

Constructing Eco-Islamic University Model: Strategies for Pesantren-Based Higher Education

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Abstract

Bojonegoro faces a critical paradox: it serves as a national energy and extractive-industry hub, yet remains highly vulnerable to ecological disasters such as floods, landslides, and droughts. Despite this alarming condition, Pesantren-based higher education institutions which act as the moral and intellectual foundation for local communities currently lack a comprehensive educational model that integrates Islamic values with a strategic responsiveness to the environmental crises caused by these extractive industries. Therefore, this study aims to construct the "Attanwir Eco-Islamic University Model" as a systematic, preventive, and educational strategy to address these local ecological challenges. Employing a qualitative exploratory case study design at Institut Attanwir Bojonegoro, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed interactively using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, comprising data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings propose a robust framework built upon three integrated pillars. First, a Philosophical Foundation rooted in "Feminine Theology" (emphasizing the compassionate attributes of *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim*) to counter anthropocentric exploitation. Second, an Academic Framework that embeds local issues, such as oil waste and teak forest conservation, directly into the Environmental Jurisprudence (*Fiqh al-Bi'ah*) curriculum. Third, a Social System that institutionalizes a "green lifestyle" through practices such as plastic fasting and eco-wudhu. The study concludes that this Eco-Islamic model is vital for transforming universities into moral beacons, ultimately producing graduates who are not only intellectually competent but also agents of change, possessing profound ecological piety to advocate for communities in vulnerable industrial zones.

Keywords: Eco-Islamic University, Ecotheology, *Pesantren* Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

The current global ecological crisis has transcended mere technical environmental issues to become an acute spiritual and moral crisis. Environmental degradation is driven not only by economic and technological factors but also by the erosion of human ethical awareness, which views nature merely as an object of exploitation rather than a sacred entity to be preserved (Mafaza et al., 2025). From a theological perspective, this phenomenon reflects the dominance of a masculine theological paradigm, which tends to be exploitative and positions humans as absolute masters over nature. Consequently, an intellectual reconstruction towards feminine theology is required, emphasizing the attributes of *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim* (compassion and mercy) in treating nature as a manifestation or sign (*ayat*) of God (Ruswanda, 2025).

Bojonegoro faces a paradox: it is a national energy hub highly vulnerable to ecological disasters. Despite their potential, *pesantren*-based universities lack a comprehensive model integrating Islamic values

with responsiveness to extractive industries. This study constructs the Attanwir Eco-Islamic University Model as a preventive strategy. Employing a qualitative exploratory case study at Institut Attanwir Bojonegoro, data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model. The findings propose a framework built on three pillars: (1) a Philosophical Foundation based on Feminine Theology (*Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim*) to counter exploitation; (2) an Academic Framework integrating oil waste and forest conservation issues into Environmental *Fiqh*; and (3) a Social System through green lifestyle habituation. The study concludes that this model is vital for producing graduates who are agents of change, with ecological piety, to serve communities in industrial zones.

At the local level, the urgency of ecotheology education is growing in Bojonegoro Regency, a region with high ecological vulnerability. Recent data from the Bojonegoro Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) recorded 350 natural and non-natural disaster incidents throughout 2025. These incidents were dominated by strong winds (107 cases), followed by landslides (84 cases), riverine flooding (55 cases), and fires and droughts (Mahdi, 2025). The high intensity of these disasters corroborates previous research findings identifying Bojonegoro as a region with high vulnerability (Rozi et al., 2025), particularly in villages situated along riverbanks and in critical forest areas. This phenomenon indicates an imbalance in the relationship between humans and nature, where the function of Khalifah fil ardh (stewardship on earth) has not been fully internalized in environmental governance (Abdullah, 2023).

Pesantren-based universities, particularly Institut Attanwir Bojonegoro, hold a strategic position to address these challenges. Although Institut Attanwir is geographically relatively secure from oil exploration centers and disaster-prone areas, it serves as an educational hub for student-*santri* (*mahasanti*) originating from these affected regions. Institut Attanwir functions as an intellectual base, preparing Bojonegoro's future human capital. However, a literature review reveals that ecotheology studies have predominantly focused on implementation at the elementary education level, specifically within *madrrasah* (Islamic formal schools that integrate religious teachings with the national curriculum), through simple habituation methods, or have been limited to purely philosophical discourse. Few studies have formulated a comprehensive institutional development model at the *Pesantren*-based university level that specifically addresses the challenges posed by extractive industrial zones.

