



IMPLEMENTING ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER EDUCATION IN AN ISLAMIC SCHOOL WITHIN A MUSLIM MINORITY CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

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Abstrack

Environmental character education is vital for strengthening environmental awareness, particularly in Islamic schools within minority contexts. This study examines the implementation of religiously grounded environmental character education at an Islamic school in Southern Thailand, using a qualitative descriptive approach through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review. Findings show that the school applies a systematic habituation model based on Fathnuryati Hidayah's framework, comprising routine activities, spontaneous actions, and exemplary behavior. Religious values are integrated through the Tarbiyah program, linking cleanliness and environmental responsibility to Islamic principles. Success indicators include near-total student participation in Tarbiyah, improved classroom and schoolyard cleanliness, and greater accuracy in waste sorting. Obstacles identified include uneven student awareness, limited cleaning facilities, and weather-related disruptions to outdoor activities. The study concludes that the school effectively cultivated environmental values through religious teaching, daily habits, and teacher modeling. These findings imply that Islamic schools in similar minority contexts can adopt the Tarbiyah-based habituation model as a practical, low-resource strategy for environmental character education. Integrating Islamic values, such as cleanliness as part of faith and nature as divine trust, into daily routines demonstrates that spiritual frameworks can effectively drive sustainable behavioral change without dependence on formal government programs.

Keywords: Environmental character education, minority Islamic school, Thailand

Abstrak

Pendidikan karakter lingkungan sangat penting untuk memperkuat kesadaran lingkungan, terutama di sekolah-sekolah Islam di lingkungan minoritas. Studi ini mengkaji implementasi pendidikan karakter lingkungan berbasis nilai agama di sebuah sekolah Islam di Thailand Selatan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif



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kualitatif melalui observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan tinjauan literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sekolah menerapkan model habituasi sistematis berdasarkan kerangka Fathnuryati Hidayah yang terdiri dari aktivitas rutin, tindakan spontan, dan perilaku teladan. Nilai-nilai agama diintegrasikan melalui program Tarbiyah dengan mengaitkan kebersihan dan tanggung jawab lingkungan pada prinsip-prinsip Islam. Indikator keberhasilan meliputi partisipasi siswa yang hampir 100% dalam Tarbiyah, peningkatan kebersihan kelas dan halaman sekolah, serta akurasi pemilahan sampah yang lebih baik. Hambatan yang teridentifikasi meliputi kesadaran siswa yang tidak merata, keterbatasan fasilitas kebersihan, dan gangguan cuaca pada aktivitas luar ruangan. Studi menyimpulkan bahwa sekolah secara efektif menanamkan nilai-nilai lingkungan melalui pengajaran agama, kebiasaan harian, dan keteladanan guru. Temuan ini mengimplikasikan bahwa sekolah-sekolah Islam di konteks minoritas serupa dapat mengadopsi model habituasi berbasis Tarbiyah sebagai strategi praktis tanpa bergantung pada program pemerintah formal. Integrasi nilai Islam seperti kebersihan sebagai bagian dari iman dan alam sebagai amanah terbukti mampu mendorong perubahan perilaku berkelanjutan pada siswa.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan karakter lingkungan, sekolah Islam minoritas, Thailand.

Introduction

Schools are educational institutions that play an important role in shaping children's environmental awareness. fundamental needs, humans and other living creatures are invariably compelled to engage in interaction with their respective environments (Nugroho, 2022). Consequently, the pursuit of sustainability and preservation necessitates the incorporation of environmental management aspects into all human activities. It is imperative to acknowledge the significance of environmental sustainability, as failure to prioritize this aspect invariably results in detrimental consequences that directly impact the viability of life on Earth (Maharana, 2025). A particularly strategic approach to this issue is through educational initiatives, as they have the potential to instill values such as environmental awareness from an early age, thereby shaping a mindset and behavior of sustainability regarding the importance of protecting nature.

Satun is one of four southern provinces with a fairly large Muslim population, but the province is considered an area where Muslims are a religious minority in Thailand's demographic landscape (Putri & Lestari, 2025). Despite its cultural and historical proximity to the Malay Peninsula, Satun does not have the same level of dominance of Islamic institutions as Pattani, Yala, or Narathiwat. This unique demographic configuration shapes the educational environment at the school, where Islamic values are practiced in a national context where the majority of the population is Buddhist. Therefore, studying character education in the Satun environment offers a different perspective on how Islamic values are preserved, negotiated, and integrated in the context of a minority within the Thai education system (Putri & Lestari, 2025).

