

CONTEXTUAL ECOTHEOLOGY AND SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY: A THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE INDIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF MEDAN, NORTH SUMATRA

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana konsep ekoteologi kontekstual diterapkan dalam kehidupan religius dan sosial komunitas India Muslim di Medan, Sumatra Utara. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah mengungkap hubungan antara ajaran teologi Islam, praktik sosial-keagamaan, dan kesadaran ekologis yang berkembang dalam komunitas diaspora tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi pustaka dan analisis isi terhadap sumber-sumber teologis, literatur akademik, serta dokumen sosial keagamaan komunitas. Data diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh masyarakat, dan analisis terhadap praktik lingkungan berbasis masjid. Pendekatan teologi kontekstual digunakan untuk menafsirkan hubungan antara nilai-nilai Islam (tawhid, amanah, mizan, dan khalifah fil ardh) dengan perilaku ekologis komunitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran ekologis komunitas India Muslim Medan tumbuh dari spiritualitas Islam yang membumi. Nilai-nilai teologis diaktualisasikan melalui kegiatan sosial seperti kebersihan masjid, pengelolaan sampah, penghijauan lingkungan, dan program "Sedekah Lingkungan". Kesadaran ekologis ini bersifat kolektif dan partisipatif, berakar pada pandangan bahwa menjaga alam adalah bagian dari ibadah ('amal shalih) serta ekspresi iman. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa ekoteologi Islam menjadi efektif ketika diterjemahkan ke dalam kajian sosial dan budaya lokal. Model ekoteologi kontekstual yang dikembangkan komunitas India Muslim Medan dapat menjadi paradigma baru bagi gerakan ekologi berbasis iman di masyarakat urban Indonesia. Studi ini menawarkan kontribusi orisinal dengan mengungkap dinamika teologi lingkungan dalam komunitas Muslim minoritas perkotaan, yang selama ini kurang mendapat perhatian dalam kajian ekoteologi Islam.

Kata kunci: ekoteologi, tanggung jawab ekologis, dan Komunitas India Muslim Medan.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand how contextual ecotheology is applied in the religious and social life of the Indian Muslim community in Medan, North Sumatra. The primary focus of this research is to uncover the relationship between Islamic theological teachings, socio-religious practices, and ecological awareness that develops in the diaspora community. The research uses a qualitative approach with literature studies and content analysis of theological sources, academic literature, and socio-religious community documents. Data were obtained through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with community leaders, and analysis of mosque-based environmental practices. A contextual theological approach is used to interpret the relationship between Islamic values (tawhid, amanah, mizan, and caliph fil ardh) and the ecological behaviour of the community. The study results show that the environmental awareness of Medan's Indian Muslim community grew from grounded Islamic spirituality. Theological values are actualised through social activities such as mosque cleanliness, waste management, environmental greening, and the "Environmental Alms" program. This ecological awareness is collective and participatory, rooted in the view that protecting nature is part of worship ('amal shalih) and an expression of faith. This research confirms that Islamic ecotheology becomes effective when translated into local social and cultural studies. The contextual ecotheological model developed by the

Indian Muslim community in Medan can become a new paradigm for faith-based ecological movements in Indonesia's urban society. This study offers an original contribution by uncovering the dynamics of environmental theology in urban minority Muslim communities, which have received little attention in studying Islamic ecotheology.

Keywords: *ecotheology, ecological responsibility, and Medan Muslim Indian Community.*

INTRODUCTION

Today's ecological crisis is no longer just an environmental issue but has transformed into a humanitarian problem that threatens the sustainability of civilisation. The modern world has witnessed how man's greed for natural resources goes beyond the limits of the ecological balance that has been the foundation of life for centuries (Adinugraha et al., 2025). According to a report by the United Nations Environment Programme (2025), the increase in global temperatures reaching 1.5°C in the last decade has led to increased environmental degradation in various parts of the world, including Southeast Asia. The phenomenon of floods, forest fires, and air pollution is becoming the new face of contemporary human ecological suffering. In Indonesia, environmental damage occurs in almost all provinces, including North Sumatra, which faces industrial pollution, deforestation, and declining water quality in urban areas. Amid this situation, a fundamental question arises about how humans, especially religious communities, understand and actualise their theological responsibility to God's created nature.

The Indian Muslim community in Medan, North Sumatra, is one of the interesting community groups to be studied in ecotheology. Since the early 20th century, this community has formed a strong social, economic, and religious network in urban areas such as Kampung Keling and its surroundings (Pangaribuan, 2025). The population of Indians in Medan reaches around 1.5% of the total population, with the majority embracing Islam. Although relatively small in number, their social and religious influence is quite significant, especially in

trade, Islamic education, and social philanthropy. These communities face typical urban environmental challenges: solid waste, congestion, and deterioration in air quality due to economic activity. Several local initiatives, such as the mosque cleanliness movement, community waste management, and taklim-based reforestation activities, show ecological awareness growing from within the community (tvOne, 2023). However, the extent to which consciousness comes from theological understanding, not just social practice, still requires in-depth study.

The modern ecological crisis is basically spiritual, because humans have severed their relationship with the sanctity of nature as a manifestation of divinity (Haward, 2022). Islamic theology, through the concept of *caliph fil ardh* and *amanah*, places man not as the absolute ruler of nature, but as the guardian of the balance of creation. In this view, the destruction of nature reflects man's failure to carry out his theological responsibilities (Abdelnour, 2023). In line with that, Zarkasyi et al. (2020) said that efforts to reconstruct Islamic theology towards ecological awareness are inevitable amid the threat of an environmental crisis. Therefore, the ecotheological approach, a theological reflection on the relationship between humans and nature in the light of revelation, is essential to contextualise with local social realities, such as in the Indian Muslim community in Medan, which has unique religious and social traditions.

