

Lived Islamic Environmental Ethics and Communal Ecological Transformation in An-Nur Pesantren

Etika Lingkungan Islam yang Dihayati dan Transformasi Ekologis Komunal di Pesantren An-Nur

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Abstract: *Environmental sustainability has increasingly become an important concern in Islamic studies, yet most research on eco-pesantren primarily examines environmental education or institutional waste management without explaining how Islamic environmental ethics are translated into everyday communal practice. Addressing this gap, this study investigates how Islamic environmental ethics function as a lived ethic that shapes ecological responsibility within An-Nur Pesantren, Yogyakarta. Employing a qualitative case-study approach based on interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, the research integrates Holistic Environmental Ethics with the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework to examine the relationship between religious values and ecological practices. The findings reveal that waste reduction is understood not merely as an environmental obligation but as an act of worship embedded in religious discipline and communal life. Practices such as banning single-use plastics, encouraging reusable containers, promoting modest consumption, and integrating environmental responsibility into daily pesantren routines have significantly reduced waste generation while fostering collective ecological awareness. The study argues that Islamic environmental ethics operate as a lived communal ethic capable of transforming environmental responsibility into a sustainable religious practice. It further proposes that pesantren offer a faith-based alternative to neoliberal eco-consumerism by cultivating ecological transformation through spiritual values, communal discipline, and moral formation.*

Keywords: Islamic Environmental Ethics; Lived Ethics; Eco-Consumerism; Eco-Pesantren; Community-Based Waste Management; Ecological Transformation



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Abstrak: Keberlanjutan lingkungan menjadi salah satu isu penting dalam kajian Islam kontemporer. Namun, sebagian besar penelitian tentang eco-pesantren masih berfokus pada pendidikan lingkungan atau pengelolaan sampah secara kelembagaan, tanpa menjelaskan bagaimana etika lingkungan Islam dihayati dan diwujudkan sebagai praktik sosial sehari-hari. Untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana etika lingkungan Islam berfungsi sebagai etika yang dihayati (*lived ethic*) dalam membentuk tanggung jawab ekologis di Pesantren An-Nur Yogyakarta. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Analisis dilakukan dengan mengintegrasikan kerangka *Holistic Environmental Ethics* dan *Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)* untuk menjelaskan hubungan antara nilai-nilai keagamaan dan praktik ekologis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengurangan sampah dipahami bukan sekadar sebagai kewajiban lingkungan, tetapi sebagai bentuk ibadah yang terinternalisasi dalam disiplin religius dan kehidupan komunal pesantren. Kebijakan larangan plastik sekali pakai, penggunaan wadah pribadi, budaya hidup sederhana, serta integrasi nilai-nilai ekologis dalam aktivitas harian pesantren terbukti mampu menekan produksi sampah sekaligus membangun kesadaran ekologis kolektif. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa etika lingkungan Islam bekerja sebagai etika komunal yang dihayati, yang mentransformasikan tanggung jawab ekologis menjadi praktik keagamaan yang berkelanjutan. Secara teoretis, artikel ini menawarkan pesantren sebagai model alternatif terhadap ekokonsumerisme neoliberal melalui pembentukan transformasi ekologis yang bertumpu pada nilai-nilai spiritual, disiplin komunal, dan pembentukan karakter moral.

Kata Kunci: Etika Lingkungan Islam; Etika yang Dihayati; Ekokonsumerisme; Eko-Pesantren; Pengelolaan Sampah Berbasis Komunitas; Transformasi Ekologis.

Introduction

The transition from the early industrial era to modern society has reshaped human civilization, giving rise to market institutions such as department stores and advertising agencies.¹ This has resulted in consumerism, which has become a dominant socio-cultural phenomenon today. At the same time, consumerism has become a measure of happiness in society.² While consumerism can be seen as a way for humans to meet their daily needs, the ideology of neoliberalism has encouraged excessive consumption behavior closely linked to egoism and ethical deficits.³ In line with this, various parties, from businesses promoting credit and marketing to media portraying materialistic lifestyles, to governments with pro-consumption policies, have played a role in accelerating this trend. Furthermore, consumerism was once considered essential to capitalism, even a symbol of prosperity. However, this view has shifted.

