



Ecotheology-based Joyfull Learning Model in PAI Learning to Strengthen the Character of Environmental Care for Students of UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbangan Indramayu

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Abstract:

This research is motivated by the global environmental crisis due to the moral-spiritual crisis and the saturation of students with the conventional and monotonous learning method of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at UPTD SDN 2 Limbangan. The objectives of this research are (1) developing an ecotheology-based Joyfull Learning model through contextual case analysis and evaluating it via continuous classroom observation, (2) exploring the meaning of teachers and students towards ecotheology values, (3) analyzing forms of strengthening the character of caring for the environment, and (4) identifying supporting and inhibiting factors. This research uses a qualitative approach of the type of case study with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of school principals, PAI teachers, and students in grades 4-6 with 15 students. The results of the study show that (1) model development is carried out through three main stages: tadabur (observation), tafakur (reflection), and charity (implementation) (2) the implementation of this model succeeds in creating a learning atmosphere that supports the internalization of ecotheology values without the impression of patronizing and transforming students' perceptions in viewing nature as a form of worship and responsibility to God (3) a form of character strengthening in real behavior is evidenced by observational data, such as 12 out of 15 observed students actively bringing personal reusable water bottles to reduce single-use plastics, and initiating independent daily plant care routines. (4) The main supporting factors are the alignment of school vision, teacher creativity, the support of parents and adaptive students. Meanwhile, the main obstacles include limited curriculum time allocation, uneven practice facilities, and lack of consistency of habituation in the home environment. Practically, this study provides a solution for educators to overcome student learning boredom as well as a guide for schools in transforming spiritual values into concrete actions of environmental conservation.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

The current global environmental crisis has become the most urgent challenge that threatens human survival, including in Indonesia. Phenomena such as extreme climate change, increased pollution, scarcity of water resources, and explosions of pests and diseases are real threats to civilization (Jamal, 2025). This environmental damage is not only triggered by economic and technological factors, but is rooted in a moral-spiritual crisis due to an anthropocentric view that ignores ethics towards nature (Mafaza et al., 2025). In the context of education, systematic efforts are needed to instill the ideology of environmental preservation or ecotheology in order to build a collective awareness that protecting nature is God's mandate that must be integrated into the educational curriculum (Jamal, 2025).

Theoretically, ecotheology in the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) offers the foundation of consciousness through the perspective of monotheism, where humans play the role of caliphs who are responsible for the preservation of the earth (Rubai et al., 2025). However, the implementation of these values is often constrained by the learning process which is still dominated by conventional lecture methods, so that students feel bored, pay less attention to the material, and result in low learning outcomes (Rozak, et al., 2025). As a solution, the Joyfull Learning model is here to create a comfortable, safe, and exciting learning environment so that the process of internalizing characters can run effectively (Anggraini et al., 2024)

Problems related to low interest and student activity are specifically observed in PAI learning at SDN 2 Limbangan. In this location, the learning process tends to be monotonous which causes students' potential not to be explored optimally, thus having an impact on the lack of appreciation of Islamic values in daily life. This was conveyed by the PAI teacher who stated that "Yes, before applying this model, I only used conventional models such as lectures or writing about how to protect the environment without using real actions." (Excerpt of an interview with GP, February 24, 2026). The lack of innovation in learning methods in schools is the main obstacle in shaping students' characters, including the character of caring for the environment. Therefore, the application of the ecotheology-based Joyfull Learning model at SDN 2 Limbangan is very urgent to be researched as a strategic effort to increase students' interest in learning while strengthening the character of caring for the environment of students through meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences (Nurkarimah, 2025).

Before this research was carried out, there had been various similar studies that had been conducted before. These previous studies became this reference in carrying out this research, namely the first research, research conducted by Nurmadyah (2025) In an article entitled "Implementation of Deep Learning in Environmental Education and Ecological Awareness in Students of SMA Negeri 1 Siantan" explores the use of deep learning approaches to foster pro-environmental behavior. The results of the study show that a mindful, meaningful, and joyful approach is able to increase students' sensitivity to the school ecosystem and encourage real conservation actions. The similarity of this study is in the use of the joyful learning approach as a strategy to increase students' awareness and concern for the environment. In addition, both of these studies use a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation and documentation to explore the phenomenon of environmental education in depth in educational institutions The gap research gap found is the focus of the subject at the high school level and the use of the deep learning approach in general. Meanwhile, this research will focus on elementary school (SD) students by integrating specific religious values through ecotheological concepts in the PAI learning framework.

The second research by Musa et al., (2025) entitled "Joyful Learning Approach as a Strategy to Increase Learning Interest in Islamic Religious Education Learning in Elementary Schools" focuses on improving students' affective aspects of PAI subjects. Through the Classroom Action

Research (PTK) method, it was found that a pleasant learning atmosphere can significantly increase the active involvement and interest of grade V elementary school students. The similarity of this research is the use of the Joyful Learning approach to overcome students' saturation of the conventional and monotonous Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning method at the elementary school (SD) level. In addition, these two studies emphasize the importance of meaningful learning experiences so that the internalization of religious values does not stop only at the cognitive aspect or memorization of postulates, but can be transformed into students' behavior and character. The research gap of this article is that the research only stops at increasing learning interest in general. This research is here to bring joyful learning to a more substantial stage, which is not just to attract interest, but as a means of internalizing the character of caring for the environment based on divine values (ecotheology).

