

Strategies of Islamic Education Teachers in Building Students' Ecological Awareness at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strategies of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in fostering ecological awareness among students at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba. Ecological awareness is an essential aspect in shaping a young generation that is environmentally conscious, in line with Islamic principles that emphasize human responsibility as khalifah (stewards) on earth. This research employs a qualitative approach with field study methods through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation conducted between late June and early August 2025. The findings indicate that PAI teachers develop strategies based on the integration of religious values with practical activities, such as thematic learning using environmental verses, school cleanliness projects, and instilling ecological responsibility through teachers' exemplary conduct. These findings affirm the role of PAI teachers as agents of change capable of nurturing students' environmental awareness through educational, religious, and participatory approaches.

Keywords:

Islamic Education Teachers; Learning Strategies; Ecological Awareness; Environmental Education; SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba

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Introduction

Environmental degradation has become a global concern over the past few decades. Climate change, deforestation, water and air pollution, as well as the decline of biodiversity indicate that nature is currently in a state of crisis [1]. This phenomenon demands a paradigm shift in the way humans treat the environment, not merely for economic interests but also for the sustainability of life [2].

In the Indonesian context, environmental problems are highly complex as they are influenced by various factors such as rapid population growth, urbanization, industrialization, and the lack of public awareness in maintaining ecosystem balance [3]. Plastic waste, flooding due to the loss of water catchment areas, and forest destruction are concrete examples of problems faced daily. This situation calls for the active role of all elements of the nation, including educational institutions, in fostering ecological awareness among the younger generation [4].

Education is considered a strategic instrument for instilling ecological awareness from an early age. Schools, as formal institutions, hold the responsibility not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape students' character to care for the environment. Thus, the learning process in schools needs to be directed toward strengthening ecological values through contextual and applicable approaches [5].

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) holds a significant position in this effort. Islamic teachings do not only regulate the relationship between humans and Allah (*hablumminallah*) and among human beings (*hablumminannas*), but also the relationship between humans and nature. The concept of *khalifah fil ardh* (stewards on earth) emphasizes the role of humans in protecting and preserving the environment as a trust from Allah [6]. Therefore, PAI has great potential to internalize ecological values among students through spiritual and moral approaches.

PAI teachers carry a dual responsibility: as instructors of religious knowledge and as role models in daily life. Their role extends beyond the delivery of subject matter to the shaping of students' attitudes, behaviors, and awareness. With pedagogical creativity, PAI teachers can integrate environmental issues into religious education, for example by linking Qur'anic verses prohibiting corruption of the earth with practical activities such as maintaining school cleanliness [2].

Previous studies have shown that religion-based education is effective in enhancing students' ecological awareness. However, the implementation of such strategies varies according to school context, student characteristics, and teachers' creativity. Therefore, more specific research is needed to examine how PAI teachers in particular schools, including SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba, develop strategies to build students' ecological awareness.

SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba is a junior high school located within an agrarian society. Although the surrounding environment remains relatively close to nature, the challenges of modernization have made some students less attentive to cleanliness and environmental preservation. This condition requires teachers, particularly PAI teachers, to adopt appropriate approaches in nurturing environmental awareness.

In this school context, PAI teachers attempt to integrate religious learning with practical activities, such as school-cleaning programs, greening initiatives, and simple waste management practices. In addition, they utilize Qur'anic verses and relevant hadiths on environmental themes as a medium for students' reflection. This demonstrates the existence of specific strategies employed by teachers to foster students' ecological awareness in a sustainable manner.

Through this research, the author seeks to explore the strategies adopted by PAI teachers in developing ecological awareness among students at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba, the approaches utilized, and their impact on students' behavioral changes. The focus is directed toward teachers' efforts to connect religious teachings with tangible actions observable in daily school life.

Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic educational theory and practice that is responsive to environmental issues. Moreover, the findings may serve as a reference for PAI teachers in other schools in designing learning strategies capable of shaping a young generation that is not only intellectually and spiritually competent but also environmentally conscious and responsible.