This study aims to address this gap by constructing an Eco-Islamic University development model at Institut Attanwir Bojonegoro. This model is designed to respond to the Ministry of Religious Affairs' "Roadmap for Independence and Religious Moderation" policy, which positions ecotheology as a pillar of transformation. By integrating social entrepreneurship values and local wisdom (Purnomo & Azizah, 2025), this study offers an integrative strategy to cultivate scholar-*santri* who are not only intellectually astute but also possess ecological piety as agents of change.

METHODS

Design

Research approach and design this study employs a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. In this study, the primary unit of analysis is the institutional level, explicitly Institut Attanwir, a *pesantren*-based higher education institution. Within this institutional context, the research also examines embedded sub-units, including institutional policies, the perspectives of key actors (university leaders, lecturers, and *mahasanti*), and their daily ecotheological practices. A qualitative approach was selected, as this study aims to understand the meaning, characteristics, and dynamics of phenomena that occur naturally through direct interaction between the researcher and the research subjects (Hikmawati, 2020). An exploratory design was employed because the primary objective of this study is to construct a new development model

(conceptual model construction) regarding the Eco-Islamic University, which currently lacks a standardized framework in the region. This method enables the researcher to explore in depth the strategic development needs of *pesantren*-based higher education to respond to contemporary ecological challenges (Hardani et al., 2020). Research location and time: This research was conducted at Institut Attanwir Bojonegoro. The location was selected purposively, considering that this campus is the largest *pesantren*-based higher education institution serving as an educational hub for *mahasantri* (a designated term for university students who simultaneously reside in and follow the traditional educational system of an Islamic boarding school, or *pesantren*) from areas affected by the oil and gas industry and forestry in Bojonegoro. Although geographically outside the primary ring of the exploration zone, Institut Attanwir plays a strategic role as an intellectual and moral foundation in producing human resources (HR) who will return to these disaster-prone areas. The research was conducted in 2025-2026, coinciding with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' momentum to strengthen ecotheology policies.

Procedure and Data Collection

Data sources: data sources in this study are divided into two categories primary data: obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants selected using purposive sampling techniques. The informants include: (a) Leaders of Institut Attanwir and caretakers of the student *pesantren* as policymakers; (b) Lecturers from the Faculties of Tarbiyah, *Da'wah*, and Economics and Business who integrate ecological values; (c) *mahasantri* originating from areas surrounding forests and the oil and gas industry; and (d) Community leaders around the campus. Secondary data: includes university profile documents, *pesantren* curricula, disaster data from the Bojonegoro Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) for 2025 (Mahdi, 2025), and literature on the green campus concept and ecotheology (Rozi et al., 2025). Data collection techniques: data collection was conducted through three main techniques. Participant observation: the researcher directly observed the environmental culture on campus, interaction patterns of *mahasantri* with the environment, and infrastructure supporting environmental governance. In-depth Interview: conducted to explore the philosophical perspectives of the leadership regarding the campus's ecological vision and the theological understanding of the *mahasantri*. Documentation: collecting campus policy archives, semester lesson plans (RPS), and other supporting data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques was performed interactively following the model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, comprising three concurrent flows of activity: (1) Data Condensation, namely the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying field data related to ecological issues and the potential of the *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding schools), (2) Data display, namely organizing information in the form of narratives and charts of the hypothetical Eco-Islamic University model; and (3) Conclusion drawing, namely verifying findings to formulate a valid final model. Validate the data to ensure it is valid, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was performed by comparing statements between *mahasantri*, lecturers, and community leaders. Meanwhile, technique triangulation was conducted by cross-checking interview results with field observation findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study address the primary research objective: constructing a development model for a *pesantren*-based university (a higher education institution that formally integrates the traditional Islamic boarding school's residential system and moral values with a modern academic curriculum) that is responsive to ecological challenges in Bojonegoro. The findings are presented in two main sections: a needs analysis based on the ecological realities of the oil and gas region, and the design of the proposed Eco-Islamic University model.