In some cases, excessive consumerism is now considered a sign of low social status and even classified as a mental disorder, as in the case of hoarding.⁴ This suggests

that consumerism, which once supported a modern lifestyle, now intersects with a person's lifestyle and psychology. This shift underscores how consumerism, once a pillar of modern life, now intersects with social identities and mental health that prioritize market desires and trends over ethical considerations. Likewise, this excessive consumerism directly impacts massive waste production, as reported by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) in 2024, which showed that Indonesia produces approximately 34.3 million tons of waste annually.⁵ On the other hand, other sectors also contribute significantly to this crisis, such as clothing production, which accounts for 12% of annual carbon emissions, and consumer data centers, which consume large amounts of energy.⁶ Therefore, consumerism driven by material goods and energy-intensive digital systems actually continues to accelerate environmental degradation.

At the same time, Hamilton sees that ecological sustainability is not simply a technical or economic challenge.⁷ Correspondingly, there has been a fundamental shift in humanity's perspective on nature, from an integrated relationship to a dominant and extractive one. This shift has created a paradigm that natural resources can be exploited without limit, as White Jr. argues:

*"What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion or rethink our old one."*⁸

These diagnoses intersect and become discursively significant for understanding the roots of the environmental crisis. For Nasr, the contemporary environmental crisis reflects a spiritual crisis, where humans have lost their holistic and sacred relationship with nature.⁹ At the same time, for Gade, this situation requires Muslim environmentalism, not just a discursive Islam and environmentalism that is instrumental. This step needs to be taken considering its roots in ethical and social practices and commitments that emerge through the layering of material, symbolic, and religious dimensions.¹⁰ In line with that, Özdemir in Islamic environmental ethics emphasizes the principle of *tauhid*, which views all reality as an indivisible ontological whole, where the universe is understood as a collection of verses that reflect the power, beauty, and grace of the Creator. At the same time, humans are placed as caliphs who do not own nature absolutely but act as guardians who are obliged to maintain *mizan* (balance) to prevent *fasad* (damage) arising from exploitative and wasteful behavior.¹¹ Thus, this intersection requires a reading that departs from within the resources and values of Islam itself, where the role also emphasizes humans as creatures who are in nature and are responsible for nature, in an inseparable spiritual, ethical, and material unity.

Thus, the environmental crisis and the problem of excessive consumerism demand profound ethical solutions. This study focuses on internalized Islamic ethics, which offers a robust framework for addressing these issues, emphasizing wise and balanced consumption as a direct response to wasteful practices. Normatively, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Fatwa No. 47 of 2014 explicitly states that littering is *haram* (forbidden) and encourages recycling as a collective obligation.¹² The effectiveness of this faith-based approach finds its alignment with programs such as eco-Pesantren, which bridge the gap between government conservation programs and the Muslim community itself, demonstrating that the integration of Islamic values can foster sustainable community-based environmental movements.¹³ It is important to see how the situation is framed in Islamic environmental ethics as a holistic paradigm that transcends formal rules, integrating spiritual, social, and scientific dimensions. This ethic is based on three core principles: *tauhid* (the oneness of God), *khalifah* (management), and the prohibition of *israf* and *tabdzir* (prohibiting waste and destruction), which reject excess and *fasad* (environmental damage). Meanwhile, the proposed solution to this crisis in eco-consumerism is caught in a dilemma, where interests that align global products with ecological values often remain individualistic and transactional, depoliticizing systemic issues. In contrast, this study emphasizes an ethics lived within communities, demanding collective transformation through the mobilization of communal assets and structural authority, as exemplified by Obah Apik. This ethic prioritizes reduced consumption and shared responsibility beyond individualistic frameworks as the basis for communal environmental concern.

Previous Studies of environmental movements based in traditional Islamic institutions in Indonesia reveal several key trends. Regarding the issue of Eco-Pesantren, several studies have documented in detail how green curricula, waste management, and various sanitation programs are implemented through collaborations between Pesantren, the state, and non-governmental organizations.¹⁴ However, most of these studies still position pesantren as implementers of environmental programs, primarily administrative and technical. This shift in focus from institutional aspects to religious experiences has led to discussions of Islamic environmental ethics. In the Indonesian context, Elizabeth shows how environmental sanitation values are often linked to the long-standing concept of *taharah* (Islamic jurisprudence).¹⁵ However, this normative approach is not without its critics. White Jr., for example, argues that monotheistic traditions have historically harbored anthropocentric tendencies that contribute to the exploitation of nature.¹⁶

However, theological ethics do not always align with ideal social spaces. New challenges arise when ecological values intersect with modern consumer culture.

