

Spiritual Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Addressing Environmental Issues: A Case Study of Islamic Organizations in West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic mass organizations as forms of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in responding to the environmental crisis in West Java, Indonesia, with a focus on the relationship between theological values and institutional practices. This study becomes important due to the increasing ecological crisis and the significant potential of Islamic organizations as social actors grounded in religious values. The study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving eight Islamic organizations in West Java. The researcher collects data through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and then analyzes the data using thematic analysis techniques to identify key patterns in organizational practices. The findings show that Islamic organizations possess strong theological foundations in building ecological awareness, which derive from the concepts of *khalifah*, *amanah*, and *mizan*. However, these values do not automatically translate into systematic and sustainable practices. The study identifies significant variation across organizations in terms of institutional capacity, level of institutionalization, and patterns of environmental program implementation. Furthermore, the study reveals a gap between normative awareness and organizational practices, which is influenced by limitations in structure, resources, and institutional orientation. The implications indicate that strengthening the role of Islamic organizations in environmental issues requires not only value-based approaches but also the enhancement of institutional capacity. In terms of originality, this study contributes to the development of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) scholarship by identifying institutional capacity as a key factor that bridges theological values and social action, and by proposing the Green Ummah Framework as a community-based integrative model.

Keywords: Faith-Based Organizations; Green Ummah Framework; islamic organizations; institutional capacity; theological ecology.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran organisasi kemasyarakatan Islam sebagai bentuk *Faith-Based Organizations* (FBOs) dalam merespons krisis lingkungan di Jawa Barat, Indonesia, dengan fokus pada hubungan antara nilai teologis dan praktik kelembagaan. Penelitian ini penting dilakukan mengingat meningkatnya krisis ekologis serta besarnya potensi ormas Islam sebagai aktor sosial berbasis nilai keagamaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, melibatkan delapan ormas Islam di Jawa Barat. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola utama dalam praktik organisasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ormas Islam memiliki landasan teologis yang kuat dalam membangun kesadaran ekologis, yang bersumber dari konsep *khalifah*, *amanah*, dan *mizan*. Namun, nilai tersebut tidak secara otomatis terimplementasi dalam praktik yang sistematis dan berkelanjutan. Terdapat variasi signifikan antar organisasi dalam hal kapasitas kelembagaan, tingkat institusionalisasi, serta pola implementasi program lingkungan. Penelitian ini juga menemukan adanya kesenjangan antara kesadaran normatif dan praktik organisasi yang dipengaruhi oleh keterbatasan struktur, sumber daya, dan orientasi kelembagaan. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penguatan peran ormas Islam dalam isu lingkungan memerlukan pendekatan yang tidak hanya berbasis

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Received: November 7, 2025; Revised: March 7, 2026; Accepted: April 22, 2026

nilai, tetapi juga penguatan kapasitas institusional. Secara orisinal, penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan kajian *Faith-Based Organizations* (FBOs) dengan mengidentifikasi *institutional capacity* sebagai faktor kunci yang menjembatani antara nilai teologis dan aksi sosial, serta menawarkan konsep *Green Ummah Framework* sebagai model integratif berbasis komunitas.

Kata Kunci: Organisasi Berbasis Keagamaan; Kerangka Kerja Green Ummah; organisasi Islam; kapasitas kelembagaan; ekologi teologis.

INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis has become an increasingly urgent global challenge that significantly affects the sustainability of human life, including in Indonesia. National ecological pressures appear in the increase in waste production from 27.6 million tons in 2019 to 38.6 million tons in 2024, with 65.4% of districts and cities classified as being in a waste emergency condition, and more than 70% of household water sources experiencing contamination (Indonesia Environment & Energy Center, 2026). In addition, deforestation has reached more than 9 million hectares since 2000, with an additional 175,400 hectares in 2024, indicating a high level of ecosystem degradation that contributes to land conflicts, declining productivity, and increasing disaster risks (Kementerian Kehutanan RI, 2025). These conditions become more evident at the regional level, particularly in West Java Province, which has the largest population in Indonesia (more than 50 million people) and faces high ecological pressure due to population density and economic activities (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2026). Various reports indicate significant environmental degradation, including increasing frequency of floods and landslides, river pollution, and uncontrolled land conversion, as well as damage to water catchment areas in the Puncak region, which has increased from 45% to 65% over the past five years (WALHI Jawa Barat, 2025). Other data show that forest cover in West Java has declined to 43% and that 176 illegal mining sites were identified in 2024, further worsening environmental quality, as reflected in the Environmental Quality Index, which remains below the national standard (Costa, 2024; Hasyim, 2026). Overall, these conditions position West Java as a region that is highly vulnerable to complex ecological crises while also being strategically important for studying environmental mitigation and sustainability efforts.

Amid this complex crisis, the socio-religious structure of West Java society provides an important dimension that cannot be overlooked. As a province with a Muslim population reaching 97.36%, West Java has a very strong religious social base (Darmawan, 2024). This condition implies a significant role for Islamic mass organizations as social actors that possess strong moral legitimacy, extensive institutional networks, and substantial mobilization capacity (Alatas, 2021). Various Islamic organizations such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), Al-Irsyad, and Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI) maintain broad community bases through networks of mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and educational institutions that reach grassroots levels. From a theoretical perspective, these organizations can be understood as part of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), which are organizations grounded in religious values and actively engaged in social activities, development, and community services (Koehrsen & Heuser, 2019; Olarinmoye, 2023).

