

## **Eco-Friendly Mosque Initiatives: Integrating Multireligious and Multicultural Perspectives for Sustainable Community Spaces**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the concept of environmentally friendly mosques by integrating multireligious and multicultural perspectives as the basis for sustainable community development. Through qualitative literature studies, the research examines various academic sources, policy reports, and case studies from Indonesia and other countries to understand the contribution of green mosque initiatives to current social and ecological change. The findings show that the application of renewable energy, water recycling systems, and congregation-based community management effectively reduces environmental impact and raises ecological awareness while also serving as a forum for education. Socially, this movement strengthens community participation, interfaith collaboration, and environmental education. Green mosques function as centers of worship and empowerment that unite spirituality, environmental ethics, and inclusivity.

**Keywords:** environmentally friendly mosque; community sustainability; Islamic ecology; multireligious and multicultural

### **Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep masjid ramah lingkungan dengan mengintegrasikan perspektif multireligius dan multikultural sebagai dasar pengembangan komunitas berkelanjutan. Melalui studi literatur kualitatif, penelitian menelaah berbagai sumber akademik, laporan kebijakan, dan studi kasus dari Indonesia serta negara lain untuk memahami kontribusi inisiatif masjid hijau terhadap perubahan sosial dan ekologis pada saat ini. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penerapan energi terbarukan, sistem daur ulang air, dan manajemen komunitas berbasis jamaah efektif menurunkan dampak lingkungan dan meningkatkan kesadaran ekologis sekaligus menjadi wadah edukasi. Secara sosial, gerakan ini memperkuat partisipasi masyarakat, kolaborasi lintas iman, dan pendidikan lingkungan. Masjid hijau berfungsi sebagai pusat ibadah sekaligus pemberdayaan yang menyatukan spiritualitas, etika lingkungan, dan inklusivitas.*

**Kata kunci:** ekologi Islam; keberlanjutan komunitas; masjid ramah lingkungan, multireligius dan multikultural

## INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis in the 21st century requires the involvement of all sectors of human life, including religious institutions, in building ecological awareness and sustainable practices. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023) report confirms that climate change has had a significant impact on social, economic, and environmental systems globally. Of course, religion has a strategic role as a moral and social force to encourage behavioral change towards a more sustainable lifestyle (Hijrah et al., 2025). In Indonesia the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, mosques have the potential to become centers of environmental transformation because of their role not only as places of worship, but also as centers of education, social interaction, and community empowerment (Koderi et al., 2024).

The concept of eco-mosques or environmentally friendly mosques was born from the awareness that the construction of worship facilities must be in line with the principles of sustainable development goals. Mosques as spiritual spaces can be educational and symbolic mediums for the ecological behavior of the community (Khikmawati, 2020). Several Islamic countries, such as Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia have developed green mosque programs that integrate environmentally friendly architectural design, energy efficiency, water conservation, and community-based waste management (Soeharjoto et al., 2025). In Indonesia this initiative is known through the national Eco-Masjid movement initiated by the MUI Environmental Council and the Pesantren Environmental Forum. The movement seeks to connect Islamic teachings about *khalifah fil ardh* (humans as guardians of the earth) with concrete practices of resource management in mosques.

Mosques have tremendous social capacity. Every day millions of people gather to perform prayers, making them effective spaces for conveying moral and educational messages. Research by Gunawan & Satwikasari (2021) at the Raja Haji Fisabilillah Mosque in Malaysia shows that green architectural design in places of worship not only reduces energy consumption but also strengthens worshippers' awareness of the importance of energy conservation. These results

confirm that eco-mosques are not merely technical projects but also means of social and cultural transformation.

The implementation of eco-mosque initiatives in various countries often faces structural and cultural challenges. The main challenges include limited funds a lack of technical guidance and social resistance to design innovations that are considered incompatible with classical Islamic architectural traditions. On the other hand, the involvement of interfaith and intercultural communities in environmental conservation efforts is still relatively limited, even though a multireligious approach can broaden the support base and increase social legitimacy (McKim, 2024). Interfaith collaboration in the environmental field has been shown to increase social trust and solidarity between communities (Lase et al., 2025).

An eco-friendly mosque can be understood not only as an energy-efficient building, but also as an inclusive social space that facilitates multicultural dialogue and interfaith cooperation. This concept is in line with the idea of multi-faith sustainable spaces, places of worship that accommodate sustainability values and the involvement of various communities without eliminating their respective religious identities (Zulkarnain & Yosefo Gule, 2025). Thus, eco-mosques are not only a manifestation of green architecture, but also an instrument of social diplomacy and environmental-based peace.