Urgency Analysis: Ecological Challenges and Curriculum Gaps

Based on field data, the urgency of developing an ecology-oriented campus model at Institut Attanwir is driven by two fundamental factors: the escalation of disasters in the surrounding area and the absence of a specific curriculum.

Table 1. Disaster Incident Data in Bojonegoro Regency in 2025

No	Disaster Type	Number of Incidents
1	Strong Winds	107
2	Landslides	84
3	Riverine Flooding	55
4	House Fires	33
5	Drought	18
6	Others (Forest Fires, Flash Floods, etc.)	53
Total	Total Incidents	350

Bojonegoro Regency faces serious ecological vulnerability. Data from the Bojonegoro Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) indicates a significant increasing trend in disasters. Throughout 2025, a total of 350 natural and non-natural disaster incidents were recorded in this region (Rahmayani et al., 2025). Detailed disaster data is shown in the Table.

The data in table 1 confirms that the majority of *mahasantri* (student-*santri*) at Institut Attanwir originate from and will return to areas vulnerable to hydrometeorological disasters. Interviews with community leaders revealed that the conversion of teak forest land and oil and gas industry activities have further exacerbated soil and water system vulnerabilities in the region (Arham, 2025). Observations of curriculum documents at the Faculties of Tarbiyah, *Da'wah* (Islamic propagation and communication), and Islamic Economics and Business at Institut Attanwir reveal an epistemological gap. Although Islamic values are taught intensively, materials specifically discussing Environmental Jurisprudence (*Fiqh al-Bi'ah*) or Ecotheology have not yet been structurally integrated into compulsory courses (Husnah, 2025).

Student understanding tends to remain purely theocentric-worship-oriented (the relationship between humans and God), without yet touching upon the cosmocentric aspect (human responsibility towards nature) as part of worship. This indicates the need for curriculum transformation that produces graduates who are not only ritually pious but also ecologically pious.

Construction of the Eco-Islamic University Model

In response to the findings above, this study develops a model, termed the Attanwir Eco-Islamic University Model. This model is designed by integrating three main pillars: Philosophical Foundation, Academic Framework, and Social System.

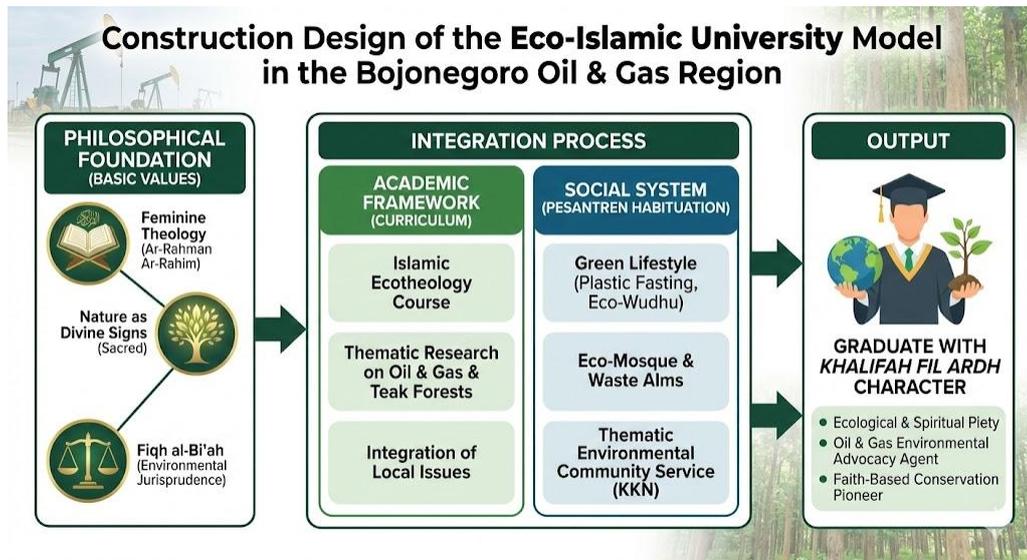


Figure 1. Construction Design of the Eco-Islamic University Model
in the Bojonegoro Oil and Gas Region

This model illustrates the integration process from fundamental values to graduates who possess the *Khalifah* character (Syaputri et al., 2023). The university's philosophical foundation is rooted in Nasaruddin Umar's concept of Feminine Theology. This concept replaces the anthropocentric paradigm with a theology of compassion, guided by the divine attributes of *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim*. From this perspective, nature is no longer viewed as an object for human exploitation, but is recognized as a sacred manifestation or Sign of God. Therefore, environmental conservation is elevated to a religious obligation, meaning that protecting the ecosystem is treated as an integral part of one's spiritual devotion.

