

Implementation of Islamic Ecotheology in the Hidden Curriculum of Traditional Islamic Boarding School Education

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Abstract

This study analyzes the implementation of Islamic ecotheological values in farming practices in traditional Islamic boarding schools as a hidden curriculum for shaping student's character. The global ecological crisis, rooted in the anthropocentric paradigm calls for spiritual reconstruction through experience-based Islamic education. Yet, the role of traditional Islamic boarding schools without formal environmental programs is often overlooked in eco-Islamic boarding school discourse. Employing a qualitative case study approach at Azziyadah Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies, then analyzed thematically using NVivo 12. The findings reveal that farming practices are not merely economic activities, but rather a medium for spiritual education that encompasses three dimensions of the hidden curriculum: direct instruction, religious reflection, and the exemplary behavior of the *kyai* (*uswah hasanah*). Together, these dimensions synergistically internalize the values of *tauhid*, *amanah*, *khalifah*, and gratitude, aligning with principles of curriculum relevance and integration. The novelty of this research lies in revealing the mechanism of organic ecological value transmission through cultural obedience (*ta'dzim*) in traditional Islamic boarding schools. This research indicates that this hidden curriculum model can be replicated as an alternative policy recommendation for the Ministry of Religious Affairs and related institutions to strengthen environmentally conscious character education in contemporary Islamic educational settings, complementing existing structural approaches.

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis implementasi nilai-nilai ekoteologi Islam dalam praktik bertani di pesantren salaf sebagai hidden curriculum pembentuk karakter santri. Krisis ekologis global akibat paradigma antroposentris menuntut rekonstruksi spiritual melalui pendidikan Islam berbasis pengalaman, namun peran pesantren salaf tradisional tanpa program lingkungan formal sering terabaikan dalam diskursus ekopesantren. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus di Pondok Pesantren Azziyadah, Cirebon, pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan NVivo 12. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik bertani bukan sekadar kegiatan ekonomi, melainkan medium pendidikan spiritual yang mencakup tiga

dimensi hidden curriculum: pembelajaran langsung (direct instruction), refleksi spiritual (religious reflection), dan keteladanan kyai (uswah hasanah). Ketiganya secara sinergis menginternalisasikan nilai tauhid, amanah, khalifah, dan syukur, yang sejalan dengan prinsip relevansi dan keterpaduan kurikulum. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada pengungkapan mekanisme transmisi nilai ekologis organik melalui ketaatan kultural (ta'dzim) di pesantren tradisional. Implikasinya, model hidden curriculum pesantren salaf dapat direplikasi sebagai rekomendasi kebijakan alternatif bagi Kementerian Agama dan institusi terkait dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter berwawasan lingkungan pada lembaga pendidikan Islam kontemporer, melengkapi pendekatan struktural yang sudah ada.

A. INTRODUCTION

The global ecological crisis, characterized by climate change, land degradation, and environmental deterioration, has reached a critical juncture demanding transformative responses across all societal sectors, including educational institutions (Core Writing Team, 2023). In Indonesia, environmental degradation is acutely manifested; data from *Badan Pusat Statistik* (2024) records a deforestation rate of approximately 115,000 hectares per year, while productive agricultural land in Java has experienced a 30% decline in quality over the past decade due to unsustainable agricultural practices. Particularly in West Java, the conversion of paddy fields reaches 3,000 hectares annually, threatening regional food security and ecological sustainability (Dinas Pertanian Jawa Barat, 2024). This crisis transcends a mere technical-ecological dimension, reflecting a spiritual rupture and the dominance of an anthropocentric worldview that positions humans as exploiters of nature.