Several studies show that places of worship can serve as community hubs in building ecological awareness. For example, studies in the United Kingdom and Malaysia found that mosque-based activities such as recycling training, wudhu water conservation, and green community gardens can strengthen pro-environmental behavior among congregations. In Indonesia, similar initiatives have emerged in a number of Islamic boarding schools that have developed integrated waste and energy management systems (Zaman et al., 2022). These innovations demonstrate the synergy between religious values and sustainability principles that are contextualized with local culture.

Eco-mosques must also be understood within the framework of environmental theology. In Islamic teachings, the concepts of *amanah* and *khalifah* provide an ethical basis for humans to protect the earth as part of their spiritual responsibility (Surah Al-A'raf: 56). Therefore, ecological behavior is not merely a moral choice, but a religious

obligation. This theological understanding provides a strong foundation for effective environmental advocacy.

An interfaith approach adds an important dimension to this discourse. Religious-based environmental movements often intersect with universal values of compassion, responsibility, and balance. According to McKim (2024) "*interfaith environmentalism*" enables the exchange of ecological values and practices among different religious communities, expanding the collective capacity for climate change mitigation. In the context of a multicultural society such as Indonesia, interfaith collaboration in eco-mosque projects can strengthen social cohesion while minimizing the potential for identity-based conflicts (Restya et al., 2024).

The integration of multireligious and multicultural values in environmental projects still faces epistemological and social obstacles. Many religious institutions do not yet have guidelines for interfaith collaboration in sustainability projects, while some communities still consider environmental issues to be technical matters rather than spiritual ones (Rahma et al., 2025). This study attempts to bridge this gap by analysing how the integration of interfaith and intercultural values can strengthen the implementation of eco-mosques as sustainable community spaces.

In addition to moral and social roles, the economic dimension is also important to consider. Several studies show that green waqf and community crowdfunding-based funding models are effective in supporting eco-mosque projects (Takwin, 2024). This approach not only reduces dependence on external funds but also strengthens the community's sense of ownership of environmental projects. The success of several mosques in Malaysia and Indonesia in adopting this approach shows that financial sustainability can be achieved with high community participation (Fahmi, 2025).

Eco-friendly mosque initiatives can also be part of climate diplomacy and culture-based sustainable development strategies. Programs such as the Green Faith Initiative in Europe and the Eco-Masjid Network in Asia show that places of worship can serve as agents of social change to encourage environmental action in many multicultural cities. Mosques have even been turned into public spaces open to educational activities, discussions, and social action with interfaith communities (Hariyah, 2015).

This study seeks to contribute conceptually and practically through a literature review approach. The main objectives of this study are: (1) to review the development of the concept and practice of eco-mosques in Indonesia and the Islamic world; (2) to explore the potential for integrating multireligious and multicultural perspectives in strengthening these initiatives; and (3) formulate policy recommendations and an implementation framework for eco-friendly mosques as sustainable community spaces.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a literature review approach with a descriptive qualitative study design. This approach was chosen because the main objective of the study is not to test empirical hypotheses, but rather to synthesize previous research results, analyse conceptual trends, and formulate a theoretical and practical framework regarding eco-friendly mosque initiatives in a multireligious and multicultural context. According to Snyder (2019) literature studies enable researchers to identify research gaps, integrate various disciplinary perspectives, and systematically formulate new research directions.

### **Data Collection Sources and Procedures**

The data collection process was conducted through a systematic search of scientific articles, proceedings, policy reports, and religious institution documents published between 2015 and 2025. Data sources were taken from several scientific databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Indonesian national journal portals such as Garuda, DOAJ, and Islamic university e-journals.

The keywords used consisted of a combination of English and Indonesian terms, including “eco mosque,” “green mosque,” “eco masjid,” “sustainable mosque architecture,” “religious space sustainability,” “interfaith environmentalism,” “multicultural community space,” and “environmentally friendly mosque.” This selection was designed to capture both the technical dimensions of sustainability such as green architecture, energy efficiency, and water management and the social dimensions, including environmental education, interfaith collaboration, and community-based governance.

## **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Inclusion criteria include: (1) Peer-reviewed articles or official policy reports (2) Focus on mosques, places of worship, or religious spaces that apply sustainability principles (3) Include social, cultural, or multireligious aspects (4) Available in Indonesian or English with full text (5) Purely theological studies with no operational relevance to environmental sustainability.

