

# 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 represent defining ethical and theological challenges of the contemporary era, compelling faith communities across the globe to articulate grounded, religiously-informed responses to the unfolding ecological crisis. Within Islamic thought, classical doctrinal concepts—*tauhid* (divine oneness), *khilafah* (earth stewardship), and *amanah* (sacred trust)—have been subjected to sustained reinterpretation, giving rise to an emerging paradigm of Islamic ecology that frames environmental care as an intrinsic dimension of Muslim religiosity. This study critically examines how Muhammadiyah, one of the world's largest Islamic civil society organizations, constructs and enacts its eco-theological discourse across three interrelated dimensions: theological foundations, educational praxis, and activist engagement. Employing an integrative literature review methodology combined with a thematic summary matrix, the study synthesizes peer-reviewed scholarship published between 2021 and 2024. The analysis reveals that Muhammadiyah extends the classical theology of al-Ma'un to encompass ecological justice, embeds environmental values within its extensive educational institutions—including schools, pesantren, and universities—and channels activism through legal advocacy, institutional fatwas, and community-based environmental campaigns. Collectively, these efforts position Muhammadiyah as a formidable moral force in Indonesia's environmental governance landscape. The findings demonstrate a coherent, holistic, and potentially replicable model that integrates Islamic theology, transformative pedagogy, and civic action. The study also acknowledges notable limitations, including resource constraints within certain institutional settings and the absence of longitudinal empirical evaluation of the model's long-term outcomes.

## Keywords:

Activism, Ecotheology, Environmental Education, Islamic Ecology, Muhammadiyah

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## INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation and the accelerating trajectory of climate change have emerged as among the most consequential ethical and theological challenges confronting humanity in the twenty-first century. Across diverse religious traditions, scholars and practitioners have increasingly recognized the imperative to develop faith-grounded responses to the deepening ecological crisis. Religious communities are no longer peripheral voices in environmental debates; they constitute morally authoritative actors capable of mobilizing collective conscience toward sustainable futures (Foltz et al., 2003; Saniotis, 2012; Haṭegan, 2021). Within Islamic discourse, this mobilization has taken the form of a sustained reinterpretation of classical doctrinal concepts. Foundational principles such as *tauhid* (the Divine Oneness that underlies the unity of creation), *khilafah* (the human vocation as steward of the Earth), and *amanah* (the sacred trust of natural resources entrusted to humanity by God) have been reconstituted as the theological pillars of an emerging Islamic ecology paradigm (Wahdini et al., 2024). This paradigm understands environmental care as organically embedded within Islamic faith and practice, drawing upon principles of *mizan* (cosmic balance) and *maslahah* (public welfare) to construct an ethical framework adequate to the scale of contemporary ecological challenges. Such developments resonate with the broader intellectual movement of ecotheology—a field that mobilizes theological categories as resources for environmental ethics and transformative sociopolitical action.

Indonesia, as the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, constitutes a particularly instructive case study for understanding how these theological currents are translated into institutional practice. Major Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have historically channeled their energies into community development, moral reform, and social services. However, for much of the twentieth century, environmental concerns remained largely peripheral to their institutional agendas (Amri, 2014; Heriadi, 2023). Issues such as deforestation, pollution, and climate-induced displacement seldom featured in official religious discourse. The past decade, however, has witnessed a significant shift: a growing ecological consciousness has taken root within Indonesian Islamic civil society, fusing Islamic moral frameworks with global environmental urgencies.

This transformation finds its most developed institutional expression in Muhammadiyah, whose evolving eco-theological discourse and praxis constitute the primary focus of this review. Founded in 1912 by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah is an Islamic modernist organization whose founding vision—grounded in the theology of *al-Ma'un* derived from Qur'an 107—has long advocated a socially engaged interpretation of Islam that attends to the suffering of the marginalized and dispossessed (Foltz et al., 2003). Over more than a century, Muhammadiyah has institutionalized this ethos through an expansive network of schools, clinics, hospitals, and

philanthropic bodies, embodying a spirit of *tajdid* (renewal) and an enduring commitment to social justice (Catanha, 2021; Hisyam et al., 2024; Indriana & Fauziah, 2023).

