ISLAMIC COMMUNICATION AND ECOTHEOLOGY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNS IN NORTH SULAWESI

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Abstract

Environmental problems in North Sulawesi show that there is a gap between the ideals of religious teachings on nature conservation and the reality of social practices that are still exploitative. The research uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques, observation, and analysis of related media content. The results of the study show that Islamic communication strategies based on theological values such as wisdom, justice, and trust have significant potential in shaping environmental ethics and ecological responsibility. This study confirms that the integration of ecotheology and Islamic Communication is not only normatively relevant, but also strategic as an analytical framework in responding to environmental crises.

Keywords: Islamic Communication, Ecotheology, Environment, North Sulawesi.

Abstrak

Problemetika lingkungan di Sulawesi Utara menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara idealitas ajaran agama tentang kelestarian alam dan realitas praktik sosial yang masih eksploitatif. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis konten media terkait. Hasil penelitian bahwa strategi komunikasi Islam yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai teologis seperti *hikmah*, keadilan, dan amanah memiliki potensi signifikan dalam membentuk etika lingkungan dan tanggung jawab ekologis. Study ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi ekoteologi dan Komunikasi Islam tidak hanya relevan secara normatif, tetapi juga strategis sebagai kerangka analitis dalam merespons krisis lingkungan.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Islam, Ekoteologi, Lingkungan, Sulawesi Utara.

A. INTRODUCTION

Environmental awareness has emerged as one of the most urgent global issues, given the severe ecosystem degradation caused by unsustainable human activities, while communities in various regions,[1] including North Sulawesi, face tangible challenges in preserving their rich biodiversity. This condition necessitates an effective communication approach to internalize conservation values.[2] The Islamic communication approach offers a normative framework that integrates moral, ethical, and theological principles to motivate communities to actively engage in environmental preservation efforts, oriented not only toward physical well-being but also toward spiritual fulfillment. Values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *khalifah* (stewardship), and *ihsan* (excellence in conduct) can serve as a foundation for transforming human behavior toward nature, ensuring that ecological practices remain inseparable from religious and moral dimensions. Accordingly, the development of ecotheology based communication strategies becomes highly relevant to encourage community participation in maintaining ecological balance while upholding religious responsibility.[3]

Ecotheology, as a field that integrates theological principles and environmental consciousness, teaches that humans have the role of *khalifah* (stewards) who must safeguard nature in accordance with ndivine ordinances,[4] consequently, ecotheology-based communication is not merely about conveying information but also about instilling spiritual values that inspire concrete actions. North Sulawesi, the region's diverse geographical conditions and sociocultural contexts necessitate communication strategies that are contextual, adaptive, and sensitive to local wisdom so that ecotheological messages can be effectively received.[5] This study emphasizes the importance of integrating theological aspects with tangible practices in environmental campaigns, ensuring that communities not only comprehend the urgency of ecological issues but also

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[1] Colin G Scanes, "Chapter 19 - Human Activity and Habitat Loss: Destruction, Fragmentation, and Degradation," ed. Colin G Scanes and Samia R B T - Animals and Human Society Toukhsati (Academic Press, 2018), 451–82, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-805247-1.00026-5.

[2] Muhammad Tahir and Sri Rayhaniah, "Implementation of The Principles of Islamic Communication in the Digital Era," *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1 SE-Articles (May 10, 2022), https://journal.uinsi.ac.id/index.php/bijis/article/view/ 4477.

[3] Anna Fisk, Mark Bennet, and Nicola Slee, "Conference Issue 2021: Practical Theology as Ecotheology," *Practical Theology* 15, no. 5 (September 3, 2022): 405–8, https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2022.2126917.

[4] Mulawarman Hannase et al., "Nahdlatul Ulamas Concept of Promoting Global Harmony Through Religion Twenty," *Al-Qalam: Jurnal Keagamaan dan Sosial Budaya* 30, no. 1 (2024): 187–199.

[5] Umi Hafsah and Najwa Indrayani Putri Tubagus, "Islam Mualaf Manado : Post-Conversion Type and Religious Life," *Rusydiah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 2 (2024): 86–105, https://doi.org/doi.org/10.35961/rsd.v5i1.1701.

develop a sense of moral and religious responsibility. Therefore, Islamic communication grounded in ecotheology serves as a medium capable of bridging normative understanding and practical implementation within a unique local context.