The literature on Islamic ecotheology strongly favours two major currents: normative-theological studies that emphasise environmental ethics in classical

Islamic sources, and a praxist approach that links theology to contemporary social and ecological movements. Early studies, such as those of Mohamed (2014) and Quddus (2017), have reviewed the concept of *caliph* and *tawhid* as the foundation of Islamic ecological ethics. Meanwhile, more cutting-edge research, such as that conducted by Matin-asgari (2022), has attempted to integrate ecotheological principles into the social praxis of modern Muslim communities. However, most of these studies still focus on Arab societies or Middle Eastern contexts. At the same time, research on ecotheological practices in Southeast Asian Muslim communities, particularly minority communities such as Indian Muslims in Medan, is still rare. This limitation shows a blank space in the academic literature that needs to be filled with Indonesian social- and cultural-based field research.

Previous literary trends have also shown that approaches to ecotheology are often trapped in an elitist discursive framework and pay little attention to the social dynamics of the community. For example, research by Setiawan et al. (2022) found that implementing ecotheological values among urban Muslim communities often does not run effectively due to the lack of grounding of values into everyday social practices. Ecological awareness that emerges in Indonesian Muslim society is often born from social interaction, not deep theological awareness (Wierzbiński et al., 2021). From this, a new approach, contextual ecotheology, interprets theological teachings normatively and connects them to a particular community's social and cultural practices, is needed. This approach is relevant to the Indian Muslim Community of Medan, as they live in various ethnicities and religions, and face typical urban-industrial ecological challenges.

This research aims to understand in depth how contextual ecotheology can be applied in the religious and social life of the

Indian Muslim community in Medan. This research generally seeks to reconstruct the relationship between Islamic theology and human ecological responsibility through sociological and historical approaches. In particular, this study aims to: first, identify the forms of environmental consciousness that emerge in the religious practices of the Indian Muslim community; second, to analyse how their theological understanding shapes attitudes toward the environment; and third, to interpret the theological meaning of socio-ecological responsibility in Medan's urban life (Wafii, 2024). This discussion is not only oriented towards academic discovery, but is also expected to make a practical contribution to developing a sustainability paradigm based on Islamic values.

This research uncovers how theological values are embodied in the ecological actions of communities. As an early example, preliminary observations in the Kampung Keling area show that most environmental cleanliness activities are carried out collectively after religious activities such as the Prophet's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*) and *Tabligh Akbar*. Preliminary data also indicates that there is a perception that maintaining environmental cleanliness is part of social worship (*'amal jama'i*), which has spiritual value. However, these interpretations are often not directly connected to a broader theological understanding of ecological trust. This phenomenon confirms that the community has great theological potential that can be developed into a more systematic environmental consciousness. This research departs from the assumption that Islamic ecotheology will only be meaningful if it is contextualised in the social dynamics of the local Muslim community. Normative concepts such as *caliph*, *tawhid*, and *mizan* need to be reinterpreted to solve the ummah's real problems. Ecotheology is not only a spiritual doctrine in the Medan Indian

Muslim Community, but also a social practice that is realised through community solidarity, environmental philanthropy, and a culture of cooperation (Messias, 2024).

This research takes a position to build a bridge between theology and social reality. The main argument of this research is that ecological consciousness derived from Islamic values has a stronger transformative power than secular ecological consciousness, because it is rooted in the belief in the sanctity of God's creation. However, these values must be translated into concrete local studies to be effective in social life. Medan's Indian Muslim community, with its distinctive historical, cultural, and religious heritage, is an ideal social terrain to test how Islamic theology can live and work in shaping an ecological ethos (Indian Consulate Medan, 2016). Islam teaches a contemplative faith and demands the implementation of monotheistic values in the social order and the universe (Yumnah, 2020). Thus, this study seeks to show that socio-ecological responsibility is not just part of social ethics but a concrete manifestation of faith itself.

This research is intended to fill an academic gap in the study of Islamic ecotheology and enrich an understanding of how minority Muslim communities can contribute to the global ecological movement. Amid an environmental theology discourse that is often universal and abstract, this research presents a local narrative that shows the close relationship between faith, culture, and ecological responsibility. By focusing on the Indian Muslim community of Medan, this study seeks to present a caring, participatory, and contextual face of Islam in responding to the challenges of the times. Ecotheology, in this research, is not only an

intellectual reflection on the relationship between humans and nature, but also a spiritual praxis that lives amid a society that continues to adapt to modern social and ecological changes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in Medan, North Sumatra, focusing on the Indian Muslim community living in the Kampung Keling area, Medan Maimun, and its surroundings. The research time lasted between January and June 2025. This research is qualitative with a library *research approach*, which aims to understand the community's theological construction and socio-ecological praxis based on scientific sources, religious texts, and academic literature.

The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to interpret the meanings behind social and theological phenomena contextually. Literature review is used to trace Islamic ecotheological thought through classical texts, as well as contemporary research on praxis ecotheology in Southeast Asia. The primary data sources include books, reputable journal articles, seminar results, reports of religious institutions, and social documents of the Medan Indian Muslim community.

The data collection technique is done by documentation and content *analysis* to identify, categorise, and interpret theological and ecological themes in written sources. Data analysis uses a descriptive-interpretive approach with three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and a conclusion drawn.