In recent years, this theological foundation has been deliberately extended to encompass environmental questions. Muhammadiyah's leadership has progressively articulated the argument that ecological degradation disproportionately burdens the poor and vulnerable, thereby reinforcing the organization's social justice mandate and expanding the moral scope of its activism. A watershed moment in this trajectory was the 47th Muhammadiyah National Congress (2015), at which the organization formally resolved to engage with global environmental challenges, recognizing climate change and ecological destruction as pressing humanitarian concerns and integrating environmental stewardship into its strategic institutional priorities alongside education, health, and economic empowerment.

Contemporary scholarship has further enriched this evolving discourse. Recent eco-theological studies conducted in 2025 have deepened understanding of the interface between Islamic faith and environmental responsibility within educational and activist contexts. The emergence of ecotheology as a substantive intellectual and practical movement in Indonesia marks a transformative phase in which faith-based organizations like Muhammadiyah reinterpret Islamic values to address contemporary ecological crises (Manalu, 2025). This reinterpretation has found concrete pedagogical expression in Muhammadiyah's green school initiatives, where Qur'anic principles of *khilafah* are integrated with sustainable environmental practices (Suhardin, 2025). Religious education, in this context, plays a critical role in reorienting spiritual formation toward ecological ethics, functioning simultaneously as theology and pedagogy in the service of moral-ecological renewal (Sakdiah et al., 2025).

The present study synthesizes the existing literature on Muhammadiyah's environmental thought and practice, examining how the organization integrates Islamic theology with ecological ethics across both pedagogical and sociopolitical dimensions. Integrative concepts such as *tauhid*, *khilafah*, and *amanah* have moved beyond doctrinal exegesis to inform socioreligious praxis; research has demonstrated, for instance, that the notion of *khalifah* functions as a critical ethical motivator for Muhammadiyah members in environmental awareness campaigns (Wijsen & Anshori, 2023). Faith-based narratives on climate change have equally been marshaled to frame institutional responses to ecological disaster (Hidayat, 2023). The Muhammadiyah Environmental Council (Majelis Lingkungan Hidup/MLH) has played a central coordinating role in translating *al-Ma'un* theology into tangible ecological programs (Efendi et al., 2021; Setiawan et al., 2022), while Islamic eco-theological principles have been woven into national discourses on religious moderation and have inspired the formation of interfaith environmental coalitions such as Green-Faith Indonesia and Eco-Bhinneka (Institute, 2024). Muhammadiyah's model of progressive da'wah further incorporates environmental concerns into interfaith and

multicultural dialogues, reinforcing the organization's role as a dynamic ethical force in Indonesia's contemporary religious landscape (Abdullah & Syarif, 2024; Nugroho, 2024).

Taken together, these developments underscore that Islamic ecotheology in the Indonesian context is not a merely theoretical abstraction but a socially embedded and institutionally enacted practice—one that positions religion as a transformative agent in confronting the environmental crises of the present century. The role of ecological awareness within the Islamic tradition affirms the human vocation as *khalifah*, entrusted to maintain the balance of nature through education and civilizational action (Imron et al., 2025), while humanistic values in Islamic pedagogy provide the normative foundation for cultivating an ecological ethic oriented toward sustainability (Saekan, 2017; Irzum & Nurani, 2017; Karim, 2018). The ongoing transformation of *pesantren* into sites of ecological activism further exemplifies the productive convergence of Islamic educational tradition and environmental commitment (Wathoni, 2023). Thus, the integration of Islamic ecotheology, education, and activism as reflected in Muhammadiyah's movement reveals that environmental preservation is not merely a moral imperative but a manifestation of *iman* (faith) and *'amal ṣāliḥ* (righteous action) in the construction of a just and sustainable civilization.

## METHODS

This study employs an integrative literature review to examine Muhammadiyah's environmental engagement through the interrelated lenses of Islamic ecotheology, transformative education, and civic activism. The integrative approach was selected because it enables the systematic synthesis of diverse scholarly materials spanning conceptual, theological, and empirical registers, thereby permitting a comprehensive and analytically nuanced account of the phenomenon under investigation. Both foundational and recent scholarship were incorporated to ensure depth of analysis and contemporary relevance.

The corpus of literature was assembled from three principal sources. First, the review is anchored in the foundational research of Efendi et al. (2021), whose comprehensive examination of Muhammadiyah's ecological movement provides both a substantive account and an extensive bibliography on Islamic environmentalism and socio-theological reform. Second, secondary literature cited within that foundational work was systematically traced across successive stages to capture major scholarly contributions from the 2000s and 2010s, extending the historical and theoretical scope of the analysis. Third, peer-reviewed studies published between 2021 and 2024 were incorporated, sourced from Scopus and other reputable academic databases, with thematic emphasis on Muhammadiyah, Islamic environmentalism, ecotheology, and religious education.