Hidayah has shown that various Islamic institutions in Indonesia are increasingly vulnerable to the commodification of religion and the growing neoliberalism among the Muslim middle class.¹⁷ At the same time, Indriyanti shows how changes in the lifestyles of Pesantren students (*santri*) influence their consumption patterns.¹⁸ In this context, environmental concerns risk being reduced to individual consumption choices that follow market logic. Amidst this trend, discussions about faith-based sustainability become increasingly relevant. Sofjan offers the concept of “heartware” to explain that sustainability depends not only on technology or institutions, but also on spiritual capital, inner awareness, and a sense of responsibility that transcends immediate material interests.¹⁹ Through this perspective, sustainability practices gain a more relevant moral foundation because they are rooted in communal accountability and a transcendental orientation. Mapping these themes reveals a clear research gap. The literature on the environment in the context of Islam in Indonesia generally falls. On the one hand, there are numerous studies that normatively discuss environmental teachings and ethics in Islam. On the other hand, some studies focus on describing the programs and governance of environmentally friendly Pesantrens. However, relatively little research explains how these religious values translate into collective behavior that can form a sustainable social system.

This research attempts to fill this gap through a case study of the An-Nur Pesantren in Yogyakarta and its autonomous unit, Obah Apik. Unlike approaches that only highlight environmental programs or religious doctrines in isolation, this article explores how Islamic environmental ethics are internalized as an ethic that shapes everyday actions. In this context, activities generally considered arduous and unattractive, such as waste sorting, are understood as part of a religious practice with religious significance. Through a three-tiered reconciliation model (theological, structural, and behavioral), this study demonstrates that the combination of the *kiai*’s charismatic leadership as a living curriculum, the application of *takzir* as a fiqh-based disciplinary mechanism, and the formation of a communal low-consumption culture can provide a strong empirical alternative to the dominant paradigm of neoliberal eco-consumerism.

Research methods

This research was conducted in July 2025 at An-Nur Pesantren in Yogyakarta, which has a waste management unit called “Obah Apik.” It used a qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of social realities from the perspectives of the actors involved,²⁰ prioritizing human experiences, narratives, and power dynamics while acknowledging the researcher’s positionality and prioritizing community engagement.²¹ Informants were selected using a key informant sampling strategy that captured different structural layers within the Obah Apik initiative: Saiful, head

management of Obah Apik (leadership), Alfi (operational), and Zaman and Arik, both sons of a *kiai* in Pesantren, who participated in the initiation and management of Obah Apik. This combination of informants was considered to offer sufficient informational power, given their distinct and central structural roles encompassing the operational, managerial, and religious-symbolic dimensions of the program. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the four informants, focusing on their experiences, motivations, and perspectives on environmental issues, eco-consumerism, and waste management practices, conducted over a single day of fieldwork that also included on-site observation and a review of social media and media coverage. However, this study also acknowledges that this limitation lies in the implementation of fieldwork, which only lasted one day, so that the ideal depth of contextual immersion was not fully achieved. Meanwhile, the interview data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme search, theme review, defining and naming themes, and report preparation.²²

This research develops a three-layer conceptual framework linking ethical, philosophical, and practical dimensions to understand how transcendental values are transformed into sustainable ecological practices. The first layer rests on Islamic Environmental Ethics, which is based on *tauhid*, *khalifah*, *amanah* (trust), *israf*, and *fasad*.²³ This layer positions environmental concern not merely as a rational or economic act, but as a form of *khidmat* (spiritual devotion). This layer is expanded through holistic environmental ethics, which views humans and nature as an interdependent whole, allowing religious values to move beyond the normative level and be internalized as lived ethic that shape everyday perceptions and behaviors, including the rejection of excessive consumption patterns characteristic of modern consumer society.²⁴ These two layers are then actualized practically through Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD),²⁵ which, rather than starting from deficiencies, mobilizes the assets that Pesantrens already possess: the individual awareness of *santri*, autonomous Obah Apik units, the authority of *kiai* as a living curriculum, environmental management facilities, and cultural capital in the form of reinterpreting cleaning activities as a form of worship. Through the integration of these three layers, Islamic environmental ethics, which were originally present as normative teachings, are translated into the social structure of Pesantrens through leadership, regulations, and *takzir* mechanisms, thus producing environmental practices that are in harmony with the community system, independent, and sustainable at the An-Nur Pesantren in Yogyakarta.