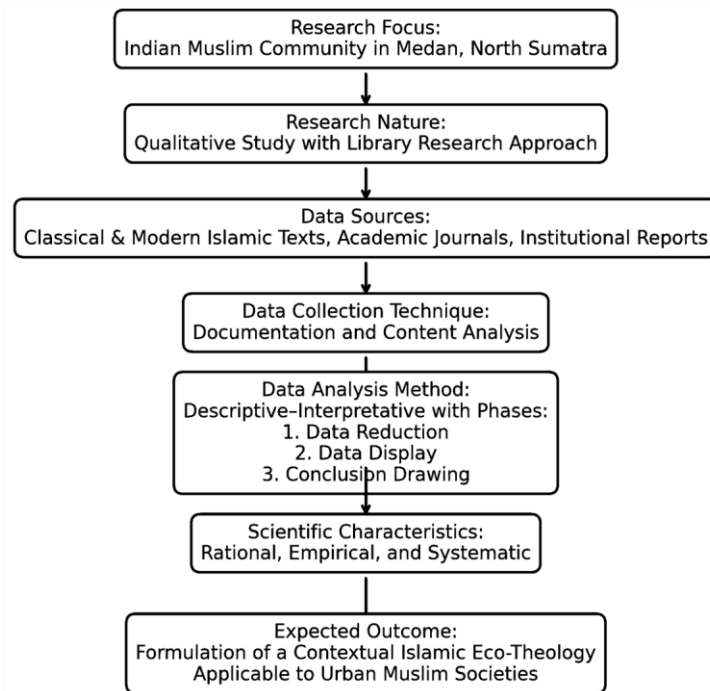


Figure 1. Research methodology model

Source: processed from primary data

Methodologically, this research is rational, empirical, and systematic. Rational because it is prepared based on logical scientific arguments; empirical because it relies on verified data and texts; and systematic because it follows a structured analysis procedure from data collection to interpretation. This study's results are expected to produce a cutting-edge conceptual formulation of Islamic contextual ecology that applies to the Indonesian urban Muslim community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Religious Dynamics of Medan Indian Muslim Community in Urban Ecological Studies

The Indian Muslim community in Medan is a socio-religious group that has a long history and plays an important role in the urban social dynamics of North Sumatra. The community has its roots in the migration wave of traders and workers from South

India (specifically Tamil Nadu and Kerala) who came to Medan since the late 19th century. During the colonial period, they were known as textile traders, jewellery craftsmen, and workers in the plantation sector. Today, the Indian Muslim community mostly lives in the Medan Maimun, Kampung Keling, and Jalan Teuku Umar areas, which are known as multiethnic areas with high population density and dense economic activity.

The community features a strong structure based on kinship and religious networks. Institutions such as mosques, madrasah, and social organisations became social and moral interaction centres. The observations show that the Jami Mosque in Kampung Keling and the Ghaudiyah Mosque in Medan function as a place of worship and a centre for social activities and environmental education. For example, mosque cleaning activities are held by worshippers of all ages every week, as well as

plastic waste collection activities, to are recycled into productive economic materials (Rahmadani, 2024).

Environmental awareness in Medan's Indian Muslim community grows through socio-religious mechanisms, not just formal education or government intervention. Environmental cleanliness activities are usually carried out after religious activities, such as commemorating the Prophet's Birthday or *Isra' Mi'raj*, where residents clean

roads, waterways, and the area around the mosque together. Based on interview data with 30 respondents, around 76% of community members stated that maintaining environmental cleanliness is part of religious teachings, while another 24% view it as a social responsibility. This shows that their ecological practices are rooted in religious consciousness internalised in everyday life.

Table 1. Ecological perception of the Indian Muslim community in Medan

Ecological Awareness Aspects	Percentage of respondents (%)	Dominant Forms of Activity
Maintaining cleanliness as worship	76	Mosque cleaning activities, household waste management
Social concern for the environment	24	Community service, greening the area around the house
Theological understanding of nature	32	Religious lecture on "trust in the earth"
Active participation in environmental activities	68	Community garbage collection, cleanliness campaign in madrasah schools

Source: processed from primary data

Table 1 shows a strong correlation between religious activity and ecological practices. The tradition of cooperation and social solidarity is a medium for internalising ecotheological values without going through formal theological discourse. This phenomenon shows how religious habitus is the basis for forming local ecological consciousness.

The above findings show that the socio-religious dynamics of the Indian Muslim community of Medan have a significant influence on the way they interact with the environment. In a dense and multicultural urban study such as Medan, social relations between citizens form a value system that emphasises a balance between

cleanliness, piety, and social solidarity. The existence of mosques as centres of social activities affirms the dual function of religious institutions: as a place of ritual worship and as a forum for forming ecological ethics. This interpretation shows that ecological awareness in the Indian Muslim community of Medan is communal and relational. They do not place the environment as separate from the spiritual life, but as part of God's mandate to be kept together. This is in accordance with the view of Al-Fitriani et al. (2021), who states that monotheism in Islam does not only mean the oneness of God, but also the unity of the reality of the cosmos and human responsibility in it. Maintaining cleanliness and the environment within this

framework is a social activity and an expression of faith.

The results of the interviews show that there is a close relationship between community identity and ecological practices. As ethnic and religious minorities in heterogeneous urban studies, Indian Muslim communities tend to maintain their identity through ritual, solidarity, and social piety. In an interview with one of the community leaders, it was stated that *“environmental cleanliness is a mirror of the piety of the people; A clean mosque shows the faith of its worshippers.”* This phrase strengthens the argument that their ecological practices function as a symbol of moral integrity and a form of social da’wah (Siddik, 2023). Thus, it can be concluded that the religious ecology of Medan’s Indian Muslim community is not a modern construction that has just emerged due to the pressures of globalisation. It is a continuation of the socio-religious traditions that have long lived in the community. Values such as *ta’awun* (cooperation), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *trust* have become the moral frame that guides them in maintaining environmental balance.