To preserve methodological rigor and transparency, only previously documented and verifiable sources were included in the review; no unverifiable or untraceable materials were admitted. The literature search was conducted using a suite of targeted keywords, including

‘Muhammadiyah,’ ‘Islamic ecology,’ ‘ecothology,’ ‘environmental education,’ ‘fiqh al-bi’ah,’ and ‘Indonesia.’ This search strategy yielded a broad corpus of studies encompassing theological reinterpretations, institutional reforms, and community-based activism—including analyses of Muhammadiyah’s legal activism and ecological fatwas, case studies of Islamic environmental education in pesantren and formal school settings, and theological innovations such as the organization’s Fiqh of Water and eco-theological curriculum frameworks.

All collected sources were reviewed systematically and organized into three thematic clusters aligned with the objectives of the study: (1) Theological Discourse, (2) Educational Praxis, and (3) Activism and Policy Engagement. Each source was classified according to its dominant analytical orientation. Studies examining eco-friendly school programs and curriculum reform were grouped under Educational Praxis, while research addressing fatwas, legal advocacy, or environmental policy was categorized under Activism and Policy Engagement. Particular attention was devoted to sources explicitly addressing the educational dimensions of Muhammadiyah’s environmental initiatives, reflecting the recognition that Islamic pedagogy constitutes a primary driver of the organization’s ecological transformation.

To support thematic synthesis, a summary matrix was constructed and is presented in the Results and Discussion section. This matrix maps each source according to its analytical focus, research methodology, and relevance to Islamic education, enabling cross-source comparison and the identification of emerging patterns, conceptual innovations, and interpretive gaps. The analytical process combined descriptive synthesis with critical comparison. Descriptive data—encompassing theological principles, pedagogical models, and forms of environmental activism—were extracted and properly attributed in accordance with APA citation conventions. Comparative analysis was subsequently conducted to assess how scholars interpret the effectiveness of Muhammadiyah’s eco-theological orientation and its translation into sociopolitical praxis. Through this triangulation of theoretical and empirical perspectives, the review constructs a holistic and integrative interpretation of Muhammadiyah’s environmental engagement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Theological Foundations of Muhammadiyah’s Ecological Discourse

Muhammadiyah’s engagement with environmental questions is rooted in a comprehensive theological framework that reinterprets core Islamic doctrines in light of contemporary ecological challenges. At the center of this framework lies the conviction that care for the natural world constitutes a religious obligation—not a discretionary ethical preference—grounded in the foundational principles of Islamic belief. Recent scholarship affirms that Muhammadiyah’s ecological epistemology is closely aligned with the paradigm of Islamic ecology, which construes *tauhid* (the unity of God and creation), *khilafah* (humanity’s

stewardship of the Earth), and *amanah* (the sacred trusteeship of natural resources) as binding theological imperatives. These concepts collectively construct nature as a divine trust to be preserved and managed with reverence and responsibility. A recent study on Muhammadiyah and environmental policy (2024) identifies *tauhid*, *khilafah*, and *amanah*—alongside the ethical distinction between halal and haram environmental conduct—as central pillars of the organization’s ecological stance, further supplemented by the complementary values of *mizan* (cosmic balance) and *maslahah* (public interest), which extend Islamic jurisprudential reasoning toward the pursuit of environmental justice.

A particularly distinctive feature of Muhammadiyah’s ecotheology is its expansive reinterpretation of *al-Ma’un* theology—originally centered on the imperatives of social compassion and charitable service—to encompass the sphere of environmental ethics. Rooted in Qur’an 107, the theology of *al-Ma’un* has historically functioned as the moral foundation of Muhammadiyah’s institutional identity, inspiring charitable activities directed toward the poor, the orphaned, and the disenfranchised. Contemporary interpretations, however, have extended this theology to environmental ethics by drawing attention to the disproportionate burden that ecological degradation places upon the most vulnerable members of society. As Efendi et al. (2021) argue, poverty is frequently caused or exacerbated by ecological damage, thereby requiring a reinterpretation of *al-Ma’un* that integrates the imperatives of environmental justice. Within this framework, protecting ecosystems constitutes a form of *ibadah* (worshipful service) that fulfills the Qur’anic mandate to safeguard the welfare of all creation. Setiawan et al. (2022) further contend that Muhammadiyah’s environmental activism represents a living manifestation of the theology of *al-Ma’un*, embedding ecological compassion within the broader moral narrative of the organization.

