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## Ecotheology in Action: The Strategic Role of Religious Identity in FNKSDA's Environmental Movement

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**Nur Anis Rochmawati**

UIN Sunan Ampel,

Indonesia

Email:

nuranis189@gmail.com

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### Abstract

The escalating ecological crisis driven by capitalist expansion has prompted new approaches to environmental activism, including those rooted in religious traditions. In Indonesia, structural failures in natural resource governance have further marginalized rural communities, prompting faith-based responses. This research explores how the Front Nahdliyyin untuk Kedaulatan Sumber Daya Alam (FNKSDA) strategically mobilizes religious identity and cultural practices to advance ecological justice. Using a qualitative, descriptive-interpretative method, the research gathers data through library research and online ethnographic observation, including organizational publications and digital media. Analysis combines interpretive tracing of ecotheological thought and descriptive mapping of FNKSDA's advocacy strategies. The findings show that FNKSDA integrates progressive Islamic values with Nahdliyyin cultural traditions, including *pesantren*, *silaturahmi*, and *istighāthah*, to build grassroots solidarity and mobilize resistance. Religious identity functions not only as a moral framework but also as a strategic resource in socio-ecological movements. The implication of this research is that religious traditions can play a transformative role in environmental activism, offering alternative frameworks of resistance beyond secular and legal-political approaches.

**Keywords:** Ecotheology; Religious Tradition; Development; FNKSDA; Nahdliyyin

Krisis ekologi yang semakin meningkat akibat ekspansi kapitalisme telah mendorong lahirnya pendekatan-pendekatan baru dalam aktivisme lingkungan, termasuk yang berakar pada tradisi keagamaan. Di Indonesia, kegagalan struktural dalam tata kelola sumber daya alam semakin meminggirkan komunitas pedesaan, sehingga mendorong munculnya respons berbasis agama. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana Front Nahdliyyin untuk Kedaulatan Sumber Daya Alam (FNKSDA) secara strategis memobilisasi identitas keagamaan dan praktik budaya dalam memperjuangkan keadilan ekologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-interpretatif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi pustaka dan observasi daring terhadap publikasi FNKSDA dan media digital. Analisis dilakukan dengan menelusuri pemikiran ekoteologis FNKSDA secara interpretatif serta memetakan strategi advokasinya secara deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa FNKSDA mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam progresif dengan tradisi budaya Nahdliyyin – termasuk *pesantren*, *silaturahmi*, dan *istigāthah* – untuk membangun solidaritas akar rumput dan mengorganisasi perlawanan. Identitas keagamaan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kerangka moral, tetapi juga sebagai sumber daya strategis dalam gerakan sosial-ekologis. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah bahwa tradisi keagamaan memiliki potensi transformatif dalam aktivisme lingkungan, menawarkan kerangka perlawanan alternatif di luar pendekatan sekuler dan politik-hukum.

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The global ecological crisis has become increasingly urgent alongside the massive expansion of capitalism that has caused environmental destruction across continents. The extraction of natural resources, industrialization, and growth-oriented development have led to ecosystem degradation, unequal distribution of resources, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups (FNKSDA 2023b; French 2022). Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the role of civil society organizations in environmental issues has become increasingly important. They have built transnational advocacy networks, influenced sustainability standards in the private sector and advanced global environmental diplomacy (Ardhian, Adiwibowo, and Wahyuni 2016). This situation demonstrates that the ecological crisis is a multidimensional problem that requires the involvement of state actors, the market, and transnational communities.

In Indonesia, ecological problems include forced displacement, land-use conversion, and the large-scale exploitation of land, forests, coastal areas, and small islands (DaulatHijau 2019a; Pasapan 2020). Regulations that should serve as safeguards—such as Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights and Law No. 32/2009 on Environmental Protection and Management—often fail to provide substantive guarantees (Herwati and Khalid 2020; Konsorsium Pembangunan Agraria 2023). Environmental court rulings frequently disappoint affected communities because they tend to side with corporate or political party interests (Rochmani and Faozi 2018; Kalmirah, Prayogo, and Adnan 2023). This situation reveals structural inequalities in environmental governance, where farmers, fishers, and Indigenous peoples become the most vulnerable victims.

