

Muslim Urban Society Development: Urban Environmental Crisis and Muslim Community Response in DKI Jakarta through a Local Wisdom Approach

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Abstract

DKI Jakarta faces increasingly complex environmental problems, including annual floods, air pollution that is classified as hazardous, waste crisis, land subsidence, and degradation of green open spaces. As a city with a majority Muslim population, DKI Jakarta holds great potential in environmental management based on Islamic values and the local wisdom of urban Muslim communities. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of urban environmental problems in DKI Jakarta and identify the strategies of urban Muslim communities in responding to the crisis through a local wisdom approach. The method used is qualitative research with a case study approach and community ethnography. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with 45 key informants consisting of mosque administrators, community leaders, Muslim environmental activists, and residents, and focus group discussions in three areas of DKI Jakarta (North Jakarta, West Jakarta, and South Jakarta). The results of the study show that the urban Muslim community in DKI Jakarta has developed a mosque-based environmental management model, integrating the values of *fiqh al-bi'ah* (environmental fiqh), the concept of *caliph filardh*, *amanah*, and *mizan* in daily practice. Featured programs include mosque waste banks, mosque community-based urban agriculture, ablution water management for irrigation, and post-Friday tree planting movements. These findings indicate that the integration of Islamic local wisdom with modern environmental programs can be an effective model of sustainable urban environmental management.

Keywords: urban environment, Muslim community, local wisdom, sustainable development

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Introduction

DKI Jakarta as the capital and economic center of Indonesia bears an extraordinary environmental burden. With a population density of more than 15,000 people per square kilometer and a total population estimated to exceed 10 million people during the day (daytime population), Jakarta is one of the megapolitan cities with the highest environmental pressure in Southeast Asia (BPS DKI Jakarta, 2023). The complexity of Jakarta's environmental problems (Andryan Fitriyansyah, 2024) is not only ecological, but also touches the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects of its people (Gatiningsih, 2009).

Environmental problems (Mohd Khairul Firdaus Wan Khairuldin et al., 2026) in DKI Jakarta are multidimensional and interrelated (Ratliff et al., 2017). Floods that hit almost every year are not only caused by high rainfall, but are also a consequence of massive land conversion, land subsidence that reaches an average of 1-25 cm per year in the northern coastal area of Jakarta (Narulita et al., 2023), and degradation of catchment areas in upstream areas (Abidin et al., 2021). On the other hand, Jakarta's air pollution is often categorized as unhealthy and even dangerous, with PM2.5 concentrations far exceeding the WHO threshold (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2023). The waste management crisis is another chronic problem, where Jakarta produces more than 7,000 tons of waste per day, while management capacity is still limited (Jakarta Environment Agency, 2023).

In the midst of the complexity of these problems, Jakarta holds a great potential that often goes unnoticed: the existence of an organized and widespread urban Muslim community (Amelia & Utami, 2021). As a city with more than 3,000 active mosques and a majority Muslim population (Aulia, 2024), DKI Jakarta has significant socio-spiritual capital to be deployed in efforts to save the environment. Various studies show that religious institutions, especially mosques, have a strategic role as a center for community mobilization in social issues including the environment.

The local wisdom of Jakarta's urban Muslim community is a unique blend of universal Islamic values with Betawi and Malay cultural traditions that have been firmly rooted (Narulita et al., 2023). Concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh* (man as caliph/manager of the earth), *amanah* (responsibility), *mizan* (balance), and the prohibition of *fa'ade* (damage) in the Qur'an and Hadith have become a strong theological foundation for the involvement of Muslims in environmental. Meanwhile, the tradition of mutual cooperation, mosque community service, and environmental social gathering is a local cultural wisdom that has historically been a mechanism for solving common problems in the Muslim community of Jakarta (Aulia et al., 2024).

Despite the great potential, studies that specifically explore how Jakarta's urban Muslim community integrates local wisdom in responding to environmental crises are still very limited. Most urban environmental studies still dominate technical and policy perspectives (Anwar et al., 2025), while the religious and cultural dimensions are often marginalized. In fact, the effectiveness of long-term environmental programs is highly dependent on the depth of internalization of values and community participation.