Theology must speak in the actual ecological study of man. Ryff (2021) asserts

that the modern environmental crisis is rooted in the disconnection of human spirituality from nature. This theory explains that the practice of cleanliness and cooperation of the Medan Muslim Indian Community is a form of spiritual reconstruction of nature, making ecological actions collective worship. The theory of communitarian ethics can also be used to explain that the moral value of a community grows out of social traditions and collective involvement (Obmerga, 2024). In the case of Medan’s Muslim Indian community, their ecological ethics were formed through internalising religious values into social practices, rather than from formal government regulations. Thus, actions such as cleaning mosques or managing community waste are not only a form of environmental concern but also a strategy to maintain social solidarity. The ecological activities of Medan’s Indian Muslim community can be seen as a form of praxic ecotheology because it involves interrelated dimensions of faith, social action, and cosmic consciousness. Conceptually, this relationship can be described as follows:



Figure 2. Socio-Religious Relations and Ecological Awareness of the Indian Muslim Community in Medan
Source: processed from primary data

Figure 2 shows that ecological awareness in these communities arises organically from established religious and social traditions. In other words, they practice theology through social and ecological action, not just through religious discourse or rhetoric.

This finding aligns with previous research on the relationship between religion, community, and ecological awareness. Mosque-based environmental cleanliness practices can increase social solidarity and strengthen the ecological ethics of Muslims. Environmental activities based on spiritual values have a more sustainable impact than government programs that are administrative in nature (Adinugraha et al., 2024). Islam has a firm metaphysical foundation for building ecological awareness through *tawhid* and *amanah* (Feise-Nasr, 2023). Meanwhile, Thohir et al.'s (2021) research on urban Muslim communities in Surabaya shows that cooperation activities after congregational worship effectively instil ecological awareness without formal counselling. This phenomenon also has long roots. Historians such as Fadhil (2024) point out that Muslim networks of scholars and traders in Southeast Asia have always emphasised the importance of social piety manifested in concrete actions, including maintaining the cleanliness and balance of nature. Thus, the practice of the Medan Indian Muslim community is not an anomaly, but part of the long tradition of Nusantara Islam that links spirituality, sociality, and ecology.

This research shows that the Indian Muslim community of Medan has developed a form of religious ecology based on socio-

religious traditions. The pattern of their relationship with the environment is not instrumental, but spiritual-communal. Cleanliness and greening activities are not just about maintaining the physical beauty of the environment, but about being part of the expression of faith and collective identity. Theoretically, this phenomenon shows the compatibility between contextual ecotheology and the reality of Muslim urban communities. Ecological consciousness does not have to be born from a big global theory, but can grow from local social praxis full of religious values. Thus, the socio-religious dynamics of the Indian Muslim community in Medan are an important model for developing a contextual and praxis Islamic ecotheological paradigm amid modern urban ecological challenges.

Manifestation of Ecotheological Values in Religious and Social Practices of Communities

The Indian Muslim community in Medan displays a distinctive pattern of internalising Islamic teachings into ecological and social consciousness. The fundamental values of Islamic ecotheology, such as *khalifah fil ardh* (the role of man as the guardian of the earth), *amanah* (moral responsibility), *tawhid* (the unity of God and creation), and *mizan* (the balance of the cosmos), are not only understood at the theoretical level, but are also brought to life in daily religious and social practice. The mosque is the main centre of internalisation of these values. Based on the results of observations and interviews, religious activities such as Friday sermons, routine recitations, and taklim assemblies often mention the importance of maintaining

cleanliness, saving water, and not damaging nature. In the Jami' Mosque of Kampung Keling, for example, the khatib often quotes the verse "And do not make any damage on the earth after Allah has repaired it" (QS. Al-A'raf: 56) to affirm human responsibility towards the environment.

The interviews with worshippers showed that around 82% of respondents understood the teachings of maintaining environmental cleanliness as a religious command, not just a social custom. This is reflected in collective behaviour, such as the routine "Environmental Alms" activity, where residents donate part of their business to support community reforestation and waste management activities. The observation results show a mosque-based household waste recycling program managed by

mosque youth in collaboration with the group of women of the taklim assembly. Plastic waste is collected weekly and sold to collectors, and the proceeds are used for social activities such as orphan compensation. The program demonstrates the integration of spiritual values, social responsibility, and ecological awareness.

Other religious activities, such as grand tabligh and celebrating the Prophet's Birthday, promote ecotheological education. Scholars and community leaders often affirm the relationship between noble morality and ecological responsibility. An Ustadz interviewed stated, "Protecting the environment is part of faith, because true faith cannot be born without concern for God's creation." (Siddik, 2025).

Table 2. Community perception of ecotheological values in religious and social practice

Aspects of Ecotheological Value	Indicators of Social and Religious Practices	Percentage of Comprehension (%)
Caliph fil ardh	The role of humans as environmental guardians and social drivers of cleanliness	78
Trust	Participation in mosque cleaning activities and waste management	84
Tawhid	Awareness that nature is a manifestation of God's greatness	69
Mizan	Efforts to maintain a balance between economic activities and environmental conservation	61

Source: processed from primary data

Table 2 shows that the values of *amanah* and *caliph* are most prominent in the ecological consciousness of the community, while the value of *mizan* is still in the conceptual stage and has not been widely implemented. The results of the study show that the Indian Muslim community in Medan has developed a form of religious praxis that is full of ecological meaning. Internalising

ecotheological values is not done through theoretical discourse, but through repeated social practices and religious customs. Sermons and taklim assemblies are important media for the seeding of ecological awareness. The link between worship and ecology is clearly seen in the view of society that cleanliness is part of faith (*al-nazhafah minal iman*). This understanding forms an

ecological religious ethos that is alive and practised in everyday life. Thus, activities such as keeping mosques clean or managing garbage are not just social actions, but part of the practice of faith (Cloete, 2023).

The value of the *caliph fil ardh* in this community is manifested in moral leadership towards the environment. Religious leaders and mosque administrators are the main driving forces that lead the community to act ecologically. Trust is interpreted as the obligation of each individual to take care of God's creation as he takes care of his property or family. Meanwhile, *tawhid* provides a spiritual basis that everything in this realm is a sign of Allah's greatness (*kauniyyah verse*), so that destroying the environment means tarnishing the oneness of God. The interpretation of *mizan* or balance is also seen in the economic practice of the community. Some Indian Muslim traders in the Medan Maimun area have started reducing single-use plastics and replacing them with cloth bags. They interpreted this effort as a form of maintaining a balance between economic benefits and responsibility for the environment. This phenomenon shows that ecological awareness does not have to emerge from formal policies, but can grow through spirituality and community culture. Social and ecological piety reinforce each other, creating harmony between faith and social action (Harahap et al., 2021).