In this context, religion holds a strategic position. Religious teachings, rituals, and practices shape ethical awareness toward nature and

can drive social participation and policy advocacy that favor ecological justice (Gottlieb 2006; Khalid and Fansuri 2024). Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), as the largest religious organization with a rural social base, carries a moral and social responsibility to protect the vulnerable groups most affected by the ecological crisis (Ubaidillah 2018). However, NU has been considered less than optimal in articulating environmental issues as a priority agenda, which has led to the emergence of alternative initiatives from within its grassroots base, one of which is the Nahdliyyin Front for the Sovereignty of Natural Resources (FNKSDA).

Previous studies on the relationship between religion and ecological crisis have developed significantly since Lynn White's classic critique (1968), which argued that Judeo-Christian traditions contributed to human domination over nature. Recent works emphasize the importance of eco-justice and cross-tradition ecotheology (Vasseur and Paterson 2017; Jenkins 2018; Eaton 2019). In Indonesia, this discourse has been articulated by Nasaruddin Umar (2024), who calls for rereading Abrahamic texts on humans as *khalifah* without opposing science and religion. Likewise, research by Abdul Kodir and In'amul Mushoffa (2017) and Wahyu Saepudin (2021) highlights how FNKSDA grounds its socio-ecological struggle in the Qur'an, Hadith, and *Aswaja* traditions. Ali Murtadho, M. Balya Abul Abbas, M. Ubaidillah, and Moh. Zidni Ilman Nafia demonstrate the integration of *mustadh'afin* hermeneutics with Marxist epistemology in producing the concept of 'Progressive *Aswaja*'. At the same time, Ali Ilham Almujaaddidy (2019) underscores the construction of an *Aswaja*-based ecotheology that enriches Islamic political ecology.

Nevertheless, these studies emphasize the theological and epistemological aspects of FNKSDA's movement. In contrast fewer studies examine how religious identity is strategically mobilized to build networks, solidarity, and ecological programs. Global literature, however, shows that religious identity can serve as a collective resource that provides social

legitimacy, mobilization bases, and moral resonance in environmental movements (Jenkins et al. 2020; Gottlieb 2020; Guner and Ozturk 2021; Yildirim and Koc 2022; Zelinsky 2023). This highlights an important research gap: the discourse on Islamic ecotheology in Indonesia should not remain confined to texts and doctrines but must include social-religious mobilization practices within contemporary ecological contexts.

This article aims to explore how FNKSDA uses religious identity as a strategy in advancing ecological justice in Indonesia. Academically, this study contributes to the enrichment of literature on the relationship between religion and ecology by presenting empirical dimensions of the role of faith-based civil society organizations. Furthermore, this article offers a theoretical contribution on religion as a strategic asset in the politics of knowledge and socio-ecological movements, while also expanding global debates on eco-justice within the Indonesian Islamic context.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-interpretative approach. The qualitative method is chosen because it is appropriate for exploring in depth the advocacy processes and the intellectual construction of FNKSDA concerning ecological issues. The research focuses on how FNKSDA mobilizes religious discourse and practices in the struggle for the right to a healthy environment, with particular emphasis on contextual understanding and tracing meanings embedded in the organization's narratives and activities.

Data collection techniques include library research and online observation. The library research involves examining key works of FNKSDA figures such as Muhammad Al-Fayyadl and Roy Murtadho, along with relevant books, journal articles, and theses. In addition, secondary data are obtained from media coverage and previous research. Meanwhile, online observation is done by monitoring FNKSDA's activities

through its official website (fnksda.or.id) and social media platforms. This observation covers public discourse, solidarity actions, and documentation of activities across different regions, providing a comprehensive picture of the organization's advocacy strategies.