Another theological dimension of growing significance within Muhammadiyah’s discourse is the Qur’anic ideal of *rahmatan lil-’alamin*—mercy extended to all of creation. While not exclusive to Muhammadiyah, this concept resonates deeply with Islamic ecotheology by expanding the scope of religious compassion beyond human beings to encompass animals, plants, and entire ecosystems. The Majelis Lingkungan Hidup (Environmental Council/MLH) has institutionalized these values through authoritative documents such as *Teologi Lingkungan: Menyelamatkan Bumi melalui Perbaikan Akhlak dan Pendidikan Lingkungan* (2016), which grounds ecological responsibility in the principle of moral reform (*islah al-akhlak*). This publication diagnoses ecological degradation as a consequence of moral failure, manifested in greed, excess, and irresponsibility, and calls for the cultivation of character virtues, including humility, moderation, and empathy, as the ethical foundation of environmental stewardship. This moral-ethical framing aligns with the broader discourse of *Fiqh al-Bi’ah* (jurisprudence of the environment), which draws upon prophetic traditions concerning the prohibition of

waste and the duty of care toward non-human beings as doctrinal bases for sustainable living (Muhammadiyah, 2001, 2016a, 2016b).

It is important to acknowledge that Muhammadiyah's eco-theological trajectory has developed gradually, reflecting an institutional process of critical learning and theological renewal. As Efendi et al. (2021) observe, Muhammadiyah did not initially adopt the 'green Islam' narratives that characterized global Islamic environmental movements during the late twentieth century. Throughout much of that period, the organization prioritized theological purification (*tanzih*) and socio-economic reform, with environmental concerns remaining marginal to institutional deliberations. A significant turning point was reached at the 47th Muhammadiyah National Congress (2015), which formally declared environmental degradation a humanitarian concern and integrated ecological stewardship into the organization's strategic agenda.

Since that pivotal juncture, environmental themes have been incorporated into Muhammadiyah's broader ideological project of Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam)—a theological orientation that positions the organization as reformist, rational, and engaged with contemporary global challenges. Environmental stewardship, in this framing, is understood not as a departure from Muhammadiyah's historical mission but as its continuation and deepening: a theological mandate and a marker of the organization's evolving identity as a socially responsive Islamic movement committed to justice and civilizational renewal (Arifin et al., 2022).

### **Integration of Ecological Ethics in Islamic Education**

Education occupies a foundational role in Muhammadiyah's reformist mission, and the integration of ecological ethics into its schools, universities, and pesantren has become central to the operationalization of its eco-theological commitments. These educational institutions increasingly function as what might be termed eco-Islamic educational spaces, where environmental consciousness is cultivated in organic relation to religious formation. A compelling illustration of this pedagogical process emerges from Muhammadiyah's eco-pesantren settings, where faith and ecological practice are interwoven in systematic and intentional ways. A qualitative study by Putri et al. (2023), conducted in two Muhammadiyah eco-pesantren in Banten province utilizing social construction theory, describes how ecological devotion is cultivated through three sequentially ordered yet mutually reinforcing stages (see Table 1).

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

No.	Stage	Process Description	Examples of Implementation in Pesantren
1	Externalization	Theological and Islamic values pertaining to environmental responsibility are introduced conceptually by kyai or teachers through the exposition of Qur'anic verses and Hadith, establishing doctrinal legitimacy for ecological stewardship.	Teaching Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 on human stewardship; Hadith on cleanliness as part of faith; initiating fiqh instruction with tahārah to frame environmental duty as a religious obligation.
2	Objectification	Ecological values are institutionalized through practical activities and pesantren policies, embedding them into the organizational culture and daily rhythms of the institution.	Tree-planting programs, composting workshops, and water conservation initiatives are structured as expressions of ibadah (worship) and ṣadaqah jāriyah (ongoing charity).
3	Internalization	Ecological values are gradually internalized by santri, becoming constitutive of personal character and sustained environmental behavior beyond the institutional setting.	Students establish eco-clubs, practice water conservation during ablution, and carry environmentally responsible habits into their households and broader communities.