The first study at Assalihiyah Thungphla Pattani used a character education method based on role modeling and habituation that referred to the basic Islamic principle of "cleanliness is part of faith," so that the activities developed emphasized routine cleaning of the environment and following the example of teachers (Sholikhah, 2017). The second study at Musleeminsuksa School applied a similar method but emphasized three forms of habituation routine activities, spontaneous activities, and role modeling to address students' low awareness of

cleanliness (Azzahro & Mavianti, 2024). Meanwhile, the third study at Islamsartmulniti School used a broader character education method, namely commands and prohibitions, dialogue, stories, targhib- tarhib, habituation, and role modeling, because the focus was not only on the environment but on the overall character of believers (Maisu, 2019).

Unlike the three studies mentioned above, this study has novelty in two main aspects. First, the research was conducted at an Islamic school in Satun, Southern Thailand, an educational context in a Muslim minority area that has not been widely studied. Second, this study uses a more focused approach through the environmental character education method based on Fathnuryati Hidayah, which emphasizes environmentally friendly habituation strategies through unprogrammed activities, namely habits that include (a) routine activities, (b) spontaneous activities, and (c) exemplary activities. This approach makes the implementation of environmental character education more systematic and structured, resulting in new scientific contributions compared to previous studies.

In Indonesia, the most visible government program is the Adiwiyata School Program, which was created in 2006 to promote environmental awareness and a culture of environmentalism in schools (Megawati et al., 2022). This program emphasizes the integration of school policies, environmentally-friendly curricula, environmentally-friendly infrastructure, management, and community involvement. As a result, many schools have reported tangible improvements in their environmental practices, as well as the formation of environmentally-conscious character among students (Robihah, 2025). This program demonstrates the efficacy of strategies such as habituation, curriculum reinforcement, and extracurricular activities in fostering environmental awareness. For instance, the findings of numerous research initiatives in Indonesia demonstrate the efficacy of integrating environmental character education. As demonstrated in the research by Tjandra Irawati, Maria Ulpah, and Mukti Amini on the implementation of the Adiwiyata Program at SMP Negeri 1 Mrebet, the formation of habits, the curriculum, and extracurricular activities have been effective in fostering environmentally conscious character, despite initial challenges in student motivation (Irawati et al., 2024). A review of the literature reveals that green school programs, including adiwiyat programs, demonstrate considerable promise in fostering environmentally conscious characteristics and practices (Trisnawati, 2025). These findings underscore the significance of comprehensive support measures, such as systematic monitoring, comprehensive teacher training, and active parental involvement, which are instrumental in ensuring the success of these initiatives (UNESCO Website, 2025).

In the context of Indonesia's Muslim-majority society, a religious perspective has the potential to further enhance the value-based approach to environmental education. Integrating the values of the Qur'an into environmental education has been demonstrated to strengthen students' sense of responsibility (Nahdi & Ghufron, 2006). Theoretical studies on environmental ethics in Islamic teachings emphasize principles such as khalifah (khalifah fil-ard), amanah, and the prohibition of destruction (fasad). These principles can serve as a moral foundation in managing resources and strengthening religious narratives. The efficacy of this approach in enhancing the resonance of environmental values among students and parents has been empirically substantiated. Consistent findings were reported by Yuliana Siregar, who underscored the efficacy of environmental education

grounded in the principles of the Qur'an in fostering the internalization of ecological responsibility among students in their daily lives (Siregar, 2023).

