



# Strengthening the Integration of Nationalist Jihad and Ecotheology Values in Religious Moderation and Ecotheology Literacy for Santri (Islamic Boarding School Students)

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Track Record Article	Abstract
<p>Revised: 25 July 2025 Accepted: 28 August 2025 Published: 30 September 2025</p> <p><b>How to cite :</b> Nahar, S., Wati, A., Syam, A. M., Adinda, F., Panjaitan, N. A., Nabila, Z., Safira, P., Siregar, P. A., Rezebri, M., &amp; Rahayu, S. (2025). Strengthening the Integration of Nationalist Jihad and Ecotheology Values in Religious Moderation and Ecotheology Literacy for Santri (Islamic Boarding School Students). <i>Contagion: Scientific Periodical Journal of Public Health and Coastal Health</i>, 7(2), 480–488.</p>	<p><i>This community service program aimed to strengthen the literacy of santri (Islamic boarding school students) in religious moderation by integrating the core values of contextual jihad, inclusive nationalism, and ecotheology. The urgent need to fortify the younger generation's resilience against religious extremism, radicalism, and environmental apathy drove the initiative. The program employed a participatory action research method in Langsa City, focusing on the formation and training of cadres who acted as peer educators. A single-group pretest and posttest design involving 30 santri was used to measure changes in ecotheological practices and attitudes towards religious moderation and nationalism. The results demonstrated a highly significant increase in the santri's ecotheological practices (<math>p &lt; 0.001</math>), evidenced by improved habits in water conservation, waste management, and use of reusable items. Furthermore, a significant strengthening was observed in their commitment to religious moderation and nationalism (<math>p = 0.006</math>), including stronger support for the rights of minorities, the Indonesian constitution (UUD 1945), and Pancasila. The study concludes that the peer-educator-based mentoring model is an effective strategy for simultaneously internalizing the integrative values of constructive jihad, nationalism, and environmental stewardship. This integrative approach offers a sustainable model for developing a generation that is religious, patriotic, and ecologically conscious, which can be replicated in other Islamic educational institutions.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Religious Moderation, Ecotheology, Jihad, Nationalism, Santri, Peer Educator.</p>

## INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, countries around the world are becoming increasingly open to religious and cultural diversity (Bassar et al., 2021). However, this openness also brings new challenges in the form of increasing cases of extremism and social conflicts rooted in differences in beliefs (Dakhi, Nuryani, 2023). This phenomenon not only causes tensions between religious communities but also shows a decline in the level of moderation in people's religious lives (Afriana, 2023). In Indonesia's plural and religious social context, strengthening the value of religious moderation is essential to maintain social harmony and stability.

However, in the midst of complex social and political issues, another problem that is no less urgent also arises, namely the ecological crisis caused by the uncontrolled exploitation

of nature. Climate change, environmental pollution, and ecosystem damage show a disconnect between the value of human spirituality and their responsibility to nature (Sukendar & Hidayat, 2021). Indeed, Religious teachings revere and protect the universe as God's creation (Abdullah, 2019). Therefore, the emergence of the ecotheology paradigm is an important foundation in building environmentally friendly religious awareness. Ecotheology emphasizes that preserving nature is not only a social responsibility but also a form of worship and a manifestation of human faith as *a caliph fil ardh* (Zainuddin, 2022).

In the Islamic view, humans are entrusted with the task of maintaining the balance of nature. This is in line with the concept of jihad in a contextual sense, namely non-violent struggle oriented towards the welfare and common welfare, including jihad in protecting the environment (Mukzizatin, 2019). The value of jihad interpreted constructively can encourage the birth of ecological behavior among the younger generation, especially students, such as saving ablution water, sorting waste, greening the pesantren environment, and managing energy wisely.

In addition to jihad, the value of inclusive nationalism also plays a role in strengthening responsibility for nature and the nation. Nationalism is shown in love for the homeland, loyalty to Pancasila and the Republic of Indonesia, and concern for environmental sustainability (Fatmawati, 2023). Thus, protecting the environment is a tangible form of religious nationalism that places nature as a living space with all of God's creatures.

Lack of education and literacy about religious diversity and environmental issues can weaken religious moderation and hinder interfaith collaboration in protecting the earth (Handoko et al., 2022). Social inequality and economic injustice can also cause tension and insecurity, which ultimately hinders ecological concern (Ridho, 2020). Therefore, a moderate ecotheology-based education strategy is needed to promote ecological awareness while strengthening the value of tolerance and social responsibility.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, students have enormous potential as agents of change who can integrate religious, national, and environmental values. Strengthening the literacy of religious moderation based on ecotheology can form the character of students who are religious, nationalist, and concerned about nature (Hendry, 2024). Through continuous education and mentoring, students not only understand the meaning of jihad contextually and inclusive nationalism but also live their role as guardians of the earth in charge of maintaining environmental balance as part of their spiritual responsibility (Fihri et al., 2023).