However, this substantial potential has not been fully accompanied by optimal engagement in environmental issues. Although Islamic theological values such as *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, and *mizan* provide a strong foundation for ecological ethics, the institutional practices of Islamic organizations in responding to environmental issues remain limited and not yet systematically integrated (Arauf, 2021). Most organizational activities still focus on preaching, education, and socio-religious services (Haryanto,

2019; Qorib & Umiarso, 2025; Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023), while contributions to environmental management remain underdeveloped. This condition reveals a paradox between strong spiritual values and relatively weak implementation in organizational practices. Therefore, it is important to examine more deeply how the significant potential of these religious organizations can be articulated into effective social forces in addressing environmental crises at the local level.

Studies on the relationship between religion and the environment have developed significantly in recent decades, particularly in response to increasingly complex global ecological crises. In general, existing literature can be categorized into several major trends. First, studies that emphasize the development of eco-theological frameworks in Islam focus on theological values as the basis of environmental ethics. Various studies show that concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, and *mizan* serve as the primary foundation for building ecological awareness in Islam (Almirzanah, 2020; Alumona & Alumona, 2025; Makki & Juilleret, 2023; Mohamed, 2025; Ragozina, 2023). Within this perspective, humans act as representatives of God on earth who bear moral responsibility to maintain ecological balance and avoid excessive exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, eco-theology also develops through the integration of spirituality, such as eco-sufism, which emphasizes values of *zuhud*, simplicity, and harmony with nature as part of religious practice (Irawan, 2022; Tahir et al., 2025). Some studies even demonstrate how eco-theology is applied in Islamic education contexts, such as Islamic boarding schools that integrate ecological values into their curricula and daily practices (Abd-Elsalam & Binay, 2024; Munawar-Rachman et al., 2026; Romdloni et al., 2024).

Second, studies focus on the role of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in environmental governance, particularly in global contexts. Several studies indicate that FBOs hold strategic positions in promoting sustainability practices through community mobilization, moral legitimacy, and extensive social networks (Biscotti & Biggart, 2014; Harper, 2011; Moyer et al., 2012, 2014; Zhang, 2024). FBOs function as intermediaries between religious values and social practices by integrating ecological messages into religious teachings and encouraging public participation in environmental activities such as conservation, reforestation, and public education (Brotosusilo et al., 2016; Duangmanee et al., 2024). In addition, other studies show that FBOs possess the capacity to build social capital and public trust, which are critical factors in the success of community-based environmental programs (Lyons et al., 2016; Moyer et al., 2014; Tok & O'Bright, 2017).

However, this literature also reveals several limitations, particularly regarding the gap between normative potential and practical implementation. Some studies find that FBOs often face challenges in translating religious values into tangible environmental impacts due to limitations in resources, institutional capacity, and tensions between religious agendas and secular policies (Lyons et al., 2016; Zhang, 2024). Furthermore, most studies still focus on global contexts or specific countries outside Indonesia, thus failing to provide a comprehensive understanding of FBO dynamics within large Islamic organizations in Indonesia.

Third, studies in the Indonesian context highlight the integration of Islamic values into environmental practices. Various studies show that Islamic teachings have significant potential to promote ecological awareness through education, preaching, and community-based (Amrullah et al., 2025; Fakhruddin et al., 2018; Maghfiroh et al., 2024; Mangunjaya, 2011). Initiatives such as green pesantren, eco-mosque, and the integration of environmental issues into Islamic education curricula serve as concrete examples of how religious values translate into social practices (Amri, 2025; Irawan, 2022). Additionally, the roles of organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have begun to

receive attention in studies related to climate change mitigation and community-based environmental management (Mustofa et al., 2025; Nur et al., 2025).

On the other hand, some studies show that Islamic values influence individual behavior in sustainability contexts, such as adopting environmentally friendly technologies and managing resources (Anwar, 2025). However, most studies in Indonesia remain partial and fragmented, focusing on specific aspects such as education, local communities, or particular initiatives, without comprehensively examining religious organizations as complex social actors. Moreover, comparative studies on the roles of different Islamic organizations in environmental issues remain very limited, preventing a broader understanding of variations in strategies, capacities, and effectiveness among organizations.

Although various studies have demonstrated the important contributions of religion in building ecological awareness, significant gaps remain in the literature. Most research focuses on normative and conceptual dimensions or limited community practices without deeply examining how theological values become institutionalized within religious organizational structures and practices. Additionally, studies on Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) tend to be global in scope and rarely focus specifically on large Islamic organizations in Indonesia that possess extensive social networks and strong grassroots influence. Furthermore, existing research has not sufficiently explored internal organizational processes, decision-making mechanisms, and the relationship between spiritual values and program implementation within institutional contexts. These gaps highlight the need for research that not only examines normative dimensions but also empirically analyzes how spiritual values become articulated in institutional practices, how variations among organizations emerge, and why gaps exist between strong theological values and weak environmental action.

This study aims to analyze how Islamic spiritual values are articulated in religious organizational practices through perceptions, spiritual roles, institutional strategies, and concrete programs implemented by Islamic mass organizations in West Java in responding to environmental issues. Specifically, this study examines how theological constructions shape organizational ecological orientations, how institutional strategies and mechanisms develop in managing environmental issues, and how practical actions at the community level are implemented and mobilized. Therefore, this study not only maps normative dimensions but also connects values, organizational structures, and social actions within the context of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs).

