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## **Integrating Ecopedagogy into the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum to Foster Ecological Awareness**

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### ***Abstract***

*Environmental degradation and climate change pose serious global challenges that demand educational responses, including in religious education. This study examines the integration of ecological awareness into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum through an ecopedagogical approach rooted in Islamic values. Utilizing a literature review method, the study reveals that the current PAI curriculum remains focused on theological aspects, ritual worship, and moral development, while the ecological dimension embodied in Islamic teachings such as the concepts of *khalifah fil ard* (humans as stewards of the Earth) and *fiqh al-bi'ah* (environmental ethics) has not been comprehensively accommodated. The analysis indicates a substantial gap between Islamic teachings emphasizing environmental preservation and their implementation at the educational level, resulting in low levels of ecological awareness and concern among students. As a constructive alternative, the development of a more integrative and transformative PAI curriculum incorporating ecopedagogical principles based on Islamic values is proposed. Through this approach, students are expected not only to be religious in a ritual sense but also to develop a high level of ecological consciousness and to internalize social and spiritual responsibilities in preserving the environment. The novelty of this study lies in the formulation of a PAI curriculum model grounded in ecopedagogy that integrates Islamic spirituality with environmental sustainability principles, thus offering practical contributions to character education enhancement and the development of ecological awareness among young Muslim generations. The research findings imply the need for policy reforms and curriculum redesign to ensure Islamic education actively contributes to shaping environmentally responsible future generations.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Education Curriculum; Ecopedagogy; Ecological Awareness

## Introduction

The global environmental crisis today has reached an alarming level, evidenced by increasingly frequent natural disasters, accelerating climate change, and widespread environmental degradation that threaten human life and the balance of ecosystems (Akhyar et al., 2024). Amidst these challenges, Islam offers a holistic worldview in which humans are not only spiritual beings but also entrusted as stewards (*khalifah fil ard*) responsible for maintaining and preserving nature. Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship (*hifz al-bi'ah*) are embedded in various Quranic verses and hadiths, emphasizing the prohibition of corruption on earth (QS. Al-A'raf: 56) and highlighting that nature is a trust (*amanah*) from Allah (ROSITA, 2020).

However, despite these strong normative foundations, the reality shows that the awareness and implementation of ecological values among Muslim communities remain low. The lack of integration between religious teachings and ecological responsibility leads to an educational gap that affects the formation of students' holistic character. In many educational contexts, especially within Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the focus is still dominated by ritualistic and doctrinal aspects, while attention to ecological issues remains superficial (Sulwana & Harahap, 2025).

Existing studies reveal that while efforts to introduce environmental values in schools have been made, these initiatives are often fragmented, lack depth, and are not yet fully institutionalized within the curriculum (Dewi, 2021). Furthermore, classical Islamic education theories historically emphasize moral and worship aspects, marginalizing ecological concerns as peripheral (Mahmud et al., 2024). Consequently, religious education often fails to shape students' behavior to reflect ecological ethics, leading to a dichotomy between religious piety and environmental care.

At the same time, the urgency to strengthen ecological awareness is increasingly evident, considering the serious impact of environmental damage on future generations. Islam teaches the importance of maintaining balance (*mizan*) and justice (*adl*), not only in social relations but also in the human relationship with nature. The principle that damaging the earth is equivalent to violating divine trust underscores the theological depth of environmental ethics in Islam (Hamid, 2025). However, this principle has not been adequately reflected in the current PAI curriculum, which tends to focus on doctrinal delivery without integrating critical and contextual thinking skills needed to address environmental crises.

Ecopedagogy, as a critical educational approach inspired by Paulo Freire, emphasizes experiential learning, participatory engagement, and transformative action. This approach not only transmits knowledge but also shapes ecological consciousness and social responsibility through direct involvement in real environmental contexts. Integrating ecopedagogy into Islamic education can provide a more comprehensive educational experience, bridging spiritual and ecological dimensions in a coherent and integrated manner (Manshur & Dwiputri, 2025).