Thus, the integration of contextual jihad values, inclusive nationalism, and ecotheology in religious moderation literacy is a strategic effort to create a generation of students with

moderate character, love for the homeland, and an ecological spirit. Through this approach, it is hoped that sustainable, environmentally friendly behavior will be formed as a tangible manifestation of contemporary jihad that reflects faith, justice, and balance in national and religious life.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a one-group pretest and posttest design (Sugiyono, 2019). The activity was carried out in Langsa City, Aceh Province, involving 30 students as research respondents. Data were collected through online questionnaires and direct observations, with two main variables, namely ecotheological-religious knowledge and practice, and religious moderation attitudes. The questionnaire was compiled using a four-point Likert scale to measure the level of frequency and intensity of respondents' behavior.

The validity of the instrument was obtained through expert judgment by Islamic education and environmental experts (Arikunto, 2013), while the reliability test produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.861, indicating that the instrument was very reliable (Azwar, 2012). Data analysis was carried out in a quantitative descriptive manner to describe the frequency distribution of each indicator, and the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to see the difference in pretest and posttest results. The entire analysis process was carried out using SPSS version 24.

## RESULT

### Ecotheology Practices and Religious Activities

**Table 1. Total Distribution of Ecotheology Practices and Religious Activities**

Pretest			Posttest		
Score	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Score	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
11	1	3,3	0	0	0
12	3	10,0	0	0	0
13	3	10,0	0	0	0
14	5	16,7	0	0	0
15	6	20,0	0	0	0
16	2	6,7	16	2	6.7
17	9	30,0	17	1	3.3
18	0	0	18	10	33.3
19	0	0	19	16	53.3
20	1	3,3	20	1	3.3
Total	30	100,0	Total	30	100,0

Based on the distribution table of the total scores of ecotheology practices and religious activities, there was a significant increase from pretest to posttest. In the pretest, the total score of respondents ranged from 11 to 20, with a mode score of 17 (30%), indicating moderate

involvement. After the intervention, the total posttest score increased to 16–20 with a mode of 19 (53.3%), indicating a high increase in engagement.

In particular, the indicators of ecotheology show a marked improvement. The frequency of respondents' participation in socio-religious activities that include environmental action, waste sorting, the use of refillable drinking bottles, and the planting of trees or waste banks increased significantly. Most respondents reported doing this practice often in posttests, compared to pretests, where they still chose categories sometimes.

These results confirm that the intervention successfully increased respondents' awareness and engagement in ecotheological practices, including tangible actions to protect the environment, save resources, and integrate religious values into daily life.

### Religious Moderation Attitudes

Respondents showed strong support for religious moderation and national values: protection of minority rights (80% strongly agree), law compliance in diverse regions (73.3% strongly agree), and fairness in government aid (93.3% strongly agree). Commitment to NKRI and Pancasila was high (83.3% strongly agree). Refusal to disobey leaders of different religions showed more varied responses. Total commitment scores ranged from 32 to 40, with a mode of 37 (20%), reflecting high national commitment.

### Normality and Wilcoxon Test

Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated non-normal distribution for ecotheology practices (pretest  $p = 0.039$ ; posttest  $p < 0.001$ ) and normal distribution for national commitment scores.

**Table 2. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results**

Variable	N	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Ties	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
Total Ecotheological & Religious Practice	30	0	28	2	-4.636	< 0.001	Significant ( $p < 0.05$ )
Total National Commitment	30	0	9	21	-2.754	0.006	Significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

The results of the Wilcoxon test showed a significant improvement in ecotheological and religious practices after the intervention. Of the 30 respondents, 28 experienced an increase in scores, 2 did not change, and none decreased, with a value of  $Z = -4.636$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). This confirms the effectiveness of the intervention in increasing respondents' involvement in ecotheological practices. Meanwhile, the national commitment score remained largely stable, with 9 respondents increasing and 21 unchanged ( $Z = -2.754$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ).

## DISCUSSION

### Improvement of Ecotheological and Religious Behavior

The results showed a significant increase in ecotheological and religious practices after educational interventions. In the pretest, the majority of students were in the medium category with a score of 17 (30%), indicating a basic understanding of ecological responsibility in religious teachings, but daily practices are still uneven, for example, in waste sorting, the use of refillable bottles, and participation in reforestation. After the intervention, the posttest score increased sharply by 19 modes (53.3%), indicating high involvement in ecotheological practices, including five-time obligatory prayers, socio-religious participation, and environmentally friendly behaviors such as carrying refillable bottles and maintaining public facilities.

The Wilcoxon test showed a significant improvement ( $Z = -4.636$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) in the practice of ecotheology, with 28 respondents increasing and 2 remaining. These findings confirm that ecotheology-based education effectively internalizes religious values into ecological behavior, in line with the concept of caliph fil ardh in Islam and Paulo Freire's theory of critical education. These results are consistent with previous research that shows that the integration of religious and environmental values can shape ecological awareness and sustainable habits among students.