The data are analyzed using interpretative and descriptive models. The interpretative analysis traces the genealogy of FNKSDA's ecotheological thought and its underlying ideological framework. The descriptive analysis aims to map out the forms of FNKSDA's activism, including its networks, programs, and advocacy strategies. The combination of these two models enables the researcher to reveal the conceptual dimensions and explain the concrete practices of FNKSDA's advocacy within contemporary socio-ecological arenas.

### **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the study's key findings by exploring how FNKSDA mobilizes religious identity and *Nahdliyin* cultural traditions as strategic resources in advancing ecological justice. It analyzes the socio-political context of ecological degradation in Indonesia and examines how FNKSDA responds through grassroots organizing, cadre development, network building, and ritual-based mobilization. Through Islamic values, progressive political thought, and bottom-up engagement, FNKSDA exemplifies a unique model of faith-based environmental activism. The discussion highlights the organization's approaches – such as the Agrarian *Pesantren*, *silaturahmi*, and *istighāthah* – as integral practices that bridge theology, tradition, and resistance. These findings illuminate how religious communities can play a transformative role in confronting capitalist-driven ecological crises.

#### **1. Capitalism and Its Impact on Ecology in Indonesia**

The Democracy, defined as 'people's rule based on popular control and political equality' (Uhlir 1993), remains elite-centered. The domination

of state instruments by oligarchic powers has caused the priorities and agendas of natural resource governance to fall under the control of a small group of interests (*Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria* 2023). Today, Indonesian society is facing a situation in which capital-owning classes are becoming increasingly consolidated. Moreover, deadly collaborations between capital owners and the state—with all its power apparatuses—are aggressively pursued (FNKSDA 2023b). This strengthening of oligarchic politics has weakened the quality of democracy by shrinking the space for civil society participation, particularly in the governance of natural resources (Suryani et al. 2021). Existing regulations and policies tend to facilitate acquisitions by large-scale corporations and mega-projects backed by the state (*Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria* 2023).

Capital operations in the extractive industry, which almost always disregard environmental carrying capacity and the existence of vital community livelihoods, have resulted in crises across various aspects of life—poverty, socio-ecological disruption, inequality in agrarian resource control, and a crisis in social reproduction (*Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria* 2023). Among the many cases that have occurred are: the industrial disaster caused by PT Lapindo Brantas, which resulted in hot mud eruptions that wiped out the living space of much of the Sidoarjo community; iron sand mining on the southern coast of Kulon Progo, which faced strong resistance from the *Paguyuban Petani Lahan Pasir* (PPLP); the construction of Yogyakarta International Airport; land grabbing by sand mining corporations, the military, and other actors in Urutsewu, Kebumen; the 10,000-megawatt coal-fired power plant project in Batang, Central Java; and extensive exploitation of natural resources in Kalimantan, Sumatra, and other regions (Widayati and Suparjan 2019).

Structurally, these agrarian conflicts can be understood as land grabbing by state-owned and private enterprises, facilitated by government policy and directed by capital interests (*Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria*

2023). Here, the state plays a role in creating policy schemes, legal frameworks, and mobilizing its apparatus to execute these practices – from dispossession to profit extraction. The legal framework that facilitates dispossession ultimately legitimizes violence and normalizes the notion that ‘public interest’ (i.e., corporate interest) is equivalent to development for the greater good. This narrative continues to be constructed to conceal the fact that dispossession through violence and exclusion is taking place, as if nothing is wrong. In reality, the displacement and marginalization of farmers from their land – regardless of local histories or long-standing residency – amount to nothing more than an economic push to expand zones of resource extraction, production, labor, and consumer markets (Eka S 2023).