Islamic communication possesses distinctive characteristics, emphasizing *hikmah* (wisdom), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and ethical conduct in message delivery,[6] which enables environmental da'wah strategies to be accepted without generating resistance from the community while simultaneously reinforcing awareness of spiritual responsibility toward nature. In the context of North Sulawesi, the interaction between Muslim communities, religious institutions, and environmental groups creates a complex dynamic that requires participatory and value-based communication methods to ensure that ecotheological messages are translated into everyday practices. Effective communication strategies also take into account the media employed, the style of delivery, and the relevance of the values conveyed, ensuring that each message is not only informative but also transformative for community behavior. This approach underscores that environmental da'wah is not solely educational in nature but also carries a strong motivational dimension for behavioral change.[7]

Previous studies have shown that integrating Islamic values into environmental campaigns can enhance community participation in conservation activities,[8] including waste management,[9] reforestation,[10] and coastal ecosystem protection,[11] however, research specifically focusing on ecotheology-based communication strategies in North Sulawesi remains limited. The region's religious and cultural diversity demands an inclusive communication approach

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[6] Muhammad Taqiyuddin, Bagus Yudhistira, and Rizki Maulana Fadillah, "Islamic Worldview for Ethical Dimension of Islamic Communication," *Proceeding International Conference on Science and Engineering* 4, no. 0 SE-Articles (March 2, 2021): 365–67, https://sunankalijaga.org/prosiding/index.php/icse/article/view/722.

[7] Zulfikar Arahman et al., "Interpersonal Communication between Students and Gurèe in Instilling Islamic Values: A Case Study of Dayah Mudi Mesra in Aceh, Indonesia," *Islamic Communication Journal* 10, no. 1 SE-Articles (April 30, 2025): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.21580/icj.2025.10.1.23773.

[8] Nur Adibah Mohidem and Zailina Hashim, "Integrating Environment with Health : An Islamic Perspective," *Social Sciences* 12, no. 6 (2023), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12060321.

[9] Fatin N Zabidi, Norshariani Abd Rahman, and Lilia Halim, "Integration of Islamic Values for Environmental Conservation: An Analysis of School Textbooks," *Religions*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070509.

[10] Syukri Syukri et al., "Integration of Islamic Values with Environmental Ethics in Pesantren Education: A Case Study at Darularafah Raya Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 13, no. 1 SE-Articles (June 30, 2024): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2024.131.1-12.

[11] Jens Koehrsen, "Muslims and Climate Change: How Islam, Muslim Organizations, and Religious Leaders Influence Climate Change Perceptions and Mitigation Activities," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 12, no. 3 (2021): 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.702.

that nevertheless retains an Islamic value foundation, enabling ecotheological messages to reach a broader audience and foster collective awareness. This study seeks to address that gap by providing an in-depth analysis of how Islamic communication principles can be applied in environmental campaigns oriented toward concrete action. Through this approach, it is expected that a communication model can be developed that is not only informative but also inspirational, motivating communities to play an active role in environmental preservation.

Existing studies on Islamic ecotheology predominantly frame theological principles such as *khalīfah*, *amanah*, and *mīzān* as universally applicable ethical foundations for environmental communication, often without sufficient engagement with sociocultural particularities of regions like North Sulawesi. While ecotheology highlights the spiritual relationship between humans and nature through normative exegesis of Qur'anic and prophetic texts, this universalist lens tends to sideline how such theological narratives are received, negotiated, or contested within pluralistic public spheres where Muslims are a minority. Recent literature on Islamic environmental discourse still leans toward textual interpretation or normative positioning of doctrine rather than probing communicative effectiveness in multireligious contexts, thereby limiting its explanatory power for grassroots ecological mobilization. This gap calls for integrative frameworks that balance ecological ethics with socio-political contextualization and audience reception analysis.[12]

Moreover, much of the research reduces Islamic environmental communication to moral persuasion embedded in dakwah approaches that emphasize individual awareness and ethical exhortation, mirroring broader trends in environmental preaching. For example, contemporary da'wah initiatives integrate Islamic values with ecological awareness and promote environmental commitment in theory and practice, yet they rarely interrogate structural barriers such as economic interests or governance deficits that shape environmental outcomes. Such focus risks conflating ethical aspiration with social impact without systematic evaluation of communicative strategies across stakeholders and power relations. Therefore, this body of work requires refinement through empirical studies that assess how ecotheological messages

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[12] Alfadhli et al., "Ekoteologi Islam: Menjelajahi Hubungan Spiritual Antara Manusia, Alam, Dan Tuhan Dalam Tradisi Islam," *Ta'wiluna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an, Tafsir Dan Pemikiran Islam* 6, no. 1 SE-Articles (March 25, 2025): 300–310, https://doi.org/10.58401/takwiluna.v6i1.2024.