Source: Adapted from Putri et al. (2023)

The findings of Putri et al. (2023) reveal the formation of what the authors term 'ecological devotion'—a sustained, faith-driven environmental ethic embedded within institutional culture and personal identity. The trajectory moves from conceptual introduction to habitual practice, with Islamic values functioning as the motivational and normative scaffolding for ecological behavior change. Muhammadiyah's universities further contribute to this educational ecology through research programs and community outreach initiatives. Palangkaraya Muhammadiyah University, for instance, addresses the critical regional challenges of deforestation and peatland fires through dedicated conservation programming. The translation of the Fiqh of Water into English in 2016 marked Muhammadiyah's effort to internationalize Islamic environmental jurisprudence

and to contribute to global sustainability dialogues from a distinctively Islamic ethical standpoint.

At the level of general education, Muhammadiyah schools contextualize national curricula by embedding Islamic environmental ethics into religious studies and extracurricular programming—including Qur’anic study circles (*halaqah*) on nature, hadith on animal welfare, and ‘Green Sunday’ environmental service programs (Efendi et al., 2021). These pedagogical initiatives are aligned with the *Pedoman Hidup Islami Warga Muhammadiyah* (Abdillah, 2001), which guides members to avoid wastefulness, maintain environmental cleanliness, and actively promote public welfare. Post-2005 updates to this organizational guidance further reinforced ecological responsibility as a dimension of faithful Islamic living.

Muhammadiyah’s educational model also demonstrates a notable capacity for intercultural dialogue and integration. A 2024 study by Hisyam et al. examined the compatibility of *Tri Hita Karana* (THK)—a Balinese Hindu framework promoting harmony between humans, nature, and the divine—with Islamic ecological ethics. The study concluded that THK’s ethical orientations toward stewardship and cooperative care are substantively compatible with Islamic teachings on *tauhid*, *mizan*, and *khilafah*, provided that distinctively ritual elements remain separate. This finding enables Muhammadiyah schools operating in pluralistic contexts, such as Bali, to thoughtfully integrate local ecological wisdom within an Islamic ethical framework, thereby fostering interfaith collaboration and mutual respect (Hisyam et al., 2024).

The analytical matrix presented in Table 2 synthesizes the key scholarly contributions to Muhammadiyah’s eco-theological and educational discourse, organized by topic, methodology, and educational relevance.

Table 2. Summary Matrix of Scholarly Literature on Muhammadiyah’s Eco-Theological Discourse

Study (Author, Year)	Topic / Focus	Methodology / Approach	Educational Relevance
Efendi et al. (2021)	Ecological movement of Muhammadiyah post-1998: from <i>fiqh</i> to political advocacy	Qualitative; historical and theological analysis	Documents the expansion of Muhammadiyah’s reformist theology into environmental domains; traces the growing inclusion of ecology within educational programs.
Arifin et al. (2022)	Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam): roots and	Documentary and historical study; critical	Illuminates the theological foundations derived from Ahmad Dahlan’s teachings

	epistemological development	theological reconstruction	that inform Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy and ecological ethics.
Wahdini et al. (2024)	Contestation between Muhammadiyah and the state in Indonesian environmental law	Normative legal research; comparative policy analysis	Contextualizes civic environmental education by examining tensions between theocentric ethics and secular developmentalist policy frameworks.
Setiawan et al. (2022)	Eco-theological movement of the Muhammadiyah Environmental Council (MLH)	Descriptive qualitative; liberation theology and ecotheology frameworks	Provides guidance for educational and activist programs within Muhammadiyah; MLH publications serve as authoritative environmental literacy materials.
Putri et al. (2023)	Development of 'ecological devotion' in Muhammadiyah pesantren	Qualitative field study; interviews and observation using social construction theory	Demonstrates the effectiveness of Islamic environmental education in fostering pro-environmental behavior grounded in spiritual values.
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 ecological activism.
Mangunjaya & Prahrawati (2019)	Islamic environmental fatwas in Indonesia and their ecological impact	Qualitative analysis of fatwas and case studies	Fatwas are utilized as community education tools on environmental issues, influencing sermons and extracurricular programming.
Abdillah (2001)	Religion-friendly environment: a Qur'anic perspective	Theological exegesis; analysis of environmental messages in the Qur'an	Foundational for eco-Islamic education; widely cited in Muhammadiyah institutional literature and school guidance documents.
Hisyam et al. (2024)	Tri Hita Karana and Islamic teachings: cross-religious environmental ethics	Comparative theology and ethics; text-based analysis	Supports the incorporation of universal ecological values into Islamic curricula; fosters

