Drawing on Article 33 of the Indonesian Constitution and prophetic teachings on water as a communal right, Muhammadiyah successfully has petitioned the Constitutional Court to annul the law in 2015—a landmark in faith-based legal environmental advocacy. Since then, Muhammadiyah has targeted multiple laws (e.g., on mining, energy, and investment) that favor corporate interests over *maslahah* (public good). While not all efforts succeed, they have established a new model of Islamic environmental jurisprudence, with religion positions as a source of democratic accountability and ethical policymaking.

Importantly, Muhammadiyah's environmentalism is justice-oriented rather than purely conservationist. Campaigns focus on equitable access to resources (e.g., water, land), disaster relief, and anti-mining activism—framed within Islamic imperatives like *khilafah* (stewardship) and *amanah* (trust). The 2016 *Fiqh of Water*; asserts water as a human right grounded in both Islamic and constitutional ethics. Institutionally, the Majelis Lingkungan Hidup (MLH) has played a vital role in formalizing this discourse through texts like *Fiqh of Disaster* (2015) and *Environmental Theology* (2016), which integrate Islamic law with disaster risk reduction and ecological responsibility. These *fiqh*-based frameworks elevate environmental concerns to the level of *tarjih* (authoritative deliberation), embedding them within Muhammadiyah's doctrinal system.

On the ground, activism is coordinated through bodies like the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC), which now includes reforestation and coastal protection in its mandate. Youth organizations (e.g., IPM) run campaigns on waste management, recycling, and climate awareness—framed as *amal saleh* (righteous acts) and *jihad lil-bi' ah* (environmental struggle). Muhammadiyah also excels in media-based environmental outreach. The MLH's "agile and creative" communication—via social media, Ramadan campaigns, and Islamic reflections on climate—contrasts with the more formal tone of legal activism, yet expands public engagement by aligning sustainability with Islamic moral vision (Efendi et al., 2021).

Socio-politically, this activism has made Muhammadiyah as a moral force in democratic Indonesia. Its legal interventions and campaigns have strengthened civil society's voice in governance, although not without tension. As Wahdini et al show, Muhammadiyah's theocentric paradigm often clashes with the state's

developmentalist priorities, especially around extractive industries (Wahdini et al., 2024). Yet, these contestations have been productive, prompting regulatory changes and encouraging Muhammadiyah to deepen its collaboration with scientists in fiqh development.

Table 3. Summary Table: Muhammadiyah Environmental Activism

Aspect	Summary Description	Key Implications
Nature of the Movement	Muhammadiyah’s environmental engagement extends across litigation, education, institutional reforms, and public advocacy. It represents a faith-based justice movement rooted in Islamic ethics.	Religion serves as a moral foundation for environmental governance and public accountability.
Ideological Paradigm	Although not initially a green movement, Muhammadiyah now embodies a 'right-green' paradigm, religiously conservative in its values yet progressive in ecological vision (Efendi et al., 2021).	Demonstrates that Islamic conservatism and environmental progressivism can coexist synergistically.
Strategic Foundations	The movement’s strength lies in combining legal advocacy, educational integration, and organizational development within a coherent theological framework.	Creates a replicable model for Islamic civil society movements addressing sustainability.
Sustainability Challenges	To maintain momentum, Muhammadiyah requires institutional continuity, scientific collaboration, and broad-based social coalitions.	Strengthening partnerships between scholars, policymakers, and activists is crucial for long-term impact.
Overall Contribution	Despite uneven implementation, Muhammadiyah has laid the groundwork for a robust Islamic ecological movement influencing both national policy and global sustainability discourse.	Positions Muhammadiyah as a leading actor in linking faith, justice, and environmental ethics within the Muslim world.