This study argues that the role of religious organizations (Faith-Based Organizations/FBOs) in addressing environmental issues cannot be understood merely as an expression of spiritual values or moral legitimacy but rather as the result of interaction between theological dimensions and institutional capacity that enables these values to become operationalized into structured collective action. In this context, FBOs function both as moral authorities that shape ecological awareness through religious legitimacy and as social mobilizers that drive community participation through social networks and religious institutions. However, this study shows that strong spiritual values such as *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, and *mizan* do not automatically produce effective environmental practices because implementation depends heavily on organizational capacity, program structures, leadership, and partnership networks within each organization. Thus, the effectiveness of FBOs in environmental issues depends on the extent to which organizations can transform theological values into institutional strategies, concrete programs, and sustainable social mobilization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study positions Islamic mass organizations as the primary unit of analysis, with a focus on their institutional and spiritual roles in responding to environmental issues in West Java. The study examines eight Islamic organizations, namely the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah, Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), Wahdah Islamiyah, Sarekat Islam (SI), Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI), and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), with an emphasis on organizational representatives operating at the regional level of West Java. The study investigates how these organizations, particularly within the regional context of West Java, construct their perceptions of environmental issues, develop institutional strategies, and implement environmental programs at the community level.

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to achieve an in-depth and contextual understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The researcher selects the qualitative approach because it allows comprehensive exploration of meanings, experiences, and perspectives of actors within complex social contexts. The researcher uses a case study design because it provides a detailed understanding of internal organizational dynamics and the interaction between spiritual values and institutional practices within the local context of West Java. This approach enables the researcher to examine in detail the relationship between theological values, organizational structures, and social practices in environmental issues.

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources as the basis for analysis. The researcher obtains primary data from informants who represent the leadership of each Islamic organization involved in the study. Each organization is represented by one key informant who possesses knowledge and experience related to environmental issues within the organization. The researcher collects secondary data from institutional documents, organizational activity reports, and relevant academic literature. The researcher uses these multiple sources to strengthen data validity and enrich the analytical context.

The researcher collects data through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation study. The researcher conducts unstructured in-depth interviews lasting 40–60 minutes with each informant (one representative from each organization, totaling eight informants) to explore their perspectives, experiences, and organizational practices in responding to environmental issues. The interviews take place concurrently from January to June 2025. The researcher uses an interview guide as the primary instrument to ensure that the discussion remains aligned with the research objectives. The researcher conducts non-participant observation online to examine organizational activities, particularly environmental programs disseminated through digital media and official organizational platforms. The researcher complements the data through documentation study by reviewing organizational archives, program reports, and relevant literature sources.

The researcher analyzes the data using thematic analysis techniques with an interactive analysis approach developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The researcher conducts the analysis through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher performs data reduction by filtering and grouping information that is relevant to the research focus. The researcher presents the data in thematic categories to facilitate interpretation. The researcher draws conclusions by identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings from the analyzed data. The researcher categorizes the findings into three main aspects: organizational perceptions of environmental issues, identification of environmental problems in West Java, and forms of spiritual roles and institutional practices in responding to these issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Islamic Organizations in West Java and Institutional Context

This Islamic mass organizations in West Java demonstrate diverse institutional characteristics in terms of historical background, ideological orientation, and organizational structures in responding to environmental issues. This study examines eight Islamic organizations, namely the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah, Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), Wahdah Islamiyah, Sarekat Islam (SI), Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI), and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), with a focus on their regional representatives in West Java as the operational context. Each organization possesses a distinct historical base and movement orientation, which ultimately influence how they position environmental issues within their institutional structures and organizational practices.

MUI, as an umbrella institution that functions as a religious authority and issuer of fatwas, positions environmental issues within a normative framework through the establishment of the Institute for Environmental Stewardship and Natural Resources (LPLH-SDA), which formulates Islamic principles related to environmental management and integrates them into public preaching (Lestari & Fakhruddin, 2026; LPLH-SDA MUI, 2025). Meanwhile, NU, as the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, develops a more structural approach through the establishment of the Disaster Management and Climate Change Agency (LPBI NU), which focuses on disaster mitigation, climate change, and community-based programs such as *"Green Pesantren"* (Alawi, 2019; Jannah, 2025). These two organizations demonstrate a tendency to institutionalize environmental issues through the establishment of specialized bodies with relatively clear operational mandates.

On the other hand, organizations such as Wahdah Islamiyah also exhibit a relatively structured institutional pattern by establishing an Environmental Department as a form of integration between preaching and ecological action (Taqiyuddin, 2025). In contrast, most other organizations such as PERSIS, PUI, SI, Dewan Dakwah, and Al-Irsyad have not established specific institutional bodies that explicitly address environmental issues (Al-Irsyad, 2025; Dewan Dakwah, 2024; Romdhon, 2025; Syarikat Islam, 2026). In these organizations, environmental issues tend to be implicitly integrated into preaching, education, or social programs without a specific and sustainable institutional structure.

These findings indicate that significant variation exists in the level of institutionalization of environmental issues among Islamic organizations in West Java. Organizations that possess specialized institutions tend to implement more structured and sustainable programs, while those without specific structures tend to treat environmental issues as a supplementary part of their primary agenda. In addition, the relationship between central and regional structures also varies, as some organizations apply a top-down approach through central policies, while others rely on local community-based initiatives. These conditions indicate that institutional capacity and organizational structure play critical roles in determining the extent to which environmental issues can be systematically articulated within religious organizational practices.

