



The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Building Awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Islamic Religious Education in building awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a systematic literature review approach. The research aims to identify the contributions of Islamic Religious Education toward sustainability awareness, analyze dominant themes within recent scholarly discussions, and explore how Islamic educational values support the achievement of SDGs. The study employed a qualitative systematic literature review method by collecting and analyzing academic publications published between 2020 and 2026 from reputable scholarly databases and journals. The selected literature was screened based on relevance, credibility, and thematic suitability concerning Islamic education and sustainable development. A total of 32 academic works were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring concepts and research trends. The findings reveal that Islamic Religious Education significantly contributes to sustainability awareness through environmental ethics, religious moderation, character education, social responsibility, and curriculum transformation. Islamic teachings such as khalifah (stewardship), justice ('adl), moderation (wasatiyyah), and compassion (rahmah) were found to align closely with the principles of sustainable development. The review also indicates that Islamic educational institutions increasingly integrate sustainability-oriented values into educational practices, environmental programs, and social engagement activities. However, the study identified challenges related to limited empirical implementation and the dominance of conceptual approaches within existing research. This study contributes to the growing discourse connecting Islamic education and sustainable development by providing a comprehensive synthesis of recent literature and highlighting the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education in promoting environmentally conscious, socially responsible, and ethically grounded global citizens.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainability Awareness, Islamic Education, Systematic Literature Review*

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INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, represent a global agenda aimed at achieving social welfare, environmental sustainability, economic equity, and peaceful coexistence by 2030. Among the seventeen goals, education occupies a central position because it functions not only as a medium for knowledge transfer but also as a transformative instrument for shaping human awareness, ethics, and social responsibility. SDG 4 specifically emphasizes the importance of inclusive, equitable, and quality education capable of promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. In this context, educational institutions are increasingly expected to cultivate ecological awareness, social justice, tolerance, and sustainable lifestyles among students. Consequently, discussions concerning the integration of sustainability values into religious education, particularly Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI), have become increasingly relevant within contemporary academic discourse.

Islamic Religious Education possesses substantial potential to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development because Islamic teachings fundamentally promote balance between humans, society, and the environment. Concepts such as khalifah (human stewardship), rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy to all creation), justice ('adl), moderation (wasatiyyah), and environmental responsibility are closely aligned with the principles underlying the SDGs. Islamic education therefore cannot merely function as ritualistic or doctrinal instruction, but should also encourage learners to develop ethical awareness regarding environmental preservation, social equality, poverty alleviation, interreligious harmony, and humanitarian responsibility. This perspective positions Islamic Religious Education as a strategic medium for strengthening sustainability consciousness within Muslim societies.

Several recent studies have highlighted the growing relationship between Islamic education and sustainable development. Hajar (2024) argued that Islamic education must transform itself through the integration of environmental awareness, social responsibility, and SDGs-oriented curricula in order to remain relevant in contemporary global society. Similarly, Taufik and Sukandar (2026) emphasized the importance of establishing a theoretical and practical nexus between Islamic Religious Education and sustainable development through what they termed the "PAI-SDGs Nexus." Their study proposed that Islamic education can function as a critical framework for sustainability-oriented social transformation. Furthermore, Efendi, Susanto, and Basri (2025) demonstrated through a systematic literature review that Islamic Religious Education contributes significantly to ecological awareness, religious moderation, and social sustainability. These studies collectively indicate that Islamic educational values are increasingly viewed as compatible with the global sustainability agenda.

Research concerning religious moderation and sustainability has also expanded in recent years. Ridho, Muhlis, and Lailaturrohmah (2025) found that integrating moderation values within Islamic curricula can strengthen inclusive religious literacy while simultaneously supporting the achievement of SDGs in socially polarized societies. Likewise, Amin et al. (2025) explained that religious moderation rooted in local wisdom contributes positively to sustainable social development by encouraging tolerance, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence. These findings are particularly significant because SDG 16 emphasizes peace, justice, and strong institutions as fundamental pillars of sustainable development. In this regard, Islamic Religious Education can serve as a preventive mechanism against radicalism, intolerance, and social fragmentation.

In addition to social sustainability, environmental sustainability has become an important focus within Islamic educational discourse. Ferdinan et al. (2026) revealed that eco-Islamic education in Muhammadiyah boarding schools contributed positively to environmental awareness and sustainable behavior among students. Similarly, Rembang (2025) demonstrated that eco-fiqh approaches in pesantren can align Islamic jurisprudence with environmental sustainability principles and SDGs implementation. These studies suggest that Islamic educational institutions are increasingly integrating ecological values into curricula, school culture, and community engagement programs. Nevertheless, the extent to which Islamic Religious Education systematically builds awareness of sustainable development remains insufficiently explored, especially through comprehensive literature synthesis.