To translate this philosophy into intellectual practice, the institution employs an integrative academic framework that embeds environmental consciousness directly into the curriculum. Core courses such as Islamic Ecotheology and Environmental Jurisprudence (*fiqh al-bi'ah*, which concerns Islamic legal rulings on the protection and preservation of the environment) are mandatory, ensuring students understand the theological basis for conservation. Beyond the classroom, academic rigor is applied to real-world solutions through thematic research; specifically, undergraduate theses and community service initiatives are strategically directed toward addressing pressing local ecological challenges, such as mitigating oil waste and reforestation of teak forests.

Finally, the campus culture cultivates a social system defined by *pesantren* habituation, which institutionalizes a Sharia-based Green Lifestyle among students and staff. This commitment to sustainability is manifested through disciplined daily practices, such as observing a "plastic fast" on Mondays and Thursdays to reduce non-biodegradable waste. Additionally, the community actively practices eco-wudhu to promote water conservation during religious ablutions and engages in *sedekah sampah* (the charitable practice of collecting and donating recyclable waste to support community and environmental needs), effectively transforming environmental responsibility into a collective spiritual and social act.

Discussion: the findings of this study offer a new perspective on the management of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI). Compared with general Green Campus models that are technical-managerial in nature (such as UI Green Metric), this Eco-Islamic University model offers a theological-substantive approach.

A purely technical approach is insufficient to change behavior if it does not touch the inner dimension. This model addresses that challenge by positioning environmental awareness as a manifestation of faith. This aligns with the Hidden Curriculum theory, which posits that the formation of independence and caring characters is shaped by the environmental atmosphere, not merely by classroom instruction (Awang et al., 2019).

The strategic implications of implementing this model in Bojonegoro are significant. By producing graduates with "Feminine Theology" awareness, Institut Attanwir not only generates a workforce for the industry but also gives birth to "Environmental Moral Guardians" who dare to advocate for ethical policies against exploitative practices in the oil and gas region. This study simultaneously strengthens the position of the pesantren as the final bastion of nature conservation through religious language adhered to by grassroots communities (Mafaza et al., 2025).

Operationally, the synergy between the academic framework and the social system creates a holistic educational ecosystem that bridges the gap between epistemological understanding and axiological practice. While the formal curriculum introduces concepts such as *Fiqh al-Bi'ah* (Environmental Jurisprudence) and ecological crisis analysis, the *pesantren's* daily life functions as a laboratory for habituation. Practices such as eco-wudhu (water conservation) and plastic fasting are not enforced merely as campus regulations, but are internalized as religious observances (*ibadah*). This method effectively internalizes the "Hidden Curriculum," ensuring that ecological consciousness becomes a permanent character trait (*akhlaq*) rather than a mere act of compliance with campus rules.

Ultimately, this constructed model serves as a blueprint for other *pesantren*-based Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) facing similar ecological vulnerabilities. It redefines the relevance of the *pesantren* in the contemporary era, proving that traditional Islamic institutions can provide progressive solutions to modern global crises. By harmonizing local wisdom, theological depth, and scientific inquiry, Institut Attanwir demonstrates that higher education can function as an agent of ecological salvation. This model implies that the responsibility of a university extends beyond academic transfer; it encompasses the moral obligation to protect the biosphere, thereby fulfilling the proper mandate of the *khalifah fil ardh* (the divinely entrusted responsibility of humans to act as stewards who manage, protect, and sustain the earth) in preserving the sustainability of life for future generations.

The application of feminine theology challenges the human-centered approach that typically drives extractive industries. In Bojonegoro, where natural resources like oil and gas are heavily commercialized, prioritizing the divine attributes of *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim* provides an ethical boundary. Through this theological lens, students learn to perceive the environment not as a passive resource for human use, but as an integral part of their religious responsibility. As a result, the Eco-Islamic University model aims to graduate individuals who combine technical environmental knowledge with strong ethical standards, preparing them to prioritize ecological sustainability over pure economic gain in their future careers.