The findings are further supported by interview results, which show that most organizations perceive environmental issues as part of moral and religious responsibility, yet not all organizations have been able to integrate these values into concrete institutional structures. One informant stated:

“Environmental issues are part of *amanah*, but not all organizations have developed specific mechanisms to manage them seriously.” (IS, MUI Informant, Interview, February 13, 2025).

Table 1. Profile of Islamic Organizations and the Position of Environmental Issues within Institutional Structures

No	Islamic Organization	Year Established	Movement Basis	Environmental Institution	Environmental Focus	Institutional Pattern
1	MUI	1975	Fatwa and religious authority	LPLH-SDA	Environmental preaching, fatwa	Top-down
2	NU	1926	Traditional - community	LPBI NU	Disaster mitigation, green pesantren	Semi bottom-up
3	Wahdah Islamiyah	1988	Preaching and cadre development	Environmental Department	Eco-Wahdah, reforestation	Structured
4	PERSIS	1923	Islamic purification	None	Ecological preaching (non-structural)	Individual
5	PUI	1917	Education and preaching	None	Integration in pesantren	Implicit
6	SI	1905	Socio-economic	None	Ecological values in preaching	Non-structural
7	Dewan Dakwah	1967	National preaching	None	Environmental preaching	Limited
8	Al-Irsyad	1914	Modernist education	None (implicit)	Ecological education	Limited institutionalization

Source: Jannah, 2025; LPLH-SDA MUI, 2025; Maarif, 2026; Taqiyuddin, 2025.

The findings on the institutional profiles of Islamic organizations in West Java reveal at least three main patterns in responding to environmental issues. First, the study identifies a formal institutionalization pattern, in which organizations such as MUI, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Wahdah Islamiyah have established specific institutions or departments that address environmental issues in a structured manner. This pattern indicates that environmental issues have been integrated into organizational systems through clear institutional mandates, sustainable programs, and structural support from central to regional levels. Second, the study identifies an implicit integration pattern, in which organizations such as PUI and Al-Irsyad do not have specific institutions but internalize ecological values through education, preaching, and community development. In this pattern, environmental issues do not

function as a primary agenda but remain embedded within religious practices and social activities. Third, the study identifies a non-structural or sporadic pattern, as demonstrated by organizations such as PERSIS, Sarekat Islam, and Dewan Dakwah, in which environmental issues have not yet become an institutional focus and largely depend on individual initiatives or situational responses.

In addition, the study identifies a fourth tendency, namely differences in institutional relationships between central and regional levels, which influence the dynamics of environmental program implementation. Organizations with strong structures tend to apply a top-down approach through centralized policies, while others rely more on bottom-up community-based initiatives. Based on these four patterns, the study concludes that the effectiveness of Islamic organizations in addressing environmental issues does not depend solely on the presence of theological values, but is strongly influenced by institutional capacity and the level of institutionalization of environmental issues within the organization.

Theological Construction and Ecological Spirituality of Islamic Organizations

All Islamic mass organizations in West Java possess strong theological foundations in viewing environmental issues as an integral part of Islamic teachings. Each organization constructs ecological ethics through key concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, *mizan* (balance), and *maqashid syariah* as normative bases for developing environmental awareness. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), for example, emphasizes that protecting the environment constitutes a religious obligation that cannot be separated from the human role as *khalifah* on earth.

“In our view, protecting the environment is part of religious obligation. If humans damage nature, they violate the *amanah* as *khalifah* on earth. However, the most important aspect is how religious leaders provide concrete examples to society.” (IS, Interview, February 13, 2025).

This statement shows that MUI’s theological construction does not stop at the normative level but also emphasizes the importance of social exemplarity as a mechanism for internalizing values. A similar perspective appears in Al-Irsyad, which views the environment as a divine *amanah* that must be preserved, although the organization acknowledges that environmental issues remain relatively new within its institutional agenda.

“The environment is an *amanah* from God that must be protected. However, we also realize that this issue is relatively new within the organization’s agenda, so we need to develop more structured programs to cultivate environmental awareness in society.” (RA, Interview, March 21, 2025).

On the other hand, Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) develops a more normative approach through the framework of environmental *fiqh*, in which environmentally harmful behavior is positioned as both a moral violation and a violation of religious law.

“From the perspective of *fiqh*, actions that damage the environment cannot be considered trivial. For example, littering is not only a social issue but also a moral and religious issue.” (SR, Interview, June 28, 2025).

This approach indicates that ecological ethics in PERSIS operates within a normative-regulatory framework of Islamic law. Meanwhile, Wahdah Islamiyah develops a more integrative approach by linking the concepts of *tauhid*, balance (*mizan*), and public benefit (*maslahah*) as the foundation of ecological ethics.

“Humans are created as *khalifah* on earth, so they have the responsibility to maintain environmental balance. The principles of *tauhid*, balance, and *maslahah* form the basis of how we understand environmental issues.” (MS, Interview, January 21, 2025).

This *tauhid*-based approach also appears in Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI), which interprets environmental degradation as *fasad fil-ardh*, a concept explicitly prohibited in the Qur’an, thus positioning environmental protection as part of worship.

“Environmental destruction in the Qur’an is described as *fasad fil-ardh*. Therefore, protecting nature is not only a social matter but also an act of worship and a form of obedience to God.” (AK, Interview, May 10, 2025).

In addition, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) integrates theological approaches with institutional strategies through fatwas and the establishment of specialized bodies that address environmental issues.