## **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic synthesis approach as suggested by (Thomas, 2008). All selected articles were read thoroughly to identify the main themes, such as: (1) green design and technology, (2) sustainable governance and financing, (3) religion-based environmental education, and (4) multireligious and multicultural integration. These themes were then compared across geographical and social contexts (Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe) to find patterns of similarity and difference.

The analysis process used the following steps: (1) Initial coding of ideas, concepts, and key research findings; (2) Categorization based on technical, social, and theological dimensions; (3) Narrative synthesis, which is compiling a comprehensive interpretation of the findings; (4) Cross-verification, which is comparing national and international sources to ensure the validity of the findings.

## **Validity and Reliability**

To maintain data validity, only sources with high academic reputation were used. Each piece of information was compared with at least two other sources to avoid interpretive bias (Snyder, 2019). In addition, reliability was strengthened by recording the literature selection process transparently and in a documented manner, including a list of sources included in the final reference section.

This method provides a comprehensive overview of eco-friendly mosque practices and challenges in various cultural and religious contexts. The results form the basis for analysis in the discussion section to develop an inclusive and sustainable implementation framework.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the literature study show that the development of eco-friendly mosques has increased over the past decade, especially in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe. This increase is driven by the growing awareness of Muslims regarding climate change, energy efficiency, and ecological responsibility as part of Islamic teachings that emphasize balance (*mīzān*) and preservation of the earth (*khalīfah fil-ardh*) (Wulan, 2025).

The concept of environmentally friendly mosques is not limited to green architecture, but also includes social and spiritual dimensions. Several studies show that mosque designs that prioritize natural ventilation, sunlight, and local materials not only save energy but also increase the spiritual comfort of worshippers (Idris et al., 2024). The application of green building principles has been implemented in several projects, such as the Al-Irsyad Mosque in Bandung and the National Mosque in Malaysia, which are examples of the integration of aesthetic, theological, and technological values (Syahid, 2015).

The success of implementing the concept of sustainable mosques is largely determined by social factors, including leadership, congregational participation, and environmental awareness among the surrounding community (Layyin et al., 2025). Mosques not only serve as places of worship, but also as educational spaces and centers for social change in shaping environmentally friendly behavior.

### **Environmentally Friendly Mosques as New Social Spaces**

Mosques have undergone a transformation in their role from being merely places of worship to centers of social, educational, and community empowerment activities. The concept of eco-friendly mosques or environmentally friendly mosques has emerged as a form of Islamic spirituality oriented towards sustainability. This idea was born from the theological awareness that humans are *khalīfah fil ardh*, guardians of the earth who are responsible for the balance of the ecosystem (Ramazani Novanda, 2023). Therefore, mosques are considered not only as sacred spaces for worship, but also as symbols of Muslims ecological responsibility towards nature and fellow living beings.

Several literature sources indicate that eco-friendly mosque initiatives arise from the Muslim community's need to present a form of



worship that is in harmony with the global ecological crisis. In the modern context, the construction of mosques is often considered an expression of community pride. However, this also raises new issues when building designs do not consider energy efficiency, water consumption, and waste management (Ningrum & Mutiari, 2024). The eco-mosque movement seeks to address these challenges by combining the principles of green architecture, renewable energy management, and sustainable social behavior.

Research conducted on mosques in the UK, such as the Cambridge Mosque, shows that green mosques are not only a representation of technological progress, but also a new form of da'wah that instills moral values about environmental awareness (Çetinkaya & Efeoğlu, 2024). In this context, mosques play a dual role as social ecology laboratories and as centers of ecological spirituality.

### **Dimensions of Green Architecture and Design of Mosques**

Architectural aspects are the most tangible component of environmentally friendly mosque initiatives. Green design is not only related to physical appearance, but also to a philosophy of simplicity and efficiency that is in line with Islamic values. The principle of “no excess” or *la israfa fi al-ma'* (no waste of water), for example, is the basis for the application of water-saving technology in the wudhu area.

The most prominent example can be seen at Cambridge Central Mosque in the UK, which is known as the greenest mosque in Europe. The building is designed to be fully powered by renewable energy, with a natural cooling system and energy-efficient lighting, while the layout incorporates an internal garden as a space for preaching and socializing (Çetinkaya & Efeoğlu, 2024). This design not only reduces the carbon footprint but also expresses openness to nature and the multicultural community around it.

