

UIN Ar-Raniry Nature-Loving Students' Reception on Ecology Verses

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Abstract: Ecology studies the reciprocal relationship between living organisms and their environment. The Al-Quran contains numerous verses that touch upon ecological themes. The ongoing reality, however, the ecological conditions of environments have not been properly solved which is evident by the rampant illegal logging and the lack of public awareness about environmental conservation. Some efforts to overcome the problem of environmental protection have been carried out by the student's association of PA-LH Gainpala at Ar-Raniry University in Banda Aceh. This study aims to examine how ecological verses including their meanings and implications were understood and implemented in Gainpala. The type of this study is field research, and the data were collected through interviews and documentation. Then, the data were analyzed and presented using descriptive analysis. The results of the study show that Gainpala members generally had the same understanding of environmental ecology, yet they differed in terms of its implementation in protecting environments such as maintaining cleanliness and promoting environmental campaigns. Furthermore, Gainpala members also understood the messages contained in the Al-Quran, but they had not fully grasped yet the concept of ecological environment mentioned in the Al-Quran.

Abstrak: Ekologi merupakan hubungan timbal balik yang terjadi antara makhluk hidup dengan lingkungan. Al-Qur'an mengandung banyak ayat tentang ekologi. Realita saat ini, kondisi ekologi lingkungan belum terselesaikan dengan baik, hal ini dibuktikan dengan masih maraknya terjadi illegal logging dan kurangnya perhatian masyarakat tentang pelestarian lingkungan. Upaya untuk mengatasi permasalahan pelestarian lingkungan tersebut dilaksanakan oleh UKM PA-LH Gainpala Ar-raniry Banda Aceh. Penelitian ini ingin melihat bagaimana resepsi ayat-ayat tentang ekologi meliputi pemahaman dan implementasinya pada Gainpala. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian lapangan (field research). Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan dokumentasi, selanjutnya dianalisis dan disajikan secara deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anggota Gainpala secara umum memiliki pemahaman yang sama tentang ekologi lingkungannya saja terdapat perbedaan dalam segi penanganannya yaitu sebagian dengan cara menjaga kebersihan dan ada juga dengan melakukan penyuluhan lingkungan. Anggota Gainpala secara pemahaman juga mengetahui pesan yang terkandung di dalam Al-Qur'an. Namun, belum memahami konsep ekologi lingkungan dalam Al-Qur'an secara menyeluruh.

Keywords: *Ecology, Gainpala, Verses about Ecology*

Introduction

Ecology represents the relationship between humans and the environment, encompassing interactions both among living organisms and with inanimate objects.¹ The term "ecology" was first introduced by Reiter in 1965. According to Reiter, ecology is the science concerning the relationships between organisms and their environment. Haeckel, on the other hand, defines ecological science as the comprehensive understanding of the total interactions or connections between humans and their environment.²

Based on this definition, it can be understood that the relationship between humans and their environment is inseparable. However, this interaction between humans and the environment has two different sides: positive effects arise when humans can utilize nature without harming it, while negative effects emerge due to human greed. Negative impacts may occur naturally, such as natural disasters that happen without human intervention, like tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, or earthquakes, which represent a form of natural balance. However, negative effects resulting from human factors, such as illegal logging causing landslides and floods, as well as environmental pollution due to the habit of indiscriminate waste disposal and suboptimal industrial waste management, also exist.³

Humans, animals, and plants created by Allah on the face of the earth are intended to establish balance and serve as evidence of Allah's greatness. In Surah Ar-Rum, verse 41, the causes of environmental degradation are mentioned. Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by (reason of) what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of (the consequence of) what they have done that perhaps they will return (to righteousness).

M. Quraish Shihab asserts that environmental degradation occurs due to the sins and transgressions committed by humans, resulting in disturbances and damage on land

¹ <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/ekologiEkosistem> diakses pada 1 Juni 2022.

² Quoted from N.H.T. Siahaan, *Hukum Lingkungan dan Ekologi Pembangunan*, (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2004), 16.