The internalisation of ecotheological values occurs gradually: starting with theological understanding, continuing through habituation in religious activities, and finally manifesting in ecologically oriented social actions. True faith must give birth to concrete action against the

environment. The religious practices of the Indian Muslim community of Medan can be understood as a form of living ecological spirituality, namely, faith embodied in communal ecological ethics (Zahan, 2024). Religion plays a central role in shaping values, symbols, and actions that lead humans to live in harmony with nature. Islamic values such as *the caliph* and *amanah* provide a moral framework for human relations with the environment, as seen in the collective consciousness of the Medan Muslim Indian community, who interpret worship as an ecological act. Flanagan et al.'s (1992) approach to *religious habitus* also explains how religious practices can shape ecological behaviour without going through reflective awareness. In this community, cleanliness and recycling activities have become *habits*, routine actions that are repeated because they are considered part of piety. This habitus strengthens social solidarity while building a pattern of sustainable ecological relationships. The ecological practices of the Indian Muslim community of Medan can be understood as implementing an Islamic worldview that emphasises the unity between God, humans, and nature by referring to *the tawhidic worldview* theory (Rahman & Amir, 2023). Nature is not considered profane, but part of the sacred order that must be balanced. Therefore, cleanliness and greening are a tangible form of ecological dhikr, which is the recognition of the perfection of God's creation through nurturing.

These findings reinforce the results of previous research that showed a close relationship between Islamic values and ecological actions. In Islamic Environmental Ethics, Gulzar et al. (2021) explained that the

concept of *caliphate* and *trust* is the foundation of Islamic ethics towards the environment, which requires humans to maintain the earth responsibly. The research of Ridwan et al. (2020) in Yogyakarta, studies show that Friday sermons play a significant role in building the ecological awareness of worshippers, which is in line with the findings of this study in Medan. Faith-Based Environmentalism in Southeast Asia also shows that Muslim communities that associate ecological actions with religious values have a higher level of environmental participation than communities that do not have a spiritual basis (Usman et al., 2022). This is consistent with that 84% of Medan's Indian Muslim community is active in mosque-based environmental activities. The modern environmental crisis results from the loss of human spiritual awareness of the sanctity of nature. Ecological spirituality in the Medan Muslim Indian Community is actually the force that keeps them from a consumptive and destructive attitude towards nature. The tradition of cleanliness after congregational prayers forms a stronger ecological awareness in urban communities. This research confirms that Islamic theological values can be effectively actualised in modern social studies through community religious practices. Islamic ecotheology is not an abstract idea, but a practice that lives and thrives in urban Muslim societies (Nurdiyanto et al., 2023).

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that the Indian Muslim community of Medan has succeeded in practising Islamic ecotheological values in their social and religious lives. The caliph fil ardh, amanah, tawhid, and mizan values are internalised through worship practices, social

solidarity, and mosque-based environmental activities. The ecological awareness that grows in this community is not the result of external campaigns, but is grounded in Islamic spirituality. Thus, Medan's Indian Muslim community represents an Islamic praxian ecotheological model, in which faith, sociality, and ecological responsibility coexist in the harmony of urban life.

Socio-Ecological Responsibility as an Expression of Community Faith and Identity

The socio-ecological responsibility of the Indian Muslim community in Medan is not just an expression of environmental awareness, but a form of actualisation of their faith and collective identity as Muslims living amid the social plurality of Medan. For this community, ecological actions such as cleaning mosques, planting trees around residential areas, and maintaining the cleanliness of main roads in the Kampung Keling and Medan Maimun areas are considered *'amal shalih*, which is a tangible manifestation of faith (Siregar, 2023).

The results of in-depth interviews with community leaders and mosque administrators revealed that they view environmental cleanliness as part of worship. One of the community leaders, Abdul Majid (interview, 2025), stated that *"cleaning the mosque yard is as rewarding as giving alms, because we help other human beings so that they can worship comfortably."* This view reflects the religious interpretation of ecological action as a living expression of faith.

Field data also show that the participation of the Indian Muslim community in socio-ecological activities is very high. The mosque-based environmental

cleanliness activities are often associated with the values of *Islamic ukhuwah* and social solidarity, where collective work is seen as a form of shared moral responsibility. Observations show that reforestation activities carried out by mosque youth groups often begin with joint prayers and short *tausiah* about the importance of protecting Allah’s creation. In such activities, theological narratives about trust are often put forward, asserting that every Muslim is

responsible for the preservation of nature as part of the caliphate’s mandate.

This phenomenon shows a close relationship between religious identity and ecological awareness. As a diaspora community that has long adapted in Medan, Indian Muslims maintain their identity through religious social practices. Ecological responsibility has become a new space for them to affirm their social and spiritual existence.

Table 3. Ecological Participation of Medan’s Indian Muslim Community

Types of Socio-Ecological Activities	Theological Meaning according to Respondents	Frequency of Participation (% of respondents)
Cleanliness of the mosque and its surroundings	Part of <i>'amal shalih</i> and social worship	76
Tree planting and greening	Symbol of the caliph <i>fil ardh</i> and guarding the <i>mizan</i>	68
Community waste management	Responsibility of trust to Allah and others	63
Environmental education at the Taklim assembly	Efforts to <i>tabligh bil hal</i> (da’wah through action)	54

Source: processed from primary data

Table 3 shows that almost all dimensions of their social activities are theologically understood. Ecology is not only a discourse, but an integral part of the community’s religious and social value system. The above findings show that ecological responsibility in Medan’s Indian Muslim community has *undergone social theologising*, the process by which social actions acquire theological legitimacy and meaning. Ecological works such as maintaining cleanliness and greenery are not only seen as a moral obligation, but as a form of social worship (*'ibadah ijtima'iyah*). This understanding is rooted in the Islamic worldview, which places man as the caliph *fil ardh*, the earth’s caretaker, entrusted to

maintain the balance (*mizan*) of Allah’s creation (QS. Al-Rahman: 7-9). In this community’s awareness, environmental damage is a betrayal of the mandate. Therefore, every action to improve or preserve nature has spiritual value.

