

Awakening Environmental Responsibility in Youth Through Islamic Values in Green Governance Education

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Submitted: 09-07-2025

Revised : 24-10-2025

Accepted: 11-11-2025

ABSTRACT. This study investigates how Islamic values can foster environmental responsibility and influence youth behavior within the context of green governance education. Despite the expansion of global and national environmental policies, their effectiveness is often limited by weak ethical engagement and a lack of value-based education at the grassroots level. Existing research typically focuses on policy frameworks or institutional reforms, neglecting the potential of faith-based education to transform student awareness. To address this gap, the present study employs a qualitative case study design rooted in Social Justice Theory in Islam (Choudhury, 2020), which views humans as *khalifah* (stewards) responsible for upholding *adl* (justice) and *tawazun* (balance) in all aspects of life. Data were gathered through three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 28 university students from South Sumatra, Indonesia, representing two universities that actively participate in the UI GreenMetric program. Thematic analysis revealed that students' comprehension of Islamic environmental ethics transcended mere conceptual understanding, translating into responsible consumption, community engagement, and peer-led sustainability initiatives. These findings demonstrate that participatory Islamic pedagogy can cultivate moral leadership and ecological consciousness, positioning students as active advocates for environmental justice. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of how Islamic ethical principles are applied within green governance education, an area seldom explored in higher education. The results emphasize the need for Islamic education policy to incorporate faith-based environmental ethics into curricula, promoting spiritually grounded and sustainability-oriented youth leadership.

Keywords: *Adl, Tawazun, Khalifah, Environmental ethics, Green governance.*

 <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i4.2263>

How to Cite Andriana, I., Zamroni, M. A., Thamrin, K. M. H., Kalsum, U., Fuadah, L. L., Rifanka, N. S., ... Usman, F. (2025). Awakening Environmental Responsibility in Youth Through Islamic Values in Green Governance Education. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(4), 650–660.

INTRODUCTION

The escalating environmental crisis, evident in climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecological degradation, demands a transformative shift in public awareness and governance systems. Although global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stress the importance of balancing economic growth with environmental preservation, many developing nations struggle with a persistent implementation gap. In Indonesia, this gap is characterized by inconsistent policy enforcement, unregulated industrialization, and an overreliance on extractive

industries, all of which undermine sustainability goals (Zhironkin & Cehlár, 2022). Rapid urbanization and industrial expansion, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas like Sumatra and Kalimantan, have led to increased deforestation rates, declining air quality, and ecosystem disruption. These issues demonstrate that environmental degradation is not merely a technical problem; it is also a moral and governance challenge that requires a fundamental reorientation of values at both institutional and individual levels.

Green governance has emerged as a strategic approach to integrate sustainability into administrative and policy frameworks. It prioritizes participation, accountability, and transparency in natural resource management to ensure equitable outcomes for both current and future generations (Pirmana et al., 2021). However, its effectiveness largely depends on how well citizens, especially the youth, embrace the ethical aspects of environmental responsibility. Without this moral foundation, green governance risks becoming merely a bureaucratic ideal rather than a transformative practice. Research indicates that sustainability initiatives often focus on economically advanced urban areas, leaving peripheral regions to face environmental injustice, weak institutional capacity, and limited community participation (Siddiki & Ambrose, 2023). This disparity highlights the necessity for a more inclusive and value-driven approach that aligns with local contexts and moral traditions. Indonesia's demographic advantage, characterized by a youthful population with a strong cultural and religious identity, presents significant potential for ecological transformation (Seftiani et al., 2025). Engaging the youth is essential, as they are the generation most affected by environmental decline and are also the most capable of driving innovation and advocacy. However, environmental education in Indonesia primarily focuses on cognitive aspects, prioritizing scientific knowledge over ethical and spiritual responsibility. This education gap has led scholars to advocate for a paradigm shift toward ethical environmental education that integrates knowledge, faith, and practice. Incorporating Islamic values into green governance education offers a pathway for this shift, creating a holistic framework that links ecological stewardship with moral accountability and spiritual growth.