			interfaith understanding and collaboration.
Hategean (2021)	Eco-trends, counseling, and applied ecology in environmental health	Descriptive study on environmental health education and counseling trends	Offers insights into integrating ecological awareness with counseling and health-oriented educational practices.
Naidoo (2012)	Ministerial formation of theological students in multi-faith contexts	Conceptual and reflective analysis	Explores the preparation of theological students for ministry in religiously diverse environments.
Heriadi (2023)	Community social theology and religious education	Descriptive qualitative study	Highlights community theology as a basis for integrating faith and social responsibility within educational frameworks.
Catanha (2021)	Critical engagement with theological education in Africa	Theoretical critique and policy review	Proposes reforming theological education to better align with local cultural and social realities.
Freathy (2018)	Theology in multi-faith religious education: curriculum implications	Curriculum analysis in multi-faith religious education	Proposes the meaningful incorporation of theology into religious education curricula across diverse socioreligious contexts.

Note: The table includes both research studies and influential writings relevant to Muhammadiyah's eco-theological discourse. 'Educational Relevance' identifies how each work contributes to or can be applied within Islamic educational settings.

In summation, Muhammadiyah's educational institutions perform a critical function in transforming eco-theological values into lived environmental practice. Through curriculum integration, institutional culture, community outreach, and intercultural dialogue, they cultivate a holistic, faith-anchored environmental awareness that draws upon both Islamic principles and contextually situated ecological wisdom.

### **Environmental Activism and Sociopolitical Engagement**

In parallel with its theological and educational endeavors, Muhammadiyah has emerged as a consequential actor in Indonesia's environmental activism, deploying Islamic moral reasoning and constitutional legal mechanisms in what the organization itself terms *jihad konstitusi* (constitutional *jihad*). Unlike technocratic or purely secular environmentalism, Muhammadiyah's activist orientation is fundamentally faith-driven: it weaves together

doctrinal authority, grassroots community mobilization, and institutional policy advocacy into a distinctive and coherent model of Islamic civic engagement.

A landmark moment in Muhammadiyah's legal environmental activism was its successful challenge to Law No. 7/2004 on Water Resources, legislation that had permitted the privatization of water—a resource that Islamic tradition regards as a communal right. Drawing on Article 33 of the Indonesian Constitution as well as prophetic traditions affirming water as a shared inheritance of humanity, Muhammadiyah petitioned the Constitutional Court and succeeded in securing the annulment of this law in 2015—a historic achievement in faith-based environmental legal advocacy. Since this landmark victory, Muhammadiyah has extended its legal engagement to challenge multiple additional legislative instruments, including laws governing mining, energy, and investment, on the grounds that they subordinate the public good (*maslahah*) to corporate interests. While not all of these efforts have achieved their intended outcomes, they have collectively established a new paradigm of Islamic environmental jurisprudence in which religion is positioned as a source of democratic accountability and ethical oversight of state power.

Muhammadiyah's environmentalism is fundamentally oriented toward justice rather than conservation alone. Its campaigns focus on equitable access to natural resources—particularly water and land—as well as disaster relief and resistance to extractive industry encroachment, all framed within the Islamic imperatives of *khilafah* (stewardship) and *amanah* (trust). The *Fiqh of Water* (2016), developed by the *Majelis Tarjih*, formally asserts water as a human right grounded in both Islamic law and constitutional ethics. Institutionally, the MLH has systematized this discourse through authoritative publications, including the *Fiqh of Disaster* (2015) and *Environmental Theology* (2016), which integrate Islamic jurisprudence with principles of disaster risk reduction and ecological responsibility. These *fiqh*-based frameworks elevate environmental concerns to the level of *tarjih* (authoritative deliberative judgment), embedding them within Muhammadiyah's formal doctrinal architecture.

At the grassroots level, environmental activism is coordinated through bodies such as the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC), whose mandate has expanded to include reforestation and coastal ecosystem protection. Muhammadiyah's youth organizations (e.g., *Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah/IPM*) conduct campaigns on waste management, recycling, and climate awareness, framing these activities as *amal saleh* (righteous acts) and *jihad lil-bi'ah* (environmental struggle). The MLH's agile and creative communication strategy—encompassing social media outreach, Ramadan-themed environmental campaigns, and Islamic reflections on climate—complements the more formal register of legal activism and significantly broadens public engagement by aligning sustainability with Islamic moral vision (Efendi et al., 2021).