The third research compiled by Karima et al., (2025) In the article "Innovation of the Joyful Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education Materials at SDN Sengon II Purwosari" emphasizes the creativity of teachers in overcoming student boredom. The innovations carried out have been proven to create comfortable and stress-free classroom conditions so that PAI materials are easier to absorb. Similarities This research is a fundamental similarity in the use of a qualitative approach to explore the implementation of the joyful learning model in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects at the elementary school level. In addition, both of these studies emphasize the important role of teachers' creativity in innovating teaching patterns to create a fun, comfortable, and stress-free learning atmosphere, so that it can increase students' motivation and interest in learning. Technically, the two researchers also use identical data analysis stages, namely through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The research gap in this study lies in its innovation orientation which is more cognitive-instructional for mastery of teaching materials. This research complements this gap by offering a learning model that is not only pedagogically innovative, but also has a specific ecological value content, aiming to transform student behavior to be more concerned about the environment within the scope of UPTD SDN 2 Limbangan.

The main novelty of this research lies in the integration of socio-religious through the concept of ecotheology into the joyful learning model in the subject of Religious Education. Another novelty arises from efforts to transform theoretical PAI material into a fun and spiritually meaningful learning experience to form a concrete character of caring for the environment. In other words, this research offers a learning model that is not only pedagogically innovative, but also has a depth of spiritual-ecological value that has not been touched by previous studies at the elementary school level.

While previous studies have explored Joyful Learning for general affective improvement and deep learning for environmental awareness at the high school level, there remains a critical gap in elementary education. This research offers a novelty by integrating specific socio-religious values (ecotheology) into the Joyful Learning framework for elementary students. Theoretically, this integration bridges the gap between religious doctrine and ecological action. When ecotheological values (the 'what') are delivered through a stress-free, engaging environment (the 'how'), it lowers students' affective filters. This enables the cognitive understanding of ecological verses to seamlessly internalize into concrete psychomotor actions, thereby accelerating environmental character development. Based on the description that has been explained above, for the Strengthening of Students' Environmental Care Character with an ecotheology-based joyful learning model, the objectives of this study are: (1) Developing an ecotheology-based joyful model in PAI learning. (2) Exploring the meaning of teachers and students towards ecotheology values that are integrated in PAI learning through the Joyful Learning approach (3) Analyzing the forms of strengthening the character of environmental care that appear in elementary school students during and after the application of the ecotheology-based Joyful Learning model in PAI

learning. (4) Identifying the supporting and inhibiting factors of the application of the ecotheology-based Joyful Learning model in PAI learning to strengthen the environmental caring character of UPTD SDN 2 Limbangan Indramayu students.

The benefits of this research are to be able to develop an ecotheology-based joyful model in PAI learning, to explore the meaning of teachers and students to ecotheological values that are integrated in PAI learning through the Joyful Learning approach, to analyze the forms of strengthening the character of environmental care that appear in elementary school students during and after the application of the ecotheology-based Joyful Learning model in PAI learning, and to be able to identify supporting and inhibiting factors for the application of the ecotheology-based Joyful Learning model in PAI learning to strengthen the character of caring for the environment of UPTD SDN 2 Limbangan Indramayu students.

This research is very important to be carried out in order to make a real contribution in harmonizing theological understanding with students' ecological actions through the ecotheology-based Joyful Learning model. By integrating environmental spirituality values into a pleasant learning atmosphere, this research is expected to be able to transform religious education from mere doctrinal memorization to the internalization of the character of applicable environmental care. If this innovative approach is not implemented immediately, it is feared that the educational process will only give birth to a generation that is cognitively superior but ignores the environmental crisis and loses the ethical connection between religious beliefs and the preservation of the surrounding nature.



Method

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The case study was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of a case or phenomenon in the context of a specific site, namely SDN 2 Limbangan, because the value of qualitative research lies in the specificity of the context (Fiantika et al., 2022). This research is naturalistic, meaning that the researcher observes the phenomenon as it is in the field without providing manipulation, treatment, or intervention to the informant. Thus, this study does not form a control group or division of conditions (*between-subjects* or *within-subject*). The design used is a single case study at one research location.

Research Location and Time

The research was carried out at UPTD SDN 2 Limbangan. This location was deliberately chosen to obtain specific descriptions and themes that developed in the context of the site (Fiantika et al., 2022). Data collection, including interview activities, lasted for three weeks, namely from February 24 to March 15, 2026.

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The data sources in this study were selected using *nonprobability sampling* using the *purposive sampling technique* (Rasyid, 2022). Informants were determined based on the suitability of their roles and knowledge to the focus of the research. The informants consisted of 1 school principal (providing policy oversight and curriculum alignment), 1 PAI teacher (acting as the direct model implementer and facilitator), and 15 students in grades 4 to 6 (acting as the active learners and subjects of behavioral observation). Ethical clearance was obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from the students' parents prior to data collection, ensuring that all participants' identities were anonymized to protect the elementary school minors.

The criteria for inclusion of informants are school principals and PAI teachers who are actively serving at SDN 2 Limbangan, active students in grades 4 to 6 who participate in PAI learning, and are willing to become informants. The exclusion criteria are informants who are not present or are not willing to participate during the data collection period. Because some of the informants are minors, permission to conduct research is obtained through the school and teachers (adjust if your permit procedure is different).

Data Collection Techniques

Data is collected through direct interaction in the field using several techniques or triangulation techniques to maintain the validity of the data, namely in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation (Rasyid, 2022).

Interviews are the main data collection technique because they involve direct interaction between researchers and research subjects to gain in-depth insights (Niam et al., 2024). Interviews were conducted with school principals, PAI teachers, and students guided by semi-structured interview guidelines, and the results were recorded and recorded. Observations were carried out by directly observing learning activities using structured behavioral rubrics to monitor actual environmental practices during and outside PAI lessons. Documentation included photos of daily waste disposal, plant care activities, and classroom cleanliness checklists.

Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively and cyclically, starting from data collection as an integral part of the analysis to record the words and actions of informants. The data collected then goes through the data reduction stage, which is summarizing, classifying, and abstracting rough data into certain concept units or themes. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of narrative texts, matrices, or charts to organize information so that it is easy to understand. The analysis process ends with conclusion drawing and verification that is carried out continuously from the beginning of the research by looking for patterns and meanings, which are then retested for validity through peer discussions or field record reviews (Rijali, 2018). Data credibility was established through method triangulation cross-verifying interview transcripts with observational rubrics and school documents and member checking with the participating teacher to ensure the accuracy of the documented behavioral changes.

Result

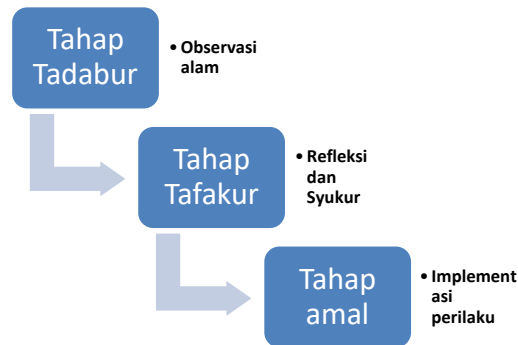
Data collection in this study was carried out through interviews with school principals, teachers and students in grades 4-6 with a total of 15 children. The interviews were conducted on February 24-March 15, 2026. Based on the research integrating the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* into instructional methodology, the results of this study formulated a Joyful Learning model *that not only touches on the cognitive aspect, but also the religious affection of students. Through an ecotheological approach, PAI learning is designed to foster joy as well as ethical responsibility towards the universe.*

1. Development of Ecotheology-based Joyful Learning Model in PAI learning

In the midst of the challenges of the global environmental crisis and the saturation of conventional methods, this research has succeeded in developing an innovative PAI learning model. *The ecotheology-based Joyful Learning* model is present as a solution to create a learning experience that is fun, meaningful, and relevant to today's ecological issues. The development of this model is carried out through three main stages that are mutually sustainable, namely the *tadabur* stage (nature observation), the *tafakur* stage (reflection and gratitude), and the

charity stage (behavioral implementation). The following is a picture of the *ecotheology-based joyful learning model*:

ECOTHEOLOGY-BASED JOYFUL LEARNING MODEL



A. *Tadabbur* Stage (Nature observation)

This model departs from the realization that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should not stop only in textbooks or memorization of postulates. Ecotheology exists to provide an understanding that protecting nature is part of faith. Based on an interview conducted with the principal, the researcher obtained the following information: *"a model like this is not just a theory, but there must be real action that makes them visually more attractive for children"*. (Excerpt from the interview by KS on February 24, 2026). Based on interviews, this study shows that the PAI learning model based on Ecotheology transforms from mere theological doctrine to ecological practice. The core of the success of this model lies in the shift from memorization methods (cognitive) to direct experience (psychomotor).

B. *Tafakkur* Stage (Reflection & Gratitude)

The success of this model is not measured by the ability of students to memorize definitions, but by changes in behavior. Based on interviews conducted with PAI teachers, the following information was obtained: *"after leaving the classroom, children need to reflect that Allah has given blessings such as free oxygen and others. This needs children to learn to be grateful"* (Quote from the interview results by GP on February 24, 2026). Based on the interview, the effectiveness of the learning model applied no longer focuses on the cognitive aspect alone, but on the transformation of students' behavior.

C. Charity stage (behavioral implementation)

After children observe nature and then reflect, children need real action in the form of implementing behavior in daily life. Based on the interview conducted with PAI teachers, the following information was obtained: *"after children observe and reflect, then children do it in daily life in the form of implementation that has been learned"*. (Excerpt from the interview results by GP on February 24, 2026). Based on the results of the interview, it can be concluded that the process of internalizing values in students is carried out through a systematic flow, where natural observation and reflection activities function as a theoretical and emotional foundation before stepping into the psychomotor stage. The implementation of behavior in daily life is the final estuary of learning, which shows that students' understanding has been transformed into

concrete and sustainable real actions in accordance with the material that has been learned.

From the findings of the research, this model proves that religious education is not just a *transfer of knowledge*, but a *transfer of value*. The transformation from "Know" to "Caring" and finally to "Doing" is the main essence of the success of the character-based curriculum that is implemented.

2. Teachers' and students' understanding of ecotheological values that are integrated in PAI learning through a joyful learning approach

This research aims to describe and analyze in depth the meaning of teachers and students of ecotheological values that are integrated into the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through the joyful learning approach.

A. Instilling Value in a Fun Way

The implementation of the joyful learning approach is able to create a learning atmosphere that supports the internalization of ecotheological values without a patronizing impression. Through the method of playing and exploring nature, the awareness of protecting the environment can grow organically in students. The principle of ecotheology that views nature as a sacred creation is also easily understood. Students do not just memorize theories, but feel responsible for the preservation of the earth. The noble values of caring for nature are also firmly embedded in their hearts without a patronizing impression.

1) Loss of boredom of studying religion

Religious learning will lose its boredom when we manage to find the right method and understand the relevance of the knowledge in daily life. Based on interviews conducted with PAI teachers, the following information was obtained: *"In PAI, ecotheology material is often considered heavy or just memorization of postulates. However, with joyful learning, for example through nature tadabbur in the school garden or simulation games, it is more meaningful. When they feel happy and not depressed. Students no longer see taking care of nature as a burden of duties from teachers, but as a form of fun worship. So, a positive learning atmosphere is a bridge that changes perception from obligation to awareness"* (Quote from an interview by GP on February 24, 2026). Based on the results of the interviews, it was shown that the joyful learning model succeeded in changing students' paradigm towards ecotheology materials in PAI, where a positive and stress-free learning atmosphere was proven to be effective in shifting students' perceptions from simply completing assignments/memorization to awareness of worship through real actions to protect the environment.