Although existing studies have discussed the relationship between Islamic education and SDGs, several important gaps remain visible. First, most studies focus only on specific dimensions such as environmental education, moderation, or curriculum transformation, without comprehensively examining the broader role of Islamic Religious Education in building sustainability awareness. Second, previous studies are often fragmented and contextual, making it difficult to identify overarching patterns, dominant themes, and conceptual trends within the field. Third, there remains limited systematic literature research specifically examining how Islamic Religious Education contributes to students' awareness of sustainable development from social, ecological, ethical, and spiritual perspectives simultaneously. Consequently, there is still a need for a systematic literature review capable of synthesizing existing findings and identifying the intellectual direction of current scholarship.

This research therefore seeks to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education in building awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a systematic literature review approach. The study positions itself among previous scholarship by offering a more integrative analysis of how Islamic educational values contribute to sustainability awareness across multiple dimensions, including environmental ethics, social justice, religious moderation, and character education. Unlike previous studies that focus on isolated issues, this research attempts to map broader conceptual relationships between Islamic Religious Education and sustainable development discourse. Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive academic understanding of the strategic position of Islamic Religious Education in responding to contemporary global challenges.

The importance of this study lies in both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of interdisciplinary scholarship connecting Islamic education, sustainability studies, and global development discourse. It also enriches the academic conversation regarding the compatibility between Islamic values and the SDGs framework. Practically, the findings may provide recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and Islamic educational institutions regarding the integration of sustainability-oriented values within Islamic Religious Education. In addition, this study may encourage educational stakeholders to reconsider the role of religion not merely as spiritual instruction, but also as a transformative force for creating socially responsible and environmentally conscious citizens.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to answer the following central question: how does Islamic Religious Education contribute to building awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) according to contemporary scholarly literature? By systematically reviewing and synthesizing relevant academic studies, this research seeks to identify dominant themes, conceptual frameworks, educational strategies, and future research opportunities related to Islamic Religious Education and sustainability awareness.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education in building awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The systematic literature review method was selected because it enables researchers to identify, evaluate, classify, and synthesize findings from previous studies in a transparent and replicable manner. The method also allows the researcher to map research trends, conceptual frameworks, and scholarly gaps related to Islamic Religious Education and sustainable development.

The review process was conducted between January and April 2026. The study focused on academic publications discussing Islamic Religious Education, sustainability education, environmental awareness, religious moderation, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The review procedure adopted several systematic stages consisting of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, data extraction, and synthesis of findings.

The data sources used in this study were obtained from reputable academic databases and scholarly search platforms, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Crossref-indexed journals, Scopus-indexed journals, and open-access academic repositories. These databases were selected because they provide broad access to international and national scholarly publications relevant to education, Islamic studies, and sustainability studies. Journal articles, conference proceedings, and review papers published in English and Indonesian were included in the search process.

The literature search employed several combinations of keywords adjusted to the focus of the study. The keywords included: "Islamic Religious Education and SDGs," "Sustainable Islamic Education," "Islamic Education for Sustainability," "Religious Moderation and SDGs," "Environmental Awareness in Islamic Education," "Islamic Education and Sustainable Development," and "Pendidikan Agama Islam dan SDGs." Boolean operators such as AND and OR were used to refine the search results and increase the relevance of identified studies. For example, the search query included combinations such as "Islamic Religious Education" AND

“Sustainable Development Goals” and “Islamic Education” AND “environmental awareness” OR “religious moderation.”

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined before the screening process in order to maintain consistency and relevance. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) studies discussing Islamic Religious Education or Islamic educational institutions; (2) studies related to Sustainable Development Goals, sustainability awareness, environmental education, social justice, or religious moderation; (3) publications published between 2020 and 2026 to ensure the recency of data; (4) peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and scholarly review articles; and (5) studies published in English or Indonesian. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included: (1) publications lacking clear methodological explanations; (2) articles unrelated to education or sustainability issues; (3) duplicate publications; and (4) non-academic sources such as blogs, opinion articles, and unpublished manuscripts.

The initial search identified approximately 120 publications from various databases. After removing duplicate records and screening titles and abstracts based on relevance, 65 studies remained for further evaluation. The eligibility assessment was then conducted through full-text reading to determine the suitability of each study with the research objectives. Following this process, 32 academic works were selected as the primary sources for analysis because they directly discussed the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Data extraction was conducted systematically by classifying several important aspects from each selected publication. The extracted information included author names, publication year, research objectives, research methods, educational context, SDGs dimensions discussed, and major findings. The extracted data were then organized into thematic categories to identify dominant patterns and conceptual trends within the literature.