## **2. FNKSDA and the Spirit of Ecotheology**

The FNKSDA movement, established through a thematic discussion titled ‘NU and Natural Resource Governance Conflicts’ on July 4, 2013, at the LKiS Pavilion in Yogyakarta, holds a vision to ‘realize the ideals of liberation for the *mustad'afin*; to strengthen and support the struggle for democracy and anti-capitalism in Indonesia; to achieve popular sovereignty with a spirit of socio-ecological justice; and to foster public awareness and sensitivity toward all forms of colonization and oppression’ (FNKSDA 2023b). This movement is grounded in the spirit of ‘Islamic Socialism,’ based on the argument that aligning Islamic and socialist intellectual traditions in FNKSDA's struggle clarifies the contradiction between ‘what ought to be’ (Islamic ideals) and ‘what is’ (contemporary global capitalism), thus opening a practical path toward resolution (French 2022).

While critical studies of capitalism serve as FNKSDA's primary intellectual tool to diagnose and respond to large-scale destruction and to determine paths of resistance, Islamic values underline FNKSDA's normative relationship with the environment. A key point in FNKSDA's

engagement with Islam is its emphasis on a third ethical axis in addition to the two commonly known principles: human-to-human relations (*hablun min an-nas*) and human-to-God relations (*hablun min Allah*). FNKSDA stresses a third relationship: human-to-nature (*hablun min al-'alam*) (French 2022). As the foundation of its struggle, FNKSDA interprets religious texts (the Qur'an and Hadith) on environmental themes using a liberationist rationality (Almujaddidy 2019). For example, Surah al-Rum: 41 triggers critical public awareness about the importance of sovereign natural resource governance. Islamic Socialism is positioned as the practical embodiment of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation), which situates FNKSDA's tactical engagement squarely within a class-based struggle (Setiawan n.d.).

For FNKSDA activists, anti-capitalist organizing is a vital effort to preserve Islamic values and defend a way of religious life that they believe is under threat from capitalist expansion and its associated violence and destruction (French 2022). FNKSDA's presence as a progressive Muslim environmental movement asserts that religion exists not only in abstract normative domains, but also plays a concrete and vital role in the trajectory of civilization. Religion not only offers conceptual frameworks on major development issues, but also actively participates in addressing them in practice (Amin 2023). With the spirit of progressive Islam and a post-traditionalist paradigm, FNKSDA activists—who come from the *Nahdliyin* tradition—seek to reintroduce Islamic values not only in private, spiritual spaces but also as a spirit of liberation in collective struggles (Abbas 2021).

FNKSDA was not established through a top-down decree from the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU), but rather by progressive-minded Muslim environmental activists from across various regions, disillusioned with the permissiveness of mainstream Islamic groups—especially the NU elite (French 2022). The movement's starting point lies in rural communities, particularly grassroots *Nahdliyin* who are the most



directly impacted by environmentally destructive industrial growth. Roy Murtadho (National Coordinator of FNKSDA) stated firmly:

We, individually and collectively, are firmly fighting for political economy through the cultural movement of the *Nahdliyin* to oppose capitalism. We are honestly disappointed with those in NU's leadership structure who are closely networked with capitalists, funders, and corporate figures. They are the political actors of this country. We stand with the marginalized – the ones whose land is taken, whose living spaces are destroyed. NU was founded to uphold the welfare of the ummah. However seeing people in NU's structural leadership aligning themselves with 'the enemy,' we have taken up the role ourselves. (Murtadho 2019)

As a cultural NU movement, FNKSDA functions as a form of auto-critique against NU itself—especially under the Jokowi administration, in which many NU elites align with the president's infrastructure development agenda that threatens community living spaces (French 2022). In addressing environmental problems, NU elites often adopt a top-down approach, issuing fatwas or establishing institutions that generally fail to accommodate grassroots ideas or needs (Dewayanti and Saat 2020). Rather than resolving problems, this top-down model—mostly representing elite perspectives—frequently generates new community challenges (Friedman 1992). In contrast, FNKSDA's bottom-up approach emphasizes active community involvement, positioning local people as the primary decision-makers in development policy (Wicaksono 2019). FNKSDA activists engage in direct assistance and advocacy by immersing themselves in local communities and building networks with regional organizations and leaders affected by agrarian crises (Abbas 2021).