Discussion

Muhammadiyah’s eco-theological journey demonstrates how Islamic faith can underpin a holistic, integrated model of environmental engagement—bridging

theology, education, and activism. This section evaluates its significance, compares it with broader Islamic trends, and identifies strengths, limitations, and future directions.

a. Holistic Eco-theological Model

Muhammadiyah's integration of khilafah, al-Ma'un, and 'adl into its pedagogy and activism exemplifies a synergy between belief, learning, and action. Environmental care is framed as 'ibadah (worship) and khidmah (service), thus internalized in schools and enacted through activism—from eco-pesantren to court litigation. This triadic model overcomes the motivational gap often seen in secular environmentalism by rooting ecological ethics in enduring spiritual commitments.

b. Justice-Centered Environmentalism

Muhammadiyah's approach is deeply justice-oriented, prioritizing human dignity, rights, and wellbeing. Environmental harm is addressed as both a violation of divine trust and a source of social injustice—e.g., polluted water, land dispossession. This theo-anthropocentric framing aligns with global environmental justice movements and garners broader public support (Efendi et al., 2021). However, risks include instrumentalizing nature, giving less attention to issues like biodiversity unless linked to human welfare. The growing inclusion of fasād (corruption) in discourse reflects a shift toward intrinsic ecological values, showing movement toward a more balanced ethical ecology.

c. Broader Influence in Muslim Contexts

Domestically, Muhammadiyah's influence has inspired other Islamic bodies—e.g., NU's environmental programs and MUI's fatwas on forest burning (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019). Its institutional model—via MLH, Fiqh of Water, etc.—offers a replicable structure. Internationally, Muhammadiyah adds a practical implementation layer to the more philosophical discourse advanced by Foltz (Foltz et al., 2003). Its large-scale mobilization validates hypotheses that Islamic environmentalism thrives in democratic and organizationally capable settings (Foltz, 2003).

d. Challenges and Areas for Growth

Internally, Muhammadiyah faces challenges of program continuity, resource limitations, and integration of scientific expertise. Efendi et al. (2021) note drop-offs after major victories (e.g., water law). Environmental knowledge must be embedded through updated curricula, preacher training, and stronger MLH capacity. The risk of oversimplifying disaster causes through religious lenses also requires caution, though Muhammadiyah generally favors rational preparedness.

Externally, environmental advocacy sometimes clashes with state development agendas, risking regulatory pushback (Wahdini, N., Kamsi, K., & Jubba, 2024). Muhammadiyah’s “prophetic pragmatism” –ethical yet constructive–helps maintain dialogue while pursuing policy reform. Educationally, a standardized green curriculum across Muhammadiyah schools remains a growth area. Universities can lead curriculum design, while partnerships with other faith or cultural groups (e.g., incorporating Tri Hita Karana) can promote interreligious collaboration and local relevance (Hisyam et al., 2024).

e. Implications for Islamic Education and Jurisprudence

This case affirms that Islamic education is not isolated from global issues. Integrating environmental ethics empowers students as morally grounded ecological leaders. It also contributes to the evolution of *fiqh al-bi’ ah*, expanding *ijtihad* to cover climate, pollution, and sustainability. Muhammadiyah’s model–context-sensitive yet scripturally anchored–is already influencing NGOs in Malaysia and Middle Eastern scholars citing Indonesian fatwas.

f. Toward Islamic Sustainable Development

Muhammadiyah is poised to pioneer Islamic sustainable development, combining spiritual, social, and ecological goals. Potential directions include eco-mosques, green microfinance, and applying its *fiqh* to urban planning or energy. Realizing this requires commitment to knowledge integration, youth engagement, and intersectoral cooperation. With its organizational reach and moral capital, Muhammadiyah has the potential to become a global exemplar of Islamic environmentalism, which can sustain coherence and adapt to emerging challenges.

D. Conclusion

Muhammadiyah's evolving engagement with ecotheology and environmental activism presents a compelling model of faith-based response to ecological crises by integrating theological principles, educational praxis, and sociopolitical engagement. This synthesis exemplifies adaptive reformism, rooted in classical Islamic teachings yet continuously reinterpreted to address contemporary global challenges. The case of Muhammadiyah illustrates how Islamic education fosters both spiritual integrity and ecological consciousness, enabling learners to become ethical stewards of creation, while its activism extends beyond charity into legal reform, policy advocacy, and environmental governance. This holistic eco theological model, though still maturing, has yielded tangible outcomes including increased environmental awareness, institutional policy transformation, and legal achievements that safeguard natural resources. More importantly, it contributes to the global discourse on Islam and ecology by offering a contextual, replicable framework for other Muslim communities. However, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature and lacks empirical field data to evaluate the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of Muhammadiyah's environmental initiatives.

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