In response, Islamic ecotheology integrates four fundamental principles (Nasr, 1990): (1) *tauhid* as the ontological unity of all creation; (2) *khalifah* as human responsibility in the wise stewardship of the earth; (3) *amanah* as an ethical mandate for resource conservation; and (4) *mizan* as the principle of maintaining cosmic balance in the universe (Dien, 2000). These principles establish an ethical framework in which environmental management is not merely secular activism, but an integral dimension of worship and submission to the Creator (Kadir et al., 2023). Within an educational context, the internalization of these principles requires a tangible pedagogical medium so as not to remain mere theoretical doctrine in the classroom (Setianingrum et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have examined the integration of environmental values into Islamic educational institutions. Mohamed (2014) conducted a conceptual

synthesis of Islamic environmental ethics derived texts actualized within educational landscapes, yet the study was purely theoretical without empirical grounding in traditional Islamic boarding schools. Bakri Maysarah (2021) investigated the design of eco-pesantren in Banda Aceh, but emphasized sustainable infrastructure and architectural aspects rather than internal pedagogical mechanisms. Meanwhile, empirical studies by Purnomo et al. (2024) and Candra et al. (2024) explored environmental care practices in Islamic boarding schools. Still, these studies focused on progressive modern Islamic boarding schools that already possess formal environmental curricula, such as eco-pesantren or Adiwiyata programs (Lokhandwala, 2022).

From this literature comparison, five critical gaps emerge: (1) previous studies focused on Islamic boarding schools with structural environmental programs, while the role of traditional Islamic boarding schools without formal environmental curricula remains underexplored; (2) a lack of analysis regarding the mechanism of the hidden curriculum through the relational cultural obedience (*ta'dzim*) between *kyai* and students in agricultural practices; (3) a dominance of physical infrastructure studies over spiritual pedagogical dimensions; (4) a scarcity of empirical evidence regarding the concept of *riyadhah* (spiritual exercise) as a medium for ecological consciousness; and (5) the absence of studies positioning the daily routines of traditional Islamic boarding schools specifically as an implementative curriculum for ecotheology.

It is from these gaps that this research derives its novelty and significance, focusing on Azziyadah Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, West Java, a traditional Islamic boarding school where students manage the rice production cycle alongside the *kyai*, not as a part of a formal environmental program, but as a spiritual expression (*ta'dzim*) that has not been investigated in prior research.

Based on these gaps, this study is specifically delimited to qualitatively describing the mechanism of internalizing ecotheological values through the hidden curriculum in farming practices within traditional Islamic boarding schools, and it is not intended to statistically measure the quantitative impact of these practices on students' pro-environmental behavior. Therefore, this research is formulated to answer two main questions: (1) How do farming practices in traditional Islamic boarding schools serve as a hidden curriculum in the process of internalizing Islamic ecotheology among students?; and (2) How do these practices organically integrate the

principles of curriculum development? In line with these research questions, the research objectives are: (1) To analyze and describe the role of farming practices in traditional Islamic boarding schools as a hidden curriculum in internalizing Islamic ecotheology among students; and (2) To elaborate on how the integration of curriculum development principles occurs organically through farming practices in the boarding school environment.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design. The selection of this approach is not intended to test hypotheses, but rather to explore and describe holistically (Bhangu et al., 2023; Weng et al., 2025) the process of internalizing Islamic ecotheological values that occurs organically within the boarding school environment (Hussein, 2023; Ratnasari, Anisza; Sudradjat, 2023). The case study is focused on a specific locus, namely Azziyadah Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, West Java, which possesses a unique characteristic in integrating the traditional *salaf* education system with agricultural practices as part of the students' daily routine.

Table 1. Research Subjects

Subject	Code
Kyai	K1
Boarding School Administrator	P1
Boarding School Administrator	P2
Student	S1
Student	S2
Student	S3
Student	S4

Informants were selected using a *purposive sampling* technique, based on criteria of direct involvement in policy formulation, guidance, and the execution of agricultural practices at the boarding school. The participants consisted of 1 *Kyai* (K1), 2 Boarding School Administrators (P1, P2), and 4 Students (S1, S2, S3, S4) who were actively involved in farming activities.

Data collection was conducted using three primary methods simultaneously: (1) in-depth interviews to investigate ecotheological practices within the boarding school's hidden curriculum, internal experiences, value interpretations, and the subjects' perspectives; (2) participant observation, enabling the researcher to directly observe the spiritual atmosphere, inter-individual interactions, and emotional

expressions arising during activities; and (3) document analysis, which included examining Islamic teaching texts (*pengajian*), the *kyai*'s advice, students' daily journals, and boarding school records. These three methods were applied concurrently to yield comprehensive, authentic, and contextually grounded data.