2) Learning directly in Nature Makes the Heart Happy

The ecotheology-based joyful learning model integrates the joy of learning with spiritual awareness of nature as God's creation. Through this approach, nature is not only used as a scientific laboratory, but also a spiritual phase that triggers a sense of joy. This observation activity in an open space effectively drives away psychological boredom by turning academic material into a creative adventure. Learning becomes more meaningful because students' ecological, intellectual, and spiritual intelligence are honed simultaneously without pressure. This is also in line with the interview of grade 6 students by obtaining the following information: *"Yes, it is very influential. I used to think that learning about the environment in religious lessons was boring because the content was only prohibitions or*

commands. But because the learning is exciting, such as making a recycling project while having a casual discussion or learning outside the classroom, I understand better" (Quote from the interview by NU on February 24, 2026). Based on the excerpt of the interview, it can be concluded that the application of interactive and fun environmental learning models such as casual recycling projects and activities outside the classroom has succeeded in changing students' views of environmental-themed religious lessons that were originally considered boring and rigid to be easier to understand and more interesting for them.

Based on the results of the above research, it shows that the application of the ecotheology-based joyful learning model aims to change the paradigm of students in environmental-themed religious learning, from what was originally considered rigid and limited to memorization to a fun and interactive experience. Through extracurricular activities and stress-free leisure projects, this model effectively expels psychological boredom while simultaneously honing students' ecological, intellectual, and spiritual intelligence. As a result, this hands-on learning in nature has succeeded in changing students' perception from initially seeing environmental preservation as a rigid task burden, now into an intrinsic awareness to worship through real actions.

B. Changing the Perspective That Protecting Nature is Part of Worship

The implementation of Islamic ecotheology is greatly influenced by the way teachers and students interpret religious teachings subjectively in the context of nature conservation. This personal perception of spiritual values is the main determinant of whether theological principles are able to transform into ethical awareness and concrete actions that are consistent in the school environment. In this context, the effectiveness of the implementation is highly dependent on the teacher's ability to package ecotheological materials that are often considered theoretical and rigid into enjoyable contextual learning activities

1) From Fear of Rules to Love of God's Creation

Protecting the environment is no longer just the fulfillment of rigid moral obligations, but a form of worship born from the sincerity of the heart to love all of Allah's creation. Based on the interview conducted with the PAI teacher, the following information was obtained: "*Preserving the environment is a form of worship, because destroying nature means betraying Allah's mandate as the manager of the earth.*" (Excerpt from the interview results by GP on February 24, 2026). Based on the results of the interview, preserving the environment is actually a manifestation of worship. On the contrary, the act of destroying nature is considered a form of betrayal of the mandate that has been entrusted by God to humans as the manager (*caliph*) on earth.

2) Understanding Man's Duty as Guardians of the Earth

Humans were created not as owners of the universe who are free to exploit without limits, but as caliphs or managers who hold a direct mandate from Allah to preserve the earth. This task requires the integration of intellectual intelligence and spiritual awareness, where every action of caring for the environment is considered a form of real worship. This is also in line with the interview of grade 4 students by obtaining the following information: "*I used to think that worship was only about prayer and fasting. Now I realize that protecting nature is also a form of our obligation. Class picketing is now not just a task, but a form of worship*" (Quote from the interview results by SF on February 24, 2026). Based on the results of the interview,

it proves that there has been an expansion of the meaning of worship in students, from what was originally limited to formal rituals now includes real actions to take care of the environment. This transformation of consciousness changes their perception of daily activities such as class picketing, which is no longer considered a burden of ordinary tasks but is lived as a real form of worship.

The results of the study show that the implementation of Islamic ecotheology has succeeded in transforming the paradigm of environmental conservation from just rigid obedience to deep spiritual awareness. The teacher emphasized that caring for nature is a manifestation of the worship and responsibility of the caliph, while destroying it is a betrayal of Allah's mandate. This transformation is strongly internalized in students through the expansion of the meaning of worship from formal rituals such as prayer and fasting, now including real environmental actions. As a result, daily activities such as class picketing are no longer considered as an ordinary burden of duties, but are sincerely lived as a form of worship and affection for fellow God's creation.

3. Forms of strengthening the character of environmental care that appear in elementary school students during and after the application of the ecotheology-based joyful learning model in PAI learning

A form of strengthening the character of caring for the environment that is manifested in elementary school students, both cognitively and behaviorally, as a direct impact of the application of the joyful learning model integrated with ecotheology values in PAI subjects.

- A. Students are more sensitive in identifying environmental damage around the school as a form of violation of their mandate as a caliph

The sensitivity of students in identifying environmental damage in schools is a manifestation of moral responsibility as a caliph. This awareness emphasizes that damaging or neglecting the ecosystem is not just a technical problem, but a tangible form of violation of the Mandate to protect the earth. Based on interviews conducted with 6th grade students, the following information was obtained: *"The school is not only a place to study, but also our second home that must be maintained. If we leave the school dirty or damaged, it means that we are not carrying out the task properly"* (Quote from the interview by S on February 24, 2026). Based on the interview, the students feel that taking care of the school environment is clear evidence of their responsibility to Allah and others.