function within institutional, interreligious, and policy arenas rather than solely within intra-Muslim ethical discourse.[13]

Methodologically, existing research on Islamic communication and ecology is dominated by normative-textual analyses and lacks robust engagement with communicative practice, audience interpretation, and interfaith negotiation dynamics. While studies articulate ecological ethics from Islamic perspectives and mobilize concepts like local wisdom to articulate eco-theological relevance, few have systematically examined how these narratives are translated into shared public language across faith communities or applied within multi-stakeholder environmental governance processes. In a pluralistic society such as North Sulawesi, environmental campaigns cannot rely solely on theological assertion; they must leverage dialogical communication that resonates beyond religious boundaries and engages diverse epistemic communities. This gap underscores the necessity for research that combines communicative theory with contextual empirical inquiry, especially in interreligious, intercultural, and policy-oriented settings.[14]

The geographical context of North Sulawesi, with its rich coastal, forest, and mountainous ecosystems, presents both challenges and opportunities for ecotheology-based communication strategies, as communities residing in the region maintain strong cultural and spiritual connections to their surrounding environment. Employing relevant religious narratives linked to daily practices can strengthen ecotheological messages, ensuring that communities not only understand the ecological urgency but also internalize the spiritual values underpinning conservation efforts.[15] Furthermore, communication approaches based on direct interaction, workshops, or Islamic-themed social media content allow ecotheological messages to be disseminated more effectively, reaching diverse age groups and social backgrounds. Accordingly, Islamic communication strategies integrated with ecotheology have the capacity to foster comprehensive and sustainable environmental awareness.[16]

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[13] Mukhlisin Saad and Umar Faruq, "Agency, Cultural and Theological Representation of Ecological Narrative in Indonesian Popular Islamic Websites," *Jurnal Penelitian* 21, no. 1 SE-Artikel (May 26, 2024): 101–13, https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v21i1.6894.

[14] Irsyad Ibadulloh and Rizal Samsul Mutaqin, "Islamic Eco-Theological as Local Wisdom for The Preservation of Natural Environment," *Islam Transformatif : Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 2 SE-Articles (February 23, 2023): 145–56, https://doi.org/10.30983/it.v6i2.5913.

[15] Almudena Recio-Román, Manuel Recio-Menéndez, and María V Román-González, "Religious Affiliation and Consumer Behavior toward Biodiversity Conservation in Europe," *Religions*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070947.

[16] Jaime Tatay and Amparo Merino, "What Is Sacred in Sacred Natural Sites? A Literature Review from a Conservation Lens," *Ecology and Society* 28, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-13823-280112.

The Islamic communication approach in ecotheological campaigns also emphasizes the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders, including religious leaders, local communities, educational institutions, and environmental organizations, to create synergies that strengthen program implementation. Such synergy not only optimizes the distribution of information but also fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility toward nature, thereby positioning ecotheological messages as part of a moral and spiritual obligation. By applying Islamic communication principles such as courtesy, openness, and an emphasis on shared goodness,[17] environmental campaigns can be more readily accepted by communities with diverse backgrounds. This demonstrates that value-based religious communication is not only cognitively effective but also capable of motivating concrete actions in environmental preservation.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze Islamic communication strategies applied in ecotheology-based environmental campaigns in North Sulawesi, with a focus on practices that integrate spiritual values and tangible community actions. The study is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic communication theory, particularly within the context of ecotheology, while also providing practical guidelines for religious institutions and environmental communities in designing effective programs. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of a contextual understanding of local social, cultural, and geographical conditions to ensure that communication strategies are more adaptive and relevant. Through this approach, it is anticipated that a model of Islamic communication can be developed that synergistically unites theological understanding and ecological practice.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach and adopts an abductive analytical strategy. Rather than applying theory in a purely deductive manner, the analysis allows empirical data from ecotheology-based environmental initiatives in North Sulawesi to interact iteratively with existing communication theories. Analytical concepts such as message framing, ethical translation, and dialogical engagement function as sensitizing concepts that guide, but do not rigidly determine, the interpretation of data. This approach enables theoretical categories to be refined in response to local communicative

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[17] Sri Ayu Rayhaniah, M Tahir, and Qarinul Karim, "Islamic Communication and Information Principles in Digital Platforms: The Case of Online Buying and Selling on Tokopedia," *KOMUNIKE: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* 16, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 5, 2024): 147–168, https://journal.uinmataram.ac.id/index.php/komunike/article/view/11511.

practices, socio-religious constraints, and the minority positioning of Muslim actors in the research context.