Literature Review

The body of literature demonstrates that religious education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' ecological awareness. Islamic teachings encompass ecological principles that emphasize balance, the prohibition of environmental destruction, and the obligation of humankind to preserve the earth [7]. In line with this, the integration of religious values into environmental education has been shown to increase students' concern for nature [8]. Meanwhile, it has been argued that character-based education can only be effective when teachers are able to translate values into real-life practices, rather than confining them to theoretical discourse [9]. Previous studies have also highlighted the importance of participatory strategies in fostering ecological awareness, such as collective activities (*gotong royong*), school greening initiatives, and community-based waste management programs [6].

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach with a field study method. The research subjects consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and students at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with PAI teachers and several students as the primary informants, conducted between late June and early August 2025. In addition, the researcher carried out classroom observations of teaching activities as well as students' practices in the school environment. Documentation, including activity notes, photographs, and school archives, was also utilized to support the findings.

The collected data were analyzed using the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [10]. Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation, along with member checking by confirming interview results with the informants.

3.1 Integration of Islamic Values in Ecological Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba

The findings reveal that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba have successfully integrated Islamic values into the teaching process related to ecological awareness. This integration is reflected in the teachers' efforts to connect learning materials with Qur'anic verses that address the prohibition of corruption on earth, the importance of cleanliness, and human responsibility as *khalifah*. In this way, PAI functions not merely as a normative subject but also as an instrument for instilling ecological attitudes grounded in religious values.

In practice, PAI teachers often begin lessons by reading and interpreting Qur'anic verses relevant to environmental themes. For instance, QS. Al-A'raf: 56 emphasizes the prohibition of creating corruption on earth, while QS. Ar-Rum: 41 highlights the consequences of environmental destruction caused by human actions. Teachers then relate these verses to students' immediate environmental issues, such as littering or lack of classroom cleanliness. This contextualization makes learning more meaningful for students.

In an interview on July 3, 2025, one PAI teacher stated: *"We want students to understand that Islam is not only about ritual worship, but also about how they treat nature. Every act that damages the environment is a violation of God's trust."* This statement illustrates how PAI teachers seek to build students' awareness by linking spiritual and moral dimensions to environmental care.

Integration of Islamic values in ecological learning is also carried out through classroom discussions. Teachers present environmental cases, both local and global, and invite students to analyze them from a religious perspective. For example, when discussing the recurring floods

in the area, teachers emphasize that beyond natural factors, human negligence in maintaining river cleanliness plays a significant role. Such discussions encourage students to view environmental issues not only as technical problems but also as moral and religious concerns.

Field observations show that PAI teachers apply an inductive approach in integrating Islamic values. Students are invited to observe environmental phenomena, after which teachers explain their relevance to Qur'anic verses or hadiths. For instance, when students observe piles of garbage in the school yard, they are reminded that the Prophet emphasized cleanliness as part of faith. This strategy makes it easier for students to internalize ecological values as they are tied to their daily experiences.

In addition, reflective strategies are employed. Students are asked to write about their experiences in maintaining cleanliness or conserving water at home, and then compare them with Islamic teachings discussed in class. In this way, students not only understand Islamic values cognitively but also reflect upon and apply them in everyday actions. This reflection reinforces the awareness that ecological behavior is an integral part of religious practice.

The role of teachers as role models is a crucial aspect of this integration. PAI teachers consistently demonstrate environmental care by disposing of waste properly, tidying up classrooms, and reminding students to maintain the cleanliness of the school mosque. Such modeling has a strong impact, as students see that what is taught is also practiced. In an interview on July 12, 2025, one student noted: *"When our PAI teacher helps clean the mosque, we feel ashamed if we don't join. The teacher becomes a real example for us."*

The integration of Islamic values has also fostered collective attitudes among students. Observations indicate that students have begun to remind peers not to litter or to keep their classrooms clean. This suggests that the internalization of Islamic values does not stop at the individual level but extends to collective awareness, reinforcing a culture of environmental care within the school.