- B. Reduced use of single-use plastics in school environments due to the understanding that cleanliness is part of faith

Reducing single-use plastics in schools is a tangible manifestation of the principle that cleanliness is part of faith. By minimizing inorganic waste, students integrate spiritual values into environmental action, transforming religious awareness into sustainability practices that preserve the school ecosystem. Based on interviews conducted with 5th grade students, the following information was obtained: *"So the plan is that there will be a program when PAI subjects are required to bring drinking bottles. This obligation is very good. So we don't just memorize the postulates about cleanliness, but actually do it. Bringing my own drinking bottle is the simplest way for me to prove that I love the school environment"* (Quote from the interview by MS on February 24, 2026). Furthermore, the interview claims were strongly supported by documentary and observational evidence. During the three-week observation period, it was recorded

that the proposed program had already transitioned into actual daily practice. Observational rubrics indicated a visible reduction in plastic waste inside the classroom bins, as 12 out of the 15 observed students consistently brought their personal reusable water bottles during PAI sessions. This documentary evidence confirms that the reduction of single-use plastics was not merely a proposed school plan, but an actualized behavioral change resulting from the internalized belief that cleanliness is part of faith. Based on the interview, fully support the plan of the mandatory program to bring your own drinking bottle, especially during PAI subjects. This program is considered a real step in implementing the religious value that cleanliness is part of faith, so that students not only memorize the postulates but also practice them.

- C. Student initiative to take care of plants or pick up garbage without having to be ordered by a teacher

The students' independent initiative in caring for plants and picking up garbage without orders reflects the internalization of a strong environmental caring character. This voluntary act shows that maintaining the preservation of the school has become a personal moral responsibility, not just formal compliance with the teacher's rules. Based on interviews conducted with grade 4 students, the following information was obtained: *"In my opinion, maintaining the cleanliness and school environment is the responsibility of all school residents, not just cleaners or teachers. I do it because I want our environment to remain clean without having to be told by the teacher"*. (Excerpt from the interview results by MH on February 24, 2026). Based on the interview, students showed high initiative in caring for plants and picking up garbage without the need for instructions from teachers.

4. **Supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation of ecotheology-based joyful learning in PAI learning to strengthen the character of environmental care for UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbangan students**

Various supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of ecotheology-based joyful learning methods in PAI learning at UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbangan. This is done in order to formulate effective strategies in strengthening students' environmental care character through the integration of religious values and fun nature conservation.

A. **Supporting Factors for the Implementation of Ecotheology-Based Joyful Learning in PAI Learning to Strengthen the Character of Environmental Care for UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbangan Students**

1) Alignment of vision and curriculum

The alignment of vision and curriculum ensures that every learning activity becomes a concrete step towards achieving the institution's ideals. This synchronization ensures that the curriculum is not only an administrative document, but a strategic instrument that consistently translates the main values in the process of forming students' character and competencies. Based on interviews conducted with school principals, the researcher obtained the following information: *"The main supporting factor is the alignment between the school's vision and the concept of Ecotheology in PAI. Our school policy supports this integration into the Independent Curriculum, namely through the green day program"* (Excerpt from the interview by KS on February 24, 2026). Based on the interview, the main supporting factor is the alignment of the school's vision with the concept

of Ecotheology in PAI, which is realized through the policy of integrating the Independent Curriculum in the form of the Green Day program.

2) High competence and enthusiasm of PAI teachers

The professional competence and enthusiasm of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are the main keys in effectively transferring moral values to students. With good mastery of material and high dedication, PAI teachers not only teach inspiring, but also become role models in shaping the religious character and ethics of students at school. Based on interviews conducted with school principals, the researcher obtained the following information: *" Our PAI teachers have high creativity in designing Joyful Learning. Teachers no longer teach rigidly in the classroom, but invite students to learn outdoors"*. (Excerpt from the interview results by KS on February 24, 2026). Based on the interview, another supporting factor is the competence and creativity of PAI teachers in implementing Joyful Learning through outdoor learning methods that are not rigid.

3) Parental support

Parental support is an important pillar in creating synergy between home and school to consistently strengthen students' character. The active participation of the family ensures that the educational values taught at school are strengthened at home, so that a holistic and sustainable learning ecosystem is created. Based on interviews conducted with school principals, the researcher obtained the following information: *"We saw great enthusiasm from students' parents. They support environment-based programs, such as bringing plants for the green day program. And of course, they will also support the programs carried out in this PAI learning"* (Quote from the interview by KS on February 24, 2026). Based on the interviews, the enthusiasm and full support of parents for the environment-based program, including active participation in Green Day activities and PAI learning.

4) Adaptive students

Adaptive students have the flexibility to quickly adapt to changing environmental dynamics and learning challenges. This ability allows them to remain resilient and creative in achieving learning outcomes, so that the obstacles that arise actually become opportunities for self-development and character strengthening. Based on an interview conducted with the principal, the researcher obtained the following information: *"Children basically have a great curiosity about something, including nature. With the Joyful Learning method, such as a nature-themed project with the inclusion of evidence or with visuals, they do not feel bored. It is assessed that the values of environmentally caring characters in them will grow"* (Quote from the interview results by KS on February 24, 2026). Based on the interview, through the project-based and visual-based Joyful Learning method. This is effective in fostering a character who cares about the environment without causing boredom.

B. Factors Inhibiting the Implementation of Ecotheology-Based Joyful Learning in PAI Learning to Strengthen the Character of Environmental Care for UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbangan Students

1) Time allocation limitations

The application of project-based joyful learning requires a longer duration than conventional learning in the classroom. Based on interviews conducted with PAI teachers, the researcher obtained the following information: *" the density of PAI materials in the curriculum is the main obstacle, because the project-based joyful learning*

method requires a longer time allocation which sometimes clashes with the target of completeness of semester material" (Excerpt from the results of an interview by GP on February 24, 2026). Based on interviews, it shows that the limitation of time allocation is the main obstacle in the implementation of ecotheology-based joyful learning. This is due to the clash between the long duration required for the project-based method and the target of the dense completion of PAI material in the semester curriculum.