Through this abductive process, the study develops a conceptual contribution termed contextualized Islamic ecotheological communication. This concept emerges from a systematic engagement between empirical findings and communication theory, rather than from the researcher's intuition alone. It captures how Islamic environmental messages are transformed from inward-looking theological claims into relational and inclusive ethical narratives that resonate within broader public and interfaith environmental discourses. The framework demonstrates that ecotheology, when examined through the lens of Islamic communication, operates as a negotiative process shaped by power relations, audience diversity, and interreligious interaction.

By explicitly outlining this theoretical trajectory and methodological logic, the study strengthens its analytical rigor and theoretical coherence. This clarity positions the research as a meaningful contribution to the development of communication-based approaches to Islamic ecotheology. The methodology makes explicit the theoretical foundations guiding the analysis of ecotheological practices as communicative processes. At the same time, it clarifies the epistemological pathway through which new conceptual insights are generated from the interaction between theory and empirical data.

This study is theoretically grounded in the field of Islamic communication, drawing particularly on contextual and interpretive approaches to religious communication that emphasize meaning-making processes, symbolic negotiation, and audience reception within specific socio-cultural settings. Unlike dominant approaches to Islamic ecotheology that rely primarily on normative theological reasoning or descriptive accounts of environmental da'wah, this research conceptualizes ecotheology as a *communicative practice*. In this perspective, Islamic ecological thought is not treated solely as a doctrinal system but as a dynamic process through which religious meanings are articulated, translated, and contested in public space.[18]

The analytical framework builds upon established communication theories, including contextual communication theory, framing theory, and dialogical communication, which have been widely employed in studies of religious and intercultural communication. These theories provide the conceptual basis for examining how Islamic ecological values are framed as ethical messages, how theological concepts are translated into socially inclusive

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[18] Heidi A Campbell and Alessandra Vitullo, "Assessing Changes in the Study of Religious Communities in Digital Religion Studies," *Church, Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 73–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2016.1181301.

narratives, and how communication strategies are adapted for pluralistic and interreligious audiences. Thus, the framework is not developed solely from the researcher's subjective interpretation, but is anchored in recognized theoretical traditions within communication studies.[19]

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Integration of Islamic Values within Environmental Campaign

Environmental campaigns in several Muslim communities in North Sulawesi demonstrate a strong integration between nature conservation activities and Islamic values such as *amanah* (responsibility), *ihsan* (excellence in conduct), and *khalifah* (stewardship over the earth). In practice, activities such as tree planting, coastal clean-ups, and waste management education are promoted not only as social obligations but also as forms of worship. This perspective aligns with the concept proposed by Rosemary Hancock (2019), which asserts that the human–nature relationship stems from a spiritual awareness of the interconnectedness of all creation with the Creator.[20] Accordingly, environmental messages framed within religious teachings tend to possess stronger moral legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

Religious leaders in the region utilize Friday sermon pulpits, lectures in *majelis taklim* gatherings, and home-based Qur'anic study sessions to emphasize that protecting the environment is a divine command explicitly stated in the Qur'an and Hadith.[21] In several cases, they cite verses such as Surah Al-A'raf (7:56), which prohibits corruption and destruction on earth, as a theological foundation to encourage congregants to participate in environmental actions.[22] Such delivery strategies enhance the relevance of da'wah messages by linking ecological issues with religious guidance that is already familiar to the community. According to Shahida (2024), religious teaching-based delivery models have a higher success rate in shaping ecological behavior compared to purely secular approaches.[23]

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[19] Nidya Agustin Beni Prasetyo et al., "Utilization of Tik-Tok as A Da'wah Media of Kadam Sidik in The Contemporary Era," *KOMUNIKE: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* 15, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 30, 2023): 107–118, https://journal.uinmataram.ac.id/index.php/komunike/article/view/8571.

[20] Rosemary Hancock, "Ecology in Islam" (Oxford University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.510.

[21] Islamic Religious Leader Raya Mosque Manado, "*Interview*" 25 August 2025. (Manado, 2025).

[22] Ahmad Aripin and Kharis Nugroho, "Environmental Ethics in the Perspective of the Qur'an: Analysis of Surah Al-A'raf Verses 56-58," *Proceeding ISETH (International Summit on Science, Technology, and Humanity)*, 2024, 1553–64, https://doi.org/10.23917/iseth.4374.