This study underscores the context of schools in Indonesia, a country with a Muslim majority society, thereby demonstrating that the inculcation of environmental values is congruent with local social traditions. However, the implementation of environmental character education is not homogeneous. (Hidayati & Nihayah, 2025) A significant research gap emerges when the focus shifts from the Muslim-majority context in Indonesia to the context of Islamic schools situated within Muslim minority communities, particularly in Southern Thailand. In contexts where religious minorities prevail, Islamic schools fulfill a multifaceted role. In addition to imparting knowledge about religion and general subjects, these institutions serve as crucial spaces for the reinforcement of cultural and social identity. This function is particularly salient in communities facing political challenges and the variability of national education policies. A review of studies conducted on Thailand's southern provinces, as well as relevant literature on Islamic education in these regions, illuminates the multifaceted challenges confronting educators and school administrators. These challenges encompass a spectrum of issues, including but not limited to: inadequate facilities, social and political pressures, and the delicate balance required between adhering to national curriculum standards and aligning with community values (Thathong, 2010).

The focus of the present study is an Islamic school located in Satun Province, Southern Thailand. The school in question has made notable efforts to incorporate environmental awareness values into its learning process and student activities. This is particularly noteworthy given its location in an area that is home to a Muslim minority community (Liu et al., 2025). The education study report by Rafika et al. mentions the use of creative learning media, practical activities in the school environment, and active student participation as part of a strategy to increase interest in and habits of environmental friendliness (Sipahutar et al., 2023).

Satun province is often characterized in the literature as a region that differs from the three southernmost provinces of Thailand in terms of its political and social landscape, particularly in comparison to the conflict-affected areas in these regions (Goodman, 2022). This study examines practices at this school to identify implementation strategies and the strengthening of religious values that are in line with environmental ethics. These strategies can serve as a model for Islamic schools in other minority communities. The novelty of this research lies in its cross-context comparison between Indonesia and Thailand and its emphasis on the conditions of Muslim minorities who have limited resources and lack national policy support similar to Adiwiyata. Research of this nature offers theoretical contributions by enriching the discourse on religious and minority- context environmental education, as well as practical contributions in the form of recommendations for adaptive, relatively low-cost implementation models that can be adopted by Islamic schools in other regions facing similar situations.

Method

Primary and secondary data are used by the researcher to answer the formulation of the problem in this study, the primary data used are interviews, surveys, observations. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from document analysis to find research relevant to the topic. In analyzing data. The researcher uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is a process used to explore

existing problems (Emzir, 2012). With a type of descriptive research that aims to explain the implementation of character education in the environment for students of an Islamic school in Satun, Southern Thailand. This descriptive method is a problem-solving procedure that investigates by providing a description of the current state of the subject or object of research based on observable facts as they are (Soejono & Abdurrahman, 2003). The sampling technique used in this study is Purposive sampling, namely teachers at the school were selected, because teachers are actors in designing character education. And the second sampling is the students at the school because the student is the main subject of this character education.

To process, analyze, and organize data, the researcher applies techniques from Huberman, namely (a) Data collection, the process of collecting data relevant to the title or theme of the research. It starts by collecting theme-relevant studies for reference sources such as, environmental character education in schools. (b) Data reduction, Selection, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of raw data into an easy-to-process form. The data is filtered gradually until the research is completed and the final report is compiled in full. The researcher focuses on the implementation of environmental character education at the school. (c) Data Presentation, This step is taken to facilitate the study of systematically compiled data and simplify the drawing of conclusions. (d) Conclusion Drawing or Verification, The next process, and the final stage in data analysis techniques, is drawing conclusions and verifying data based on research findings. Conclusions are an important point in research because they can lead to new discoveries that may not have been discovered before. At this stage, the researcher answered the focus of the research by drawing conclusions about the implementation of environmental character education at the school. making this the final result of the research (Miles et al., 2018).

Results and Discussion

Implementation of Environmental Awareness Character Education at Nida Suksasat School.

The findings of the study indicate that environmental character education at the school has been executed in a consistent and systematic manner through the medium of regular school programs, daily behavioral practices, and initiatives aimed at cultivating a robust school culture. Referring to the environmental character education framework proposed by Fathnuryati Hidayah, this implementation is carried out through (a) routine activities, (b) spontaneous actions, and (c) exemplary behavior demonstrated by teachers and senior students. These findings were obtained through interviews with teachers and students, as well as observations of school activities related to maintaining cleanliness, waste management, and environmental care (Hariandi et al., 2023).