2) Uneven learning facilities and media

The unequal distribution of learning facilities and media is a strategic challenge that hinders the equality of educational quality for all students. This gap in access to supporting facilities demands a fairer distribution solution so that every child gets quality learning opportunities, without being hampered by the limitations of infrastructure in their area. Based on an interview conducted with PAI teachers, the researcher obtained the following information: *"Despite the potential of a large school environment, the limitations of ecological practice facilities such as composting tools and planting media make joyful learning activities cannot be carried out simultaneously for all students, so that the effectiveness of internalizing ecological values is less than optimal"* (Quote from the results of an interview by GP on February 24, 2026). Based on the interview, the limitations of ecological practice facilities, such as composting tools and planting media. This causes joyful learning activities to not be carried out simultaneously, so that the internalization of ecological values for students is less than optimal.

3) Not consistent habituation in the home environment

Inconsistency of habituation at home often hinders the internalization of values that have been built at school. Without a synergy of consistent parenting, students' character development is at risk of stalling or regression due to differences in behavioral standards between the family environment and educational institutions. Based on interviews conducted with PAI teachers, the researcher obtained the following information: *"habits in the home environment are an obstacle, where ecotheological values that are taught in a fun way at school often do not receive practical reinforcement at home, so that the process of internalizing the character of caring for the environment in students runs slower"* (Excerpt from the results of an interview by KS on February 24, 2026). Based on interviews, the values of ecotheology taught in schools often do not receive practical reinforcement from parents, thus hindering the acceleration of the internalization of environmental caring characters in students.



Discussion

1. Development of Ecotheology-based Joyful Learning Model in PAI learning

A. Tadabbur Stage (Nature observation)

The concept of tadabbur and the stage of natural observation views natural phenomena as the main means to understand the power of Allah SWT in depth. Tadabbur is defined as a process of contemplation that involves not only the intellect but also the presence of the heart to understand the implicit meaning behind each phenomenon. Tadabbur is the foundation for synergizing the mind and heart in understanding the verses of Allah, which aims to internalize religious values into the character of students

(Rahmi et al., 2026). This is in line with the writing Alandika, (2022) which applies the Tadabbur Alam learning model by making the universe an intermediary of knowledge for students to get to know Allah SWT better through concrete experiences and deep reflection. This alignment emphasizes that natural observation is a practical form of tadabbur that is able to increase students' spiritual intelligence and character beyond just cognitive understanding.

B. *Tafakkur* Stage (Reflection & Gratitude)

The tafakkur stage, which includes deep reflection and gratitude, is an essential continuation of tadabbur in building students' spiritual awareness. In the context of reflective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, tafakkur serves as a transformation mechanism in which students not only understand phenomena cognitively, but are also able to relate real experiences with faith values to give birth to personal moral commitments (Patimah et al., 2025; Rozak, et al., 2025). This reflection is a crucial solution in dealing with the crisis of spirituality because it encourages students to internalize the meaning behind creation. This is in line with the concept of written ecotheology Rohman & Syaibani, (2025) that the tafakkur stage directs students to be grateful for their role as caliphs who have an ethical responsibility in maintaining the balance of nature as a form of devotion to Allah SWT. Thus, the integration of reflection and gratitude in learning ensures that the understanding of Allah's power manifests into a character that cares about the environment and the diversity of His creation.

C. Charity stage (behavioral implementation)

The charitable stage in ecotheology is a tangible manifestation of the integration of faith and knowledge manifested through consistent pro-environmental behavior in the educational environment. The implementation of this behavior is seen not only as a technical action of conservation, but also as a spiritual practice or "ecological proxy" that connects sacred texts with environmental realities. According to Anwar & Husnayain, (2026), the active involvement of students in activities such as tree planting, waste management, and green space rehabilitation is a form of practicing the value of jariyah alms and human responsibility as a caliph of fil-ardh. This is in line with the writing Ilmudinulloh et al., (2025) emphasized that the formation of this environmentally caring behavior is very effective if supported by a participatory approach, such as through the formation of a "Madrasah Green Community" that serves as a forum for sustainable action. This synergy between theological values and real actions creates a transformative learning experience, where caring for nature is no longer just cognitive knowledge, but has become a habitus or character rooted in spiritual awareness.

Critically, these three stages operate as a cohesive transformative mechanism. The tadabbur stage serves as a cognitive awakening that disrupts students' anthropocentric tendencies. Tafakkur bridges this cognitive awareness to the affective domain, fostering a deep emotional and spiritual attachment to nature. Finally, charity acts as the psychomotor manifestation, transforming spiritual attachment into concrete ecological habits. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. While the research documented immediate behavioral changes such as reduced plastic use and independent plant care during the three-week observation period claiming a permanent sustainable behavioral transformation exceeds the currently available data. Short-term internalization does not automatically guarantee long-term habituation, particularly given the identified inconsistencies in the students' home environments. Therefore, the current findings represent a successful initial transformative step in character formation, which requires longitudinal observation to confirm sustainable behavioral persistence.

2. Teachers' and students' understanding of ecotheological values that are integrated in PAI learning through a joyful learning approach

A. Instilling Value in a Fun Way

Efforts to create a learning atmosphere that supports the internalization of ecotheology values without a patronizing impression is by creating a fluid learning environment, where religious and environmental values are not taught doctrinally, but through school culture and direct experience. Syahriyah et al., (2025) It is stated that an effective learning atmosphere is built through social learning strategies, namely teachers position themselves as real examples in ecological behavior so that students absorb grades naturally. This is in line with the writing Sabtina & Mahariah, (2025) which emphasizes that the internalization process takes place effectively through the value transaction stage, where the teacher facilitates interactive dialogue and deep reflection after outdoor activities, so that students feel involved in discovering the spiritual meaning behind natural phenomena. Thus, the two articles affirm that a learning atmosphere free from patronizing impressions can be achieved by shifting the focus from verbal instruction towards collective habituation and emotional connection between learners and the universe.