³ Ekologi dan Kerusakan Lingkungan dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an, dalam *Jurnal al-Fanar Nomor 2* (2021), 114.

and sea.⁴ According to Lynn White Jr., human-induced environmental degradation occurs due to human errors in addressing ecological issues.⁵

It is incumbent upon humans, as stewards of the Earth, to preserve the environment around them. Environmental conservation efforts can be carried out in various ways, starting from individual actions such as refraining from littering to larger-scale initiatives such as reforestation programs implemented by governments or private environmental agencies. Preventing environmental degradation can also begin by cultivating a love for nature and the environment.

The province of Aceh boasts an ecosystem area that remains preserved, namely the Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP). The Leuser ecosystem area is the largest forest conservation area in Southeast Asia. Most of this area is located in the province of Aceh, covering 2.25 million hectares, with an additional 750 thousand hectares in North Sumatra province.⁶ The Leuser ecosystem area serves as the last defense zone to maintain biodiversity on the island of Sumatra. Ensuring its sustainability actually requires the involvement of all stakeholders, including the government, private organizations, and active participation from students.⁷ Environmental conservation efforts should ideally encompass both land and sea areas, as damage occurring on land will also impact the ecosystem systems in the sea; for instance, indiscriminate waste disposal into rivers will eventually reach the sea.

Observing the current environmental conditions, numerous changes are occurring, leading to an increase in natural disasters. One significant fact is the rising number of flood disasters in the province of Aceh caused by moderate-intensity rainfall. This situation contrasts with conditions from 20 years ago, where no flood disasters occurred despite high-intensity rainfall. This discrepancy may be attributed to rapid socio-economic development, including infrastructure construction and population growth. However, this development and population increase are not accompanied by environmental education. Consequently, environmental changes leading to disasters arise

⁴M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2003), 78.

⁵ Quoted from Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, dkk. *Menanam Sebelum Kiamat: Islam, Ekologi dan Gerakan Lingkungan Hidup*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2007), 7.

⁶Rudi H. Putra, "Masyarakat Aceh dan Konservasi Kawasan Ekosistem Leuser" dalam Prosiding Seminar Nasional Biotik 2015, 17.

⁷Catatan Akhir tahun Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Aceh Tahun 2016, <https://walhiaceh.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Catatan-Akhir-Tahun-walhi-2016.pdf>, 8.

due to indiscriminate waste disposal, illegal logging, and development projects that overlook ecological impacts.

This issue requires collaboration from multiple parties, including education or learning about environmental problems and direct actions toward addressing and preventing environmental issues.

Students are agents of change in all aspects of life, including environmental degradation. Students who are part of Mapala (nature-loving student organizations) are expected to be resilient, both spiritually and physically. However, it cannot be denied that society often views students who are involved in nature-loving organizations negatively. Yet, upon closer inspection, activities undertaken by these students often have positive outcomes, such as assisting communities, particularly in environmental matters, and even aiding in evacuating victims during natural disasters. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to alter society's perception to be more receptive to the positive involvement of nature-loving students in environmental initiatives.

In the environment of UIN Ar-Raniry, there exists a student organization dedicated to environmental conservation, commonly known as Gainpala (*Gabungan Mahasiswa UIN Ar-Raniry Pecinta Alam*). This student organization operates within the field of environmental and wilderness conservation, actively advocating for environmental and wilderness conservation. Gainpala conducts various activities, such as tree planting, coral reef transplantation, and nature contemplation.

Based on the above exposition, research on the understanding of Gainpala members regarding the verses of the Qur'an is crucial to uncovering solutions to current environmental issues.

Efforts to preserve the environment have indeed been undertaken by numerous organizations or government agencies directly involved in environmental conservation. However, based on the exposition above, the current environmental conditions continue to deteriorate. Therefore, Gainpala, as an environmental conservation organization, plays a crucial role in environmental preservation efforts, with the hope of providing tangible impacts on the environment and changing negative perceptions towards nature-loving students, thereby enhancing environmental awareness.

The research aims to assess the extent of Gainpala members' reception of ecological verses in the Quran and how these verses are implemented in Gainpala's activities.