Islamic teachings present a comprehensive worldview in which nature is viewed as a divine trust (*amanah*), with humans acting as *kebalifah* (stewards) tasked with maintaining balance (*tawazun*) and justice (*adl*) within creation. The Qur'an consistently warns against *fasad* (corruption) on Earth, underscoring the importance of moderation, gratitude, and environmental protection as acts of worship. This ethical framework aligns with global discussions on intergenerational equity and sustainable development, highlighting Islam's strong compatibility with ecological ethics (Hanic & Smolo, 2023). In this context, Islamic education has the transformative potential to shape students' environmental consciousness, enabling them to engage not only as learners but also as moral agents. Recent initiatives like Indonesia's "Green Pesantren" movement highlight the role of faith-based education in fostering ecological awareness. These programs incorporate sustainability practices, such as waste management, tree planting, and renewable energy use, into religious learning environments, instilling a sense of communal and spiritual responsibility toward the planet (Maghfiroh et al., 2024). However, most initiatives focus exclusively on "Pesantren" contexts, overlooking universities where future policymakers, business leaders, and educators are trained. There is a lack of studies examining how Islamic environmental ethics can be systematically integrated into higher education governance frameworks, especially within the context of green governance. Addressing this gap is essential, as universities not only produce knowledge but also serve as microcosms of social change, capable of modelling sustainable practices.

Earlier studies on green governance often take a top-down approach, focusing primarily on policy compliance and infrastructure development. However, they tend to overlook the moral and psychological aspects of environmental responsibility (Shah & Asghar, 2024). In contrast, this study emphasizes youth as ethical agents, highlighting how Islamic education promotes internal moral transformation that leads to behavioral change. The core argument is that true environmental responsibility cannot be enforced solely through regulations; it must be cultivated through a moral awakening rooted in faith and ethical awareness. This study employs the Social Justice Theory in

Islam (Choudhury, 2020) as its theoretical framework. This theory posits that all creation is interconnected under divine law, and that humans, as stewards of God's creation, bear the responsibility to maintain harmony (*tawazun*) and justice (*adl*) in all interactions. It provides a valuable lens for understanding how Islamic ethical principles influence students' perceptions of justice, responsibility, and stewardship. In this context, *khalifah* is not merely a status but an active role that entails social, ecological, and spiritual accountability. By integrating this Islamic concept with principles of green governance, such as participation, equity, and sustainability, environmental responsibility is framed within a distinctly moral and faith-based context.

This study positions Islamic education as both a pedagogical and ethical vehicle for cultivating environmentally conscious youth. It examines how integrating Islamic values into university-level education and sustainability programs can foster ecological responsibility and reshape students' worldviews. The study analyzes behavioral outcomes and explores the cognitive and spiritual processes through which students internalize these values. Its novelty lies in presenting the first systematic exploration of how Islamic ethical constructs, namely *khalifah*, *adl*, and *maslahah*, are operationalized within the framework of green governance education in Indonesian universities. The goal of this study is to bridge the gap between Islamic ethics and environmental governance, contributing to both educational theory and sustainability practice. By fostering environmental responsibility in youth through faith-based learning, the study advocates for an educational model that transcends technical sustainability metrics and promotes an integrated vision of ecological stewardship, social justice, and spiritual accountability. In doing so, it enriches the discourse on the role of religion in shaping sustainable societies, demonstrating that environmental consciousness, rooted in moral conviction, can act as a catalyst for transformative green governance in Indonesia and beyond.

This study aims to explore how Islamic educational values influence student perspectives and behaviors regarding environmental justice and sustainability. It specifically examines how students internalize Islamic ethical concepts and translate them into environmental concern and moral agency. Through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with university students from South Sumatra, the study investigates how teachings such as *khalifah* (stewardship), *tawazun* (balance), and *adl* (justice) are applied in daily ecological practices and advocacy. This qualitative approach, reflecting the participatory nature of Islamic pedagogy, provides a contextual understanding of how faith-based values shape environmental consciousness and behavior. Unlike previous study that focuses on policy or institutional change, this study emphasizes the transformation of student identity from passive recipients of knowledge to active *khalifah* committed to ecological justice. The novelty of this paper lies in its systematic analysis of integrating Islamic values into green governance education, an area not comprehensively explored in higher education. By linking Islamic spiritual ethics with sustainability education, this study proposes a new framework for fostering environmentally responsible Muslim youth and enriches both Islamic educational discourse and environmental governance scholarship.

METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design, as described by Morse (2020), to examine how Islamic values are internalized and how they influence students' perceptions of green governance and environmental responsibility. The qualitative design enabled the researchers to delve into complex moral reasoning and contextual interpretations within natural educational settings, providing a comprehensive understanding of how faith-based ethics are translated into environmental behavior. The study was conducted from February to May 2024 at universities in South Sumatra, Indonesia, including two state universities that actively implement the UI GreenMetric World University Ranking framework. The GreenMetric initiative, developed by Atici et al. (2021), assesses global universities based on six sustainability criteria: infrastructure, energy, waste, water, transportation, and education (Ghanbarpour et al., 2024). South Sumatra was selected as the case site due to its moderate Environmental Quality Index (BPS, 2023) and its

environmental challenges stemming from industrial expansion and palm oil monoculture. As one of Indonesia's leading palm oil-producing provinces, following Riau and North Sumatra (Shigetomi et al., 2020), South Sumatra grapples with deforestation, biodiversity loss, and water pollution, making it a crucial setting for studying how Islamic educational values shape ecological awareness and green governance.

The participants in this study were university students from GreenMetric affiliated campuses in South Sumatra. A purposive sampling technique was utilized, based on the framework established by Ahmad & Wilkins (2025), to select individuals with relevant knowledge and active engagement in sustainability issues. The inclusion criteria required participants to (1) be currently enrolled in a GreenMetric university and (2) have completed at least one course on "Green Management and Sustainability." Initially, 100 students from semesters one through eight were invited to participate. Out of these, 28 students voluntarily consented and met the inclusion criteria, forming the final sample for data collection. The small number of participants was a result of their willingness and availability to engage in extended group discussions, aligning with qualitative case study protocols that prioritize depth of inquiry over sample size. Data saturation was reached during the third focus group discussion (FGD), indicating that no new information emerged and confirming the adequacy of the participant pool. Additionally, the limited number of participants reflects the regional context, as only two state universities in South Sumatra are officially involved in the GreenMetric program, which narrows the pool of eligible respondents.

Three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted, each featuring 8–10 participants. The discussions focused on key themes of Islamic environmental ethics: *kehalifahan* (stewardship), *maslahah* (public benefit), *adl* (justice), and personal ecological responsibility. The FGD format was selected for its compatibility with the dialogical and participatory nature of Islamic pedagogy, facilitating collaborative reflection and moral reasoning among participants. Alongside the FGDs, data were collected through non-participant observation and document analysis. Observations occurred during student-led environmental initiatives, campus green programs, and mosque eco-seminars, highlighting how students applied Islamic principles in real-world situations. The document analysis involved reviewing university curricula, sustainability project portfolios, and institutional GreenMetric reports to correlate behavioral data with policy and pedagogical frameworks. Data analysis adhered to the six-phase thematic analysis framework outlined by Trainor & Bundon (2021), which includes familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. NVivo software was utilized to facilitate coding and organize themes. To ensure research trustworthiness, Maxwell (2020) has four validity criteria, which are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, were applied. Credibility was enhanced through member checking, allowing participants to verify key interpretations, and through peer debriefing with Islamic education lecturers, which improved theoretical coherence and reflexivity.

The findings indicate that, from a policy and curriculum perspective, while GreenMetric universities promote sustainability metrics, Islamic environmental ethics are largely absent from formal curricula. Green initiatives often take the form of extracurricular activities rather than being integrated into institutional frameworks. This highlights the need for better alignment between sustainability frameworks and Islamic educational mandates. University leaders and curriculum developers should incorporate Islamic eco-ethics, such as stewardship, justice, and moderation, into teaching content and governance strategies. Additionally, experiential learning models, including mosque-based environmental campaigns, Qur'an-centered eco-literacy programs, and student-led green projects, should be institutionalized to enhance moral internalization. Furthermore, fostering collaborative networks among Islamic universities could promote the exchange of best practices and support the integration of faith-based social justice principles into national green governance policies.