[23] Shahida, "From Micro-Rituals to Macro-Impacts: Mapping Eco-Ethics via Religious/Spiritual Teachings into Higher Education," *Ethics and Education* 19, no. 2 (April 2, 2024): 233–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2024.2339165.

In addition to delivering messages verbally, the integration of Islamic values into environmental campaigns is also manifested through symbols and ritual practices. For instance, tree-planting activities are preceded by communal prayers, or the distribution of plant seedlings is conducted after congregational prayers, thereby embedding environmental initiatives within a warm religious atmosphere. This practice supports the argument of Claudio Tagliapietra and Ivan Colagè (2024) that the success of environmental theology lies in its ability to merge with everyday life and community traditions.[24] By making environmental actions part of collective worship activities, ecotheological messages become more deeply ingrained in the hearts of the community.

The positive impact of this integration is evident in the increased participation of residents in environmental activities initiated by local Muslim communities. Such participation manifests not only in the form of labor but also through material support and creative ideas to ensure the sustainability of the programs.[25] This effect aligns with Martin Slama's (2018) assertion that Islamic communication has transformative potential when its values are internalized within social practices.[26] In North Sulawesi, the integration of religious values into environmental campaigns has successfully fostered the awareness that caring for nature is not merely a physical activity but also an expression of spiritual devotion.

Participatory and Contextual Communication Strategies

The findings indicate that ecotheology-based environmental campaigns in North Sulawesi employ a participatory communication approach, in which communities are involved from the planning stage through to the evaluation of activities. This involvement fosters a strong sense of ownership, ensuring that community participation is not merely symbolic but also substantive.[27] This principle aligns with the Islamic teaching of *musyawarah* (consultation), as mentioned in Surah Ash-Shura (42:38), which emphasizes the importance of collective decision-making.[28] According to Thomas Jacobson (2020), participatory communication strengthens program legitimacy and enhances message

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[24] Claudio Tagliapietra and Ivan Colagè, "Transforming the World: The Science and Theology of Human-Environment Complementarity," *Theology and Science*, 2025, 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2025.2526074.

[25] "Interview with the Muslim Community in Manado City, 20 July 2025." (Manado, 2025).

[26] Martin Slama, "Practising Islam through Social Media in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416798.

[27] Mary Healy, "The Other Side of Belonging," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 39, no. 2 (2020): 119–33, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-020-09701-4.

[28] Firman Firman, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Al Qur'an: Kajian Terhadap Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Buya HAMKA," *SYAMIL: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 3, 2016), https://doi.org/10.21093/sy.v4i2.712.

effectiveness because the community becomes part of the process rather than merely a recipient of information.[29]

A contextual approach is also a key factor in the success of the campaigns. Ecotheological messages are delivered by adapting language, communication styles, and symbols relevant to local culture. For example, in several coastal communities in Manado, religious leaders link the prohibition against littering to local wisdom that regards the sea as the "mother of life." This strategy supports the argument of Amilatul Khasanah and Naibin (2021) that environmental theology is more effective when connected to cultural values already embedded in the community.[30] In this way, environmental da'wah messages are not perceived as foreign concepts but rather as a continuation of existing values.

Message contextualization is also carried out through the integration of local traditions into da'wah narratives. For instance, during the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*), in addition to reciting the *sirah*, a tree-planting activity is included as a symbol of emulating the Prophet's environmentally friendly character.[31] This method demonstrates that ecotheological da'wah can be harmoniously aligned with religious practices already familiar to the community. This aligns with Mohammad Takdir's (2020) view that the success of Islamic communication in the public sphere depends on its ability to integrate theological messages with social practices familiar to the target community.[32] In North Sulawesi, this strategy has proven effective in making environmental messages more readily accepted across generations.

The combination of active participation and cultural adaptation has produced a significant effect in strengthening the community's ecological awareness.[33] Residents not only understand the message being conveyed, but also feel that they are part of the solution. Residents not only understand the

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[29] Thomas Jacobson, "The Relevance of Habermasian Theory for Development and Participatory Communication BT - Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change," ed. Jan Servaes (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2020), 287–308, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2014-3_13.

[30] Amilatul Khasanah and Naibin Naibin, "TEOLOGI LINGKUNGAN; Studi Fenomenologi Gerakan Environmentalisme Komunitas Air Kita Mojoagung," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 15, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 31, 2021): 207–26, https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2021.152-04.