Criticism of Deprivation in Consumerism

This socio-ecological crisis, rooted in consumerism, creates inequalities that intersect with the exploitation of resources in developing countries.²⁶ To address excessive consumerism, existing strategies are often trapped in neoliberal approaches, rather than focusing on the systemic roots of the problem. This is reinforced by the rise of campaigns for environmentally friendly products or the discourse of “eco-consumerism.” Similarly, “green consumerism” or “eco-consumerism” shifts consumption toward trends that claim to be more sustainable.²⁷ However, rather than producing profound and fundamental change, this approach only creates the illusion of sustainability. The solutions offered are superficial and fail to address underlying structural problems. Therefore, despite efforts to become more environmentally friendly, destructive consumption behaviors and systems persist without significant transformation.

The discourse of eco-consumerism is biased because it shifts environmental responsibility to the individual. This means that by purchasing “eco-friendly products,” people indirectly support the capitalist status quo, which views environmental problems as individual failures, rather than systemic ones.²⁸ In this context, referring to Maxton-Lee’s statement, eco-consumerism tends to depoliticize socio-political issues into economic transactions and disproportionately places responsibility on the individual.²⁹ Therefore, a deeper understanding is needed that solutions to environmental problems must be systemic, not just superficial, practical actions.

The critique of eco-consumerism deepens through Herbert Marcuse’s reflections on the construction of “false needs” in advanced industrial societies.³⁰ According to Marcuse, modern capitalism operates not only through the control of production processes but also through the shaping of individual needs and desires to align with market logic.³¹ In the environmental context, ecological concerns that initially stem from an ethical drive to preserve nature often translate into individual consumption behaviors, such as purchasing products labeled as environmentally friendly or commodities associated with a “green” lifestyle.³² As a result, attention to ecological issues risks shifting from an attempt to critique the structural causes of environmental degradation to a belief that change can be achieved primarily through personal consumption choices. For Marcuse, this situation demonstrates how social criticism can be reabsorbed by the market system and transformed into behaviors that actually support its sustainability.³³

This tendency is further amplified in what Bauman calls the liquid consumer society.³⁴ In a liquid consumer society, individual identities are no longer based on relatively stable social bonds or values, but are constantly shaped and negotiated through changing consumption practices.³⁵ This perspective aligns with

Baudrillard's analysis of symbolic consumption, which suggests that commodities are often purchased not only for their functional benefits but also for the social meanings attached to them.³⁶ In the context of eco-consumerism, environmentally friendly products can serve as identity markers, representing a self-image as an ethical, virtuous, or environmentally conscious individual. As a result, ecological issues are potentially reduced to individual moral choices, while the structural relationships contributing to the environmental crisis become less visible.³⁷ Thus, the critiques of Marcuse, Bauman, and Baudrillard help explain how ecological values can be transformed into symbolic consumption practices, widening the gap between environmental awareness and more fundamental social change.

Thus, religious responses to the environmental impacts of consumption are no longer limited to individuals but must lead to systemic transformation. Meanwhile, consumerism has created a value system that transforms priceless values into commodities, making it difficult for modern societies to abandon, with significant environmental and spiritual impacts.³⁸ Therefore, religious traditions offer an ethical framework for this transformation. For example, the concept of "guest on earth," found across various religions and cultures, is rooted in the relationship between God as creator and humans as His creation. This paradigm guides humanity from creation to the end of time.³⁹

Meanwhile, in Islam itself, it provides an ethical basis such as prohibiting *israf* (excessive consumerism) and *fases* (corruption), with the Qur'an explicitly reminding us not to consume excessively, as in (QS. al-A'râf: 31) which states "eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, Allah does not like those who consume excessively."⁴⁰ In line with this, Islamic understanding views science and ethics as two inseparable things and encourages spiritual reflection beyond the scientific dimension.⁴¹ Thus, religion serves as a relevant ethical guideline for reshaping human relations with nature, which is responsible for the resources within it. Therefore, Islamic consumerism is a unique phenomenon where Muslim consumers modify global products to align with Islamic values.⁴² However, this can certainly be seen as a double-edged sword that is equally sharp; on the one hand, Islamic teachings address excessive consumerism but provide a strong ethical framework. In this case, the economic concept offers a real solution to environmental damage by providing spiritual, moral, and social motivations for wise consumption. Therefore, it is important to ensure that Islamic consumerism is not just a label, but rather encourages responsible consumption practices.

Ultimately, the narratives above demonstrate how eco-consumerism operates as a social text that shapes human understanding of reality. While this discourse tacitly shifts systemic responsibility to individual consumption, by purchasing eco-consumerism labeled green as a moral action, rather than challenging the hegemonic

capitalist system, this discourse actually reinforces it. Therefore, a shift is needed from individual environmental ethics practices to collective and systemic efforts grounded in holistic religious values. This means that solutions cannot be found solely through practical individualistic actions, but also through a broader transformation of the structures of social understanding and interaction. In this context, Pesantren have a crucial role as educational institutions that can instill these Islamic values collectively and practically.