In summary, this study's methodological design and findings offer a solid understanding of how Islamic values shape students' environmental attitudes and actions. While it is limited by its scale and reliance on self-reported data, the study presents a replicable model for integrating faith,

pedagogy, and sustainability in higher education. Additionally, it provides a valuable framework for policymakers and educators aiming to foster environmentally responsible Muslim youth through spiritually anchored governance education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study's results were derived from three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 28 university students from campuses in South Sumatra that participate in GreenMetric. In addition to the FGDs, supporting data were gathered through observations of environmental programs, analysis of campus policy documents, and examination of curricula content related to Islamic environmental ethics. The findings are thematically organized and framed within the Islamic ethical constructs of *khalifah*, *tawazun*, and *adl*, which served as the analytical categories.

Theme 1: *khalifah* as a moral identity in environmental awareness

Across all three FGDs, students enthusiastically embraced the concept of *khalifah* as a vital aspect of their identity as Muslims. For them, being a *khalifah* (vicegerent or steward on Earth) was not just an abstract religious metaphor, but a direct moral command from Allah that guided their behavior in everyday environmental situations. This deep moral grounding revealed a significant internalization of ecological responsibility through Islamic values.

“When I throw waste in the wrong place, I feel like I’m betraying my *amanah* as a *khalifah*.” (Participant 3, FGD A)

Participants consistently linked environmental neglect to a spiritual failure. They viewed seemingly trivial actions—such as leaving the tap running or using excessive plastic—as ethical violations that contradicted their divine responsibilities. Many students equated environmental misbehavior with *fasād* (corruption) and expressed regret over previous habits before understanding their role as *khalifah*.

“Before I learned this in our class, I thought throwing away one straw didn’t matter. Now I realize it’s *fasād*. We are warned against that in the Qur’an.” (Participant 1, FGD B)

Their understanding of *khalifah* extended beyond individual behavior to encompass community-oriented leadership. Many respondents spoke about mentoring younger students, initiating green events in their campus youth groups, or leading social media campaigns that connected environmental action with Islamic teachings.

“I post about clean rivers using Islamic quotes. People respond more when you say it’s a duty from God.” (Participant 5, FGD C)

Notably, the *khalifah* identity also empowered students to feel more confident and accountable. Instead of waiting for institutional intervention, several participants felt that their religious identity compelled them to take the initiative.

“Even if the university doesn’t run a campaign, I must start it. As a Muslim, I can’t wait around. The Earth is my *amanah*,” (Participant 6, FGD A)

Field observations supported these assertions. Students were seen independently organizing waste-sorting drives, leading FGDs sessions focused on environmental justice, and starting community garden projects. The findings from this theme suggest that the concept of *khalifah* is not only understood intellectually but is actively practiced behaviorally. This indicates a high degree of value internalization—a key outcome of transformative Islamic environmental education. In this view, environmental stewardship is not just a public act but a private devotion, linking religious belief with civic and ecological responsibility.

Theme 2: *Tawazun* as a framework for balanced living

The concept of *tawazun* (balance) prominently emerged in discussions about students' personal consumption habits, energy use, and lifestyle choices. Students interpreted *tawazun* as a call for moderation and harmony—not only in ecological practices but also in their everyday lives. Most participants connected this value to Qur’anic verses that caution against *israf* (wastefulness) and *ghulw* (excessiveness).

“*Tawazun* is about being simple. I try to eat enough, not more than I need, because wastefulness is a sin,” (Participant 2, FGD B)

Some respondents shared that after being introduced to Islamic sustainability values through classes or campus events, they reduced meat consumption, embraced minimalism in shopping, or opted for public transportation instead of private motorcycles. These changes were framed not as trends or part of environmental movements, but as expressions of religious obedience.

“Turning off the light or carrying a tumbler is not just about saving money—it’s part of my religion. It shows I’m living in balance,” (Participant 4, FGD C)

During campus-based eco-seminars, students were encouraged to connect the concept of *tawazun* with broader ecological cycles, such as water use, food systems, and biodiversity. Several participants noted how the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used minimal water for ablution and avoided hoarding natural resources, providing a model for environmental balance.