This research is here to fill this gap by asking two main research questions: First, what are the dynamics and current conditions of urban environmental problems in DKI Jakarta? Second, how do the urban Muslim community of Jakarta respond to these environmental problems through a local wisdom approach that is sourced from Islamic values and local cultural traditions?

This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of a religious community-based environmental management model, as well as provide practical recommendations for stakeholders in designing environmental policies that are more inclusive and rooted in the values of local communities.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach (Yin, n.d.) with multiple case study design combined with community ethnography. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture the depth of community experiences, perspectives, and practices in its specific socio-cultural context.

Multiple case studies allow for comparative analysis between Muslim communities in different regions within the same city, resulting in a richer understanding and testable for transferability.

Research Location

The research was carried out in three areas of DKI Jakarta that were purposively selected to represent different environmental characteristics: (1) Penjaringan Village, North Jakarta, which represents coastal areas with problems of flash floods and land subsidence; (2) Tambora Village, West Jakarta, which represents a densely populated area with waste and sanitation problems; and (3) Jagakarsa Village, South Jakarta, which represents an urban-suburban transition area with the pressure of land conversion and green open space. All three regions have active Muslim communities with mosques as centers of socio-religious activities.

Data Collection Techniques

Data is collected through three main complementary techniques. First, participatory observations were carried out for eight months (March–October 2023) at three research sites, including direct observation of community activities, mosque environmental programs, and community social interaction related to environmental issues. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with 45 key informants selected using purposive techniques and snowball sampling, consisting of 15 mosque administrators and takmir, 10 community leaders and religious leaders, 10 Muslim environmental activists, and 10 ordinary citizens. Third, three focus group discussion (FGD) sessions were held at each research site with 8–10 participants per session, to explore collective perspectives and discuss interim findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis uses a thematic analysis approach following the stages of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. The coding process is carried out in stages through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify the main themes that emerge. Triangulation was carried out through three paths: source triangulation (comparing data from different groups of informants), technique triangulation (comparing the results of observations, interviews, and FGDs), and researcher triangulation (involving three researchers in data analysis). The validity of the findings is strengthened through member checking by confirming the interpretation to key informants.

Results and Discussion

Dynamics of Environmental Problems in DKI Jakarta

The findings of the study identified five main clusters of environmental problems in DKI Jakarta that interact with each other and affect the quality of life of residents, especially the lower-middle class Muslim community who are most vulnerable to its impacts.

Flood Crisis and Land Erosion

Flooding was the most real environmental threat felt by residents in all three study sites, albeit with different characteristics. In Penjaringan, North Jakarta, flash flooding has become a phenomenon that now occurs almost all year round due to a combination of sea level rise and a decrease in land elevation. A number of informants reported that their houses are now below sea level at high tide. A mosque takmir in the area said that their mosque has undergone three floor renovations due to worsening inundation in the past decade. In Tambora, the flood of shipments from upstream is a problem exacerbated by drainage channels that are clogged with garbage. Meanwhile, in Jagakarsa, local floods occurred due to the reduction of water catchment areas along with the rampant conversion of green land into housing.

Air Pollution and Community Respiratory Crisis

Air pollution is an issue that increasingly threatens the health of Jakarta residents. Data from the IQAir air quality monitoring station shows that Jakarta consistently occupies a position as one of the cities with the worst air quality in the world in the May–October period (dry season). In the field, the research informants reported a significant increase in people with upper respiratory tract infections (ARIs) in their environment. Some mosque administrators said that elderly worshippers and children are increasingly absent from mosque activities on days with very poor air quality. The

main sources of pollution identified by the informants are motor vehicle emissions, industrial activities in the suburbs, and illegal waste burning which is still practiced in several RT/RW.