In Southeast Asia, similar concepts have developed through local approaches. The Al-Irsyad Mosque in Bandung, for example, employs an open design with natural cross ventilation to reduce the use of artificial cooling. Its geometric structure is designed to allow natural light to enter without dazzling the prayer area. In Malaysia, the National Mosque implements a wudhu water recycling system for watering gardens and toilets, while in Indonesia, several mosques, such as the Grand Mosque



of Central Java, have begun to utilize paying as an efficient architectural element (Saviola et al., 2025).

These findings show that sustainability is not only about the use of high technology, but also the extent to which architecture can adapt to the local context. This emphasizes that the vernacular green architecture approach, which utilizes local materials and climate, is more sustainable in the long term than imitating expensive and inefficient modern building styles.

### **Sustainable Governance and Financing**

The success of green mosque implementation is highly dependent on a good management system. The main issue is not technology, but rather sustainable management and financing (Layyin et al., 2025). Most mosques in the Islamic world are independently managed by congregations or foundations, with donations as their main source of funding. This model often makes environmentally friendly projects seem expensive and difficult to implement without external support.

Several management innovations have been developed to address these challenges. One of them is the concept of green waqf, which is the management of productive waqf whose proceeds are used for investment in environmental projects such as the installation of solar panels, educational parks, and rainwater management systems. At the Istiqlal Mosque, this concept has proven effective in supporting sustainable mosque development (Kusuma, 2022), as it is not only oriented towards physical development but also community economic empowerment.

In Indonesia, the Eco Mosque movement initiated by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) is a concrete step towards building ecological awareness at the local level. This program encourages mosques to conduct energy audits, water efficiency audits, and waste management audits. In addition, this movement emphasizes congregational participation through green campaign activities such as tree planting, waste banks, and environmental cleanliness competitions. This participatory approach proves that mosque sustainability cannot stand alone; it must involve the community as its owners and drivers.

### **Environmental Education and Outreach**

Education is a key pillar of the success of environmentally friendly mosques. Mosques are strategically positioned as centers of informal

learning that reach various segments of society. Environmental preaching is an effective way to instil ecological awareness based on spiritual values.

In various regions of Indonesia, environmental messages are being incorporated into Friday sermons, religious lectures, and youth activities at mosques. Preachers and religious teachers interpret verses from the Qur'an related to nature, such as Ar-Rum: 41 and Al-A'raf: 56, as a moral call to preserve the environment. This theological approach is effective in building awareness that protecting nature is not a choice, but a religious obligation.

Environmental education programs have also developed in the form of practical training. The "Eco Pesantren" movement trains students to become agents of environmental change. Students are taught how to utilize vacant land, manage plastic waste, and educate the surrounding community about green lifestyles (Erlangga et al., 2025).

This approach has succeeded in changing the perception of Islamic boarding schools and mosques as passive centers of preaching into active engines of social change. In addition, youth community initiatives have emerged to create an interesting concept, namely the "Sedekah Sampah" (Garbage Alms) program at the At-taqwa Mosque in Bekasi. This activity not only addresses waste in the surrounding area but also fosters economic independence around the mosque (Soeharjoto et al., 2025). Over time, this environmental da'wah has become a new social movement that combines spiritual, social, and ecological aspects.

### **Multireligious and Multicultural Integration in the Green Mosque Movement**

One of the most interesting aspects of the green mosque movement is its ability to bridge interfaith and intercultural relations. The environment is a universal issue recognized by almost all religions and cultures (Mighfar et al., 2025). Environmentally friendly mosque projects are not only oriented towards green technology, but also serve as a forum for interfaith dialogue that strengthens social and humanitarian cooperation. In an increasingly pluralistic global context, this movement presents a new paradigm that environmental conservation efforts can be a meeting point between spirituality, solidarity, and sustainability.

In Indonesia, the spirit of multicultural integration is clearly evident in the program to build a more sustainable Istiqlal Mosque (Ridfinanda & Puspitasari, 2024). After undergoing a major renovation in 2020, the Istiqlal Mosque launched a sustainability initiative that includes energy efficiency, advanced water management systems, and carbon footprint reduction through the use of renewable energy. Uniquely, this program also involves representatives from various religions in social activities such as joint tree planting, river clean-up campaigns, and environmental education. This approach is a tangible symbol of the spirit of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which brings blessings to all of creation, transcending the boundaries of faith and fostering interfaith ecological empathy.

The green mosque movement with its multicultural approach also serves as a space for social learning. Through joint activities across communities, people learn to foster mutual respect and understanding of differences. Universal values such as justice, balance, and compassion become a common moral foundation in shaping human relations with the environment. In this context, mosques function not only as spiritual centers, but also as social laboratories where communities build ecological awareness and human solidarity.