Ultimately, the reconstruction of the university into an Eco-Islamic entity represents a vital effort to restore the fractured relationship between humanity and nature. This model asserts that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a crisis of human character, which can only be resolved through education that touches the spiritual dimension. Thus, the Eco-Islamic University stands not only as an academic sanctuary but as a moral beacon, preparing a generation of *Khalifah* capable of managing the earth with the compassion (*rahmah*) required to sustain life for future generations.

Discussions

The findings of this study offer an alternative perspective on the management of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI). While conventional Green Campus frameworks typically prioritize technical and infrastructural indicators, the proposed Eco-Islamic University model introduces a theological-substantive approach. Addressing ecological crises in extractive zones like Bojonegoro requires more than just managerial adjustments; it demands a fundamental shift in environmental ethics (Farhani et al., 2025). This approach aligns with the argument that sustainable behavior in religious communities is more effectively shaped when ecological awareness is framed as a manifestation of faith rather than mere regulatory compliance (Zohdi & Umami, 2025).

The integration of feminine theology provides a critical response to the anthropocentric paradigm that often justifies the exploitation of nature in industrial regions. By elevating the attributes of *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim* (compassion and mercy), nature is repositioned not as a commodity, but as a sacred entity (*Jauhar*) (Lailin et al., 2025). This theological repositioning acts as an ethical boundary. As noted in recent literature, treating the environment as a partner in worship prevents the unchecked commercialization of natural resources (Amin & Huda, 2025). Consequently, students develop a spiritual baseline that restrains exploitative behavior.

Operationally, this model bridges the gap between normative Islamic teachings and practical environmental governance through its academic framework. The mandatory inclusion of *fiqh al-bi'ah* ensures that ecological issues specifically oil waste management and teak forest conservation are analyzed through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence (Widiastuty & Anwar, 2025). This curricular integration prevents religious education from becoming detached from local realities. Embedding local ecological issues into formal curricula has been shown to increase students' capacity for practical problem-solving and contextual awareness. (Al Faruq et al., 2025)

The emphasis on a theological-substantive approach in this model is further supported by the broader discourse of global ecotheology, which posits that environmental crises are fundamentally a religious problem rooted in spiritual misunderstandings (Pangihutan & Jura, 2022). By framing ecological stewardship as a divine mandate, the Attanwir model moves beyond secular environmentalism. This transition is crucial, as the effectiveness of environmental management often depends on deep-seated awareness rather than just conceptual thinking (Kurniawan et al., 2023). In this context, the application of Arne Naess's Deep Ecology theory, as observed in recent ecotheological reviews, complements the Islamic theocentric-ecological paradigm by advocating for a shift in human behavior driven by self-motivation and religious drive.

Moreover, the archipelagic nature of the Indonesian landscape necessitates a model that is not only land-based but also interconnected with the broader ecological entity (Slamet et al., 2025). The Attanwir model, while focused on the oil and gas industrial terrestrial zone, indirectly addresses this interconnectedness by preparing agents of change who understand that terrestrial degradation, such as deforestation in Bojonegoro, ultimately impacts the entire planetary ecosystem. The success of this model is heavily reliant on the process of 'value internalization,' in which school or pesantren culture serves as the primary medium (Sabtina & Mahariah, 2025). Through stages of transformation and transaction of values, the *mahasantri* do not merely understand ecological jurisprudence (*fiqh al-bi'ah*) but also embody it as a consistent character trait, manifesting in daily energy conservation and responsible waste management.

Furthermore, the model relies on *pesantren* habituation to internalize these values, effectively functioning as a "hidden curriculum." Practices like *eco-wudhu*, plastic fasting, and *sedekah sampah* transition abstract theological concepts into daily social acts. Unlike standard campus regulations that rely on external enforcement, these habituation practices are internalized as religious observances (*ibadah*). This finding is

consistent with studies showing that environmental programs in Islamic institutions succeed when institutionalized as part of the daily communal routine (Y. Rahmawati et al., 2025).

Ultimately, this model redefines the strategic role of a *pesantren*-based university. Instead of merely supplying a technically skilled workforce for the oil and gas sector, the institution functions as a moral guardian. It prepares graduates to act as *khalifah fil ardh*, possessing both the intellectual competence and ecological piety necessary to advocate for sustainable policies in vulnerable regions.