From Normative Discourse to Communal Practice

The environmental movement in Pesantrens offers a relevant case study of how lived Islamic ethics can be effectively transformed from normative discourse into concrete, sustainable communal practices. While there is often a gap between religious teachings advocating sustainability and responsible consumption and the reality on the ground, the initiatives of the An-Nur Pesantren, particularly its strategy for responding to the waste crisis through its Obah Apik waste management unit, demonstrate strong relevance in bridging this gap. Islamic ethics that encourage responsible consumption, by positioning humans as *khalifah*, are fundamentally oriented towards upholding justice, avoiding waste (*israf*), and preserving nature. In Pesantren practices, these ethics are translated into practices to respond to contemporary ecological issues, rooted in the belief that environmental pollution reflects the pollution of the human soul.

For the *santri* involved in Obah Apik, waste management is not understood merely as physical activism, as Alfi's narrative suggests, "...as part of the *khidmat*,"⁴³ a sincere devotion from the *santri* that is believed to bring blessings to them. This narrative is important to read as a "moral motivation" that contextualizes the *santri*'s respect for the *kiai*, while also demonstrating how the *kiai* functions as a living curriculum: a figure who not only teaches Islam textually, but practices it organically through real concern for environmental issues and the comfort of learning in a clean environment. At the same time, the *santri* internalize waste management as a form of "contextual spirituality" that integrates ecological awareness into their religious identity. Within this framework, the role of the *kiai* needs to be read as a symbol of capital in the pesantren, where the authority is trusted and legitimized by the *santri* community, so that the environmental practices initiated or supported are not simply accepted as institutional policy, but are internalized as part of devotion. At the same time, this entire dynamic is in line with the Islamic principle that every good deed intended as worship will bring rewards, and maintaining a clean environment,⁴⁴ in this case, directly contributes to the creation of a more conducive and solemn atmosphere for reciting the Koran (teaching and learning) and worship.

This waste management movement is a concrete manifestation of Islamic environmental values, particularly the concept of *taharah* (cleanliness), which places cleanliness as an integral part of faith and a prerequisite for the validity of worship. The framework of Islamic *fiqh* is translated from a normative level into straightforward communal practice, where, according to Zaman, “the concept of *taharah* is taught repeatedly here through classical Pesantren texts such as *Safinah*, *Fasalatan*, and *Fath al-Qarib*, with the aim of instilling from an early age the understanding that maintaining cleanliness is an inseparable part of faith and religious ritual.”⁴⁵ These teachings serve as “value resources” that provide a strong ethical foundation for prohibiting littering while encouraging environmental responsibility. More broadly, environmental sustainability can even be classified as one of the highest goals of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī’ah*), given that it is a prerequisite for fulfilling the five basic human needs (*al-dharuriyyat al-khams*)—religion, life, progeny, property, and reason, all of which depend on a sustainable ecosystem.⁴⁶ These principles effectively motivate Muslim participation in environmental programs, which can also provide economic benefits.⁴⁷ Thus, Pesantren integrates ethical and practical dimensions, demonstrating that religious teachings can drive significant social and environmental change.

Nevertheless, the challenge of significantly changing collective behavior remains a reality that cannot be ignored.⁴⁸ To address this challenge, the Islamic principle of responsibility, encompassing both rights and obligations, serves as the foundation for implementing waste management regulations in Pesantrens. These rules, both written and unwritten, such as limiting the number of items of clothing to reduce textile waste, are deeply rooted in Islamic jurisprudence and ethics. They are enforced through a system of *takzir* sanctions, which serve not merely as punishment but as an educational instrument to foster good habits and emphasize that the right to enjoy facilities goes hand in hand with the obligation to maintain them.⁴⁹ The key to the success of Pesantrens lies in their practical and down-to-earth approach, not merely abstract normative-ethical discourse. In this sense, Pesantrens simplify complex *fiqh* teachings into concrete actions that are easy to understand and implement, using three interconnected instruments: the *kiai* (religious leader) as symbolic capital and a living curriculum, *taharah* (religious guidance) as a source of values, and *takzir* and *khidmat* (religious service) as instruments of moral motivation, all of which collectively encourage *santri* to internalize Islamic environmental spirituality as an integral part of their lives.