“NU views environmental protection as part of religious responsibility. Therefore, we have established a specific institution that addresses disaster and climate change issues so that these efforts can be implemented more systematically.” (MM, Interview, March 11, 2025).

Other organizations such as Dewan Dakwah and Sarekat Islam (SI) also demonstrate similar theological constructions, although they do not accompany these perspectives with strong institutional structures.

“Environmental issues are part of *amanah* in preaching. We believe that protecting nature is part of the responsibility of the *ummah*, although it has not yet become a specific organizational focus.” (BS, Dewan Dakwah Informant, Interview, February 14, 2025).

Meanwhile, an informant from Sarekat Islam stated:

“Islam teaches balance in life, including in relation to nature. However, in practice, implementation still depends largely on individual awareness within the organization.” (AS, Interview, June 10, 2025).

Overall, these findings indicate that the theological construction of Islamic organizations in West Java converges strongly on the principle of human responsibility as *khalifah* on earth and the obligation to maintain environmental balance as part of divine *amanah*. However, variation exists in how each organization articulates ecological ethics. The study identifies at least three main tendencies: first, a normative-*fiqh* approach that emphasizes legal and moral obligations (PERSIS); second, a *tauhid*-spiritual approach that emphasizes harmony, balance, and worship (Wahdah Islamiyah, PUI, Al-Irsyad); and third, an institutional approach that connects theological values with organizational structures and policies (MUI and NU). This variation shows that although ecological values in Islam are universal, their articulation and implementation are strongly influenced by the ideological orientation and institutional capacity of each organization. Therefore, the existence of strong theological values does not automatically correspond to a high level of institutionalization and implementation of environmental programs within the organizations.

Environmental Practices and Programs: From Theological Values to Collective Action

The Islamic mass organizations in West Java not only construct theological understandings of the importance of environmental protection but also begin to articulate these values into various concrete practices and programs, including educational initiatives, social actions, and community-based movements. This transformation indicates that theological concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, and *maqashid syariah* do not remain at the normative level but are increasingly operationalized in everyday

religious practices. An informant from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) emphasized that these values hold significant potential to encourage behavioral change in society:

“In Islam, humans are *khalifah* on earth, so protecting nature is part of the *amanah* that must be fulfilled. If we damage the environment, it means we fail to carry out that responsibility.” (IS, Interview, February 13, 2025).

This statement shows that spiritual values function as a basis of legitimacy in constructing ecological action. One concrete form of this value internalization appears in ecological religious practices that have developed across various organizations. For example, an informant explained that activities such as tree planting are interpreted as *sadaqah jariyah*, which provides long-term benefits for both humans and the environment.

“Planting trees in Islam can be understood as *sadaqah jariyah*. As long as the tree provides benefits to humans or other living beings, the reward continues to flow.” (MM, Interview, March 11, 2025).

In addition, other religious practices such as *wudhu* and fasting are reinterpreted as forms of ecological education. Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) explained that using water efficiently during *wudhu* reflects the Islamic principle of balance (Persis.or.id, 2022), while Wahdah Islamiyah emphasized that fasting teaches self-restraint in consumption patterns:

“In *wudhu*, we are taught not to use excessive water. This actually carries a very important ecological message.” (SR, Interview, June 28, 2025).

“Fasting teaches us to restrain ourselves... so that people become more wise in using natural resources.” (MS, Interview, January 21, 2025).

At the institutional level, several Islamic mass organizations demonstrate more systematic efforts in developing organization-based environmental programs. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), through the Institute for Environmental Stewardship and Natural Resources (LPLH-SDA), develops various concrete programs such as waste management, reforestation, Green Hajj, and faith-based climate action forums aimed at mapping and strengthening community-based environmental movements (Amalia, 2023; Lestari & Fakhrudin, 2026; Pusat Pengajian Islam Universitas Nasional, 2015). These programs not only serve educational purposes but also attempt to influence public policy through cross-sector collaborative approaches. In the context of West Java, MUI also promotes the involvement of Islamic boarding schools in social forestry programs that integrate ecological, economic, and educational aspects within a unified framework (LPLH-SDA MUI, 2025; Zulmiron, 2025).

Meanwhile, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) develops a community-based approach through institutions such as LPBI NU and LAZISNU, which implement programs such as 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) waste management, rainwater harvesting systems, biopores, and the “Green Mosque” movement, which positions mosques as centers for environmental education and action (Alawi, 2019; Enviro.or.id, 2021; Jannah, 2025). These programs have reached thousands of community members and have demonstrated impacts in changing waste management behavior at the community level. Wahdah Islamiyah, through the Eco-Wahdah concept, develops reforestation programs such as the “One Cadre One Tree” movement, zero waste campaigns, and structured cadre-based environmental education (Wahdah Islamiyah, 2019). This approach reflects a strong integration between preaching, cadre development, and environmental action (Wahdah Islamiyah, 2024).

On the other hand, organizations such as PERSIS, Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI), and Al-Irsyad demonstrate practices that are more education- and community-based. PERSIS develops programs such

as ecological pesantren, independent waste management, and community-based food self-sufficiency, which emphasize integration between education, economy, and environment (Ginanjari, 2024). PUI focuses on utilizing idle land for food security and promoting household waste management education through women’s networks and zakat institutions (Esty & Dedah, 2022). Al-Irsyad, as an education-based organization, develops programs such as the Green School Movement, Clean Sunday (*Ahad Bersih*), and school-based environmental education programs that instill ecological awareness from an early age (Al-Irsyad, 2018; Muchsin, 2018). Meanwhile, organizations such as Sarekat Islam (SI) and Dewan Dakwah have not yet developed structured environmental programs, so ecological practices largely depend on individual initiatives and sporadic activities at the community level (Dewan Dakwah, 2024; Syarikat Islam, 2026).