Classroom-based Environmental Internalization: The Tarbiyah Program

A significant finding of this study is the introduction of Tarbiyah Classes, a moral education program designed to instruct students in the practices of hygiene and environmental care (Solihin et al., 2020). Tarbiyah is a weekly learning session, with each class occurring once a month. The attendance of students at these sessions is consistent and indicative of their engagement. During these classes, teachers emphasize the significance of personal hygiene, the maintenance of classroom

cleanliness, and the impact of human actions on the environment. The pedagogy employed in this text is characterized by its simplicity and accessibility, facilitating an emotional connection with the moral lessons it conveys.

When considered in the context of Lickona's 1991 theory, Tarbiyah assumes a significant role in facilitating students' comprehension of the principles governing the maintenance of cleanliness. These responsibilities include tasks such as waste management, maintenance of school facilities, and environmental protection. Tarbiyah also fosters the development of an ethical foundation, instilling in students a sense of right and wrong, by emphasizing the importance of maintaining cleanliness as an integral component of Islamic spirituality. Teachers who consistently reinforce the importance of cleanliness on a monthly basis can facilitate the internalization of these values by their students (Lickona, 1991).

Researchers observed a positive behavioral change in students who continued their involvement in the Tarbiyah program, manifesting in improved conduct in everyday situations. For instance, students would engage in the following behaviors: picking up small pieces of trash, sweeping the garden without explicit instruction, cleaning the classroom after classes, and encouraging their peers to refrain from littering. This kind of behavior represents a clear illustration of good morals, which comes about when students genuinely believe in and accept these values. These results align with Zuchdi's 2010 assertion that effective character education hinges on the clear instruction of moral values, consistent application in the classroom, and the cultivation of a school environment that fosters positive values (Zuchdi et al., 2010).

Field-based Activity: Cleanliness duty shift

At this school, the implementation of environmental character education in daily routines is a fundamental aspect of the educational program. Every student is required to participate in a fixed schedule of cleaning duties, including morning and afternoon shifts. These duties, when combined, form a comprehensive cleaning routine that covers all areas of the school.

First, in the afternoon, all students participate in cleaning duties before the next day's lessons. Their responsibilities include cleaning the classroom, sweeping the floor, arranging tables and chairs, and ensuring the room is prepared for the next day's activities. This strategy fosters an optimal learning environment from the start of the day. The next day, students carry out scheduled tasks on the school grounds. Their responsibilities include the maintenance of the area, the pickup of leaves, and the cleaning of common items such as park benches, windows, and water taps. This practice is crucial for maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of the school grounds, which is especially important before the start of classes. In the afternoon, students are assigned unique activities. A review of interviews conducted revealed that female students who were menstruating were assigned an alternative task: the collection of plastic waste in the yard during the zuhr prayer time. This suggests that the school is adaptable and acknowledges the needs of students while also engaging them in environmental stewardship activities.



Figure 1 : The collection of plastic waste in the yard during the zuhr prayer time. Islamic school, Satun, Southern Thailand. 2025

Each of the three task shifts is overseen by the students' respective homeroom teachers. The supervision of afternoon tasks is also overseen by on-duty teachers who rotate on a regular basis.

The findings of the interview indicate that students have started to act independently in maintaining cleanliness, even in contexts outside of their official duties. Before entering the classroom, the students often take the initiative to complete tasks such as adjusting chairs, sweeping the floor, opening windows to allow for fresh air circulation, or cleaning tables, even when these activities are not explicitly part of the instructional agenda. In addition to these responsibilities, they also engage in the collection of small pieces of trash that fall within their immediate environment. They also serve as role models for their peers by encouraging proper disposal of trash and taking care of the school building. This behavior indicates the development of an ethical sense, suggesting an understanding of right and wrong. This stage, as delineated by Lickona in 1991, marks the onset of the development of fundamental values and the subsequent manifestation of these values in action (Lickona, 1991).

In realistic conditions, these daily routines have demonstrably proven beneficial. Researchers have observed that: The implementation of the program has led to a marked improvement in the cleanliness of schools. Students have become more attentive to their immediate environment, often prompting each other to maintain the cleanliness of the classroom and school grounds. These findings align with the results of Linder's 2022 research, which demonstrated that daily habits represent the most effective strategy for cultivating pro-environmental behavior. The rationale behind this approach is that routines become automatic and deeply ingrained, leading to actions that are instinctual and habitual for students (Linder et al., 2022).