FNKSDA's collective actors are generally educated *santri* embedded in a hybrid culture, combining religious and general/social science knowledge. They develop theological discourses tied to environmental and natural resource issues and then translate them into concrete social movement practices. To push for more radical natural resource management, FNKSDA not only relies on the *Nahdliyin* identity of its members and sympathizers but also embraces marginalized and oppressed

groups (*mustadh'afin*) (Setiawan n.d.). FNKSDA continuously campaigns to shift away from the idea that the state represents the people, advocating instead for direct public ownership and management of natural resources – based on the principles of ‘community sovereignty’ and ‘economic democracy’ as enshrined in the Constitution. As an open, mass-based organization, FNKSDA employs a hegemonic strategy. It does not directly lead a ‘class’ but rather strengthens class identity and continues to fight within class terrain (Nashirulhaq 2017).

Genealogically, NU emerged as a creative response to the growing wave of Islamic purification movements in various regions. As a socio-religious organization, NU has persistently defended cultural Islam by rooting it deeply within community life. NU views Islam and local culture as distinct but inseparable. *Nahdliyin* give high regard to local culture (Hidayatullah 2014). For NU, separating religion from culture in Indonesia's historical experience is nearly impossible. Through the ‘Islam Nusantara’ paradigm formalized at the International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders (May 2016), NU emphasizes tolerance in two major areas: toward religious minorities and toward local cultural expressions in religious rituals (Kato 2021). Azyumardi Azra describes Islam Nusantara as a distinctive form of Islam shaped through interaction, contextualization, indigenization, and vernacularization (Azra 2002). NU – as the originator of the term – has always preserved religious rituals considered part of Indonesia's traditional Islamic identity, such as *istighāthah* (Hasan 2018).

*Istighāthah* and NU appear inseparable. Rubaidi argues that, as part of the traditional Islamic community (NU), *istighāthah* is one of the most authentic symbolic traditions rooted in classical Islamic heritage from the Middle East (Rubaidi 2009). This ritual gained prominence in the late 1990s, when NU *kiai* encouraged collective prayer and supplication to Allah in public settings. Upholding the principle of *al-muhafazah 'ala al-qadim al-*

*shalih wa al-akhdu bi al-jadid al-aslah*, NU remains committed to preserving tradition, with *istighāthah* as a common and routine practice (Fitriati and Makhfud 2022). The ritual serves as a spiritual act involving remembrance (*dhikr*), invocation of Allah's names, and communal prayer for peace, clarity, ease, and success—performed after all material efforts have been made (Yuwono 2015). For NU, *istighāthah* is a sacred cultural heritage that must be preserved (Abshar n.d.).

Beyond religious rituals, NU's role in preserving tradition is also evident in its maintenance of *pesantren*—Islamic educational institutions long upheld by traditional clerics to educate students and preserve the continuity of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia (Hidayatullah 2014). As Nurcholish Madjid noted, *pesantren* are indigenous civilizational artifacts, functioning as unique and traditional institutions of Islamic learning (Madjid 1997). Although not all *pesantren* are formally affiliated with NU, the two are almost inseparable. Understanding NU's traditions is nearly impossible without grasping the *pesantren* tradition (Marom 2012). This bond exists because NU as an organization was born, grew, and developed within the *pesantren* environment (Ala 2010). Indeed, NU's founders envisioned it as an internal transformative agent of Islamic education institutions (Hidayatullah 2014). Historically, NU's movement and leadership have largely been represented by figures from the *pesantren* community (Marom 2012).