Observations during campus events highlighted eco-literacy campaigns where students utilized hashtags like #BalanceYourFaith to promote sustainable choices online. This illustrates how *tawazun* has become a motivating ethical compass, inspiring environmentally responsible behaviors rooted in Islamic teachings.

Theme 3: Adl as an Ethical Foundation for Environmental Justice

Students expressed significant concern regarding *adl* (justice) in relation to environmental degradation, resource inequality, and harm to future generations. Many viewed environmental damage as a violation of divine justice, particularly when marginalized communities bear the brunt of pollution, flooding, or deforestation.

“My village is near a palm oil plantation. The river is dirty, but the owners live in clean cities. That’s not *adl*,” (Participant 3, FGD A)

This moral perspective extended to the impact on future generations. Several respondents pointed out that irresponsible use of natural resources today harms unborn people, which they regarded as spiritually unjust. They referenced Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 205— “And when he turns away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals”—to argue that environmental destruction constitutes a form of *zulm* (oppression).

During group discussions, students emphasized that practicing *adl* entails speaking out, acting, and promoting fair policies, even at the student level. Some initiated petitions to ban single-use plastics in their canteens, while others began monitoring waste segregation practices in dormitories.

“*Adl* means responsibility. If we know the harm but say nothing, we are also unjust,” (Participant 1, FGD B)

Campus documents indicated that several environmental policy changes were implemented following student advocacy, including the establishment of green accountability teams to track energy consumption and water usage. These initiatives reflect a dynamic understanding of justice that encompasses ecological, theological, and social dimensions.

Table 1. Thematic Findings Based on Islamic Environmental Ethics

Theme	Key Islamic Value	FGD Insight (Student Voices)	Observed Behaviors
1. Moral Identity of <i>Khalifah</i>	<i>Khalifah</i>	“Throwing trash is betraying my <i>amanah</i> as a <i>khalifah</i> .”	Joined clean-up drives, led green seminars/FGDs, designed faith-based eco-campaigns
2. Balanced Lifestyle through <i>Tawazun</i>	<i>Tawazun</i>	“ <i>Tawazun</i> is turning off lights, carrying a tumbler—it’s worship.”	Practiced minimalism, eco-purchases,

3. Justice in Environmental Action	in <i>Adl</i>	“Pollution that harms villagers is injustice. We must act.”	promoted green behavior via social media Advocated green policy, petitioned for waste bans, formed environmental monitoring teams
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Discussion

This discussion interprets the findings of the study through the lens of Social Justice Theory in Islam (Choudhury, 2020), which asserts that all of creation is interconnected under divine law. Humans, as *khalifah* (vicegerents), bear an ethical responsibility to uphold justice (*adl*) and balance (*tawazun*) in their relationship with the environment. Results from FGDs with 28 university students across three GreenMetric campuses in South Sumatra revealed that Islamic values are deeply ingrained as moral drivers that shape environmental attitudes and behaviors. The three central themes, which are *khalifah*, *tawazun*, and *adl* how spiritual principles translate into ecological action through a transformative learning process rooted in faith-based education. Students demonstrated that being a *khalifah* is not merely an abstract theological concept but an active ethical identity that informs their daily environmental practices. Their expressions, such as feeling they “betray an *amanah*” when littering, reflect a profound sense of divine accountability, consistent with the Islamic understanding that stewardship (*khalifah*) entails responsibility for all of God’s creations. This finding supports Hajar’s (2024) argument that Islamic education can enhance ecological consciousness by linking moral agency with spiritual accountability. Similarly, Bsoul et al. (2022) found that Islamic ethics promote sustainable living by framing environmental care as a sacred trust rather than a secular obligation. In this study, *khalifah* identity empowered students to take initiative, leading green campaigns, mentoring peers, and initiating waste management how internalized faith-based values can foster self-driven ecological leadership. This moral activation aligns with Junaidah et al. (2025) observation that “Green Madrasa” programs cultivate youth empowerment through participatory Islamic eco-pedagogy.