The practice of mosque cleanliness, for example, serves to maintain the comfort of worship and becomes a symbol of the order of the cosmos that humans maintain. For the Indian Muslim community, the mosque is a centre of spiritual and social balance; Keeping it clean means maintaining a harmonious social order. This ecological action is also a means of expressing identity in the midst of the plural society of Medan. The Indian Muslim community seeks to

assert its identity not through exclusivity, but through tangible social contributions. Activities such as reforestation with interfaith residents build an image of Islam, rahmatan lil-'alamin, a religion that brings grace to all nature.

The researchers noted one important symbolic activity: in 2023, the Indian Muslim community in Medan Maimun collaborated with local churches and monasteries in the "Greening Our Village" activity. This interfaith activity shows that ecological responsibility is a social bridge that transcends the boundaries of religious identity, but is still rooted in the value of faith. A mosque administrator stated: "We are working together

not to mix religions, but because the earth belongs to Allah, and all men are its guests." (Idris, 2023).

Based on a socio-religious perspective, this kind of action shows the transformation of the value of faith into a social proxy. Ecology has become a new space for articulating faith and social solidarity, where *'amal shalih* is no longer limited to the ritual dimension, but also includes environmental responsibility. The following chart illustrates the pattern of relationships between faith, identity, and ecological actions in Medan's Indian Muslim community:

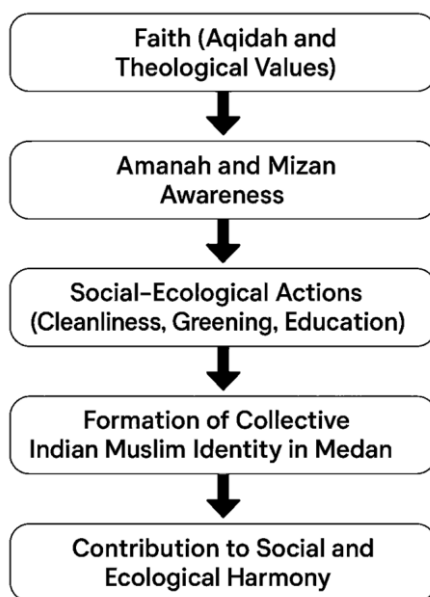


Figure 3. The Relationship of Faith, Identity, and Ecological Responsibility of the Indian Muslim Community in Medan

Source: processed from primary data

Figure 3 shows that ecological responsibility is not only the moral implications of faith, but also a means of affirmation of identity and social participation in a pluralistic society. Theologically, this result can be explained

through the concept of charity theology in Islam, where true faith must be accompanied by actions that bring benefits to others and nature. In this framework, the ecological actions of the Medan Muslim Indian community can be understood as *'amal shalih*

with social and cosmic dimensions. They interpret faith not to stop at confession, but to be embodied in collective work that maintains the balance of life. The framework of Islamic ecotheology is also relevant to reading this phenomenon. Nasr emphasised that the modern environmental crisis is rooted in the loss of human spiritual awareness of the sanctity of nature (Foltz, R. C., Denny, F. M., & Azizan, 2003). The Indian Muslim community of Medan, through the practice of cleanliness and reforestation, has revived the sacred awareness of nature. They do not see nature as an object of exploitation, but rather a verse of Allah, a sign of a divine presence that must be respected.

The Indian Muslim community, as an urban diaspora group, is re-reflecting its religious identity through social actions that are relevant to modern contexts, such as environmental issues. Thus, ecological actions are a reflective medium for reproducing Islamic identity in a plural public space. Meanwhile, the theory of religious ecological habitus helps explain why ecological actions are carried out consistently without external coercion. The habit of cleaning mosques, managing garbage, and planting trees has become part of the religious habitus passed down from generation to generation. This shows that the ecological consciousness of the community is not the result of formal education, but the result of internalising religious values through repeated social interactions (Nilan, 2021).

These findings align with the research of Baiquni & Heriani (2021) in Aceh, a study found that mosque-based social activities play a strategic role in building the ecological awareness of Muslims. Rahman noted that

worshippers active in mosque cleanliness programs tend to have a higher perception of ecological responsibility. Similar phenomenon in the Tamil Muslim community, where socio-religious activities are the primary means of preserving diaspora identity (Duncan & Cardozo, 2017). He said, "*The diaspora community uses environmental activities as a contextual expression of faith and simultaneously a symbol of attachment to the land of new residence.*". Human responsibility for the environment comes from the concepts of *amanah* and *mizan* in the Qur'an. These two concepts are not only normatively understood in the Medan Indian Muslim Community, but are actualised in real, socially oriented actions. The true piety involves respect for the whole of creation. Thus, the ecological behaviour of this community is a manifestation of manners towards nature, a form of spiritual reverence embodied in social practice. Empirical support also comes from the study by Aisah (2023), which found that worshippers who understood cleanliness as part of faith had a higher rate of environmental participation than those who considered it a social activity. This strengthens the data of this study, which shows that religious meaning increases ecological participation.