Waste Management Crisis

The problem of waste is the issue closest to the daily lives of residents. In Tambora, the extreme population density creates tremendous pressure on the existing waste management system. The study found that waste generation per person per day in the region averaged 0.7 kg, far exceeding the available transport capacity. As a result, careless dumping of garbage into waterways and public spaces has become a common sight that exacerbates the problem of flooding and environmental pollution. In all three research locations, residents consistently identified a lack of awareness of waste sorting, limited management infrastructure, and weak law enforcement as the main factors that make waste management difficult.

Degradation of Green Open Space and Biodiversity

Jakarta has lost most of its public green open space (RTH). Data from the Jakarta Forestry Service shows that the city's public RTH only reaches around 9.8% of the total area, far below the minimum standard of 30% set in the Spatial Planning Law. In Jagakarsa, field observations documented that in the past 10 years, tens of hectares of agricultural land and community gardens have been transformed into residential complexes and commercial centers. This not only reduces the ecological function of the area as a water catchment, but also damages urban biodiversity and eliminates the social space of the community that serves as an arena for social interaction and cultural transmission.

Urban Muslim Community Response: Models and Practices

This study identifies four main models of the response of DKI Jakarta's urban Muslim community to the environmental crisis, all of which are rooted in the integration of Islamic values with local wisdom (Irwan et al., 2022).

Eco-Mosque Model

Mosques (Al kahfi & Qonitah, 2025) as a central religious institution in Jakarta's urban Muslim community have developed into a major node of community-based environmental movements. The study found at least 23 mosques in the three study areas that had adopted eco-friendly practices in their management. The most common program found is the mosque's garbage bank, where worshippers are encouraged to bring sorted garbage to the mosque on Fridays. The collected waste is then sold to collectors and the proceeds are used for mosque operations or donated to social programs. At the Al-Ikhlâs Penjaringan Mosque, this waste bank program has been running for four years and has succeeded in reducing the volume of waste dumped into the river by around 40% based on the estimate of the mosque management. In addition to the waste bank, a number of mosques also developed ablution water recycling systems for the purpose of irrigating plants in the mosque yard, installing solar panels for the mosque's energy needs, and composting organic waste from slametan and feasting activities routinely held by the community. The Takmir of the Al-Falah Mosque in Jagakarsa developed a concept that they call a "garden mosque" where the mosque courtyard is planted with various types of food crops and toga (family medicinal plants) the proceeds of which are distributed to elderly worshippers and underprivileged families.

Integration of Fiqh al-Bi'ah in Da'wah and Education

One of the most influential local wisdom strategies in shaping the environmental awareness of the Jakarta Muslim community is the integration of environmental messages in Friday sermons, recitations, and education in madrasas (Nur Aulia et al., 2020). The khatib and ustaz interviewed said that they routinely include environmental themes in religious lectures by referring to relevant verses of the Qur'an and hadith. The concept of the caliph fil ardh (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 30), the prohibition of making a façade on the earth (Q.S. Al-A'raf: 56), and the command to maintain the balance (mizan) of nature (Q.S. Al-Rahman: 7-9) are often cited theological references.

Several Islamic boarding schools and Ramadan programs have also begun to integrate Qur'an-based environmental education modules (Nur Aulia & Abbas, n.d.). In Tambora, a non-formal Islamic educational institution developed a curriculum they called "Iqra' Environment" that

teaches children to read the signs of natural destruction and respond to them with concrete actions according to Islamic guidance. The program received a positive response from parents and has been adopted by 12 TPAs (Al-Qur'an Education Parks) in the region (Sulastri et al., 2017; Mardhiah et al., 2021).

Revitalization of the Tradition of Gotong Royong Based on Islamic Values

Gotong royong as a local wisdom of the people of Jakarta (Suswandari, 2017) has experienced revitalization in the context of handling environmental problems, with the framework of Islamic values as its spiritual motivation. This study documents the practice of mass community service organized by mosque administrators and carried out every Sunday or after Fajr prayers on certain days. In contrast to conventional mutual cooperation which is often incidental, the community service initiated by the mosque community has a regular schedule, a clear organizational structure, and a strong connection with religious values.