Implications and Limitations

The findings of this study present significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research enriches the existing literature on Islamic education management by proposing an alternative to the conventional, infrastructure-centric Green Campus frameworks. It demonstrates that integrating feminine theology and *fiqh al-bi'ah* into formal higher education curricula can effectively shift the institutional paradigm from anthropocentric to theocentric-ecological (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Furthermore, the study reinforces the concept that *pesantren* habituation functions as a robust hidden curriculum, proving that daily institutionalized practices are highly effective in cultivating permanent, sustainable behaviors among students (Rahmayani et al., 2025).

Practically, the constructed Attanwir Eco-Islamic University model serves as a strategic blueprint for other Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI), particularly those located in extractive industrial zones or disaster-prone areas. It provides a clear framework for university leaders and policymakers to formalize eco-theological practices, such as *eco-wudhu* and *sedekah sampah*, into campus regulations (Zohdi & Umami, 2025). Ultimately, this model ensures that universities do not merely supply technical workers to industry, but actively produce graduates who embody the character of *khalifah fil ardh* individuals equipped with both intellectual capacity and ecological piety to advocate for environmental sustainability in their communities (Widiastuty & Anwar, 2025). Putting this model into practice shows that building environmental character depends heavily on diverse, hands-on activities. Recent eco-*pesantren* strategies reveal that involving students directly in environmental management such as tending gardens, running cleanliness competitions, and maintaining aquatic ecosystems directly increases their discipline and sense of responsibility toward nature (Fifi Risana et al., 2024).

Additionally, combining physical tools with Islamic jurisprudence creates a clearer baseline for measuring ecological behavior. For instance, using automatic water faucets to reduce waste during ablution, alongside the formal study of environmental laws, helps students translate the abstract concept of *khalifah fil ardh* into everyday habits rather than just understanding it spiritually (Bintang Kejora et al., 2025). In addition, to character development, implementing land-based programs such as urban farming on campus provides a concrete example of institutional self-sufficiency and food security. This explicitly links Islamic eco-theological values to practical sustainability (Asman et al., 2025). Ultimately, the Attanwir Eco-Islamic University model moves beyond theoretical advocacy, offering a practical framework for religious institutions to actively participate in global environmental preservation.

This study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered. First, the research primarily focuses on the conceptual construction of the Eco-Islamic University model. Consequently, it has not empirically tested the practical effectiveness of this model through field implementation or quantitative measurement. Second, the data and context are specifically derived from a single institution, Institut Attanwir, which operates under a unique *pesantren*-based system and is geographically situated near an oil and gas extractive zone. Therefore, applying this exact framework to conventional universities or institutions located in different ecological contexts may require significant contextual adaptation. Finally, this study captures

current institutional policies and the academic community's perceptions. However, it does not longitudinally track whether the *fiqh al-bi'ah* curriculum and *pesantren* habituation will permanently alter the graduates' environmental behavior once they enter society.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully constructed the Attanwir Eco-Islamic University Model as a strategic response to the high ecological vulnerability in the Bojonegoro oil and gas region. The findings assert that addressing environmental crises requires a strong theological foundation to shift from an anthropocentric to a theocentric-ecological paradigm. The proposed model integrates three core dimensions: (1) a Philosophical Dimension centering on Feminine Theology and *fiqh al-bi'ah*; (2) an Academic Dimension contextualizing the ecotheology curriculum with local issues like oil waste and deforestation; and (3) a Social Dimension establishing a green lifestyle through *pesantren* habituation, such as plastic fasting and *sedekah sampah*.

Theoretically, this model enriches Islamic education management by expanding the conventional Green Campus concept to include the reconstruction of students' spiritual awareness. In practice, it serves as a vital roadmap for similar *pesantren*-based institutions in extractive zones to mitigate ecological disasters by training graduates to serve as agents of environmental change. While this study provides a robust conceptual framework, its primary limitation is the absence of empirical testing. Therefore, future research is strongly recommended to conduct a limited pilot project implementing this model, alongside longitudinal studies to measure the long-term impact of the ecotheology curriculum on the environmental behavior of *mahasantri* post-graduation.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors, NLR, A, AA, FNR, and EM, were involved in the development and writing of this article.

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