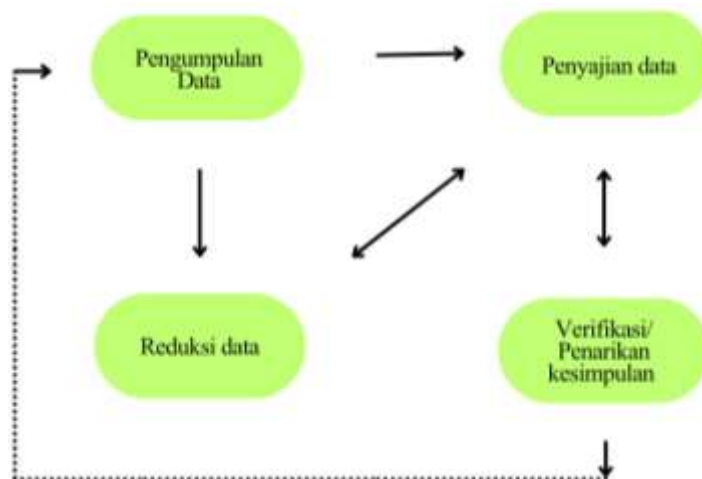


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman Data Analysis Framework

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the Miles and Huberman model, as illustrated in Figure 1: (1) data reduction relevant data regarding ecotheological practices were selected and coded; (2) data display findings were organized into categories reflecting ecotheological values; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification patterns were identified, interpreted, and verified through *member checking* with key informants (Schwandt, 1996). To enhance precision and analytical rigor, the entire process was managed using NVivo 12 Plus software.

Operationally, interview transcripts and field notes were imported into NVivo 12 Plus. The data reduction phase was conducted through a coding process to group units of meaning into thematic *nodes* relevant to ecotheological principles and the hidden curriculum. Subsequently, data display was visualized using the *Word Cloud* feature to analyze the frequency and intensity of participant discourse, as well as the *Conceptual Map* feature to map relationships between main themes such as *Direct Instruction*, *Religious Reflection*, and *Uswah Hasanah*.

Research trustworthiness and validity were ensured through: data source triangulation (interviews, observations, documents); *member checking* (initial findings were confirmed with key informants); prolonged engagement (extensive fieldwork allowed for a deep understanding of the boarding school culture); and thick description (detailed contextual description to enable transferability assessments).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

To comprehensively understand this phenomenon, this study is grounded in three interconnected theoretical foundations: Islamic ecotheological principles, experiential learning in Islamic education, and traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren salaf*) as institutions of character education.

Islamic ecotheology rests on a robust theological foundation (Nasr, 1990), rooted in the concept of *tauhid* (divine unity), which

which perceives the universe as an interconnected and interdependent creation of Allah. From an Islamic perspective, nature is not a passive object to be exploited but an active subject that glorifies the Creator.

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ٤٤

“The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him” (QS. *Al-Isra* [17]: 44).

The concept of *khalifah fil-ardh* positions humans in a unique role as God's vicegerents on earth, not as absolute owners, but as responsible stewards. Allah says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ٣٠

“Remember when your God said to the angels, ‘I am going to place a vicegerent on earth’” (QS. *Al-Baqarah* [2]: 30). This position carries profound ethical implications: humans are required to manage natural resources justly, wisely, and sustainably.

The principle of *amanah* (trust/responsibility) asserts that everything on earth is a trust from Allah that must be safeguarded and managed with utmost accountability. The Qur'an states:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ٧٢

“Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they all refused to bear it and feared they would betray it, and it was humankind that bore it” (QS. *Al-Ahzab* [33]: 72). Betraying this ecological trust constitutes a serious sin in the Islamic perspective.

The principle of *mizan* (balance) teaches that Allah created the universe in perfect balance, and humans are prohibited from disrupting it:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ ٧ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ ٨

“And Allah has raised the heavens and established the balance (of justice). So that you do not transgress concerning the balance.” (QS. *Ar-Rahman* [55]: 7-8). Environmental destruction is thus regarded as a violation of the cosmic order established by Allah.