Obah Apik: a form of lived Islamic environmentalism

Obah Apik, which can be understood as “change for the better” and is an acronym for “Omah Tarbiyah Addressing Climate Change,” was born as an urgent

response to the waste crisis, specifically the closure of the Piyungan Final Disposal Site (TPA) in Yogyakarta in 2024.⁵⁰ At the same time, this concern was exacerbated by the awareness of the surge in waste volume following the khataman (graduation ceremony for *santri*'s learning activities). This initiative marked a fundamental shift, where Pesantrens no longer depended on external parties but managed their waste independently. This movement was more than a technical solution; it reflected a shared awareness driven by the distinctive teaching traditions of Pesantrens and a strong foundation in Islamic ethics.

Obah Apik's ethical foundation is rooted in a deep understanding of Islamic values. In waste management practices, this is manifested through waste sorting by type. For *santri*, properly sorting and managing waste is the act of returning everything to its proper place, which is seen as a good deed that must be done. In line with field findings, the shift in the slogan from "throw trash in its place" to "separate trash according to type" is a strategy for Obah Apik in managing incoming waste, starting from the beginning of waste collection, thus facilitating a faster management process. This strategy can be seen as a paradigm shift, where awareness of waste sorting becomes an urgent need that aligns with the Pesantren's commitment to ongoing waste management. This action aligns with the view of Islamic scholars that humans have the privilege to utilize natural resources sustainably. Still, this right is not exclusive to humans and applies to all living things.⁵¹ Therefore, responsible waste management is an integral part of Muslims' moral obligation to maintain ecosystem balance and implement ecological justice.

In line with this, the Movement also relies heavily on the central role of the *kiai* as role models. While there is no specific curriculum on cleanliness or teaching through classical texts, the *kiai* provides concrete examples through direct actions, such as admonishing *santri* who neglect cleanliness and designing their homes with environmentally friendly concepts, making it the most effective "living curriculum" with a very central role in the eyes of the *santri*. The *kiai* symbolically prioritizes *santri*'s cleanliness duties over the study of Pesantren sciences, an action that affirms that cleanliness is an integral part of spiritual life and cannot be separated from religious education. This support and example are then formalized in policies implemented in Pesantrens, such as a ban on plastic in the cafeteria, the obligation to bring your own containers, and restrictions on ownership of goods (the number of *santri*'s clothing items to reduce hazardous waste) that must be adhered to by all *santri*, thus suppressing and limiting the potential for waste from the start.⁵²

Pesantren's approach to environmental management also implicitly critiques the dominant concept of eco-consumerism in global discourse. Eco-consumerism is often considered to fail to fundamentally address ecological problems because it tends to focus on excessive consumption and emphasizes only individual

responsibility for purchasing environmentally friendly products, without demanding more effective policies from the government or industry. Pesantrens, on the other hand, have the advantage of being a subculture inherently characterized by a culture of low consumption.

The data found in the field shows a striking comparison, and the administrators are not skeptical about the data, as the narrative presented by Zaman, where the average amount of waste produced per person per day in Pesantrens is much lower than the national average. "The national average ranges from 0.7 kg to 1 kg per day, while in Pesantrens, the figure is only around 0.07 kg to 0.2 kg per person per day, only one-tenth of the national average."⁵³ In fact, his admission considers that this much lower figure "is already considered high." This difference underscores the superiority of an approach based on religious ethical values over an approach based on "eco-consumerism." By integrating ethical values into daily practice, Pesantrens have succeeded in demonstrating that Islam can be a relevant and effective framework for environmental conservation and concrete responsible action. Through initiatives such as Obah Apik, Pesantrens can become pioneers in the responsible ecology movement, where the orientation of *santri* is returned to the roots of their Islamic value resources. Thus, this also has implications for the individual development of *santri*, where they not only study religion but are also able to survive independently and make significant contributions to their environment.

Challenges and Reconciliation

As a traditional Islamic educational institution, Pesantren An-Nur currently faces complex challenges that test the relevance of Islamic and environmental teachings in the modern era. The most significant challenge is the influx of consumerism into *santri*'s daily lives, particularly the culture of sachet packaging and single-use products that generate large volumes of plastic waste. This excessive consumerism fundamentally contradicts Islamic values of modesty, responsibility, and natural resource management. To address this, the Pesantren implemented an integrated reconciliation strategy that focuses on practical solutions while strengthening its spiritual and communal foundations. This reconciliation demonstrates the Pesantren's rich social and spiritual capital in responding to contemporary issues.