The principle of *tawazun* enhances the process of moral awakening by promoting balance and moderation in consumption, energy use, and lifestyle choices. Students’ reflections, such as “turning off the light is part of my religion,” exemplify the lived embodiment of moderation (*wasatiyyah*), echoing the Qur’anic call to avoid *israf* (extravagance) and maintain harmony between material and spiritual needs (Q.S. Al-A’raf: 31). This moderation aligns with Khan & Haneef (2022) assertion that Islamic cosmology recognizes balance as the foundation of sustainable development, connecting environmental practices with spiritual ethics. Participants’ commitment to eco-friendly behaviors, such as minimalism, reduced consumption, and waste reduction, indicates that *tawazun* serves as an ethical compass that harmonizes Islamic faith with ecological awareness. Additionally, the findings support Muslih (2025), who found that fostering moderation in environmental education boosts students’ moral motivation for sustainability. By framing sustainability as a religious act rather than merely a scientific principle, students positioned *tawazun* as both a personal discipline and a social ethic. This faith-based understanding of balance transforms environmental awareness into a moral obligation that promotes holistic well-being. In line with Amin et al. (2024), who emphasized the integration of Islamic ethics into sustainability curricula, the current findings demonstrate that religious principles can effectively drive behavioral change by embedding environmental responsibility within daily worship and moral identity.

The theme of *adl* (justice) illustrates that students view environmental degradation as a moral and theological injustice (*zulum*), particularly when it impacts marginalized communities. Their concerns about pollution, resource inequality, and intergenerational harm demonstrate a sophisticated ethical reasoning that links ecological issues with divine justice. This perspective aligns with R’boul (2021) assertion that Islamic justice theory encompasses social, ecological, and

spiritual dimensions of equity. Students emphasized that *adl* necessitates not only awareness but also action, as evidenced by their petitions to ban single-use plastics and their participation in campus environmental monitoring. These efforts reflect the *amal saleh* (righteous deeds) aspect of justice, where faith is expressed through civic engagement and environmental advocacy. This aligns with Maghfiroh et al. (2024), who found that students in “Green Pesantren” view environmental activism as an expression of religious justice and moral responsibility. Within the framework of Social Justice Theory in Islam, *adl* serves as both an ethical and relational principle, urging individuals to restore balance when environmental harm disrupts the divine order. Thus, environmental protection transcends mere compliance with sustainability norms; it is an act of worship and justice towards creation (*haqq al-bi’ah*). This perspective broadens the understanding of justice beyond anthropocentric definitions, positioning students as moral agents who advocate for the rights of nature as an integral part of their faith.

Interpreting these findings considering existing literature on Islamic education and green governance underscores the potential of faith-based pedagogy to instill ecological ethics in young people. Unlike traditional sustainability education, which primarily focuses on cognitive knowledge, Islamic eco-pedagogy emphasizes the cultivation of spiritual consciousness (*taqwa*) and ethical praxis (*amal*). Through dialogical and participatory learning, students can reshape their worldviews to align with principles of divine stewardship and moral justice. This approach resonates with the transformative learning model, where learners transition from passive awareness to active engagement through critical reflection rooted in values (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). Moreover, this study adds to the growing discourse linking religious ethics to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 13 (climate action). Gulzar et al. (2021) argue that integrating Islamic environmental ethics into governance frameworks enhances moral accountability and fosters collective action, a notion supported by the evidence of student-led initiatives and eco-advocacy presented in this study. The students' ability to connect spiritual duty with environmental policy activism illustrates how Islamic education can foster “ethical governance from below.” This idea is further reinforced by Arismaya (2023), who found that faith-based sustainability frameworks improve institutional accountability in Indonesian universities.

This study enhances the Social Justice Theory in Islam by demonstrating how its core principles, *khalifah*, *tawazun*, and *adl* can be effectively applied in educational settings. Choudhury (2020) model highlights the interconnectedness of moral, social, and ecological systems through the lens of divine justice. This research illustrates that promoting such interconnectedness is achievable through participatory pedagogy. The transformative experiences of students reveal that justice in Islam extends beyond human rights and utilitarian efficiency; it encompasses the balance of the entire ecosystem. This comprehensive understanding of justice positions education as a vital arena for realizing divine order, bridging theological ethics with practical governance. By integrating green governance education into Islamic pedagogy, universities can cultivate a moral economy where ecological stewardship and social responsibility are embraced as acts of faith. In this context, institutions participating in UI GreenMetric can serve as laboratories for creating a new model of Islamic sustainability education grounded in *adl* and *tawazun*.