1. Experiential Learning in Islamic Education

Kolb’s (1971) experiential learning theory emphasizes that effective learning unfolds through a four-stage cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within religious education, experiential learning has been shown to enhance spiritual formation and value internalization. The Islamic tradition features the concept of *riyadhah* (spiritual exercise), which aligns with experiential learning while embedding a more explicit spiritual dimension. *Riyadhah* integrates physical discipline with continuous spiritual awareness (*muraqabah*), fostering holistic character development that encompasses body, mind, and soul. Unlike Western experiential learning models that emphasize cognitive reflection and skill acquisition, *riyadhah* grounds learning in a transcendent reference point, preventing education from being reduced to mere pragmatism.

2. Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools as Institutions of Character Education

Traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren salaf*) in Indonesia are distinguished by unique value transmission mechanisms (Ayubi & Masruri, 2025). Unlike modern educational institutions that rely on formal curricula, *pesantren salaf* emphasize learning through exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) and deep reverence (*ta’dzim*) toward the *kyai* as a spiritual authority figure. The concept of *ta’dzim* serves as a central pillar of boarding school culture (Batula et al., 2026). Students cultivated profound respect for the *kyai*, not due to formal authority, but out of reverence for the *kyai*’s spiritual depth and scholarly authority. This reverence is expressed through body language, speech, and obedience in following the *kyai*’s guidance. Importantly, this study highlights that attitude of *ta’dzim* extends beyond the *kyai* to include the objects nurtured by the *kyai*, including nature and the environment.

In addition to these three primary words, terms such as “*nilai*” (values), “*kyai*”, “*Allah*”, “*alam*” (nature), “*belajar*” (learning), “*lingkungan*” (environment), and “*Islam*” also appear prominently in the Word Cloud. This collection of words reveals a close interconnection between farming activities and the internalization of spiritual, moral, and ecological values. The word *values* signifies that farming is understood not merely as a physical activity, but as a medium for learning ethics and character traits such as responsibility, hard work, patience, and gratitude. The words *Allah* and *Islam* reflect the theological dimension framing the orientation of meaning; participants understand nature and their labor through the lenses of worship and *tauhid*. Meanwhile, the words *nature* and *environment* indicate the emergence of ecological consciousness among students, particularly, the view that environmental conservation is an act of obedience to divine command.

The terms “*kyai*” and “*belajar*” (learning) also appear in a significant medium size, highlighting the crucial role of the *kyai* as a central figure and exemplar in the non-formal educational process of the boarding school. The *kyai* functions as a “living curriculum,” educating not only through sermons but also through direct example and interaction during shared farming activities with the students. Thus, the Word Cloud results reinforces the concept of the hidden curriculum—value education that occurs implicitly through daily practice and the role-modeling of boarding school figures.. From the distribution of words, four main thematic clusters can be identified: First, Pedagogical Cluster: Comprised *Esantri*, *learning*, *kyai*, and *boarding school*, highlighting the distinctive experiential learning structure characteristic of traditional Islamic boarding schools. Second, Spiritual Cluster: Consisting of *Allah*, *Islam*, *values*, and *gratitude*, illustrating the theological orientation underpinning all farming activities as acts of worship and devotion to God. Third, Ecological Cluster: Featuring *nature*, *environment preservation*, and *soil*, reflecting ecological consciousness cultivated through direct experience with nature. Fourth, Moral-Praxis Cluster: Encompassing *hard work*, *amanah* (trust), *patience*, and *life*, demonstrating the internalization of character values through collective labor in the boarding school’s fields.

Conceptually, this Word Cloud illustrates that education in boarding schools occurs not only through formal curricula, but also through ecologically and spiritually grounded lived experiences. Farming activities serve as a holistic learning medium integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Students learn not only agricultural techniques, but also the deeper meanings of patience, gratitude,

cooperation, and environmental responsibility. This activity reflects the implementation of Islamic curriculum development principles oriented toward relevance, integration, and balance (*tawazun*). In this context, the boarding school acts as a laboratory for ecological character education grounded in *tauhid* values.