[31] Muslim Religious Leader from the Nahdlatul 'Ulama Organization in North Sulawesi, "*Interview*" June 11, 2025. (Manado, 2025).

[32] Mohammad Takdir, "Contestation and the Roles of Islam in The Public Sphere: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Secularization in Indonesia and the West," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 16, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 31, 2020): 154–74, https://doi.org/10.18196/AIIJIS.2020.0119.154-174.

[33] John W Berry, "Intelligence as Ecological and Cultural Adaptation BT - Intelligence in Context: The Cultural and Historical Foundations of Human Intelligence," ed. Robert J Sternberg and David D Preiss (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 7–30, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92798-1_2.

messages conveyed but also feel that they are part of the solution. According to Muhammad Alfandi and Warsiyah (2024), communication from an Islamic perspective is dialogical and inclusive; thus, when applied to environmental campaigns, it can foster a sense of collective responsibility.[34] Accordingly, this participatory and contextual strategy not only succeeds in transmitting information,[35] but also in internalizing ecotheological values into everyday behavior.

Religious Leaders as Primary Agents of Communication

Religious leaders in North Sulawesi play a central role in shaping public opinion and influencing the ecological behavior of Muslim communities. They not only convey religious messages but also interpret environmental issues as part of the obligations of faith. In Friday sermons, Qur'anic study sessions, and community discussions, they link environmental degradation to the concept of collective sin that the ummah must avoid.[36] This perspective aligns with the view of Fatimah Husein and Martin Slama (2018), who argue that *ulama* and *muballigh* possess strong moral authority, thereby granting the messages they deliver a higher persuasive power compared to other sources of communication.[37]

Religious leaders also serve as role models by providing direct examples through concrete actions. For instance, several mosque imams regularly lead environmental clean-up activities and plant trees around places of worship. Such actions reinforce the da'wah message because the community witnesses consistency between the communicator's words and deeds.[38] According to the source credibility theory proposed by Sujadi Badrun et al. (2023), alignment between a communicator's message and behavior increases audience trust and acceptance.[39] In this context, the exemplary conduct of religious leaders becomes a vital instrument in grounding ecotheological values within the community.

In addition, religious leaders leverage their extensive social networks to broaden the reach of their messages. They frequently collaborate with

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[34] Muhammad Alfandi and Warsiyah Warsiyah, "Walisongo Rodat Traditional Art as a Campaign Media to Strengthen Religious Moderation," *Islamic Communication Journal* 9, no. 2 (2024): 147–66, https://doi.org/10.21580/icj.2024.9.2.23787.

[35] Rachmah Ida, "Researching Audiences in Surabaya: An Initial Engagement with Brian Shoesmith to Study the Indonesian Television Audience (1993-1995)," *Continuum* 35, no. 3 (May 4, 2021): 343–55, https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2021.1902158.

[36] Muslim Religious Leader from the Nahdlatul 'Ulama Organization in North Sulawesi, "*Interview*" June 11, 2025.

[37] Fatimah Husein and Martin Slama, "Online Piety and Its Discontent: Revisiting Islamic Anxieties on Indonesian Social Media," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 80–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1415056.

[38] Imam of a Mosque in Manado City, "Interview" October 29, 2025. (Manado, 2025).

[39] Badrun et al., "Pancasila, Islam, and Harmonising Socio-Cultural Conflict in Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah* 61, no. 1 (2023): 137–56, https://doi.org/10.14421/AJIS.2023.611.137-156.

community organizations, schools, and youth groups to integrate environmental messages into various social activities. For example, during the commemoration of *Isra Mi'raj*, religious leaders invite environmental advocacy groups to deliver educational sessions on plastic waste management.[40] This collaborative approach aligns with the view of Lukis Alam et al. (2024) that the success of environmental da'wah depends on the ability to build cross-sector partnerships, ensuring that messages circulate not only within religious spheres but also reach the broader public domain.[41]

Interestingly, the role of religious leaders in pluralistic regions such as Manado also extends beyond religious boundaries. Several Muslim leaders participate in interfaith forums to discuss environmental issues alongside Christian, Catholic, and Hindu leaders. This involvement demonstrates that ecotheological messages can serve as a common ground that unites communities of different faiths.[42] This supports the view of John Fahy and Jeffrey Haynes (2018) that universal humanitarian issues, such as environmental preservation, have the potential to become effective platforms for fostering interreligious dialogue.[43] Accordingly, religious leaders in North Sulawesi function not only as message conveyors but also as bridges for cross-faith communication in the pursuit of environmental sustainability.