In conclusion, this study successfully examines how Islamic educational values influence student perspectives and behaviors regarding environmental justice and sustainability. It reveals that Islamic values serve as both cognitive and behavioral catalysts for environmental responsibility. The internalization of *khalifah*, *tawazun*, and *adl* enhances students' awareness, transforming them from passive learners into active stewards of the Earth and aligning their moral consciousness with sustainable behavior. This indicates that when Islamic values are taught through contextual and participatory education, they foster not only ecological literacy but also ethical integrity and social accountability. Thus, Islamic education emerges as a transformative means of embedding sustainability within moral consciousness, creating a framework where faith and environmental governance coexist harmoniously. This approach nurtures a generation of spiritually grounded, socially just, and ecologically responsible Muslim youth.

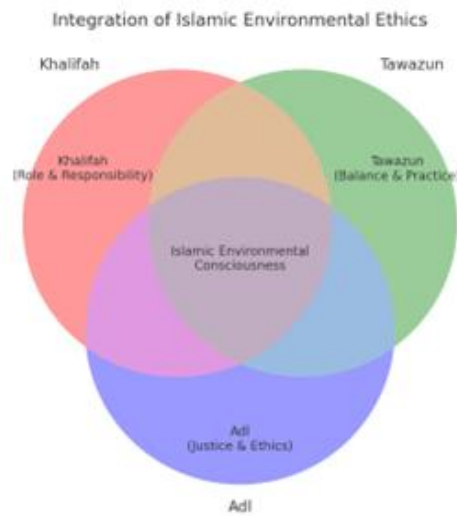


Figure 1. The Integration of Islamic Environmental Ethics

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that university students in South Sumatra have significantly internalized Islamic environmental ethics, particularly the values of *khalifah* (stewardship), *tawazun* (balance), and *adl* (justice). These values serve as practical moral foundations that guide their ecological awareness and behavior. Instead of viewing these principles as abstract theological concepts, students have embraced them as living ethics, reflected in sustainable daily practices, peer-led initiatives, and faith-driven civic engagement. This finding directly addresses the study's primary objective: to explore how Islamic educational values influence youth perspectives and behaviors regarding environmental justice and sustainability. It shows that when Islamic pedagogy is contextualized and participatory, it fosters profound ethical transformation, aligning spiritual consciousness with ecological responsibility (Junaidah et al., 2025).

These findings highlight the importance of incorporating Islamic values into environmental education to nurture a generation that is spiritually grounded and actively engaged in environmental issues. In the context of green governance education, Islamic ethics provide a comprehensive approach that connects moral reasoning, ecological literacy, and social responsibility. Reflections from students suggest that education rooted in Islamic principles can extend beyond mere cognitive understanding, fostering moral leadership that translates faith into sustainable actions. This supports the argument that environmental responsibility in Muslim contexts should be based on religious ethics rather than solely on policy compliance or technical knowledge (Ok et al., 2022).

This research offers valuable insights, but its findings are limited to the universities in South Sumatra. Future studies should expand their scope to include various regions and utilize mixed method approaches to capture a wider range of perspectives and track longitudinal changes in ethical development. Considering these findings, Islamic education policymakers and university leaders should actively integrate environmental ethics into curricula through experiential learning, community-based green projects, and mosque-centered eco-literacy programs. Additionally, incorporating assessment tools that evaluate ethical and behavioral outcomes, rather than just knowledge, will enhance curriculum effectiveness. By institutionalizing Islamic environmental ethics within educational frameworks, universities can empower youth as agents of sustainable change, ensuring that faith-based moral principles serve as a foundation for ecological resilience and justice in the Muslim world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research is supported by Universitas Sriwijaya through the scheme of Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (PKM) Unsri year 2024 number 0040.009/UN9/SB3.LP2M.PM/2024.

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