Multireligious and multicultural integration in the green mosque movement reflects a holistic approach in which spirituality, culture, and ecology unite in a single vision building a peaceful, just, and sustainable civilization a vision that affirms that caring for the earth is both a form of worship and a moral responsibility for all of humanity.

The increased integration of multireligious and multicultural perspectives in the green mosque movement highlights the potential of faith-based environmentalism as a catalyst for global cooperation. By viewing environmental protection as a shared moral obligation rather than a divisive political agenda, this movement transcends religious and cultural boundaries, creating opportunities for collective action. This inclusive approach not only promotes environmental awareness but also fosters a sense of global citizenship based on compassion, respect, and responsibility for the planet.

In practical terms, the green mosque movement encourages the adoption of sustainable lifestyles through community-based education programs, environmentally friendly infrastructure, and interfaith collaboration on environmental initiatives. These efforts often extend

beyond the walls of the mosque, influencing schools, local governments, and civil society organizations. Mosques become centers of transformation demonstrating how spiritual values can guide social innovation and ecological stewardship simultaneously.

### **Social and Ecological Impacts**

The implementation of green mosque principles has a significant impact on the social and ecological dimensions of society (Ningrum & Mutiari, 2024). Ecologically, green mosques are a tangible representation of the integration of spiritual values with environmental sustainability practices. The use of environmentally friendly technologies such as solar panels, natural lighting, and cross ventilation systems can reduce conventional energy consumption and substantially reduce carbon emissions. In addition, innovations in rainwater utilization and wudhu water recycling systems are examples of Islamic architecture adapting to modern ecological challenges. These efforts make mosques a model of energy-efficient public buildings that also serve an educational function for the surrounding community.

The ecological aspect is also evident in the application of green vegetation and open spaces in the mosque environment, which act as micro lungs for the area. Green spaces not only lower the ambient temperature and improve air quality, but also provide visual harmony that reflects the balance between humans, nature, and the Creator. Green mosques play a strategic role in shaping collective ecological behavior through architectural examples and sustainable management.

Green mosques have become catalysts for the emergence of community solidarity based on the environment. Programs such as joint clean-up efforts, waste management training, and green economic activities have created new patterns of social participation that strengthen independence in the community (Soeharjoto et al., 2025). This concept not only revives the values of *ukhuwah* and *ta'awun* (social cooperation), but also expands the space for *da'wah* into an inclusive ecological movement.

The existence of green mosques fosters collective awareness of environmental ethics in Islam. The teaching that humans are *khalifah fil ardh* (stewards of the earth) is implemented practically through actions to maintain ecosystem sustainability. The social and ecological impacts of green mosques do not stand alone, but rather reinforce each other in

building a society that is empowered, faithful, and ecologically aware. This concept shows that Islamic spirituality can be a strong foundation for sustainable development that is just and oriented towards the welfare of all people.

The social and ecological impact of green mosques also contributes to long-term behavioral transformation within communities. By promoting environmentally friendly practices such as waste separation, energy conservation, and sustainable consumption, these mosques encourage the formation of environmentally responsible habits that spill over into everyday life. Educational programs and sermons on environmental stewardship further reinforce this mindset, creating a generation of Muslims who view ecological stewardship as a form of worship. The integration of religious beliefs and the environment fosters a culture of sustainability rooted in compassion, simplicity, and collective responsibility values that not only protect the planet but also strengthen social cohesion and moral integrity within society.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the concept of an eco-friendly mosque is a tangible manifestation of the integration of spiritual, social, and ecological values. Mosques not only function as places of worship but also as public spaces that promote awareness of sustainability and interfaith solidarity. Islamic principles of balance and human responsibility as *khalifah fil ardh* (stewards of the earth) form the moral basis for wise and equitable environmental management.

A review of the literature shows that the application of environmentally friendly principles in mosques covers various aspects, ranging from green architectural design, energy and water management, to environment-based social activities. These efforts become more meaningful when they involve the participation of the congregation and cooperation with other communities, including those of different religions and cultures. In the context of a multicultural society, environmentally friendly mosques can be symbols of inclusiveness and meeting points for dialogue on humanity.

Playing a role in shaping ecological awareness, eco-friendly mosques also have strategic potential in supporting sustainable urban development. Through efficient and adaptive design, mosques can contribute to energy efficiency, rainwater absorption, and improved

urban environmental quality. However, challenges such as limited resources, lack of policy support, and minimal environmental literacy still need to be overcome through cross-sector collaboration.

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