Table 3 provides a synthesized overview of the key dimensions of Muhammadiyah's environmental activism and its broader sociopolitical implications.

Table 3. Summary of Muhammadiyah's Environmental Activism: Dimensions and Implications

Aspect	Summary Description	Key Implications
Nature of the Movement	Muhammadiyah's environmental engagement encompasses litigation, formal education, institutional reform, and public advocacy. It constitutes a faith-based justice movement anchored in Islamic ethical imperatives.	Affirms religion as a legitimate moral foundation for environmental governance and civic accountability.
Ideological Paradigm	Although Muhammadiyah did not originate as an environmental movement, it has evolved to embody a 'right-green' paradigm—religiously conservative in doctrinal values yet ecologically progressive in orientation (Efendi et al., 2021).	Demonstrates that Islamic conservatism and environmental progressivism are not inherently contradictory but can coexist synergistically.
Strategic Foundations	The movement's institutional strength derives from the coherent combination of legal advocacy, educational integration, and organizational capacity-building within a unified theological framework.	Provides a replicable model for Islamic civil society movements engaging with sustainability challenges.
Sustainability Challenges	Long-term momentum requires institutional continuity, systematic scientific collaboration, and the cultivation of broad-based social coalitions across sectors and faith communities.	Strengthening interdisciplinary partnerships among scholars, policymakers, and grassroots activists is essential for sustained environmental impact.
Overall Contribution	Despite uneven implementation across regions, Muhammadiyah has established the groundwork for a substantive Islamic ecological movement that is influencing both national environmental policy and global sustainability discourse.	Positions Muhammadiyah as a leading actor in bridging faith, justice, and ecological ethics within the Muslim world.

Source: Synthesized from Efendi et al. (2021), Wahdini et al. (2024), and related literature.

In the broader sociopolitical arena, Muhammadiyah's activism has established it as a significant moral force in Indonesia's democratic landscape. Its legal interventions and public campaigns have materially strengthened civil society's voice in environmental governance, though not without generating productive tensions. Wahdini et al. (2024) document how Muhammadiyah's theocentric paradigm frequently clashes with the state's

developmentalist priorities, particularly regarding extractive industries. Yet these contestations have been generative, stimulating regulatory reform and encouraging Muhammadiyah to deepen its collaboration with scientific communities in the ongoing development of ecologically informed fiqh.

### **Discussion: Critical Evaluation and Broader Significance**

Muhammadiyah's eco-theological trajectory illustrates how Islamic faith can serve as the foundation for a holistic, integrated model of environmental engagement—one that bridges the domains of theology, education, and activism in a coherent and mutually reinforcing manner. This section offers a critical evaluation of that model's significance, situates it within broader trends in Islamic environmentalism, and identifies both its institutional strengths and areas requiring further development.

**Holistic Eco-Theological Model.** Muhammadiyah's integration of khilafah, *al-Ma'un* theology, and *'adl* (justice) into both its pedagogy and activism exemplifies a synergistic relationship between belief, learning, and action. Environmental care is consistently framed as *ibadah* (worship) and *khidmah* (service), internalized within educational institutions and enacted through public activism ranging from eco-pesantren to constitutional litigation. This triadic model overcomes the motivational gap frequently observed in secular environmentalism by grounding ecological ethics in durable spiritual commitments that command the allegiance of community members across generations.

**Justice-Centered Environmentalism.** Muhammadiyah's approach to environmental issues is deeply and consistently justice-oriented, foregrounding questions of human dignity, rights, and equitable access to natural resources. Environmental harm is addressed simultaneously as a violation of divine trust and as a driver of social injustice—whether manifested in polluted water systems, land dispossession, or disaster vulnerability among the poor. This theo-anthropocentric framing resonates with global environmental justice movements and generates broad public legitimacy (Efendi et al., 2021). One area warranting greater attention is the risk of instrumentalizing nature primarily as a resource for human welfare, at the potential expense of non-anthropocentric ecological values. The growing incorporation of the concept of *fasad* (corruption of creation) in Muhammadiyah's discourse signals an encouraging movement toward a more intrinsically ecological ethic.