B. Changing the Perspective that Protecting Nature is Part of Worship

The perception of the relationship between Islamic teachings and environmental conservation (ecotheology) places religious values as the main foundation in changing individual behavior towards nature. The subjective understanding of teachers and students in interpreting this relationship is often rooted in the internalization of the concepts of caliph (leader/guardian), mizan (balance), and amanah (responsibility). Teachers view that strengthening the theological meaning, namely believing that protecting the environment is part of worship, is a key strategy to foster sustainable environmental ethics. Ulfiani & Ningsih, (2026) stated that teachers integrate ecotheology by linking the material of faith and morals directly to the moral responsibility of students as caliphs on earth to take care of the creation of Allah SWT. This is in line with the writing Azzahra & Masyithoh, (2024) argues that a deep understanding of Islamic principles such as avoiding waste (israf) and maintaining cleanliness (taharah) is able to transform daily actions into a form of spiritual devotion to the Creator. Thus, the harmony of perception between teachers and students in interpreting ecotheology creates a green school culture, where every conservation action is understood as a tangible manifestation of religious obedience.

3. Forms of strengthening the character of caring for the environment that appear in elementary school students during and after the application of the ecotheology-based joyful learning model in PA learning

A. Students are more sensitive in identifying environmental damage around the school as a form of violation of their mandate as a caliph

The sensitivity of students in identifying environmental damage around the school is a tangible manifestation of the role of humans as caliphs *Thread-ARD* who carry out the mandate to preserve nature, not exploit it excessively (Thoyibah & Fakhruqi, 2025). The ability to identify these damage is in line with the concept *Tadabbur* and *ecoliteracy*, where students do deep reflection to realize that every form of destruction of nature is an act of *Facade* (damage) that violates the commands of Allah SWT (Amelia et al., 2025). This is supported by the view that ecological awareness must be integrated with the value of *ihsan*, so that students view the activity of protecting the school environment not just as

a social task, but as a form of worship and moral responsibility to the Creator (Thoyibah & Fakhruqi, 2025). This alignment affirms that when students are able to associate environmental damage with the violation of the caliphate's mandate, they have reached the stage *green behaviour* that is driven by spiritual motivation to prevent the destruction of the wider earth (Amelia et al., 2025).

- B. Reduced use of single-use plastics in school environments due to the understanding that cleanliness is part of faith

The concept of ecotheology in Islamic Religious Education views environmental preservation not just as a social responsibility, but as a concrete manifestation of faith that places man as a caliph *Fil-Argh*. The implementation of these values is realized through concrete steps such as reducing the use of single-use plastics in schools, which are based on a deep understanding that cleanliness is part of faith (*An-Nadzafatu Minal Iman*) (Muttaqin et al., 2026). This effort is in line with the writings Lahabu et al., (2024) which confirms that habituation of environmentally friendly behaviors, including minimizing plastic waste in canteens and promoting reusable containers, is very effective in shaping the character of students who care for and are responsible for the ecosystem. This continuity between theological values and field practice shows that the integration of religious aspects into environmental education is able to increase students' spiritual awareness while stabilizing their ecological behavior beyond routine habits in school

- C. Student initiative to take care of plants or pick up garbage without having to be ordered by a teacher

The students' self-initiative in caring for the environment shows a fundamental alignment between the theoretical concept of tadabbur and religious-ecological practices in the field. When a student picks up garbage or waters plants without the teacher's instruction, the action is not just a physical routine, but a tangible manifestation of the internalization of the values of the caliphate and the trust that have been integrated in the heart (Novanto et al., 2025). This is in line with the essence of tadabbur which demands the synergy of the mind and heart where students do not only see plants as biological objects, but as God's mandate that must be maintained as a form of worship (Irma et al., 2025). The integration of Islamic values in the curriculum creates an intrinsic motivation that makes students feel personally responsible for the preservation of nature (Novanto et al., 2025). This harmony is further strengthened by the writing Irma et al., (2025) where the example of teachers as *role model* In practical activities, it is able to transform cognitive awareness into a sedentary character so that students act pro-environment consistently. Thus, this non-ordering initiative is valid evidence that natural observation accompanied by spiritual contemplation has succeeded in giving birth to ecological intelligence that goes beyond just obedience to school rules.

4. Supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation of ecotheology-based joyful learning in PAI learning to strengthen the character of environmental care for UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbangan students

A. Supporting Factors for the Implementation of Ecotheology-Based Joyful Learning in PAI Learning to Strengthen the Character of Environmental Care for UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbanga Students

- 1) Alignment of vision and curriculum

The alignment between the vision of the institution and the implementation of the curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is supported by the integration of spiritual values manifested through student-centered learning methods. Primadola &

Karim, (2023) emphasizing that the main supporting factor in this alignment is the high motivation and enthusiasm of the students, which is then facilitated by the teacher through the joyful learning method to achieve learning goals without pressure. This is in line with the findings Ulfiani & Ningsih, (2026) which states that curriculum harmony can be achieved effectively through the integration of ecotheology and the value of compassion, where students are invited to understand their responsibilities as caliphs through real experiences in the school environment. These two sources consistently show that the vision of character formation can only be realized if the curriculum is designed to encourage student activity, both through a pleasant learning atmosphere and through strengthening theological meaning in every daily activity. The harmony of opinion from these two articles confirms that the emotional and spiritual involvement of students is the main key in bridging the ideal vision of the school with the practice of the curriculum in the classroom.