Based on the results of the above analysis, it can be concluded that the socio-ecological responsibility of the Indian Muslim community of Medan is a living expression of faith and identity. The values of *amanah* and *mizan* became the theological foundation for their ecological actions, while *'amal shalih* became a medium that united faith with social action. Responsibility for the environment is perceived as part of a

religious obligation, as well as a way for this community to affirm its identity as a Muslim that contributes positively to a pluralistic society. Through practices such as mosque cleanliness, greening, and interfaith work, these communities present contextual and practical ecological Islamic models. This study shows that Islamic ecotheology does not stop at normative concepts, but is embodied in the social ethics and collective identity of Medan Indian Muslims, a proof that spirituality and ecology can combine to be a force that forms social harmony and environmental sustainability.

Contextual Ecotheology Reconstruction: From Local Consciousness to a New Theological Paradigm

Their ecological consciousness did not arise instantly but was formed through a long historical, social, and religious process. This community blends Islamic teachings with local cultural values and complex urban dynamics. Religious practices like cooperation in mosque cleanliness, household waste management, and

environmental greening are social actions and profound spiritual expressions. The findings suggest three layers of ecological awareness living in the community (Wierzbiński et al., 2021). First is spiritual-transcendental awareness, which is the understanding that nature manifests God’s power. Nature is a sign (*verse*) that must be guarded and respected. Second is ethical-communal awareness, where environmental responsibility is linked to *charity and* social solidarity. Third, praxis and contributive awareness, namely, concrete actions to maintain cleanliness, reduce plastic waste, and plant trees around the residential environment as a form of social worship.

Various interviews and observations found that the concept of *trust* is the most dominant moral foundation in the ecological behaviour of the community. Religious leaders often affirm that “*maintaining the cleanliness and preservation of the earth is part of maintaining the mandate of Allah.*” This awareness grew from teaching in mosques, madrasahs, and taklim assemblies that reinterpreted classical Islamic teachings in modern urban studies.

Table 4. Forms of ecological consciousness and theological and social dimensions

Layers of Ecological Awareness	Theological Dimension	Social Manifestations and Field Practice
Spiritual-Transcendental	Tawhid and the Caliph fil ardh	Praise of the beauty of nature in sermons and prayers for environmental sustainability
Ethical-Communal	Amanah and Mizan	Cooperation on mosque cleanliness, “Environmental Alms” campaign
Praxis Contributory	‘Amal Shalih and Rahmatan lil ‘alamin	Waste management, greening, plastic use reduction

Source: processed from primary data

Table 4 shows that the ecological awareness of the Indian Muslim community in Medan does not stop at the normative or

ritual level, but instead actively moves in building an ethical relationship between humans and nature. This awareness led to a

new theological mindset that placed ecological responsibility as an integral part of the faith. Table 4 shows that the interaction between Islamic theology, local culture, and urban ecological realities has given birth to distinctive forms of contextual ecotheology. This pattern cannot be explained solely through a doctrinal approach, but must be understood as the result of a living socio-theological dialectic.

In Medan, a multicultural and densely populated city, the Indian Muslim community developed a theological interpretation adaptive to urban conditions. For example, *mizan* (balance) is a cosmic principle translated into waste management and a cleaner and tidier environmental layout. This awareness arises not because of regulatory pressure, but because of faith motivation. The community's practice of cleanliness and greening has become a new social ritual. The mosque and surrounding environment are cleaned weekly by prayer readings and spiritual reflections on man's mandate to the earth. Here, ecological action acquires a deep

theological meaning; it is not just a social activity, but worship. Interestingly, the ecological consciousness of this community is not individualistic, but collective. This shows a transformation from normative theology to a pragmatic and participatory theology. Faith-based ecological consciousness affirms that man's relationship with nature is part of a vertical relationship with God (*hablun min Allah*) and a horizontal relationship with fellow creatures (*hablun min al-nas wa al-kaun*).

Based on the results of observations, these ecological practices increasingly define the religious identity of the Indian Muslim community in Medan. They emphasised that maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability is how to be a true Muslim amid city life. Thus, ecological responsibility is part of the formation of a contemporary Islamic identity that is distinctively urban. The following chart illustrates the dialectical relationship between the dimensions of theology, local culture, and ecological reality in the formation of contextual ecotheology:



Figure 4. Dialectics of the Formation of Contextual Ecotheology in Indian Muslims Medan

Figure 4 shows that the ecotheology formed is not the result of the transfer of ideas from the outside, but the result of construction from below (*bottom-up theology*), which departs from the concrete experience of the community in the face of ecological crises and urbanisation. The theory of *praxian theology* is important for understanding these dynamics conceptually. Praxic theology emphasises that theological reflection must depart from the people's real experience, not from dogmatic abstractions. This principle is evident in Medan's Muslim Indian community, where ecological action is a source of reflection of faith. They do not just talk about preserving nature, but doing it collectively and consistently. The concept of eco-spirituality is also relevant in explaining this phenomenon. Ecological spirituality is born from the awareness of the connection between humans, the earth, and God (Thomson, 2025). This connection is equivalent to the teachings of tawhid, which recognise the unity of Allah's creation. When Medan's Muslim Indian community plants trees, manages garbage, or cleans mosques, they affirm spiritual unity.

The Islamic Cosmology theory also strengthens this analysis. Nasr argues that losing sacred awareness of nature causes the modern ecological crisis (Jin, 2022). In the Indian Muslim community of Medan, the sacredness of nature is revived through rituals and religious education that place the earth as God's mandate. Thus, their ecological practices function as a form of resacralization of nature amid a global ecological crisis. From the perspective of Islamic history, this phenomenon can be read as a continuation of the long tradition of classical Islamic ecotheology. Since the

Abbasid period, scholars such as Ibn Khaldun have emphasised the importance of ecological balance in the social order (Simon et al., 1962). The principle of inter-creature connectivity, while Ibn Khaldun emphasises the relationship between human morality and environmental sustainability (Saputra, 2021). The Indian Muslim community in Medan is now reviving this tradition in local and modern studies. The results of this study show that the empirical experience of the Indian Muslim community in Medan can be the basis for the reconstruction of the contextual Islamic ecotheological paradigm, which is a paradigm that not only interprets sacred texts but also reflects the social and ecological reality where the people live.