At the same time, Pesantrens can be analyzed through the ABCD framework⁵⁴ in addressing consumerism and environmental issues by optimizing their internal assets, such as individual assets in the form of *santri* who are educated to be active agents of change, who are internally motivated to protect the environment, and have practical skills in waste management. These assets are strengthened by associational assets, such as the Obah Apik unit that serves as a forum for collective action, and *santri* groups that share responsibilities in management. Structurally, institutional

assets, namely the leadership of the *kiai* and the institution itself, have provided strong legitimacy and role models by ensuring that all environmental policies are complied with. These assets are supported by land assets that serve as learning spaces for ecological practices, such as waste sorting and composting, and the implementation of policies such as the use of personal (non-disposable) containers in the canteen. From an economic perspective, local economic assets are activated by integrating the waste management program with the waste bank system. This helps alleviate the financial operational burden and facilitates access to waste disposal that is limited outside the Pesantren. However, the most important assets and the main differentiators of Pesantrens are the cultural aspects and stories. The Islamic values of *iktisad* (wise consumption) and *israf* (avoiding waste) provide a strong ethical foundation. Meanwhile, reinterpreting cleaning work as *khidmat* (devotion) and shifting the slogan to “Separate waste according to type” are ongoing strategies.

The implementation of environmental programs in Pesantrens faces two main challenges. The first is internal, namely, inconsistent *santri* awareness. Although waste reduction policies, such as the mandatory use of personal containers, have been introduced, implementation often does not go as planned. *Santri* often finds carrying containers cumbersome, leading them to abandon them. The management recognizes this and continues to navigate a deeper and more consistent awareness among *santri* regarding cleanliness and waste management. The second challenge is external, namely the economic impact on the surrounding community. The policy of banning plastic bags in the Pesantren canteen has led to complaints from vendors within the school, who have experienced a decrease in income. Similarly, the policy restricting *santri* from purchasing snacks outside can impact the livelihoods of the surrounding community. This challenge presents a dilemma that the management recognizes and mobilizes its capabilities through dialogue between the Pesantren and vendors, reaching a common ground and agreement so that these activities can continue, by jointly establishing the goal of alleviating the waste crisis while simultaneously maintaining socio-economic responsibility to the surrounding community. Thus, the Pesantren not only restricts but also engages in dialogue by encouraging traders to switch from single-use to reusable packaging. This aims to create a supply chain that aligns with the Pesantren’s environmental ethics while remaining economically profitable for the traders. This strategy demonstrates that a transformative Islamic environmental ethic must be able to interact and negotiate with the dominant economic system, offering solutions that are not only environmentally friendly but also socially just.

Meanwhile, in the reconciliation efforts, field findings show that the success of the An-Nur Pesantren in translating Islamic environmental ethics into sustainable communal practices cannot be reduced to a single factor. Rather, it is the result of

three layers of reconciliation working in an integrative and mutually supportive manner.

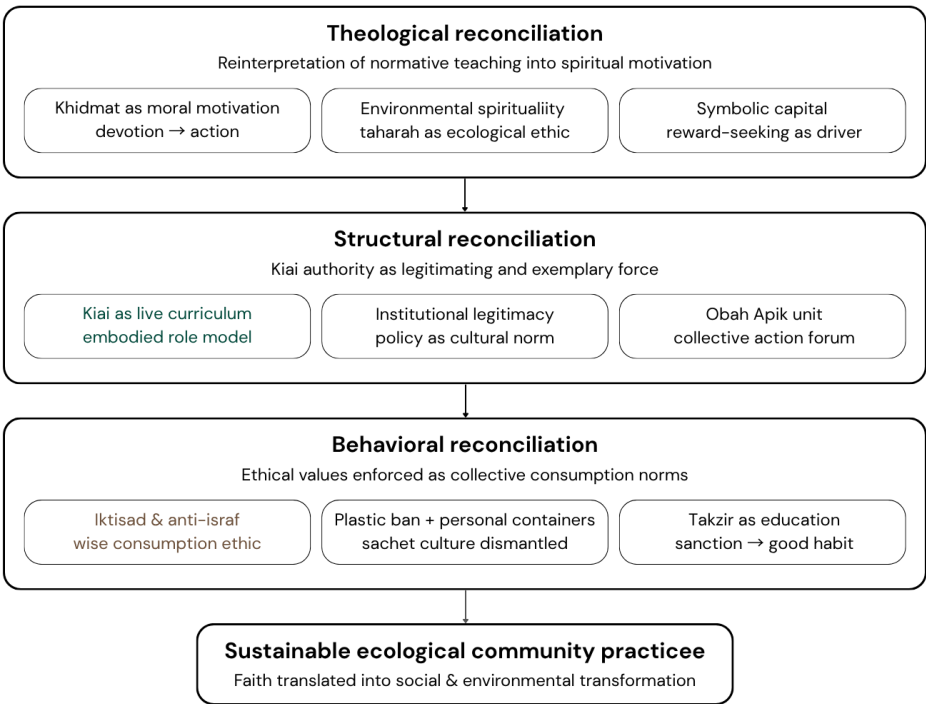


Figure 1. Three-level reconciliation model of lived Islamic environmental ethics.