Table 2. Environmental Programs and Practices of Islamic Organizations in West Java

Organization	Main Programs	Types of Activities	Scale	Characteristics
MUI	Green Hajj, Edu Forest, waste management	FGDs, reforestation, education	National–local	Structural
NU	Green Mosque, 3R, biopore	Waste management, water systems, education	Broad community	Community-based
Wahdah	Eco-Wahdah, One Cadre One Tree	Reforestation, zero waste, cadre education	National–community	Structured
PERSIS	Ecological pesantren, independent waste management	Education, cultivation, food security	Community	Educational
PUI	Food security, waste education	Land utilization, campaigns	Local	Socio-community
Al-Irsyad	Green school, Clean Sunday	School education, cleanliness actions	Educational institutions	Educational
SI	Not structured	Individual practices	Individual	Sporadic
Dewan Dakwah	Not specific	General preaching	Individual	Non-structural

Source: Alawi, 2019; Amalia, 2023; Enviro.or.id, 2021; Esty & Dedah, 2022; Ginanjari, 2024; Jannah, 2025; Lestari & Fakhrudin, 2026; Muchsin, 2018; Syarikat Islam, 2026; Wahdah Islamiyah, 2024.

These findings indicate that although all Islamic organizations in West Java possess strong theological foundations in building ecological awareness, the level of implementation of environmental practices depends heavily on the institutional capacity and organizational structure of each organization. Organizations that establish specific institutions and structured programs tend to develop more systematic and impactful environmental actions, while organizations that lack clear institutional structures tend to produce sporadic and limited practices. Therefore, the findings suggest that the successful implementation of ecological values in religious organizations depends not only on the strength

of spiritual values but also on the institutional capacity to transform these values into concrete programs and sustainable collective action.

Institutional Mechanisms and Processes: From Problem Perception to Organizational Action

The study shows that the institutional mechanisms and processes of Islamic mass organizations in West Java in responding to environmental issues are strongly influenced by how these organizations interpret ecological problems in society. Informants demonstrate a relatively consistent awareness that the environmental crisis in West Java is multidimensional, encompassing waste management issues, river pollution, deforestation, and climate change. However, the process of translating this awareness into organizational programs reveals significant variation. Some organizations develop systematic program formulation processes through formal institutional mechanisms, while others still rely on individual initiatives or situational responses at the community level. In this context, the design of environmental programs depends not only on organizational capacity but also on how organizations perceive the root causes of environmental problems. An informant from Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI), for example, emphasized that environmental issues cannot be separated from the cultural dimension of society:

“Waste is not merely a technical management issue, but also a cultural issue within society. If public awareness does not change, the problem will continue to recur.” (AK, Interview, May 10, 2025).

This statement indicates that environmental program design often begins with a social diagnosis that places behavioral change as the primary focus of organizational intervention.

In organizations with stronger institutional structures, such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the process of environmental program formulation tends to follow a top-down approach combined with local adaptation at the regional level. MUI, through the Institute for Environmental Stewardship and Natural Resources (LPLH-SDA), designs environmental programs based on national agendas that are then implemented through regional networks by considering local contexts (Zulmiron, 2025). MUI explains that strategic issues such as the pollution of the Citarum River serve as the basis for determining program priorities:

“The Citarum River has become a very clear symbol of environmental degradation. Industrial waste and household waste mix together, resulting in severely deteriorated water quality.” (IS, Interview, February 13, 2025).

Meanwhile, NU develops a more flexible mechanism through the interaction between central, regional, and community levels, supported by networks of pesantren and mosques. Programs such as waste management and water conservation are not only designed by central institutions but also evolve through local initiatives driven by key actors such as *kiai*, mosque administrators, and community volunteers (Alawi, 2019; Jannah, 2025; NU Online, 2011). This pattern reflects a combination of structural and community-based approaches that allows programs to adapt more effectively to local conditions.

In contrast to large organizations with formal structures, Wahdah Islamiyah demonstrates an institutional process based on cadre development, where program design and implementation are carried out in an integrated manner through a structured network of cadres. Wahdah Islamiyah explains that climate change serves as one of the primary considerations in designing environmental programs based on preaching and education:

“Climate change is now very noticeable. Floods and landslides occur more frequently, and seasonal patterns have become increasingly unpredictable.” (MS, Interview, January 21, 2025).

In this context, cadres function as key actors who transform theological values into concrete actions at the community level. Meanwhile, organizations such as PERSIS and Al-Irsyad rely more on education- and preaching-based approaches, where decision-making processes tend to be collective but not formally institutionalized within organizational structures. An informant from Al-Irsyad highlighted that spatial transformation has become an important issue that encourages the organization to pay greater attention to environmental aspects within educational programs:

“Many areas that were once green have now been converted into housing or industrial zones. As a result, green open spaces are decreasing, and the risk of flooding is increasing.” (RA, Interview, March 21, 2025).

On the other hand, organizations such as Sarekat Islam and Dewan Dakwah demonstrate relatively weak institutional processes regarding environmental issues. Their decision-making processes do not explicitly position environmental issues as strategic priorities, so program implementation depends largely on individual awareness or specific moments.