2) High competence and enthusiasm of PAI teachers

The high competence and enthusiasm of PAI teachers are the main supporting factors that are in line with the success of the implementation of ecotheology-based joyful learning. The superior personality competencies of PAI teachers, such as integrity and example, are key factors in increasing learning motivation and creating positive and inspiring interactions for students. Teachers who have high enthusiasm in consistently applying moral values are able to build a conducive learning environment, so that the process of internalizing Islamic teachings and building students' character can run more effectively and meaningfully (Danar, 2025). This is in line with the writing Alamsyah & Ahwa, (2020) which states that the implementation of joyful learning requires educators to be able to create a fun, stress-free, and creative learning atmosphere so that students' interest in learning grows optimally. On the contrary, the lack of creativity and competence of educators is actually an inhibiting factor that makes learning feel monotonous and boring (Alamsyah & Ahwa, 2020). This alignment emphasizes that teachers who have high enthusiasm and spiritual competence will be able to move students through example and compassion, which ultimately enhances students' spiritual intelligence and character beyond just cognitive understanding.

3) Parental support

Parental support as a supporting factor for the application of ecotheology-based joyful learning in PAI learning shows a strong alignment with the principles of children's education. The position of parents as primary educators who are responsible for guiding children to do good to fellow creatures created by Allah SWT as part of the development of their natural potential (Moomin et al., 2025). This is in line with the writing Rahmi, (2022) which states that their active involvement creates a synergy between the values of environmental conservation taught in school and habituation at home. Real forms of support such as the provision of relevant reading resources, motivation through appreciation, and spiritual guidance that are in harmony with the principles of ecotheology can optimally increase children's enthusiasm and understanding.

4) Adaptive students

The existence of adaptive students is a crucial supporting factor in the successful implementation of eco-theology-based joyful learning, because students' ability to adapt to various variations of learning methods allows for the creation of a conducive and happy classroom atmosphere (Azkiya & Istiqomah,

2025). This is in line with the concept of tadabbur which emphasizes concrete experiences and deep reflection, where adaptive students will be more easily actively involved in the process of contemplating natural phenomena as a means of understanding the power of Allah SWT in depth (Sajida et al., 2024). The use of fun and varied learning strategies, such as the use of audio-visual media or educational games, has been proven to be able to significantly increase learning motivation when supported by students' flexibility in responding to learning innovations designed by teachers (Sajida et al., 2024). Thus, the synergy between adaptive student characteristics and fun learning models can optimize the internalization of religious values and spiritual intelligence through a harmonious interaction between intellect, heart, and natural environment (Azkiya & Istiqomah, 2025)

B. Factors Inhibiting the Implementation of Ecotheology-Based Joyful Learning in PAI Learning to Strengthen the Character of Environmental Care for UPTD SD Negeri 2 Limbangan Students

1) Time allocation limitations

The implementation of the ecotheology-based joyful learning method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning faces interrelated structural and technical obstacles. Limited time allocation is the main obstacle because the project-based learning model requires a longer duration than conventional methods, so it often clashes with the semester curriculum completion target. Ecological education in Islam requires a deep approach and cannot be done instantly in order to instill awareness that protecting nature is part of worship (Zulfikar, 2025). This is in line with the writing Aini & Effendy, (2026) which emphasizes that problems in the curriculum dimension arise because the environmental material in PAI is still implicit and only an additional content, which in the end makes it difficult to build faith-based awareness if learning is only carried out incidentally.

2) Uneven learning facilities and media

In addition to time, inequality of learning facilities and media, such as composting tools and practice facilities, causes learning activities to not be able to reach all students simultaneously, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of internalizing eco-spiritual values (Rubai et al., 2025). This is in line with the writing Tugiah & Asmendri, (2022) emphasizing that an inadequate learning environment and unattractive media can interfere with the learning process and reduce students' interest. Inequality of facilities hinders the creation of effective and enjoyable learning, because the success of internalizing values and building personality is highly dependent on the use of appropriate media and a supportive learning atmosphere. Without equal means of practice, it is difficult for teachers to develop students' creativity so that the educational goal of achieving spiritual power is not optimally achieved.

3) Not consistent habituation in the home environment

The last inhibiting factor is the weak synergy between the school and the home environment; the ecotheological values that have been built in a fun way in schools often do not get practical reinforcement from parents, so the process of forming the character of caring for the environment is slow (Mafaza et al., 2025). This is in line with the writing Mahmud et al., (2024) which confirms that instilling good habits is the responsibility of parents at home. But in fact, the lack of communication and

cooperation with parents is one of the main obstacles in achieving the goals of religious education. This inconsistency between school and home hinders the internalization of the character of caring for the environment in students.



Conclusion

This research succeeded in achieving four main objectives in integrating an ecotheology-based joyful learning model in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at UPTD SDN 2 Limbangan. First, this research succeeded in developing a structured learning model through three main stages: tadabur (nature observation), tafakur (reflection and gratitude), and charity (behavioral implementation). Second, this approach has proven to be effective in facilitating teachers and students to interpret ecotheology not as a cognitive doctrine, but as a form of fun worship and responsibility to God. Third, the implementation of this model has significantly succeeded in strengthening the character of caring for the environment in students, which is characterized by increased sensitivity to environmental damage, plastic reduction initiatives, and independent actions in caring for school plants. Fourth, the success of this model is supported by the alignment of the school's vision, the creativity of PAI teachers, parental support, and adaptive children, although in its implementation it still faces challenges in the form of limited curriculum time allocation and practice facilities, as well as inconsistent habituation in the home environment.

This study has limitations in terms of limited observation time range and the coverage of ecological practice facilities that are not evenly distributed in the research site, so that it is not possible to implement environmental actions simultaneously for all students. In addition, there are obstacles to the consistency of strengthening behavior in the home environment that is not fully aligned with the habituation at school. Based on these limitations, it is recommended for future research to expand the scope of the research subject to other levels of education and integrate the role of the family more intensively through a structured home-school collaboration program. In addition, the development of the next model is expected to explore the use of digital technology or more varied creative media to overcome the limitations of physical practice facilities, so that the internalization of ecotheological values can run more optimally even with limited facilities.



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