**Broader Influence in Muslim Contexts.** Within Indonesia, Muhammadiyah's environmental model has demonstrably inspired other Islamic bodies, including NU's environmental programs and MUI's fatwas on forest burning (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019). Its institutional architecture—encompassing the MLH, the Fiqh of Water, and associated publications—constitutes a replicable structural model for Islamic civil society organizations engaging with environmental challenges. Internationally, Muhammadiyah's large-scale institutional mobilization validates theoretical claims that Islamic environmentalism flourishes within democratic and organizationally capable contexts

(Foltz et al., 2003), and adds a dimension of practical implementation to more philosophically oriented global discourses on Islamic ecology.

**Challenges and Areas for Development.** Internally, Muhammadiyah faces persistent challenges related to program continuity, resource limitations, and the systematic integration of scientific expertise into religious deliberation. Efendi et al. (2021) note a pattern of institutional momentum loss following major advocacy victories—a vulnerability that underscores the need for sustained structural investment in environmental knowledge, preacher training, and MLH institutional capacity. Educationally, the development of a standardized green curriculum across Muhammadiyah's schools remains an important strategic priority. Universities within the Muhammadiyah network are well-positioned to lead curriculum design and innovation, while partnerships with other faith and cultural communities—including the integration of frameworks such as *Tri Hita Karana*—offer meaningful opportunities for interreligious collaboration and local contextual relevance (Hisyam et al., 2024).

**Implications for Islamic Education and Jurisprudence.** This case study affirms that Islamic education need not remain insular in the face of global challenges. The deliberate integration of environmental ethics into Islamic educational curricula empowers students to become morally grounded ecological leaders equipped for the demands of the twenty-first century. Muhammadiyah's model also makes a significant contribution to the evolution of *fiqh al-bi'ah* (environmental jurisprudence), demonstrating the capacity of Islamic legal reasoning to extend *ijtihad* to encompass climate, pollution, and sustainability. The model is already exerting influence beyond Indonesian borders, with NGOs in Malaysia and scholars in the Middle East citing Indonesian fatwas as sources of jurisprudential inspiration.

**Toward Islamic Sustainable Development.** Muhammadiyah is well-positioned to pioneer a comprehensive vision of Islamic sustainable development that integrates spiritual, social, and ecological imperatives. Potential future directions include the development of eco-mosques, Islamic green microfinance instruments, and the application of ecological *fiqh* to urban planning and renewable energy transitions. Realizing this vision will require sustained commitment to knowledge integration, intergenerational youth engagement, and intersectoral cooperation. With its organizational reach, institutional depth, and accumulated moral capital, Muhammadiyah has the potential to become a global exemplar of Islamic environmentalism—provided that it maintains doctrinal coherence while adapting responsively to emerging challenges.

## CONCLUSION

Muhammadiyah's evolving engagement with ecotheology and environmental activism constitutes a compelling and instructive model of faith-based response to ecological crisis—one that productively integrates theological principles, transformative educational praxis,

and sociopolitical engagement within a coherent institutional framework. This synthesis exemplifies what might be termed adaptive religious reformism: rooted in the intellectual heritage of classical Islamic teaching yet continuously reinterpreted in response to the demands of contemporary global challenges. The case of Muhammadiyah illustrates, in concrete and institutional terms, how Islamic education can simultaneously nurture spiritual integrity and ecological consciousness, equipping learners to assume the role of ethical stewards of creation. Its activist dimension, meanwhile, extends the organization's moral reach well beyond charitable service into the domains of legal reform, policy advocacy, and environmental governance.

This holistic eco-theological model, though still in the process of maturation and consolidation, has generated tangible outcomes: measurable increases in environmental awareness, meaningful institutional policy transformations, and legal achievements that have materially safeguarded natural resources from corporate encroachment. More fundamentally, Muhammadiyah's model contributes to the global discourse on Islam and ecology by offering a contextually grounded, organizationally replicable, and theologically robust framework that other Muslim communities and Islamic civil society organizations may draw upon and adapt. The study acknowledges, however, significant limitations: its reliance on secondary literature means that it cannot offer the granular empirical assessment of implementation variability across Muhammadiyah's institutions that longitudinal field research would provide. Future studies would benefit substantially from primary empirical investigation into the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of Muhammadiyah's environmental initiatives across diverse regional and institutional contexts.

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