Several previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of ecotheology education in shaping religion-based ecological behavior. Syafaruddin (2025) shows that the ecotheology paradigm in Islamic education is a transformational framework for instilling spirituality-based environmental awareness. Rifa & Yusuf (2025) affirm the strategic role of pesantren in waste management and natural resource conservation through daily practice. Research by Ayatullah (2024) found that students who receive Qur'anic value-based education are more active in greening and renewable energy management.

Mansur Hidayat (2023) emphasizes that religious narratives build the ecological attitude of Muslim society. Research by Rohman et al. (2024) found that the integration of ecotheology values in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects has enormous potential to increase students' awareness and skills in protecting the environment. Karman et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of a practical approach through dialogue, reflection, and community action in internalizing environmental values.

Strengthening the integration of the values of national jihad and eco-theology in religious moderation and eco-theological literacy for santri (Islamic boarding school students) demonstrates strategic relevance amid the intensifying ecological crisis and challenges of

intolerance in Indonesia (Parlan, 2025). Ecological jihad (eco-jihad), defined as non-violent efforts to preserve nature through spiritual transformation, environmental ethics, and social justice, is in line with the mission of Islamic boarding schools as centers for the training of religious scholars and responsible citizens (Syafaruddin, 2025; Setiawan, 2022). Santri nationalism, rooted in the Jihad Resolution, namely, the defense of the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia as part of religious obligations, can be redirected into a national jihad in the environmental field, such as green policy advocacy, reducing the carbon footprint of pesantren, and strengthening community-based circular economies.

Reinforce the argument that strengthening ecological behavior based on religious values is more sustainable than ordinary normative approaches. Students, or students who understand that simple actions such as saving water or maintaining cleanliness are worship, will be more encouraged to do it consistently. Ecotheology education enhances knowledge and attitudes and fosters genuine behavioral changes that align with both religious teachings and global ecological needs. This study enriches the existing literature by providing quantitative evidence that ecotheology education in pesantren has a significant effect on improving the ecotheology and religious behavior of students, as well as confirming the results of previous research using qualitative and conceptual approaches.

### **Increasing Religious Moderation and National Commitment**

In addition to ecological behavior, religious moderation education increases inclusive attitudes and national commitment. The pretest showed that the majority of students had a positive attitude towards national values and moderation, but there were variations on sensitive issues related to religious and minority differences. After the intervention, the score mode increased to 37 (20%), with most of the students in the high category, indicating the strengthening of tolerance, inclusivity, and nationalism.

The Wilcoxon test showed a significant improvement ( $Z = -2.754$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ), with 9 respondents improving and 21 staying. These findings confirm that religious moderation education not only maintains existing positive attitudes but also deepens students' understanding of coexistence in differences. These results are in line with previous research that shows that moderate education is effective in fostering tolerance and strengthening social cohesion among students.

Previous research has confirmed that religious moderation education is effective in forming inclusive attitudes and strengthening national commitments. The ICECRD Center for Religious Guidance and Services shows that moderate education suppresses intolerance through strengthening religion-based national values (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of

Indonesia, 2019b). Junaedi (2019) emphasizes religious moderation as a strategy to strengthen the life of the nation, not weaken identity. Budiyanto (2024) reported that students showed a positive tendency toward tolerance and nationalism after moderate education.

Research by Kharisma (2025) emphasizes the importance of internalizing moderation through reflective discussions and dialogue. Asshidqi et al. (2023) found that routine religious activities support the formation of moderate character in Islamic boarding schools. These findings are in line with this study, strengthening the evidence that religious moderation education is able to increase the inclusiveness, tolerance, and national commitment of students (Marpaung, 2022; Aksa & Nurhayati, 2020; Latifa et al., 2022). The religious activities can be an effective means of fostering tolerance and national commitment. This study not only adds quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of religious moderation education but also enriches the literature by showing that the internalization of the value of moderation in pesantren contributes directly to strengthening social and national cohesion in a pluralistic society.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the intervention of ecotheology education and religious moderation in pesantren has a positive impact on the ecological behavior and national attitude of students. The main conclusions are as follows:

1. Improvement of Ecotheology and Religious Behavior: Ecotheology education interventions integrated with religious values significantly improve students' ecotheology practices, including saving ablution water, waste sorting, use of refillable drinking bottles, participation in greening, and maintenance of public facilities ( $p < 0.001$ ).
2. Strengthening Attitudes of Religious Moderation and National Commitment: Religious moderation education succeeded in strengthening the inclusive, tolerant, and nationalist attitudes of students, with a significant increase in national commitment ( $p = 0.006$ ), showing the internalization of national values as part of religious awareness and social responsibility.

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