Analysis of these findings indicates that the strategies of PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba align with the concept of holistic education, which connects cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. The Islamic values integrated into learning are not only understood theoretically but are also practiced in concrete behaviors. Thus, students' ecological awareness emerges not from coercion but from the belief that protecting the environment is part of obedience to God.

Based on the research findings and existing literature, it can be concluded that the integration of Islamic values into ecological learning by PAI teachers is an effective strategy for fostering students' ecological awareness. This process combines religious, moral, and practical dimensions, enabling students to possess both spiritual grounding and tangible motivation to care for the environment. These results affirm that Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in addressing ecological challenges in the modern era.

3.2 School Cleanliness and Greening Programs Led by PAI Teachers

The findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba play an active role in initiating and guiding school cleanliness and greening programs. These initiatives are designed as part of practical learning that integrates religious values with concrete actions. Through such activities, students not only learn the concept of cleanliness as part of faith but also practice it in their daily school environment.

The cleanliness program is implemented routinely through classroom duty schedules and scheduled environmental cleaning activities. PAI teachers supervise and participate directly in these activities, enabling students to experience both closeness and role modeling. The teachers' presence reinforces the awareness that protecting the environment is not merely a formal obligation but an expression of Islamic teaching.

In an interview on July 25, 2025, one student noted: *"When the school cleaning activities are led by our PAI teacher, he also sweeps, collects garbage, and waters plants. It makes us feel that this activity is not just a task but truly an act of worship."* This statement underscores

the significance of the teacher as a real-life example, which strengthens students' motivation to actively participate.

The greening program is also central to fostering students' ecological awareness. PAI teachers collaborate with the school and students to plant flowers, shade trees, and maintain small gardens around the mosque and school yard. These activities serve not only as greening projects but also as practical lessons in caring for Allah's creation.

Observations in early August 2025 revealed increasing student involvement in maintaining school plants. Students took turns watering flowers, cleaning pots, and monitoring plant growth. PAI teachers consistently emphasized that every small effort to care for plants constitutes a good deed. Thus, the greening program goes beyond aesthetics, functioning as a medium for shaping students' ecological character.

The program is further reinforced through religious activities. For instance, after performing congregational *shalat dhuha*, PAI teachers encouraged students to conduct short communal cleanups around the mosque. This activity illustrates the integration of ritual worship with socio-ecological worship. The integration fosters student understanding that cleanliness and greening are integral aspects of holistic faith.

In an interview on July 30, 2025, one teacher stated that students' participation in cleanliness and greening programs positively affected their behavior outside school. Some students reported that they began to consistently dispose of waste properly at home and assist their parents in cleaning the yard. These findings suggest the transfer of ecological values from school to family life, broadening the impact of environmental education.

Pedagogically, the cleanliness and greening programs led by PAI teachers reflect an *experiential learning* approach, in which students learn through direct experience. Instead of merely receiving theory, students actively engage in maintaining the environment. This process strengthens value internalization as it simultaneously involves cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

Further analysis shows that the implementation of these programs faced challenges such as limited facilities, lack of awareness among some students, and weather conditions. However, PAI teachers addressed these challenges through persuasive and motivational approaches, linking them with religious values so that students developed spiritual reasons for protecting the environment. This strategy proved more effective than simply issuing instructions.

In conclusion, the cleanliness and greening programs led by PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba represent practical strategies for sustainably fostering students' ecological awareness. The school has become a religiously oriented ecological learning space where students not only study Islamic teachings cognitively but also apply them in tangible acts of environmental care. This finding affirms that religious education makes a significant contribution to shaping a younger generation that is environmentally conscious and responsible.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering students' ecological awareness at SMP Negeri 1 Bangun Purba are carried out through two main approaches: the integration of Islamic values into classroom learning and the implementation of school cleanliness and greening programs. Both strategies have proven effective in linking religious teachings with practical actions while actively engaging students in environmental care activities. The PAI teachers act as facilitators, motivators, and role models, enabling students not only to understand ecological values conceptually but also to practice them in their daily lives. Accordingly, religious education holds great potential in strengthening the ecological awareness of young generations at the junior high school level.

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