Beyond formal mechanisms, the study also finds that the role of individual actors such as *kiai*, *ustadz*, and organizational leaders plays a critical role in driving the implementation of environmental programs. These actors function as moral entrepreneurs who not only communicate theological values but also mobilize community participation in environmental action. However, the findings also show that not all organizations possess key actors who consistently promote environmental issues as a primary agenda. In several cases, environmental issues often receive lower priority compared to preaching, education, or social agendas that are considered more urgent.

Furthermore, the study does not identify significant internal conflicts within organizations regarding environmental issues. However, it identifies an indication of priority tension between traditional religious agendas and environmental issues, which are still often perceived as secondary concerns (IS, Interview, February 13, 2025). This condition causes uneven institutionalization of environmental programs across organizations. In addition, limitations in resources, including funding and human resource capacity, also affect the effectiveness of institutional processes.

Overall, these findings indicate that the institutional mechanisms and processes of Islamic organizations in responding to environmental issues are strongly influenced by the interaction between problem perception, organizational structure, and the role of key actors within the organization. Although these organizations share similar theological awareness, the transformation of values into action depends heavily on institutional capacity and internal organizational dynamics. These findings reinforce the argument that the success of environmental program implementation in religious organizations depends not only on the strength of spiritual values but also on how organizations manage internal processes, build adaptive structures, and activate key actors in driving social change.

DISCUSSION

This study finds that Islamic mass organizations in West Java possess strong theological foundations in building ecological awareness, rooted in key Islamic concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, and *mizan*. These values consistently function as normative bases in shaping how humans understand their relationship with the environment. However, this study also shows that this theological strength does not automatically transform into systematic, structured, and sustainable environmental

practices. Significant variation exists among organizations in terms of institutionalization levels, institutional capacity, and patterns of environmental program implementation. This variation appears in the differences between organizations that have established formal structures and targeted programs and those that still rely on implicit or even sporadic approaches. Furthermore, this study identifies a clear gap between normative awareness and organizational practice, influenced by factors such as limited institutional structures, resource capacity, central–regional dynamics, and the role of key actors within organizations. Therefore, the findings confirm that the effectiveness of Islamic organizations in responding to environmental issues depends not only on the strength of spiritual values but also on the level of institutional capacity and the ability to transform theological values into organized and sustainable collective action.

The gap between theological values and environmental practices within Islamic organizations can be explained through several key factors. First, not all organizations possess institutional structures specifically dedicated to environmental issues, which causes ecological values to remain unorganized in systematic program forms. In this context, organizations that have specialized institutions, such as MUI and NU, tend to develop more sustainable programs compared to organizations that rely on individual or sporadic approaches. Second, limitations in cadres and human resources significantly affect program sustainability. Organizations with strong cadre systems, such as Wahdah Islamiyah, demonstrate a greater capacity to transform values into action at the community level.

Third, differences in ideology and movement orientation influence how organizations perceive and respond to environmental issues. Organizations with a *fiqh*-based approach tend to frame environmental issues within a normative legal framework, while organizations grounded in *tauhid* and spirituality emphasize moral and individual awareness. Fourth, social networks and organizational capacity serve as key differentiating factors in program effectiveness. Organizations with broad networks and established structures possess greater mobilization capacity compared to organizations with weaker structures. Thus, variation among Islamic organizations does not arise solely from differences in values but also from differences in organizational capacity to manage and operationalize these values.

These findings align with eco-theology literature, which emphasizes that Islam provides strong theological foundations for environmental ethics through the concepts of *khalifah*, *amanah*, and *mizan* (Almirzanah, 2020; Mohamed, 2025; Ragozina, 2023). As observed in this study, these values indeed function as the primary basis for building ecological awareness among Islamic organizations. In addition, these findings confirm studies on Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), which show that religious organizations have significant potential to drive social change through moral legitimacy and community networks (Biscotti & Biggart, 2014; Harper, 2011; Moyer et al., 2012).

However, this study also reveals an important distinction from existing literature. While most studies emphasize the potential of FBOs in social mobilization, this study demonstrates that such potential does not always materialize in practice due to limitations in institutional capacity. These findings reinforce previous research that identifies a gap between normative dimensions and practical implementation in the role of FBOs (Lyons et al., 2016; Zhang, 2024). In the Indonesian context, this study contributes new insights by highlighting variation among Islamic organizations in responding to environmental issues, a topic that has rarely been examined comparatively. Thus, this study not only confirms existing literature but also extends it by providing empirical analysis of institutional dynamics and organizational variation in a local context.

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the position of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) as key actors in environmental governance, particularly through two main roles: as moral

authority and as social mobilizer. As moral authority, Islamic organizations possess strong religious legitimacy to shape norms, values, and ethical orientations related to environmental issues, enabling them to internalize ecological awareness within moral and spiritual frameworks (Koehrsen & Heuser, 2019; Torry, 2017). As social mobilizers, these organizations have the capacity to mobilize collective participation through extensive social networks, institutional structures, and community bases, positioning them as potential agents of social change in public issues, including environmental concerns (Olarinmoye, 2023). Furthermore, from the perspective of institutional logics, FBOs operate not only as moral actors but also as organizational entities shaped by multiple institutional logics—such as religious, social, and organizational logics—that influence how they respond to development and environmental issues (Kurlberg, 2024). Therefore, the role of FBOs in environmental contexts cannot be understood merely as an expression of religious values but must be viewed as the result of complex interactions between moral legitimacy, organizational capacity, and institutional dynamics.