The benefits of this research are twofold. Theoretically, it is expected to enhance scholarly insights, particularly in the field of Quranic sciences and exegesis, by understanding the ecological concepts in the Quran and their preservation through Gainpala's activities. Practically, the research is anticipated to serve as a resource for comprehending ecological concepts in the Quran and as a knowledge base for fostering sustainable environments.

This study is a type of field research employing a qualitative approach. Field research necessitates that researchers directly engage in the field to obtain data and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the field's conditions.⁸ Data collection occurs on-site to depict, elucidate, and address issues surrounding a phenomenon or event under study. Researchers utilize various techniques, including observation, interviews, and documentation, to gather data. The informants selected for this study are members of the *Gabungan Mahasiswa UIN Ar-Raniry Pecinta Alam (GAINPALA)*. Purposive sampling is employed as the technique to select informants for this research

Understanding Ecological Verses among Gainpala's Environmental Care Student Organization (UKM PA-LH) Members

1. The Understanding of Gainpala's Environmental Care Student Organization (UKM PA-LH) Members Regarding Ecology

Gainpala is a community of nature enthusiasts engaged in environmental conservation and education on environmental issues prevalent in society. To enhance environmental preservation, one of the essential aspects to master is an understanding of ecology and the supporting factors for achieving environmental preservation, according to Gainpala members. As stated by Gainpala's chairman, Muhammad Rizki:

"Ecology encompasses everything existing in the universe; this is referred to as ecology."⁹

⁸J.R. Raco, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Jenis, Karakteristik dan Keunggulannya*, (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2010), 9.

⁹ The outcome of Interview with Muhammad Rizki, Chairman, Permanent Member of Gainpala on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

Based on the research findings, it was observed that, in general, Gainpala members share a common understanding of ecology, which involves the reciprocal relationship between humans and their environment. However, there is a difference between permanent members and young members in terms of emphasis on environmental preservation efforts. Young members are more proficient in the practical application of ecology, while permanent members have a broader conceptual understanding, albeit less involved in practical implementation. The differing approaches to environmental conservation include aspects such as environmental cleanliness and environmental awareness campaigns.

2. Understanding of Gainpala's PA-LH UKM Members Regarding Verses on Ecology

After conducting interviews with informants, Gainpala members in general are already aware of the messages conveyed by the verses of the Qur'an regarding ecology, such as the prohibition of causing harm to the earth. However, all the research informants were unable to explain the ecological verses found in the Qur'an comprehensively, including both the verses and the ecological concepts. Despite being on a campus affiliated with Islam in Aceh, the informants should have a thorough understanding of ecological concepts. This understanding is crucial for the effective implementation of environmental conservation efforts. Muhammad Raihan stated that:

"Allah prohibits us from causing harm, as reflected in Gainpala's slogan, 'Nature is never dirty without human intervention,' which is also derived from one of the verses of the Qur'an. This verse means, 'Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by reason of what the hands of people have earned.' Therefore, in the implementation of Gainpala's activities, the messages of the Qur'an are always conveyed."¹⁰

Essentially, Gainpala was born bearing the prestigious name of UIN Ar-Raniry; therefore, all of its programs are based on the Qur'an and Hadith, as the foundation of all knowledge is the Qur'an and Hadith. Based on the interviews with the informants, it is evident that the majority of Gainpala members understand the ecological messages in the Qur'an. However, they do not know the specific verses in detail. As a community of nature lovers, Gainpala has never conducted studies on the concepts of ecological verses in the Qur'an and Hadith. In its implementation, Gainpala has already carried out activities

¹⁰ The outcome of Interview with Muhammad Raihan, HRD, Permanent Member of Gainpala on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

based on the Qur'an and Hadith. Thus, there is alignment between what is recommended in the Qur'an and what Gainpala applies in the field.