The first layer is theological reconciliation, the process of reinterpreting normative Islamic teachings into spiritual motivations inherent in *santri*'s daily lives. This is where the concept of sincerity plays a role beyond mere religious functions, simultaneously serving as a moral motivation that encourages active engagement, symbolic capital that gives meaning to seemingly trivial ecological work, and a form of environmental spirituality that connects the act of maintaining cleanliness with a transcendental orientation. Without this layer, behavioral change would rely solely on external coercion and be vulnerable to collapse once oversight weakens. The second layer is structural reconciliation, which makes the *kiai*'s authority both a legitimizing force and a living curriculum.⁵⁵ Environmental policies are not simply implemented as administrative regulations but integrated into the *pesantren* culture through the *kiai*'s direct example. Thus, the Obah Apik Unit serves as a forum for collective action that strengthens this structural basis, ensuring that the environmental awareness movement does not rely solely on a single individual.

The third layer is behavioral reconciliation, where Islamic ethical values of wise consumption (*iktisad*) and avoiding waste (*israf*) are translated into binding

collective norms. This also intersects with the ban on plastic in the canteen, the obligation to bring personal containers, and the limitation of lunch hours, which constitute a systematic deconstruction of the culture of single-use packaging and consumerism in the lives of *santri* at Pesantren. Meanwhile, the system of *takzir*, in this context, is seen as a pedagogical instrument that gradually forms good habits.⁵⁶ These three layers do not operate in a hierarchical-linear manner, but rather reinforce each other, with theological reconciliation providing internal motivation, structural reconciliation providing legitimacy and concrete examples, while behavioral reconciliation ensures that these values are translated into concrete, measurable actions. Thus, not only is a waste management program important, but it is also a model of socio-ecological transformation rooted in Islamic values. This means that when religious teachings are managed integratively at all three levels simultaneously, they can become a driving force for significant and sustainable change. Through these three forms of reconciliation, Pesantrens demonstrate that Islamic traditions and values possess rich social and spiritual capital to respond to modern challenges. Innovations based on these values have enabled the Pesantren to survive and thrive, serving as a relevant model of how faith can be translated into communal practices that significantly impact the school and its environment.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Islamic environmental ethics in An-Nur Pesantren operates not merely as a normative religious doctrine but as a lived communal practice that continuously shapes ecological awareness, moral responsibility, and everyday environmental behaviour. Rather than relying primarily on external regulations or market-oriented sustainability strategies, ecological responsibility is internalized through religious values, communal discipline, and shared spiritual commitments. In this sense, waste reduction is understood not simply as environmental management but as an expression of worship, stewardship (*amanah*), and moral accountability before God.

The findings further reveal that communal ecological transformation is sustained through the interaction between religious leadership, institutional culture, and collective daily practices. The *kiai* functions as a living moral exemplar whose behaviour embodies Islamic environmental ethics, while initiatives such as *Obah Apik*, *khidmat*, *taharah*, and *iktisad* translate abstract theological principles into concrete communal habits. These practices illustrate how Islamic environmental ethics becomes a lived ethic that is reproduced through religious rituals, moral formation, and communal participation rather than through environmental campaigns alone.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing literature on Islamic environmental ethics by shifting the analytical focus from eco-pesantren as environmental education toward Islamic environmental ethics as lived practice. It argues that pesantren provide a faith-based model of communal ecological transformation that offers an alternative to neoliberal eco-consumerism, where environmental responsibility is grounded in spiritual values, collective discipline, and moral formation instead of individual consumer choice. This perspective enriches contemporary discussions on religion and environmental sustainability by demonstrating that ecological transformation can emerge from the internal ethical resources of religious communities.

Although this research is limited to a single case study and relatively short field engagement, it offers an analytical framework that may be tested in other pesantren and faith-based communities. Future research could undertake comparative studies across different religious institutions and explore how lived Islamic environmental ethics contributes to broader ecological governance and sustainable community development in diverse social contexts.

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