In Penjarangan, the tradition of "ngobras" (chatting while cleaning) which is a local adaptation of community service is carried out every two weeks by the mosque community. This activity combines physical activities to clean the environment with light discussions about community issues, including environmental issues. Local religious leaders played an important role in legitimizing this activity by referring to the hadith "cleanliness is part of faith" (al-nazhafah min al-iman) and positioning environmental service work as a social worship (ijtima'iyah worship) (Bilqalam et al., 2025).

Mosque Community-Based Green Economy

The economic dimension is an important element in the environmental management strategy (Jensen, 2025) of Jakarta's urban Muslim community. The study found a number of green economy initiatives developed based on the mosque community (Al kahfi & Qonitah, 2025), which simultaneously create economic value for residents while having a positive impact on the environment. The mosque community-based urban farming program is developed in several locations by utilizing the vacant land around the mosque, the roof of the mosque, and the yard of residents' houses adjacent to the mosque complex.

In Jagakarsa, the Al-Hidayah Mosque community developed a model they call the "Garden of Heaven" in which community members collectively manage 500 m² of land for the production of organic vegetables. Crops are divided fairly based on labor and capital contributions, with some surpluses sold to the market and some donated to underprivileged families. This system is inspired by the concept of muzara'ah (sharing of agricultural produce) in the fiqh of muamalah which is contextualized for urban conditions.

Discussion

Environmental Theology as the Foundation of Local Wisdom

The findings of this study confirm that the local wisdom of the urban Muslim community in managing the environment has strong roots in the Islamic theological tradition (Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim, 1994). This is in line with Nasr's (1996) argument that Islam, doctrinally, contains a comprehensive environmental ethics, although in practice it is often not well implemented. What is interesting about the findings of this study is how the Jakarta Muslim community has succeeded in translating these theological values into practical actions that are contextual and relevant to contemporary urban environmental issues.

The concept of khalifah fil ardh (Rusmanto, 2021) in the context of DKI Jakarta is no longer understood in the abstract as a human duty to manage the earth in general, but is interpreted operationally as the responsibility of residents to maintain the cleanliness of drainage channels in front of their homes, sort garbage, and plant trees in residential environments. This theological contextualization is a form of deep local wisdom, because it succeeds in bridging the gap between universal values and specific actions that ordinary citizens can take in their daily lives. This process is similar to what Geertz (1973) calls "thick description" the ability of a community to give profound meaning to seemingly simple social practices.

Mosques as Key Institutions in Communal Environmental Governance

One of the most significant findings of this study is the role of mosques as a central institution in community-based environmental management. These findings strengthen and expand the arguments of Rihlah Nur Aulia about the potential of Islamic religious institutions in environmental conservation (Aulia et al., 2017, 2018). Mosques do not simply function as ritual places of worship, but have evolved into what we can call a "community governance platform" that integrates religious, social, economic, and environmental functions.

The advantages of mosques as environmental institutions lie in several factors. *First*, mosques have a regular and intensive communication network – five-time congregational prayers, Friday sermons, and weekly recitations – that can be used for efficient socialization and community mobilization. *Second*, the moral authority of religious leaders gives strong legitimacy to environmental programs, so that citizen participation is more intrinsically motivated (religious) than simply extrinsic (material incentives). *Third*, the mosque has physical assets in the form of space and infrastructure that can be used as an operational base for environmental programs. *Fourth*, the tradition of infak, zakat, and waqf provides a sustainable funding mechanism for community programs, including environmental programs.

Mutual Cooperation and Reconfiguration of Social Capital in an Urban Context

The revitalization of mutual cooperation within the framework of Islamic values found in this study is an interesting example of the process of social capital reconfiguration in the context of urbanization. As noted by Putnam, urbanization and modernization (Rybak-Niedziółka et al., 2021) tend to erode the social capital of communities, especially traditional forms of solidarity and reciprocity. However, this study shows that Jakarta's Muslim community (Narulita & Aulia, 2021) finds ways to maintain and even strengthen this social capital by giving it a frame of religious values and linking it to contemporary issues such as the environmental crisis.