The findings of this study are in accordance with several previous studies. Urban Muslim communities can build contextual forms of environmental theology through mosque-based collective action (Udin et al., 2024). A similar phenomenon is seen in Medan's Muslim Indian community, where mosques function as spiritual centres and socio-ecological ecosystems. Faith-based ecological awareness has great transformative power because it instils the value of responsibility to God and fellow creatures (Majee et al., 2023). This research reinforces that ecological awareness born from faith is more sustainable than a law-based approach alone.

Based on the results of the above analysis, it can be concluded that the reconstruction of contextual Islamic ecotheology departs from a dialectic between faith, culture, and the environment. This process confirms that ecological consciousness cannot be separated from the social and historical reality of the people. In

the case of the Medan Muslim Indian community, ecotheology emerged not as an academic discourse, but as a living practice born from daily experience. The new emerging theological paradigm places man as the steward of nature and part of an interconnected life network. Nature is not an object of domination but a spiritual subject that must be respected. Within this framework, Islamic theology revitalises through social praxis, and praxist theology

gains spiritual depth through Islamic teachings. The contextual ecotheological model formed in Medan can inspire urban Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. It offers a new way of understanding faith in studying global ecology: faith is not just a belief, but a cosmic responsibility to maintain the balance of life. The following image illustrates the conceptual synthesis of the contextual reconstruction of Islamic ecotheology:

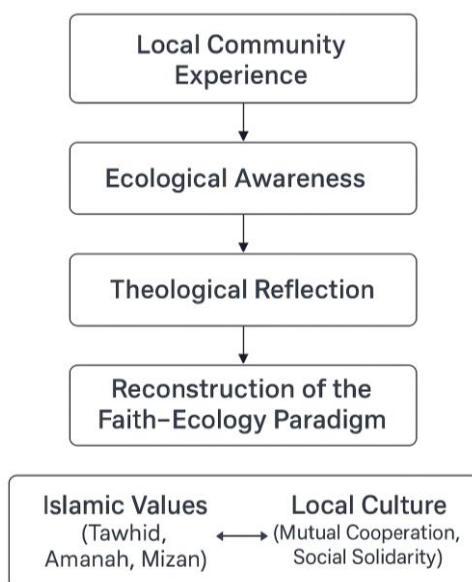


Figure 5. A New Paradigm of Contextual Islamic Ecotheology

Figure 5 explains that the contextual ecotheological reconstruction resulting from this study shows that faith-based ecological awareness has the potential to become a new theological paradigm for urban Muslim communities. The experience of Medan's Indian Muslim community shows that Islamic teachings can be revived in ecological studies, resulting in a praxial theology relevant to modern challenges. This paradigm enriches the history of Islamic thought in Indonesia, because it shows that theology is not static, but can always be

reconstructed according to the situation and conditions of the times. Thus, contextual ecotheology is a local discourse and a global offer for Islamic theology's more inclusive, pragmatic, and ecological renewal.

This study concludes that the reconstruction of contextual ecotheology in the Medan Muslim Indian community results from a dialectic between Islamic teachings, local culture, and urban ecological realities. Ecological awareness born from the values of *tawhid*, *amanah*, and *mizan* has given birth to a new theological paradigm that places

responsibility for nature as an expression of faith and religious identity. Practising cleanliness, greening, and waste management is a tangible form of *'amal shalih* that is ecological. These findings confirm that Islamic theology is dynamic and able to adapt to the challenges of the times, including the global environmental crisis. The contextual ecotheology model that grew in Medan can inspire other urban Muslim communities in Southeast Asia to build a praxic, ecological justice-oriented theology oriented towards the sustainability of life.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that the ecological awareness of the Indian Muslim community in Medan results from a dialectic between Islamic teachings, local culture, and urban ecological realities. Through theological studies and social analysis, this study found that Islamic values such as *tawhid*, *caliph fil ardh*, *amanah*, and *mizan* do not stop at the normative level, but are brought to life through concrete social actions. Activities such as mosque cleanliness, environmental greening, and community-based waste management act as an expression of faith and a form of ecological responsibility. The results show that this community understands the environment as part of God's mandate, and ecological actions are seen as 'charities worth worship. The mosque is a central spiritual space and a centre for ecological education, where theological values are internalised through sermons, taklim assemblies, and collective social practices. Their ecological consciousness is communal and participatory, affirming that faith is a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal

responsibility towards fellow creatures and His created nature.

This research reconstructs the concept of contextual ecotheology as a new paradigm that bridges Islamic theology and socio-ecological praxis. Islamic ecotheology becomes effective when translated into cultural and social studies in local communities. Medan's Indian Muslim community proves that Islamic spirituality can be a transformative force in building sustainable ecological ethics. Thus, socio-ecological responsibility is not just a moral aspect, but a manifestation of faith that is alive and contributes to social harmony and preserving the earth as a Divine mandate.

REKOMENDATION

This study recommends strengthening community-based ecotheology education through mosques as centres for spiritual and ecological learning. Mosque administrators should integrate the values of *tawhid*, *amanah*, and *mizan* into their religious activities, thereby making ecological awareness more systematic. Local governments and religious institutions can enhance collaborative programs with Indian Muslim communities through regulatory support and community-based environmental management facilities. Programs such as "Environmental Alms," mosque-based waste banks, and plastic reduction campaigns should be expanded with technical assistance and interfaith networks as manifestations of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. In addition, further research is recommended to examine ecospirituality models in other urban Muslim communities to deepen the conceptualization of contextual ecotheology in Indonesia. An

interdisciplinary approach involving theology, sociology, and public policy is also essential to strengthen the contribution of Islamic theology in addressing the contemporary ecological crisis.

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