From an ecotheological perspective, the visualization of words such as *Allah*, *nature*, and *humans (santri)* demonstrates an interconnected theological relationship between the Creator, creation, and the stewards of nature. Farming practices become an actualization of *khalifah fil-ardh*, wherein humans fulfill the mandate to flourish on earth and maintain cosmic balance (*mizan*). This consciousness does not arise from classroom theories, but grows through concrete experience in managing the boarding school's land. Therefore, this Word Cloud is not merely a linguistic representation, but also a reflection of an Islamic educational epistemology rooted in ecological experience.

From these explanation, the Word Cloud demonstrates that the participants' narrative positions farming as a vehicle for value and spiritual learning deeply rooted in boarding school culture. This visualization confirms the synergy among the three primary dimensions of this study: (1) contextual and value-oriented curriculum development principles, (2) the hidden curriculum operating through role-modeling and experience, and (3) Islamic ecotheology as the theological foundation. Thus, the Word Cloud results confirm that traditional Islamic boarding schools have developed an educational model fostering *tauhid*-based ecological consciousness, a unique integration of theology, ecology, and pedagogy in Islamic educational praxis.

2. Conceptual Map Analysis: Farming Practices in Boarding Schools as a Hidden Curriculum

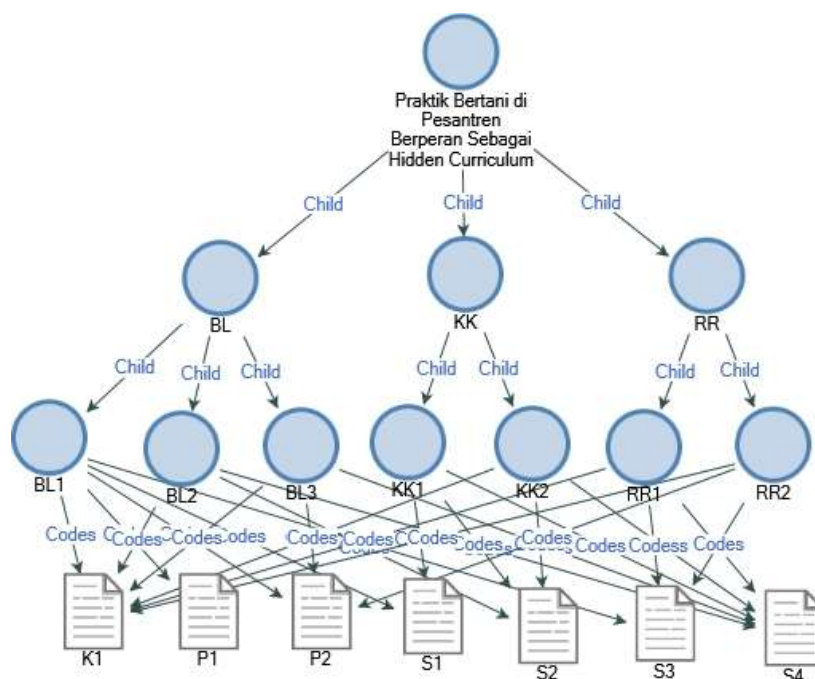


Figure 3. Conceptual Map: Farming Practices in Boarding Schools as a Hidden Curriculum

The results of the conceptual map analysis in Figure 3 demonstrate that farming practices in the boarding school function as more than economic or logistical activities; they operate as a hidden curriculum that plays a vital role in shaping students' character, work ethic, and spiritual consciousness. Drawing on interviews, observations, and thematic mapping using NVivo software, three primary modes of learning embedded within farming practices were identified: (1) Direct Instruction, (2) Religious Reflection, and (3) *Uswah Hasanah* (the exemplary conduct of the *kyai*). Together, these three modes form a value system that is not explicitly stated in the formal curriculum, it is deeply internalized through daily life at the boarding school.

a. Direct Instruction

Farming practices in the boarding school begin with the processes of planting, nurturing, and harvesting, conducted directly by students under the guidance of the *kyai* or boarding school administrators. This process functions as contextual and experiential learning, where values of hard work, responsibility, and togetherness are instilled through concrete activities. Key informants (K1, P1, S1, and S3) explained that planting is not merely technical training, but a means to cultivate spiritual awareness that sustenance and crop yields stem from Allah's will. Nurturing plants fosters

diligence, patience, and care for living beings, while harvesting symbolizes gratitude for collective efforts. Thus, direct instruction in farming forms a complete pedagogical cycle: students learn from empirical experience (*learning by doing*), reflect upon it through spiritual values (*learning by reflecting*), and translate moral meaning into daily action (*learning by being*). This process demonstrates how farming serves as an effective medium for experience-based character education (Ding, 2022; Maqbool et al., 2021).