### **3. FNKSDA's Movement for Environmental Protection**

#### **a. Creating Grassroots Actors through Agrarian Pesantren**

FNKSDA operates free from sectarian or partisan interests of specific figures or political groups. They carry out their activities independently while continuously building alliances and creating new actors in every region. Through Regional Coordinators (*Korda*) spread across Indonesia, FNKSDA consistently conducts education, cadre formation, advocacy,

research, and development in each locality. As emphasized in the Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART), Article 8 states that ‘each regional coordinator is obliged to ensure the implementation of cadre development, education, advocacy, and the operation of the Research and Development Bureau’ (Komite Nasional FNKSDA 2015). The Agrarian *Pesantren*, held periodically by FNKSDA, functions as a recruitment and learning platform for new actors to deepen their understanding of environmental issues (Murtadho 2019). This program reaches diverse groups—not only *santri* (Nahdliyin cadres), students, urban poor, industrial workers, rural laborers, and small farmers, but anyone who feels called to help create a more just and sustainable world. The program has since been expanded and implemented in various locations (Arifin 2024).

As a program originally designed for cadre recruitment, the Agrarian *Pesantren* provides a foundation of faith, understanding, and basic technical skills necessary for agrarian justice advocacy. The goal is for cadres to understand the principles and mission of FNKSDA before committing to join the struggle. This program's core vision is to increase the number of cadres, and more importantly, to cultivate and maintain their long-term commitment. FNKSDA's network strength relies not merely on cadre quantity, but on the sustainability of individual commitment (Arifin 2024). The Agrarian *Pesantren* curriculum includes essential subjects such as progressive Islam, Islam and political movements in Indonesia, and the history of agrarian-ecological politics (FNKSDA 2023a). Participants are encouraged to read critical political economy works, contemporary ecological studies in Indonesia, and Islamic Left literature (French 2022), focusing on political economy, capitalism, and gender. In terms of Islamic content, in addition to classical sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith, *ijma'*, and *qiyas*, the program also incorporates values from the *ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* tradition (FNKSDA 2023a). By naming the program *pesantren*, FNKSDA underscores its deep roots in NU's local wisdom. They adopt the

terminology associated with NU's educational institutions and frame the curriculum around natural resource sovereignty, environmental justice, and agrarian issues through theological, cultural, and movement-based lenses grounded in NU community traditions (Murtadho 2019).

**b. *Silaturahmi as a Network-Building Strategy***

FNKSDA realizes it cannot face capitalist expansion alone, which drives it to form partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals. As a movement rooted in the *Nahdliyin* tradition, FNKSDA builds relations not only with environmental organizations like WALHI, LBH, Kontras, Green Christians, and JATAM (Widayati and Suparjan 2019), but also with *Nahdliyin* figures and communities. To grow the movement and garner wider public support, FNKSDA employs the traditional method of *silaturahmi*. This outreach begins with NU officials—at the branch, provincial, or national level—who remain neutral or side with the people's interests. In areas where NU elites support corporations, FNKSDA first strengthens its grassroots presence. Once politically prepared, FNKSDA may move forward with initiatives such as environmental *halaqah*, Agrarian *Pesantren*, or political ecology study circles to engage *Nahdliyin* youth (Ubaidillah 2018).

*Silaturahmi*, a form of interpersonal communication deeply embedded in Indonesian culture, serves as a social connector and an effective strategy for building sustainable partnerships. These forums become spaces for sharing stories and news, fostering empathy, mutual encouragement, and collectively imagining a public consciousness of shared class identity and a common pursuit of justice (FNKSDA 2024). At its core, *silaturahmi* enhances communication, warmth, and trust—facilitating information exchange and cooperation (Muttaqin 2020). For FNKSDA, this approach strengthens bonds among stakeholders including government, communities, and NGOs. Effective networks improve

information flow, optimize resources, and enable more efficient project implementation.