However, to date, the application of ecopedagogy in the context of Islamic education, particularly in the PAI curriculum, has not been widely explored. Existing studies often focus on theoretical discussions without offering concrete models or practical guidelines that connect Islamic ecological values with ecopedagogical methods (Zaimina & Munib, 2025). This indicates a critical research gap: there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks that systematically combine Islamic theological foundations with pedagogical strategies aimed at fostering environmental stewardship among students.

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptual framework that proposes the systematic integration of ecopedagogy into the PAI curriculum as a means of strengthening ecological awareness while remaining grounded in Islamic teachings. This integration is not only expected to enrich curriculum content but also to transform learning orientation from mere doctrinal understanding toward contextual and action-based religious practice. By addressing both theoretical and practical gaps, this research aims to contribute to curriculum development that is more responsive to global ecological challenges.

In addition to highlighting practical significance, this study also offers a theoretical contribution to curriculum development in Islamic education. By positioning ecological awareness as an essential component of religious and moral education, it emphasizes that environmental responsibility is not merely a contemporary social necessity but a fundamental part of Islamic spirituality and ethics. Thus, this approach reinforces the role of Islamic education as an agent of social transformation that cultivates a generation of Muslims who are not only devout in worship but also actively involved in environmental preservation.

Accordingly, this study sets out to (1) analyze the extent to which ecological aspects are currently integrated into the PAI curriculum; (2) identify gaps in teaching materials, methods, and educational orientations; and (3) formulate concrete and applicable recommendations for curriculum development based on ecopedagogical principles aligned with Islamic values. It is hoped that this research will provide theoretical contributions to curriculum studies in Islamic education and practical recommendations for policymakers and educators to develop a more comprehensive, contextual, and transformative PAI curriculum.

## Method

This study employs a library research method (literature review), focusing on the collection, analysis, and synthesis of data obtained from various relevant literature sources. The main objective of this approach is to explore and formulate an integrative concept of ecological awareness within the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum through an ecopedagogical perspective. The sources analyzed include primary literature, such as books, peer-reviewed journals, and scientific articles that discuss the PAI curriculum, Islamic environmental ethics (Hifz al-Bi'ah and fiqh al-bi'ah), as well as ecopedagogy (Damanik, 2025). In addition, secondary sources supporting theoretical frameworks and empirical findings on environmental education, both from an Islamic perspective and general global educational perspectives, are also examined.

The selection of literature was carried out based on several criteria, namely its relevance to the topics of Islamic education and ecological awareness, the recency of publication (preferably within the last ten years to maintain the novelty of discussion, except for classical theoretical works), and the credibility of sources, with priority given to peer-reviewed publications and scholarly works that explicitly discuss curriculum development or pedagogical approaches.

In the analysis stage, this study adopts a thematic content analysis approach. Literature data were examined critically to identify, organize, and interpret key themes related to the integration of ecological values into Islamic education. Through coding, statements or ideas relevant to environmental responsibility, the spiritual dimension of ecology, and curriculum development strategies were systematically grouped. These codes were then synthesized into broader thematic

categories, which were further interpreted to build a comprehensive conceptual framework that connects Islamic values with ecopedagogical principles.

Furthermore, to strengthen the validity and reliability of the conceptual findings, a critical content analysis approach was employed by comparing and cross-referencing ideas drawn from different literature sources. The integration of theories from Islamic educational philosophy, environmental education, and ecopedagogy was also carried out to ensure that the conceptual framework formed is robust, coherent, and can be accounted for scientifically.

Through this systematic and comprehensive literature study, this research aims to produce theoretical contributions and practical recommendations for developing an Islamic Religious Education curriculum that is more inclusive, responsive to environmental issues, and capable of shaping a generation that is both spiritually devout and ecologically conscious.

## Results And Discussion

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and personality, particularly in aspects of faith, ethics, and worship. Based on previously explained theories, the PAI curriculum encompasses various learning aspects that not only aim to enhance students' academic intelligence but also to develop their character in accordance with Islamic teachings (Anshori, 2019). However, in practice, the PAI curriculum still faces challenges in accommodating environmental issues, which should be an integral part of Islamic education.