A general review of field data from the school reveals that these daily habits are not simply components of the school curriculum. These habits have become deeply ingrained in the daily lives of students. This method is instrumental in achieving the Tarbiyah learning objectives and plays a pivotal role in cultivating environmentally responsible character within the academic community (Ghifari, 2024).

Environmental Infrastructure: Waste Separation and Recycling Culture

The school has strategically positioned waste bins, both organic and inorganic, at regular intervals to assist students in the proper sorting of their waste. According to observers, elementary school students have already developed a familiarity with the types of waste based on the color of the bins and often sort their waste independently, without requiring external reminders.

The following positive outcomes have resulted from this initiative: (a) A reduction in the mixing of organic and inorganic waste is also desirable. (b) A greater number of students are currently engaged in the collection of plastic materials during academic breaks. (c) Teachers have reported that students do not leave trash lying around for more than a few minutes.

This indicates that the environmental education program at the school is effective in teaching students about cleanliness and waste management. This education fosters the development of environmentally beneficial habits, including the integration of daily practices that demonstrate a commitment to environmental care. This finding aligns with the research published by Halek 2021, which suggests that the implementation of a straightforward and user-friendly waste sorting system can motivate students to adopt more environmentally conscious behaviors (Halek et al., 2021). In a similar vein, Hanedar 2021 found that schools that created physical spaces for proper waste sorting and management could promote long-term sustainable practices, as students became accustomed to following these routines in their daily lives (Hanedar et al., 2021).

In addition, the school has adopted a refillable water system with the objective of reducing the use of disposable plastic bottles. This initiative assists students in practicing the concept of zero waste and cultivating a more comprehensive understanding of how small actions within the school environment can positively impact the surrounding community Mpuangnan 2023. By integrating well-designed facilities with daily practices such as this one, the school has effectively integrated environmental awareness into its culture, shaping the behavioral norms of its students (Mpuangnan et al., 2023).

Synthesis of Findings with Character Education Theory

The implementation of environmental awareness character education at the school is in line with Fathnuryati Hidayah's concept of habituation, which includes routine activities, spontaneous activities, and role modeling. The Tarbiyah Class program, which is attended by almost 100% of students, is the most obvious form of routine activity because it is carried out on a scheduled and recurring basis. This consistent participation is an indicator of the successful internalization of the values of cleanliness and environmental awareness.

Spontaneous activities can be seen from the behavior of students who, without being asked, pick up trash, tidy up the classroom, sweep the yard, and remind each other to maintain cleanliness. These voluntary actions show that environmental values have begun to be instilled in students. Meanwhile, the element of role modeling is evident from teachers and senior students who consistently set an example in sorting trash, maintaining classroom cleanliness, and supervising daily cleaning duties.

From field findings, several indicators of success can be identified, namely: (1) improved classroom and schoolyard cleanliness, (2) students' ability to sort

waste according to bin colors, and (3) increased student participation in plastic waste collection. However, there are also obstacles such as differences in spontaneity among students, limited cleaning tools, and weather factors that interfere with outdoor activities.

Overall, the implementation of habits through routine, spontaneous, and exemplary activities has been effective, with indicators of success clearly visible in students' daily practices, although improvements are still needed in terms of facilities and equal awareness among students.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the school implements religious-based environmental education through systematic habituation in accordance with Fathnuryati Hidayah's concept of habituation, namely routine activities, spontaneous activities, and exemplary behavior. The Tarbiyah Class program serves as the main medium for instilling values, where cleanliness and environmental awareness are linked to Islamic teachings such as “cleanliness is part of faith” and protecting nature as a trust from Allah. The nearly 100% student attendance rate and consistency in implementing cleanliness activities demonstrate the success of internalizing these values.

The integration of religious values is reflected in the students' daily behavior, such as spontaneously picking up trash without being told, tidying up the classroom before class, and reminding friends to maintain cleanliness. Teachers' exemplary behavior reinforces these habits so that environmental values become part of students' moral consciousness. Despite obstacles such as limited hygiene facilities, varying levels of student awareness, and weather factors, a culture of environmental awareness has been established and is consistently practiced. Thus, environmental education at the school is not only practical but also spiritual, which is relevant to the context of Muslim minorities in Thailand.

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