Figure 4. Documentation of Farming Activities

Empirically, students are directly engaged in the entire agricultural cycle from planting to harvesting. Participants interpret this physical activity not merely as vocational skills, but as a medium for understanding monotheism (*tauhid*) that sustenance originates from Divine Will. Theoretically, this constitutes a form of experiential learning operating across psychomotor and cognitive domains. This finding confirms and expands upon the study by Rini et al. (2022), which demonstrated that Islamic education in agricultural boarding schools is highly effective in building an “ecosophy” for environmental preservation. Furthermore, this direct involvement aligns with Saputra & Marzuki (2023), who emphasized the importance of authentic assessment in building students’ eco-literacy. Unlike theoretical classroom approaches to eco-literacy, direct instruction in traditional Islamic boarding schools demonstrates that environmental care habits can be structurally built through green school management designs rooted in empirical *tauhid*, as highlighted by Yudi (2025).

b. Religious Reflection

The second dimension emerging in the conceptual map is religious reflection, manifested through *tadabbur* (contemplating Allah’s creation) and *tafakkur* (reflecting

on oneself and life's purpose). Farming activities provide a contemplative space for students to observe natural processes as manifestations of Divine greatness. Informants K1 and S3 explained that every stage of farming from planting to harvesting contains lessons in monotheism: humans merely exert effort, while Allah determines the outcome. This process of *tadabbur* trains students to read *ayat kauniyah* (the signs of Allah in the cosmos), serving simultaneously as ecological and spiritual education. Farming is thus not only physical work, but also spiritual exercise (*riyadhah*) that fosters humility, sincerity, and an awareness of the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the Creator.

At this juncture, farming functions as a spiritual hidden curriculum that instills ecotheological consciousness among students. The integration of physical practice and spiritual reflection mirrors the concept of *mindfulness* in the Islamic tradition, which has been shown to enhance environmental awareness and pro-ecological behavior (Purnomo et al., 2024).

Field data reveal that breaks during farming activities are utilized by students for *tadabbur* and *tafakkur*, creating a contemplative space amidst physical routines. This process directly internalizes the ecotheological value that nature represents as *ayat kauniyah*.

This finding provides empirical justification for the conceptual study by Anggraini & Rohmatika (2022) on ecosufism, wherein harmony between God, humans, and nature is achieved through continuous spiritual practice. It also reflects and represents the concepts of *khalifah* and *amanah*, extensively discussed by Arsyad & Hasanah (2025) as core pillars of Islamic ecological values. Interestingly, this finding extends the international discourse raised by Lin et al. (2024) regarding the positive correlation between religiosity and environmental quality. Amidst the global ecological crisis highlighted by Rani et al. (2025), spiritual reflection within the hidden curriculum proves that religion serves as a valid environmental ethic guiding restorative behavior in Muslim communities.

c. Exemplary Behavior of the Kyai (*Uswah Hasanah*)

The third dimension is the exemplary behavior of the *kyai*, which manifests when the *kyai* works alongside students in the fields, modeling a strong work ethic. This act demonstrates *uswah hasanah* in a real-world context, fostering respect, loyalty, and collective spirit among students. Informants S1 and S2 shared that when the *kyai* joins in hoeing or planting, students feel that labor is not merely an obligation,

but an act of worship. Through this example, the *kyai* serves as a moral figure bridging religious teachings and daily practice.

Thus, farming yields not only economic outputs but also moral and spiritual products: the emergence of hard work, discipline, solidarity, and social responsibility fostered by direct role modeling. The role of religious authority figures as role models in value transmission is a unique characteristic of boarding school education that sets it apart from formal education systems (Karim et al., 2025).