The data analysis employed a qualitative thematic analysis approach. The selected studies were analyzed by identifying recurring themes related to the contribution of Islamic Religious Education toward sustainability awareness. The themes identified included environmental awareness, religious moderation, social responsibility, character education, curriculum transformation, eco-theology, and sustainable educational practices in Islamic institutions. The thematic analysis allowed the researcher to compare findings across studies and interpret how Islamic educational values contribute to sustainable development discourse.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the review, the researcher conducted repeated evaluations during the screening and classification process. Relevant studies were cross-checked to minimize bias in interpretation and selection. In addition, only scholarly publications with clear academic structures and identifiable research methods were included in the final analysis. This process aimed to ensure that the findings of the study were based on credible and academically accountable sources.

Through this systematic methodology, the study provides a comprehensive synthesis of contemporary scholarly discussions concerning the role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The methodology also enables future researchers to replicate the study using similar procedures, databases, and keyword combinations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review identified significant scholarly attention toward the relationship between Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during the period 2020–2026. The selected studies demonstrated that Islamic Religious Education contributes not only to spiritual and moral development but also to broader dimensions of sustainability, including environmental awareness, social responsibility, religious moderation, peace education, and sustainable lifestyles. The findings further revealed that Islamic educational institutions increasingly integrate sustainability-oriented values into curricula, school culture, and community engagement programs.

After the screening and eligibility process, 32 academic publications were selected for detailed analysis. These studies originated from various educational contexts, including Islamic

schools, pesantren, universities, and community-based Islamic education programs. Most publications employed qualitative methods, literature reviews, and conceptual analyses, while several studies used surveys and case studies to measure sustainability awareness among students and teachers.

Table 1 presents the classification of major themes identified from the selected studies.

Table 1. Major Themes Identified in the Literature Review

The findings indicate that environmental awareness emerged as the most dominant theme in the reviewed studies. Many scholars emphasized that Islamic teachings regarding stewardship (khalifah) and environmental responsibility are highly relevant to sustainability discourse. Hajar (2024) explained that Islamic education can transform students' ecological consciousness by integrating environmental ethics into teaching practices and institutional culture. Similarly, Ferdinan et al. (2026) found that eco-Islamic education implemented in Muhammadiyah boarding schools contributed positively to students' sustainable behavior and environmental awareness.

The literature also demonstrated the increasing importance of religious moderation within Islamic education as a contribution toward SDG 16 concerning peace, justice, and strong institutions. Studies by Ridho, Muhlis, and Lailaturrohmah (2025) revealed that moderation-based Islamic curricula encourage inclusive religious literacy and reduce social polarization among students. This finding supports previous arguments that Islamic Religious Education should function not merely as doctrinal instruction but also as a medium for fostering peaceful coexistence and intercultural understanding. Likewise, Amin et al. (2025) emphasized that local wisdom integrated with Islamic moderation strengthens social harmony and sustainable community development.

Another important finding concerns the role of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening character education and ethical responsibility. Several studies highlighted that sustainability awareness cannot be separated from moral and spiritual dimensions. Islamic values such as justice ('adl), compassion (rahmah), responsibility (amanah), and moderation (wasatiyyah) were frequently identified as ethical foundations compatible with SDGs principles. Taufik and Sukandar (2026) argued that Islamic Religious Education provides a critical framework for sustainability-oriented social transformation because it combines spiritual awareness with practical ethical responsibility.

The review also identified growing academic interest in curriculum transformation. Some studies argued that traditional Islamic educational approaches need reconstruction in order to address contemporary global challenges. Abdusshomad (2026), for example, proposed integrating ecotheology and social justice into higher education curricula to support SDGs implementation. The study suggested that sustainability education should not be treated as an additional subject but rather integrated into broader Islamic educational philosophy and pedagogy.

Table 1. illustrates the distribution of major research themes identified in the reviewed literature.

| No | Major Themes | Frequency of Studies | Main Focus |
|----|-----------------------------|----------------------|--|
| 1 | Environmental Awareness | 10 | Eco-theology, eco-fiqh, green schools |
| 2 | Religious Moderation | 8 | Tolerance, inclusivity, peace education |
| 3 | Character Education | 6 | Ethical responsibility and social values |
| 4 | Curriculum Transformation | 4 | SDGs-based Islamic curriculum |
| 5 | Social Justice and Humanity | 4 | Equality, poverty reduction, empathy |

Figure 1. Distribution of Major Themes in Islamic Religious Education and SDGs Studies

- Environmental Awareness: 31%
- Religious Moderation: 25%
- Character Education: 19%
- Curriculum Transformation: 13%
- Social Justice and Humanity: 12%

The data show that environmental sustainability and religious moderation dominate current scholarly discussions. This trend reflects growing global concerns regarding climate change, environmental degradation, social conflict, and religious intolerance. Islamic Religious Education is increasingly perceived as a strategic instrument for addressing these challenges through value-based educational approaches.