Implementation of Understanding Ecological Verses in Gainpala's PA-LH UKM

1. Implementation of Gainpala's PA-LH UKM Members' Understanding of Ecology

a. Environmental Cleanliness

The importance of maintaining a clean environment plays a crucial role as the foremost foundation to ensure a suitable environment, thereby enabling communities to effectively fulfill their conservation responsibilities, as articulated by Gainpala Permanent member Muhammad Rizki:

"When public awareness regarding the importance of environmental preservation increases, it directly contributes to enhanced well-being. With heightened public consciousness, behaviors such as refraining from littering and opting for recyclable materials have become commonplace, fostering the aspiration for an improved clean environment."¹¹

Based on the aforementioned viewpoints, it is evident that achieving a clean environment hinge on individual or collective societal awareness regarding the significance of maintaining cleanliness and health. However, emphasis must be placed on shaping a clean environment in various locales by fostering environmental consciousness and awareness of the repercussions of environmental degradation. The lack of sensitivity among communities towards environmental preservation remains a frequent challenge in executing activities. Community awareness regarding environmental matters is still inadequate, and continuous and periodic reminders are necessary to reinforce knowledge, particularly concerning cleanliness and maintenance.

b. The Importance of Environmental Education

Increasing knowledge about the environment is essential for achieving sustainable environmental practices comprehensively. It is crucial to cultivate a movement or policy aimed at combating environmental pollution. Government support and policies, coupled with the awareness that arises from society itself, are indispensable for realizing sustainable environments within the general populace. Direct community participation plays a crucial role in optimizing social awareness, which in turn revitalizes the spirit of collective responsibility within society. Gainpala permanent member Riris stated:

¹¹ The outcome of the Interview with Muhammad Rizki, Chairman, Permanent Member of Gainpala on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

"The attainment of a clean environment is not solely dependent on how we maintain it but also on preventing further deterioration. One of the most effective ways is through environmental education. In this regard, the role of the government is paramount in formulating policies for the sustainability of the environment."¹²

Based on the interview findings, it is evident that one of the methods to sustain the environment is by increasing environmental knowledge. However, this must be accompanied by positive environmental activities such as tree planting, coral reef transplantation, and others to ensure the creation of a healthy and peaceful environment. Support and awareness from the community are crucial for achieving sustainable environments within society.

2. Implementation of Gainpala's PA-LH UKM Members' Understanding of Ecological Verses

Gainpala develops work programs that align with the broader community's needs for environmental preservation. On specific days, such as Earth Day or Environmental Day, Gainpala invites the entire community to participate in executing these programs. Additionally, governmental institutions are involved in advocating for the preservation of the surrounding environment.

a. Tree Planting and Environmental Greening around the UIN Ar-Raniry University, Banda Aceh

It is understood that the benefits of green plants originate from Allah, who sends rain from the sky. This rainwater nurtures plants that will later be consumed by humans and animals. Besides serving as food, plants also contribute to the economy by providing livelihoods for people. Feny also adds:

"Gainpala plays a significant role in raising awareness among the community about sustainable environments. This requires increased attention from the Aceh government in efforts to create a healthy and sustainable environment and to further support Gainpala's annual work programs."¹³

Based on the interviews with Gainpala members, it was revealed that positive activities such as tree planting are highly beneficial and should continue to be carried out. These

¹² The outcome of the interview with Riris Aryani, General Secretary, Permanent Member of Gainpala, on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

¹³ The outcome of the interview with Riris Aryani, General Secretary, Permanent Member of Gainpala, on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

activities not only benefit the UIN community but also broader society. However, younger members of Gainpala responded to this greening initiative by emphasizing the importance of starting with oneself first. Furthermore, in its implementation, there should be a greater emphasis on conveying verses related to ecology.

b. Maintaining Natural Balance (Conservation)

(1) Cave Expedition in the Pidie Region

In March 2021, after the COVID-19 virus had subsided, Gainpala resumed its activities. The activity was named "Cave Expedition in the Pidie Region," with three caves to be explored: Cave Tujoh, Cave Tok Ara, and Cave Krueng. Nurhafiza stated:

"This expedition is crucial given the significant environmental damage occurring, particularly the caves in the Pidie region, which are under threat from mining activities, as observed during our field survey."¹⁴

Based on the above interview, it can be understood that Gainpala members have been actively involved in implementing measures to maintain natural balance. They play a significant role in reminding the community to engage in conservation efforts, transforming places initially regarded as places of worship into areas of greater significance. It emphasizes that the benefits of preserving nature are to be enjoyed collectively.