This third dimension is embodied through the physical presence of the *kyai*, who enters the paddy fields to hoe alongside the students. This action triggers *ta'dzim* (cultural obedience), wherein students manifest reverence for the *kyai* by diligently caring for the land. This exemplary social intervention aligns with Safei & Himayaturohmah (2023), who noted that eco-friendly cultures in boarding schools thrive most effectively through authority figures. This approach embodies the prophetic approach in community empowerment examined by Purnomo et al. (2024). However, the novelty of this research becomes evident when contrasted with findings by Anshori & Pohl (2024) regarding eco-pesantren in Indonesia. While they found that formal regulations and green curricula drive ecological consciousness in modern boarding schools, this study proves that in *salaf* boarding schools, such consciousness is transmitted purely through cultural capital and the *kyai*'s charisma without written curriculum documents.

The three modes of learning interact to form a robust hidden curriculum system within the boarding school. Values such as patience, perseverance, cooperation, responsibility, and *tawakkal* (trust in God) are not taught formally in classrooms, but are experienced, internalized, and embodied through farming activities. This practice reflects what Ahmad (2023) describes as a hidden curriculum of values embedded through routines, social interactions, and institutional culture. Within the boarding school context, farming serves as an educational medium unifying three domains of education:

- 1) Cognitive: Understanding natural processes and human reliance on Allah;
- 2) Affective: Cultivating empathy, sincerity, and gratitude;
- 3) Psychomotor: Developing work ethic, discipline, and social responsibility.

Furthermore, farming demonstrates the integration of spiritual education and ecopedagogy, where students learn to care for nature while cultivating it with ecological responsibility. This practice serves as a concrete example of Islamic

educational ecotheology, linking the concept of *khalifah fil-ardh* (stewards of the earth) with daily living.

The analysis of this conceptual map reveals that farming practices at Azziyadah Islamic Boarding School function as a hidden curriculum playing a significant role in student development. Through planting, nurturing, harvesting, reflecting, and working alongside the *kyai*, students internalize spiritual, moral, and social values organically. This hidden curriculum reinforces the boarding school's role as a character-building institution uniting knowledge (*ilmu*), action (*amal*), and manners (*adab*). In other words, farming is a transformative character education strategy integrating ecological, spiritual, and pedagogical dimensions into a unified learning experience.

This finding enriches Islamic education discourse by affirming that value learning can occur outside classroom walls through meaningful daily life experiences. The hidden curriculum in farming offers an alternative model of experience-based character education, highly relevant for Islamic Religious Education in the modern era.

3. Integration of Farming Practices with Curriculum Development Principles

The research findings regarding farming practices in the boarding school indicate that agricultural activities conducted by students serve as a hidden curriculum implementing curriculum development principles in tangible ways. In curriculum theory, principles such as relevance, continuity, integration, flexibility, efficiency, effectiveness, and value/spiritual orientation serve as benchmarks to ensure holistic student development (Baptiste & Solomon, 2005; Basturkmen, 2010; Kridel, 2012). These principles are implicitly present in farming practices, where learning occurs as meaningful, contextual life experiences.

a. Principle of Relevance

The principle of relevance demands that a curriculum aligns with the needs of students and their environment (Baptiste & Solomon, 2005). In the boarding school context, farming is directly relevant to students living within an agrarian community. Through planting, nurturing, and harvesting, students gain life skills while connecting religious values to socio-ecological realities. This cultivates an ecotheological awareness that nature represents *ayat Allah* that must be preserved responsibly. Thus, farming realizes contextual relevance by integrating the curriculum with students' lives and needs, aligning with place-based education approaches proven to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Lutfauziah et al., 2024).

b. Principle of Continuity

According to Miani et al. (2023), an effective curriculum requires continuity between past, present, and future learning experiences. The cyclical pattern of farming, planting, nurturing, and harvesting embodies continuous learning that reinforces character over time. This experience fosters perseverance, patience, and responsibility not through verbal instruction, but through repeated action and spiritual reflection. This continuous cycle establishes moral and spiritual continuity, ensuring character values become enduring traits. Research confirms that continuous learning through repetitive practice is more effective for long-term character building than one-shot interventions (Vleugels et al., 2020).