However, this study shows that these two roles alone are insufficient to generate significant environmental impact without adequate institutional capacity. Therefore, this study proposes that institutional capacity serves as a missing link in FBO theory, bridging the gap between spiritual values and social practice. In other words, the effectiveness of FBOs in environmental issues depends not only on the strength of values and networks but also on the organization's ability to develop structures, programs, and sustainable implementation mechanisms.

One of the main findings of this study is the gap between strong spiritual values and weak implementation of environmental practices within religious organizations. Theological values such as *amanah* and *khalifah fil ardh* are widely accepted as part of Islamic teachings, yet they do not automatically produce structured collective action. This finding indicates that transforming values into practice requires specific conditions, including the presence of organizational structures, clear programs, and networks capable of mobilizing community participation. Therefore, this study confirms that spirituality alone cannot address the systemic complexity of environmental crises. Integration between normative and structural dimensions is necessary to translate ecological values into tangible and sustainable practices.

As a conceptual contribution, this study proposes the Green Ummah Framework as an integrative model for understanding the role of Islamic organizations in environmental issues. This framework consists of four main pillars: first, the normative pillar, which emphasizes theological values as the foundation of environmental ethics; second, the educational pillar, which focuses on disseminating ecological knowledge and awareness through preaching and education; third, the action pillar, which includes the implementation of community-based environmental programs; and fourth, the advocacy pillar, which highlights the role of organizations in influencing public policy and environmental governance.

This framework demonstrates that the effectiveness of Islamic organizations in environmental issues depends on the integration of these four pillars. When one pillar does not function optimally, the overall role of the organization becomes limited. Therefore, the Green Ummah Framework offers a more comprehensive approach to understanding and developing the role of FBOs in environmental sustainability contexts.

Historically and socially, Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia have primarily focused on religious, educational, and social service issues, making environmental concerns relatively new within their institutional agendas. Several studies show that organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have historically emphasized education, preaching, religious moderation, and social harmony (Haryanto, 2019; Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023). In this context, organizational priorities have

centered on moral and socio-religious development rather than structural issues such as ecological crises. This condition explains why many organizations have not fully adapted to the increasing complexity of environmental problems, despite possessing value systems that support ecological awareness. Ideologically, the dominance of preaching and individual morality approaches indicates that environmental issues are often framed as personal ethical concerns rather than structural problems requiring policy intervention and institutional transformation. This finding aligns with studies showing that social transformation within Islamic institutions in Indonesia occurs gradually and is shaped by internal organizational dynamics and broader social contexts (Qorib & Umiarso, 2025). Therefore, the limited response of Islamic organizations to environmental crises results not only from capacity constraints but also from historical, social, and ideological orientations that have not fully integrated ecological issues into strategic institutional agendas.

This study also shows that a spiritual approach that is not supported by institutional capacity risks producing over-spiritualization, in which solutions to environmental crises rely excessively on individual moral change without addressing structural factors. This condition raises a critical question: can religious approaches alone effectively address environmental crises without support from public policy and structural reform? Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of transforming the role of Islamic organizations from purely moral agents into strategic actors within broader environmental governance systems.

The findings of this study carry important implications at multiple levels. At the policy level, strengthening collaboration between religious organizations, government institutions, and other sectors is necessary to develop inclusive and value-based environmental policies. At the organizational level, Islamic organizations need to enhance institutional capacity, including establishing specialized units, strengthening cadre systems, and developing sustainable programs. At the community level, more systematic efforts are required to increase ecological awareness through integrating religious values into everyday practices. Therefore, an approach that combines spiritual and structural dimensions becomes essential in developing effective responses to environmental crises.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic mass organizations in West Java possess strong theological foundations for building ecological awareness, rooted in key Islamic concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh*, *amanah*, and *mizan*. These values consistently function as normative bases in shaping how humans understand their relationship with the environment. However, the findings confirm that this spiritual strength does not automatically translate into systematic and sustainable environmental practices. Significant variation exists among Islamic organizations in terms of institutionalization levels, institutional capacity, and patterns of program implementation, which result in differences in effectiveness in responding to environmental issues. Therefore, the main finding of this study emphasizes that the role of Islamic organizations in environmental issues depends not only on the strength of theological values but also on institutional capacity in transforming these values into organized collective action.

From a scientific perspective, this study contributes to the development of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) scholarship by identifying institutional capacity as a missing link that bridges spiritual values and social practices. This finding extends existing literature, which has largely emphasized the role of FBOs as moral authorities and social mobilizers, by demonstrating that these roles alone are insufficient without adequate organizational structures, resources, and implementation mechanisms. In addition, this study offers a conceptual contribution through the development of the Green Ummah

Framework, which consists of four main pillars—normative, educational, action, and advocacy—as an integrative approach to understanding and enhancing the role of Islamic organizations in environmental issues. In an empirical context, this study also enriches research on religion and the environment in Indonesia by providing a comparative analysis across Islamic organizations, which has been relatively limited in previous studies.

However, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on the West Java region, so the findings cannot be directly generalized to other regions with different social and organizational characteristics. Second, the study emphasizes organizational perspectives and does not deeply explore the experiences of individual members in interpreting and practicing environmental values. Third, limitations in field data prevent the analysis from fully capturing the long-term dynamics of environmental program implementation within organizations. Therefore, future research should expand the geographical scope, integrate multi-level approaches that include individual, community, and policy dimensions, and further examine the long-term processes through which religious values transform into environmental practices.

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