An important innovation found is the shift from patron-client gotong royong (organized by the village elite/RT/RW with the masses as implementers) to a more horizontal and community-based gotong royong. In this new model, participation is driven by a sense of shared responsibility as fellow Muslims and fellow city dwellers affected by the environmental crisis. This transformation created a more durable and egalitarian form of social capital, as it did not depend on personal relationships with local elites that could change.

Policy Implications: Towards Inclusive Environmental Governance

The findings of this study have important implications for environmental management policies in DKI Jakarta. Environmental policy strategies that have tended to be top-down, technocratic, and uniform need to be complemented by a more accommodating approach to the potential of religious communities. The Jakarta government (Astuti & Herlambang, 2021) may consider developing formal partnership mechanisms with mosque networks and Muslim communities in environmental programs such as waste management, urban greening, and flood mitigation.

This model does not mean the dominance of one religious group in environmental governance, but rather is a recognition of the social reality that in DKI Jakarta, the Muslim community has an extraordinary social infrastructure to mobilize. A similar approach can be applied in parallel with other religious communities that also have their own environmental wisdom, thus forming a truly plural and community-based environmental governance ecosystem.

Research Limitations

This research has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, as a qualitative study, these findings are not intended to be statistically generalized to the entire population of the Muslim community of Jakarta. Second, this study captures more narratives and practices that are already running, so it is not able to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of environmental impacts. Third, focusing on three specific villages may not represent the full diversity of the socio-ecological context in DKI Jakarta. Follow-up research with a mixed methods approach that integrates qualitative data with quantitative environmental impact measurement is highly recommended.

Conclusion

This research has revealed a comprehensive picture of the complexity of urban environmental problems in DKI Jakarta and the diversity of responses developed by urban Muslim communities through local wisdom approaches. Some of the main conclusions can be formulated as follows.

First, Jakarta's environmental problems are multidimensional and systemic, including chronic flooding, severe air pollution, waste management crises, and degradation of green open spaces, all of which have a disproportionate impact on the predominantly Muslim lower-middle class community. These problems cannot be adequately solved by formal technical and policy approaches alone, but rather require social mobilization rooted in community values and identities.

Second, the urban Muslim community of DKI Jakarta has developed four innovative environmental management models rooted in local wisdom: (1) the eco-mosque model that makes the mosque the center of the community-based environmental movement; (2) the integration of fiqh al-bi'ah in da'wah and religious education; (3) revitalization of mutual cooperation within the framework of Islamic values; and (4) the development of a green economy based on the mosque community. These four models demonstrate the ability of Muslim communities to transform universal theological values into contextual and effective social practices.

Third, mosques have proven to be key institutions in the governance of the communal environment, thanks to a combination of intensive communication infrastructure, the moral authority of religious leaders, tangible physical assets, and Islamic philanthropy-based funding mechanisms. The potential of mosques as strategic partners in the city government's environmental programs is still very large to be further developed.

Fourth, this study shows that the local wisdom of urban Muslim communities is not only a cultural heritage that needs to be preserved, but also a dynamic resource that continues to innovate and adapt to contemporary challenges. The integration of Islamic theological values, local cultural traditions, and modern ecological knowledge creates a unique model of environmental management and has the potential to become a reference for other Muslim cities in Southeast Asia and the world.

The main recommendations that can be formulated from this study are: (1) The Jakarta Government needs to develop a policy framework that integrates partnerships with religious communities, especially mosque networks, in urban environmental programs; (2) There needs to be capacity building support for mosque administrators and religious leaders in the field of environmental knowledge and program management; (3) The fiqh al-bi'ah curriculum needs to be strengthened and standardized in Islamic educational institutions; and (4) further research needs to be conducted to quantify the quantitative impact of the ongoing Muslim community-based environmental programs

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