In Islamic teachings, the concept of *khalifah fil ard* emphasizes that humans have been entrusted by Allah to care for the Earth and everything in it (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30). However, ecological awareness in the PAI curriculum remains limited and has not become a primary focus. Islamic education often prioritizes ritualistic and moral aspects, while sustainability values are not explicitly taught to students. Therefore, the curriculum needs to be revised so that Islamic education not only emphasizes worship and morality but also instills an awareness of the importance of environmental conservation. As a result, students will not only be devout in worship but also fulfill their role as guardians of the Earth, responsible for environmental sustainability (Asyhari & Asyhari, 2017).

Based on literature research findings, it has been observed that the PAI curriculum currently implemented in various Islamic schools has yet to systematically integrate ecological concepts, even though these values are inherent in Islamic teachings. Most of the curriculum content still focuses on theoretical teachings of *aqidah*, *fiqh*, and worship. In contrast, Islam provides clear guidelines on environmental preservation, including the concept of *fiqh al-bi'ah*, which emphasizes the importance of sustaining nature, managing natural resources responsibly, and respecting all living creatures on Earth.

Hidayat further explains that most Islamic Religious Education teachers lack a deep understanding of ecological concepts in Islam, leading to the minimal integration of environmental issues in religious studies at schools. Therefore, a more progressive curriculum development is necessary, incorporating Islamic-based environmental education. This curriculum should not only teach worship and morality but also equip students with an understanding of their responsibility towards the environment. With this adjustment, students will realize that protecting the environment is not just a social duty but also a divine trust (*amanah*) given by Allah to humans as *khalifah fil ard* (Mufida et al., 2023).

Data analysis indicates a significant gap between the current PAI curriculum and the educational needs relevant to addressing environmental challenges in the modern era. While the PAI curriculum has allocated a substantial portion to character building, especially in moral and worship aspects, ecological awareness has not received adequate attention, despite environmental issues being one of the most critical concerns in today's world.

In practice, although Islam emphasizes maintaining environmental balance and acting as guardians of the Earth, these values are not fully reflected in the Islamic education curriculum. According to Rahman (2021), many PAI teachers remain unaware of the urgency of integrating environmental education into religious subjects, resulting in a lack of environmental preservation teachings in schools. Consequently, the absence of ecological responsibility in religious education can lead to low student awareness regarding environmental care. Therefore, revising the PAI curriculum is urgent, incorporating *ecopedagogy* rooted in Islamic teachings. This ensures that religious education not only nurtures spiritually devout individuals but also fosters responsible environmental stewards, fulfilling Allah's mandate (Hidayat, 2024).

*Ecopedagogy* is an educational approach that focuses on cultivating students' ecological awareness through learning methods that connect them with their surrounding environment. As stated by Kahn (2010), this concept aims to deepen the understanding of human-nature relationships and how humans can live in harmony with ecological principles. *Ecopedagogy* does not merely involve theoretical knowledge transfer but encourages students to actively engage in actions that contribute to environmental preservation.

This principle aligns with the concept of *khalifah fil ard*, where Islam teaches that humans are responsible for caring for the Earth and all its contents as a divine trust. In the context of Islamic education, *ecopedagogy* can serve as an effective method for integrating religious teachings with environmental awareness values. By incorporating this approach into the PAI curriculum, students will not only gain a deeper understanding of their religious obligations but also develop a greater sense of responsibility towards environmental conservation. Therefore, integrating *ecopedagogy* into the PAI curriculum will help shape individuals who are not only religiously knowledgeable but also highly ecologically aware and committed to maintaining environmental balance (Imamah & Hidayat, 2022).

Findings from this study indicate that while awareness of the importance of environmental education exists in Islamic schools, the implementation of *ecopedagogy* still faces various challenges. The current PAI curriculum still focuses more on theological and moralistic aspects, while ecological awareness education remains minimally integrated into learning processes. Although some schools have attempted to incorporate nature-based activities such as gardening, reforestation, and environmental management, these efforts remain supplementary and have not been embedded as core components of the PAI subject.

Sidiq explain that one of the main challenges in implementing *ecopedagogy* in Islamic education is the lack of teacher training and understanding regarding the integration of ecological values in Islamic teachings. However, if *ecopedagogy* is properly implemented, it can significantly benefit the development of a generation that is both religiously grounded and ecologically conscious. Therefore, concrete steps are needed to develop and integrate *ecopedagogy* into the PAI curriculum comprehensively. This effort should include training programs for educators to enhance their understanding of Islamic ecology and effectively teach it to students (Madina, 2021).