FNKSDA's cultural ties with NU give it additional leverage for movement expansion. Collaborations with NU leadership—from the national to the local level—have significantly smoothed FNKSDA's activities (Setiawan n.d.). This was evident in the struggle of Silo residents who opposed a proposed mining project. Besides widespread solidarity, PCNU Jember supported the movement, issuing a *bahtsul masail* ruling that declared gold mining in the area haram due to environmental damage, land conflict escalation, and ecological disaster threats. The community won the struggle with persistent effort and broad support, including PCNU Jember (Muarif 2023).

**c. *Istighāthah: A Strategy for Mass Mobilization***

FNKSDA utilizes *istighāthah*, a religious ritual rooted in the *Nahdliyin* tradition, to strengthen resistance efforts and limit the influence of NU elites who have acted contrary to grassroots interests (Widayati and Suparjan 2019). For instance, the Green Sumenep Forum mobilized residents through *istighāthah* to seek divine protection from destructive environmental exploitation. On October 8, 2019, FNKSDA Sumenep, in collaboration with BATAN (*Barisan Ajaga Nak Poto*) and PCNU Sumenep, protested the conversion of land into shrimp farms by holding a mass *istighāthah* at Badur Beach. FNKSDA also conducted *istighāthah* in Kendeng (March 27, 2015) for the protection of the Kendeng Mountains and Indonesia's natural resources, and in Tegaldowo, Rembang, in response to threats from cement mining and factories (FNKSDA 2015). Similar actions took place with communities affected by PT. RUM's pollution, where hundreds gathered in prayer seeking divine intervention (DaulatHijau 2019b).

Using *istighāthah* as a starting point is strategic for engaging *Nahdliyin* communities as subjects and objects in environmental

development. This approach stems from observations that religious ritual lies at the heart of *Nahdliyin* life. FNKSDA recognizes *istighāthah* as a valuable community asset—an essential tool and target of their activism. Through these rituals, FNKSDA raises awareness of social issues and builds committed, cohesive communities. Combining spiritual energy and concrete action is key to strengthening the movement's societal impact. *Istighāthah* creates a shared sacred space that fosters collective identity and unity. In societies often fractured by differing views and interests, such practices offer unifying opportunities. Collective prayer not only expresses hope and aspiration but also builds emotional bonds. This fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the issues encouraging active participation in broader social movements. This affirms Emile Durkheim's insight that religious ritual plays a crucial role in community cohesion (Durkheim 1976). In ritual practices, individuals are willing to submit to the collective will, reinforcing social ties. Religious rituals, in fact, help cultivate a strong sense of community (Arsal 2023).

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study finds that FNKSDA, which emerged from the younger generation of *Nahdliyin*, has successfully developed a model of faith-based socio-ecological movement that integrates critical analysis of capitalism with the cultural values of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). FNKSDA practices its advocacy strategies through a bottom-up approach: recruiting cadres via the Agrarian *Pesantren* program, strengthening networks through the tradition of *silaturahmi*, and mobilizing the masses through religious rituals such as *istighāthah*. In this way, religious identity functions not merely as a normative foundation, but as a strategic asset used to build solidarity, networks, and legitimacy in pursuing ecological justice.

These findings reflect that religion holds significant potential to strengthen socio-ecological movements. FNKSDA demonstrates how

traditional legacies such as *pesantren* and religious practices can be transformed into tools of ecological mobilization that remain relevant in contemporary contexts. This confirms arguments in the global literature that religious identity can serve as a collective resource in environmental movements. The FNKSDA case further illustrates that ecological activism in Indonesia is shaped not only by formal legal and political factors, but also by cultural and spiritual capital embedded within religious communities.

However, this study is limited by its reliance on literature review and online observation, which may not fully capture FNKSDA's internal dynamics or long-term interactions with local communities. Future field research is needed to explore the praxis dimension of this movement, including its forms of resistance, negotiation processes, and impact on public policy. Academically, this study contributes to the discourse on religion and ecology by highlighting religion's role as a mobilizing strategy, not merely a normative reference. It enriches the literature on Islamic ecotheology and broadens global debates on eco-justice within the context of faith-based social movements in Indonesia.

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