c. Principle of Integration

Integration connects all aspects of student development cognitive, affective, and psychomotor in alignment with Selvakumar et al. (2025). In farming, students analyze plant growth (cognitive), cultivate empathy and gratitude (affective), and engage in physical labor (psychomotor). This integrates knowledge (*ilmu*), action (*amal*), and etiquette (*adab*), mirroring the Islamic educational ideal of harmonizing remembrance (*dhikr*), thought (*fikr*), and righteous deeds (*amal saleh*). Farming thus functions as an integrative curriculum connecting religious knowledge, life skills, and spiritual consciousness into a holistic (*kaffah*) educational experience (Subiyantoro et al., 2026).

d. Principle of Flexibility

A well-designed curriculum must adapt to social contexts and student needs (Maxim, 2025). Farming demonstrates high flexibility by adjusting to seasons, schedules, and student capacities. It flows with the rhythms of boarding school life and environmental conditions. This aligns with Barlex (2012), who emphasizes that a curriculum is a living, evolving process rather than a static product. Flexibility is also evident in blending farming with religious practices such as *dhikr*, *tadabbur*, and spiritual reflection, harmonizing work and worship.

e. Principles of Efficiency and Effectiveness

Efficiency and effectiveness measure a curriculum's success in achieving educational goals through optimal resource utilization (Brown Wilson & Slade, 2020). Farming reflects efficiency by using land and natural resources as an educational laboratory, yielding dual benefits: supporting boarding school logistics and building work ethic. In terms of effectiveness, farming instills responsibility, cooperation, and

honesty through real experience often more powerfully than conceptual classroom lessons.

f. Principle of Values and Spirituality

In Islamic education, curriculum development is inseparable from values and spirituality (Bakti et al., 2025). Farming is understood not merely as an economic activity, but as *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul). It fosters sincerity, patience, and humility before God. Students learn that labor is worship and crop yields manifest Divine grace. Thus, farming serves as a moral curriculum shaping ethical and spiritual awareness through concrete experience (Bakti et al., 2025; Mardatillah et al., 2025).

Synthesis: Hidden Curriculum as the Implementation of Curriculum Development Principles

Synthetically, farming practices in traditional Islamic boarding schools represent a concrete implementation of holistic curriculum development principles. The hidden curriculum emerging from this practice teaches character values through action rather than mere discourse. Learning unfolds naturally, connecting spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. Farming affirms that a true curriculum lives within institutional culture and daily practices rather than solely within written documents.

These findings strengthen the argument that traditional Islamic boarding schools possess an organic, transformative curriculum development model rooted in Islamic values. Through farming, they deliver character education that integrates curriculum principles with concrete spiritual and social practices, thereby realizing the ideal of *insan kamil* (the complete human) envisioned in Islamic education.

D. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that farming practices in traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren salaf*) serve as a tangible manifestation of a hidden curriculum that internalizes Islamic ecotheological values through daily lived experiences. Agricultural activities function as an experiential medium for internalizing the spirituality of *tauhid*, human responsibility as *khalifah*, the consciousness of *amanah*, and an attitude of gratitude toward Allah's creation. This process unfolds through three primary mechanisms: direct instruction that fosters a strong work ethic and responsibility, religious reflection that deepens ecological consciousness, and the exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) of the *kyai* that reinforces students' moral formation. Conceptually,

farming practices also embody core curriculum development principles, including relevance, continuity, integration, flexibility, and value orientation.

This research carries significant implications for the development of Islamic education, particularly in bridging theology, ecology, and pedagogy within boarding school institutions. By positioning farming practices as a hidden curriculum, the findings demonstrate that experience-based daily routines can serve as an effective vehicle for cultivating students' spiritual and ecological character, while offering a contextual curriculum model relevant to strengthening character education in formal schools. Nevertheless, this study has limitations, as it focuses on a single traditional Islamic boarding school, meaning the results cannot be widely generalized to modern or urban boarding school typologies. Additionally, it does not deeply explore the psychological and affective dynamics of students during the internalization of ecotheological values. Future research is therefore recommended to involve a broader range of boarding school institutions with diverse characteristics and to employ a mixed-methods approach, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of how hidden curricula influence the development of ecological consciousness and spirituality across varied Islamic educational contexts.

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