Currently, implementing *ecopedagogy* in the PAI curriculum in Islamic schools faces several challenges. Although the concept aligns with Islamic teachings, ecological awareness among teachers and students remains low. Most schools still focus more on worship and morality, while environmental responsibility is not yet a primary concern in learning. This situation highlights a gap between Islamic environmental teachings and their application in the Islamic education system.

While *ecopedagogy* presents a significant opportunity to enrich the PAI curriculum, the lack of teacher understanding and skills in teaching this concept is a major obstacle to its implementation. Without proper comprehension among educators, integrating *ecopedagogy* into the PAI curriculum will be challenging. Therefore, Islamic schools must develop a more holistic curriculum that is adaptive to global ecological challenges (Dewi, 2021). One approach is to incorporate *ecopedagogy* as an essential aspect of Islamic religious education. This will ensure that students grow not only as devout worshippers but also as individuals who are environmentally aware and responsible, fulfilling the trust given by Allah.

In Islamic teachings, ecology is not merely an environmental issue but also a spiritual responsibility that every Muslim must uphold. The concept of *khalifah fil ard*, which designates humans as leaders and caretakers of the Earth, asserts that humans are obliged to maintain and preserve nature according to Allah's will (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30). Additionally, Islam teaches the principles of *mizan* (balance) and *adl* (justice), emphasizing that all of Allah's creations have the right to be protected and sustained. When this balance is disrupted due to human actions that harm nature, disasters may arise as consequences of this imbalance (Gustiyanti, 2024).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains that understanding the human-nature relationship must be oriented toward respecting and preserving the Earth as a form of worship. In other words, caring for the environment is not only a social duty but also an expression of piety toward Allah. Therefore, Islam's perspective on ecology provides a strong moral and spiritual foundation for its implementation in Islamic education, including in the PAI curriculum. Integrating ecological values into religious education can help cultivate a generation of Muslims who are environmentally conscious and recognize that environmental preservation is part of their religious duty (Pardede, 2023).

Based on collected data, Islamic teachings on ecology hold significant relevance in developing religion-based environmental education. In Islam, maintaining ecological balance is not just a recommendation but a form of worship and a moral obligation for every individual. This is emphasized in various Quranic verses and hadiths that highlight the importance of environmental conservation and the prohibition of Earth's destruction. One hadith states that planting a tree is a virtuous act that retains its reward even if the Day of Judgment is near (HR. Ahmad No. 12902).

This concept aligns well with sustainability principles and responsible resource management, which can serve as the foundation for PAI learning in fostering an environmentally conscious generation. Therefore, implementing *fiqh al-bi'ah*, a branch of Islamic jurisprudence discussing environmental laws, could be a starting point for developing a more holistic PAI curriculum (Mahmud et al., 2024). By incorporating ecological values into religious education, students will not only understand Islamic teachings spiritually but also apply these values in daily life with greater environmental responsibility.

Although Islam strongly advocates for ecological consciousness, real-world implementation of these concepts in the PAI curriculum remains suboptimal. Many Islamic schools have yet to

integrate Islamic environmental values into their education. This reflects a disconnect between Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship and current educational practices in Islamic schools. As Rahman (2021) observes, while many theories support the integration of environmental education in Islam, a lack of understanding and appropriate strategies for instilling Islamic-based ecological awareness in religious education curricula remains a significant challenge (Azis & Rizal, 2024).

To address this issue, the Islamic education system must take concrete steps to integrate Islamic ecological values into the PAI curriculum. Religious education should not only discuss worship and morality but also teach the importance of environmental responsibility. By incorporating ecological concepts into religious education, students will not only understand Islamic teachings textually but also internalize these values in their daily lives. Therefore, Islamic education must take more serious efforts to develop a curriculum that emphasizes environmental preservation as part of Allah's trust to humanity.