Digital Media for Ecotheological Da'wah

The utilization of digital media by Muslim communities in North Sulawesi has become one of the driving factors for the widespread and rapid dissemination of ecotheological messages. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are employed to share educational content in the form of short videos, infographics, and photographs of environmental activities. Such content is often framed with quotations from the Qur'an or hadith to reinforce the conveyed moral message.[44] This aligns with Campbell and Tsuria's (2021) view that digital media can serve as both a space for negotiating religious meanings and a tool for expanding the reach of da'wah.[45]

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[40] Muslim Religious Leader in North Sulawesi, "*interview*" June 7, 2025." (Manado, 2025).

[41] Lukis Alam et al., "Environmental Sustainability in Indonesian Pesantren: Integrating Pious Principles and Da'wah Efforts," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 44, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 31, 2024): 311–28, https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v44.2.23607.

[42] Interfaith Leaders in North Sulawesi, "*interview*" July 13, 2025. (Manado, n.d.).

[43] John Fahy and Jeffrey Haynes, "Introduction: Interfaith on the World Stage," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 1–8, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2018.1509278.

[44] Female Islamic Religious Leaders from NU and Muhammadiyah Organizations, "*interview*" August 22, 2025." (Manado, 2025).

[45] Ruth Tsuria and Heidi A. Camphell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media* (New York: Routledge, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683.

In addition to expanding outreach, digital media enables two-way communication between ecotheological da'wah advocates and their audiences. Community members can directly provide comments, share experiences, or pose questions related to environmental issues. Such interactions foster a strong sense of engagement and strengthen a virtual community committed to environmental preservation. According to Nasrullah (2020), the interactive nature of digital media renders religious messages more relevant by creating space for active audience participation.[46] In the context of North Sulawesi, this interactivity has proven effective in motivating communities to participate in tangible activities, such as beach clean-up initiatives or tree planting.

Digital media also facilitates cross-regional and even interfaith collaboration in disseminating environmental messages. Several Muslim community social media accounts in Manado collaborate with non-Muslim environmental groups to organize joint campaigns. For example, they co-host live-streamed discussions on plastic waste, attended by participants from diverse religious backgrounds. This strategy aligns with Lim's (2022) view that digital media can transcend physical and ideological boundaries, creating an inclusive public sphere.[47] In this way, ecotheological da'wah becomes not merely an internal discourse within the Muslim community, but a shared agenda for a pluralistic society.

However, the effectiveness of digital media as a medium for ecotheological da'wah is also influenced by message quality and publication consistency. Content that combines appealing visuals, simple language, and a solid theological foundation is proven to be more easily accepted by audiences. According to Wahyudi (2024), the success of digital da'wah largely depends on the ability to package messages in ways that align with modern media consumption patterns.[48] In North Sulawesi, the success of ecotheological campaigns in the digital sphere demonstrates that technology can synergize with religious values to promote broader ecological awareness.

Challenges in Implementing Islamic Communication

The primary obstacle in implementing Islamic communication strategies for eco-theological da'wah in North Sulawesi is the low level of environmental

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[46] Rizal Fathurrohman et al., "Framing Religious Hoaxes: Logical, Religious, and Legal Perspectives in Indonesia," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 8, no. 2 (2024): 141–56, https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v8i2.15545.

[47] Muhammad Ngizzul Muttaqin, Iffatin Nur, and Ahmad Muhtadi Anshor, "Social Media Fiqh: Social Media Use Intensity and Family Harmony in Tulungagung Regency," *The Journal of Society and Media* 6, no. 1 (2022): 207–31, https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v6n1.p207-231.

[48] Wahyudi Akmaliah, Sulistiyanto Priyambudi, and and Sukendar, "Making Moderate Islam in Indonesia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 47, no. 11 (November 1, 2024): 1495–1509, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2022.2034224.

literacy that persists across significant segments of society. Ecological awareness has not been fully internalized as an integral part of religious practice, resulting in daʿwah messages linking the obligation to protect nature with God's commandments often being misunderstood or even disregarded. Some community members continue to perceive environmental issues as secular matters beyond the domain of worship, thereby assigning them lower urgency compared to ritual obligations such as prayer or fasting.[49] This finding aligns with the author's (2023) research, which emphasizes that low ecological literacy within religious communities can be a significant barrier to the acceptance of daʿwah messages that underscore the interconnection between religion and the environment.[50] Consequently, building ecological awareness requires a systematic, patient process that is adapted to the local socio-cultural context.