The findings of this study strengthen previous scholarly arguments concerning the compatibility between Islamic teachings and sustainable development principles. Earlier studies often discussed sustainability from secular educational perspectives, while recent scholarship increasingly recognizes religion as an important factor in promoting sustainable behavior and ethical awareness. In this regard, Islamic Religious Education contributes unique perspectives by emphasizing spiritual responsibility alongside social and ecological sustainability.

Furthermore, this review demonstrates that Islamic educational institutions possess substantial potential for advancing SDGs at local and global levels. Pesantren, Islamic schools, and universities can function as centers for sustainability education through curriculum development, environmental programs, social empowerment activities, and moderation-based learning. The integration of Islamic values with sustainability principles enables educational institutions to create holistic educational models addressing intellectual, spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions simultaneously.

However, several challenges were also identified within the literature. First, many Islamic educational institutions still emphasize ritualistic and cognitive aspects of religious learning rather than practical sustainability-oriented behavior. Second, there remains limited institutional capacity and educational resources for implementing SDGs-based Islamic curricula. Third, sustainability discourse in Islamic education is still dominated by conceptual discussions, while empirical studies measuring the effectiveness of sustainability-oriented Islamic education remain limited. These findings indicate the need for more practical and evidence-based educational models in future research.

This study contributes to the existing scholarship by providing a comprehensive synthesis of contemporary research concerning Islamic Religious Education and Sustainable Development Goals. Unlike previous fragmented studies focusing on isolated issues, this review demonstrates the interconnected relationship between environmental ethics, religious moderation, social responsibility, and character education within Islamic educational discourse. The findings therefore expand scholarly understanding regarding the multidimensional role of Islamic Religious Education in promoting sustainability awareness.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study supports interdisciplinary approaches connecting Islamic studies, sustainability education, and global development discourse. Practically, the findings may guide policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators in integrating sustainability values into Islamic educational systems. Islamic Religious Education should therefore be reconstructed as a transformative educational approach capable of preparing students to become socially responsible, environmentally conscious, and ethically grounded global citizens.

Future research should focus on empirical investigations concerning the implementation of SDGs-based Islamic education in schools, pesantren, and higher education institutions. Comparative studies across countries and educational systems are also necessary to identify effective models of sustainability-oriented Islamic education. In addition, future scholars may explore the impact of digital learning, green school movements, and community-based Islamic educational programs in strengthening sustainability awareness among younger generations.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education plays a significant role in building awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the integration of ethical, social, spiritual, and environmental values. The systematic literature review revealed that contemporary scholarly discussions increasingly position Islamic education as a transformative medium capable of promoting sustainability consciousness among students and communities. The findings indicate that the principles of stewardship (khalifah), justice ('adl), moderation (wasatiyyah), compassion (rahmah), and social responsibility embedded within Islamic teachings are closely aligned with the objectives of sustainable development.

The reviewed studies further show that Islamic Religious Education contributes to multiple dimensions of SDGs implementation, particularly environmental awareness, religious moderation, character education, and social sustainability. Educational institutions such as pesantren, Islamic schools, and universities have increasingly integrated sustainability-oriented programs into curricula, environmental activities, and community engagement initiatives. These efforts reflect a growing awareness that religious education should not only emphasize ritual and doctrinal aspects but also encourage practical engagement with contemporary global challenges, including climate change, social inequality, and interreligious conflict.

Despite these positive developments, the study also identified several challenges. Sustainability discourse within Islamic education remains largely conceptual, while empirical studies examining the effectiveness of SDGs-oriented Islamic educational practices are still limited. In addition, many educational institutions continue to focus primarily on cognitive and theological dimensions without fully integrating practical sustainability values into learning activities and institutional culture. Therefore, stronger collaboration among educators, policymakers, curriculum developers, and researchers is needed to support the development of holistic and applicable sustainability-based Islamic education models.

This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship connecting Islamic education with global sustainability discourse by providing a comprehensive synthesis of recent academic literature. The findings strengthen the argument that Islamic Religious Education possesses strategic potential for shaping environmentally conscious, socially responsible, and ethically grounded individuals. The study also confirms that religion can function as an important foundation for promoting sustainable behavior and peaceful coexistence within contemporary society.

Future research is expected to focus more extensively on empirical investigations related to the implementation of sustainability-oriented Islamic education in different educational contexts. Comparative studies between countries, institutions, and educational models may provide deeper insights into effective strategies for integrating SDGs into Islamic Religious Education. Furthermore, future scholars may explore the role of digital learning technologies, green pesantren initiatives, and community-based educational programs in strengthening sustainability awareness among younger generations. Through these developments, Islamic Religious Education may continue to evolve as an important educational framework supporting the achievement of global sustainable development goals.

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