## Discussion

This study aims to explore the extent to which environmental issues have been integrated into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum and to identify existing gaps in teaching materials, learning methods, and educational orientations related to ecological awareness. The findings indicate that the PAI curriculum implemented in various Islamic educational institutions still lacks attention to environmental issues, despite Islam's many teachings that emphasize the importance of preserving nature. The concepts of *khalifah fil ard* and *fiqh al-bi'ah* should serve as strong foundations for integrating *ecopedagogy* into Islamic religious education.

Additionally, although many Quranic verses and Hadith highlight the importance of environmental protection, their application in the PAI curriculum remains limited and has yet to become a central component of instructional material development. This reveals a significant opportunity to update the curriculum to be more responsive to ecological issues. Therefore, this study recommends a more comprehensive curriculum revision by incorporating environmental sustainability as an integral part of Islamic religious education.

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on the importance of integrating environmental awareness into Islamic religious education. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Hadi and Rachman (2021), have emphasized the urgency of using *ecopedagogical* approaches in Islamic education. However, their research has not deeply examined how *ecopedagogy* can be implemented within the PAI curriculum in Islamic schools.

In this study, the concepts of *khalifah fil ard* and *fiqh al-bi'ah* are used as the foundational arguments that Islam upholds principles highly relevant to environmental protection. The primary advantage of this research lies in its more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between *ecopedagogy*, ecological awareness, and the PAI curriculum. Furthermore, it provides specific policy recommendations to enhance ecological awareness among students. By introducing an *ecopedagogical* approach rooted in Islamic values, this study offers more applicable and contextual solutions for developing religious education oriented toward environmental sustainability.

The findings of this research emphasize the importance of fostering ecological awareness among students through Islamic religious education. One of the key reflections of this study is that the PAI curriculum needs to be updated to not only teach worship and morality but also to give greater attention to environmental issues. Although ecological principles are widely explained in Islamic

teachings, in practice, these concepts have not yet become a primary focus in the Islamic school system.

This reflection highlights that religious education can serve as an effective means of shaping students' awareness of the environment. Islam teaches balance in nature as a value that must be maintained for the sustainability of life. If these values can be systematically integrated into the curriculum, Islamic religious education will not only shape students' moral and spiritual character but also instill a sense of ecological responsibility. Consequently, future generations will have a higher awareness of the importance of environmental conservation as part of the *amanah* (trust) bestowed by Allah upon humankind.

The findings of this study have significant implications for both the development of the PAI curriculum in schools and the formulation of broader educational policies. The discovery that the current PAI curriculum is still insufficiently responsive to environmental issues underscores the need for a more comprehensive curriculum revision. This revision should integrate *ecopedagogical* principles based on Islamic teachings, ensuring that religious education not only instills spiritual and moral values but also teaches environmental responsibility.

The main implication of this study is the necessity of developing teaching materials that address not only theological aspects but also instill ecological awareness in students. With these changes, students will not only gain a deeper understanding of Islam but also develop strong social and ecological awareness. This awareness will shape how they interact with nature in the future, aligning with the concept of *khalifah fil ard*, where humans are responsible for caring for the Earth (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah: 30). In terms of policy, this study emphasizes the need for policymakers to design a curriculum that is more attuned to environmental issues to ensure education remains relevant to contemporary challenges.

This study is crucial as it provides a clear depiction of the gaps in the current PAI curriculum, particularly in addressing environmental issues. The findings offer valuable insights into how Islamic religious education can contribute to shaping a generation that is not only religious but also environmentally conscious. Given the increasing impact of the global environmental crisis, it is essential for the education system to begin instilling ecological awareness in students from an early age.

As mentioned in various Quranic verses and Hadith, environmental preservation is part of human responsibility as *khalifah* (stewards) of the Earth. A Hadith states that planting a tree is highly encouraged, even if the Day of Judgment is imminent (Hadith narrated by Ahmad No. 12902). Therefore, this research provides a strong foundation for policymakers to reform the PAI curriculum to be more responsive to environmental issues. With these reforms, future generations will not only be spiritually pious but will also possess a moral responsibility to preserve the environment. A more relevant education system that addresses global challenges will ensure that Islamic values are not only understood theoretically but also applied in daily life.