In addition to awareness-related factors, limitations in resources and infrastructure constitute a serious barrier to the dissemination of eco-theological daʿwah. In coastal or inland areas of North Sulawesi, supporting facilities such as stable internet access, audiovisual equipment, and engaging environmental education materials are often unavailable. Yet modern communication strategies require effective media to reach a broad audience, particularly younger generations who are more familiar with digital technologies. This situation prevents Islamic-based environmental campaigns from being implemented evenly, thereby limiting their impact to communities with adequate access to information. Effendy (2022) emphasizes that the success of public communication strategies is highly dependent on the availability of sufficient supporting facilities, as without technical support, messages are unlikely to reach the target audience effectively and may lose their persuasive power.[51]

Cultural resistance also poses a significant challenge, especially when daʿwah messages aim to change practices that have been entrenched for decades. In several coastal and inland villages, habits such as disposing of waste into rivers, burning land, or overexploiting natural resources are still considered normal and do not elicit feelings of guilt. Although daʿwah is conducted using a participatory approach, behavioral change requires a long period, particularly when such practices have become part of local cultural identity. Jurgen Howaldt

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[49] Female Islamic Religious Leaders from NU and Muhammadiyah Organizations, *"interview"* August 22, 2025.

[50] Ali Ridho et al., "Nahdlatul Ulama as The Main Actor Managing and Resetting Civilization in The Digital Era Towards Human Harmony and World Peace," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 17, no. 2 (2023).

[51] Ali Ridho, "Kritik Dan Distorsi Komunikasi Pemerintah Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19, Bagaimana Seharusnya?," *ORASI: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 13, no. 1 (2022): 134, https://doi.org/10.24235/orasi.v13i1.8367.

et al. (2025), in the diffusion of innovation theory, explain that new behaviors that conflict with established norms are adopted slowly, unless there are clear incentives or strong social pressure.[52] In this context, the role of religious leaders is crucial to integrate theological and cultural approaches so that change can be accepted voluntarily rather than imposed externally.

The final, yet equally important, obstacle is the weak coordination among the parties involved in eco-theological daʿwah campaigns. In several cases, programs implemented by religious leaders, local governments, educational institutions, and environmental communities operate independently without clear strategic integration. This results in fragmented messages received by the public, which can sometimes overlap or diverge in focus. Pandan Yudhapramesti (2021) emphasizes that effective public communication strategies require cross-sector coordination to ensure that messages are consistent, structured, and mutually reinforcing.[53] Without proper coordination, eco-theological daʿwah efforts risk becoming a series of sporadic activities with limited impact. Therefore, establishing planned communication and collaborative mechanisms among stakeholders is an urgent step to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of these initiatives.

D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic communication strategies for ecotheology-based environmental campaigns in North Sulawesi are most effective when Islamic values are integrated as communicative resources rather than rigid theological assertions. Ethical principles such as *khalīfah*, *amanah*, and *mīzān* provide a moral framework that guides environmental narratives, yet their impact depends on participatory and contextual communication processes that resonate with local ecological realities and pluralistic audiences. Religious leaders emerge as primary agents of communication who translate these values into socially meaningful messages, particularly when they adopt dialogical and inclusive approaches. In this sense, Islamic ecotheology functions not merely as doctrine but as a negotiated ethical discourse within public environmental campaigns.

At the same time, digital media expands the reach of ecotheological da'wah by enabling broader engagement, interactivity, and adaptation to diverse

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[52] Jürgen Howaldt, Ralf Kopp, and Michael Schwarz, "Diffusion of Innovation BT - Handbook of Innovation: Perspectives from the Social Sciences," ed. Ingo Schulz-Schaeffer, Arnold Windeler, and Birgit Blättel-Mink (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025), 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25143-6_33-1.

[53] Pandan Yudhapramesti et al., "Communication and Organizational Learning in Adaptation of the Radio Republik Indonesia," *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi* 9, no. 2 (2021): 161, https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v9i2.32521.

audiences, especially younger generations. However, the implementation of Islamic communication strategies faces persistent challenges, including the risk of moralistic messaging, limited interfaith penetration, and structural constraints related to power relations and environmental governance. These challenges underscore the need for strategic communication that prioritizes ethical translation, cross-sector collaboration, and critical engagement with socio-political contexts. Overall, the findings affirm that Islamic communication can contribute substantively to environmental campaigns when it is participatory, context-sensitive, and oriented toward transformative ecological action rather than symbolic moral persuasion.

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