(2) Tanoh Gayo Twin Peak Expedition

Mountain climbing is an adventurous activity in the wilderness, aiming to ascend to higher elevations and reach the mountain peak. Muhammad Rizki stated:

"This expedition is crucial not only to support Gainpala's activities but also to convey to the community the severe consequences of forest destruction."¹⁵

Gainpala, as environmental enthusiasts and preservers, has long been dedicated to this noble task, despite often being perceived unfavorably by the general public. In reality, Gainpala serves as a solution to the current environmental dilemmas. Upon closer examination, Gainpala members consistently prioritize religious principles in their activities, as all activities are guided and structured based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

¹⁴ The outcome of the interview with Nurhafiza, Treasurer General and Permanent Member of Gainpala, on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

¹⁵ The outcome of the Interview with Muhammad Rizki, Chairman, Permanent Member of Gainpala on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

Based on the interviews with the aforementioned informant, it is evident that in their implementation, Gainpala members consistently prioritize religious values in every activity, whether related to the environment or human interaction. Support and attention are consistently directed towards environmental preservation. In this regard, it is found that Gainpala members have been practicing and applying ecological verses in their activities. Although some may not fully comprehend the ecological verses found in the Qur'an, their implementation aligns with the directives of the Qur'an.

(3) Coral Reef Transplantation

The Student Activity Unit of Environmental Preservation and Care (UKM PA-LH) Gainpala at the Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Ar-Raniry conducted a member release event to participate in the Coral Reefs Transplantation on Tuan Island, held at the UIN Ar-Raniry Rectorate Building field. Feny Annisa Ghaisani stated:

"I hope that students will be more active and sensitive towards the environment, especially the oceans, as the Earth is renowned for its vast seas."¹⁶

The issue of oceans will continue to be an ongoing concern, especially in the future. The Qur'an has warned that the oceans were created by Allah for the benefit of humanity, allowing them to derive benefits such as fishing, navigation, and valuable items found beneath the sea.

Based on the interview results with the informant, it is evident that Gainpala members have endeavored to preserve the oceans with the hope that the community will also benefit from these activities. This serves as an encouragement for the community to always protect the oceans because if humans cause damage, the repercussions will ultimately affect themselves. Therefore, many verses in the Qur'an prohibit causing harm to the earth.

c. Constantly reciting verses from the Qur'an at the beginning of every activity

One form of implementing ecological verses in Gainpala is by consistently starting activities with the recitation of one or two verses from the Qur'an, seeking forgiveness and blessings for the smooth progress of the activity. Muhammad Rizki stated:

¹⁶ The Outcome of the interview with Feny Annisa Ghaisani, a young member of Gainpala, on March 15, 2023, at the Gainpala Secretariat.

"Every activity should always commence with the recitation of Qur'anic verses, whether indoors or outdoors, as through the recitation, we seek blessings and hope for the smooth progression of the event." ¹⁷

Based on the interview with the informant, it is understood that Gainpala members always recite one or two verses from the Qur'an before starting any activity. Despite differing opinions regarding the obligation to recite and traditions, this practice is consistently observed whether indoors or outdoors during activities.

Conclusion

Gainpala members' understanding of ecology generally involves knowing the basics of environmental conservation both in theory and practice. The primary effort in achieving a sustainable and healthy environment is maintaining cleanliness and providing comprehensive environmental education, thereby educating the community to be more aware of their surrounding environment.

However, Gainpala members' understanding of ecological verses is not yet comprehensive. This may be due to a lack of direct study of these verses. Nevertheless, they understand the essence of ecological verses, which emphasize humanity's prohibition from causing harm to the Earth while also urging the preservation of nature as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT.

To address environmental issues, Gainpala members have implemented numerous activities aligned with the directives of Allah in the Qur'an. Activities such as greening initiatives and environmental conservation efforts are examples of positive actions undertaken by Gainpala for a sustainable living environment.

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