Based on the findings of this research, several concrete steps need to be taken to enhance the integration of ecological awareness into Islamic religious education. One primary step is revising the PAI curriculum to incorporate *ecopedagogy* across all aspects of learning. This can be achieved by introducing the concepts of *fiqh al-bi'ah* and *khalifah fil ard* as integral parts of instructional materials at all educational levels. Through this approach, students can understand that environmental conservation is not just a social responsibility but also a religious duty.

The next step is to enhance the capacity of PAI teachers by providing specialized training on the significance of ecological awareness in Islam. As revealed in this study, the lack of teacher understanding of *ecopedagogy* is one of the primary obstacles to its implementation. Therefore, training programs focused on *ecopedagogical* teaching methods are essential to help teachers deliver the material more effectively. Additionally, the existing curriculum should be evaluated by the government and educational institutions to ensure that environmental issues receive adequate attention. These efforts can be further strengthened by developing *ecopedagogical* teaching modules that enable teachers to convey environmental topics in a more practical and interactive manner. Consequently, Islamic religious education will not only shape spiritually strong individuals but also cultivate a generation more aware of environmental sustainability and responsible for ecological preservation.

This study highlights important insights into the extent to which environmental issues have been integrated into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum across various educational institutions. Although Islam has numerous teachings emphasizing environmental conservation, such as the concept of *khalifah fil ard*, which asserts that humans are responsible as Earth's stewards (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah: 30), and *fiqh al-bi'ah*, which discusses environmental ethics in Islam, the study's findings indicate that the current PAI curriculum has not yet optimally accommodated these ecological principles in its teachings (Akhyar & Zukdi, 2025).

This gap indicates that while Islam advocates for harmony between humans and nature, religious education in many institutions still tends to focus on theological and moral aspects without sufficiently instilling ecological awareness. This presents a significant opportunity for a more holistic curriculum reform that not only teaches religious values but also integrates environmental sustainability. With these changes, future generations can understand that environmental conservation is not just a social duty but also an integral part of religious practice.

This study makes a significant contribution to the development of research on Islamic religious education by proposing the integration of *ecopedagogy* into the PAI curriculum. Theoretically, this research introduces the understanding that *ecopedagogy*—an educational approach emphasizing ecological awareness—can be combined with Islamic principles to create a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between humans, religion, and the environment. This concept is still relatively new in Islamic education studies, and this research paves the way for further exploration of how Islamic teachings on environmental balance can be implemented in formal education.

Moreover, on a practical level, this study provides recommendations for policymakers in the education sector to design a more environmentally responsive PAI curriculum. By incorporating *ecopedagogical* values into religious education, students will not only gain a profound understanding of Islam but also develop heightened awareness of environmental conservation.

## Conclusion

This study explores the integration of ecological awareness into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum through an eco-pedagogy approach. The findings indicate that although Islam has strong teachings on environmental preservation (such as the concepts of *khalifah fil ard* and *fiqh al-bi'ah*), the current PAI curriculum has yet to optimize the integration of ecological issues. The

curriculum primarily focuses on aspects of worship, ethics, and morality, while environmental awareness has not become a core component of learning.

Several challenges hinder the implementation of eco-pedagogy in the PAI curriculum, including the lack of teachers' understanding and training on the importance of ecology from an Islamic perspective, as well as the insufficient integration of environmental values into teaching materials. Although some schools have begun implementing environmentally based activities, these approaches remain supplementary and have not become an integral part of the curriculum.

This study recommends updating the PAI curriculum by integrating eco-pedagogy as a teaching approach that emphasizes ecological awareness. This can be achieved by incorporating Islamic ecological concepts into teaching materials, enhancing teachers' capacity through training, and developing eco-pedagogy-based teaching modules. By doing so, Islamic religious education will not only shape individuals who are devout in worship but also a generation with high ecological awareness and responsibility for environmental sustainability.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of fostering ecological awareness through Islamic religious education, aligning with Islamic teachings on environmental balance and humanity's role as stewards of the earth. The integration of eco-pedagogy into the PAI curriculum is expected to cultivate a generation of Muslims who are not only religious but also deeply committed to environmental sustainability.

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