



Integrating Islamic Values and Sustainability: The Role of Pesantren in Food Security and Climate Resilience

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Abstract

Climate change is increasingly affecting the socioeconomic structures and livelihood systems of communities. While research on food security and sustainability has largely focused on industrial systems, national policies, and modern technologies, the potential of value and faith-based institutions such as pesantren remains underexplored. This study aims to examine the role of pesantren in integrating Islamic values into sustainable and climate-resilient food systems. A qualitative approach was employed using an integrative literature review of relevant publications from 2015 to 2025. Fifteen key sources were selected from academic databases, including Google Scholar, based on their relevance to productive waqf, pesantren, food security, climate change adaptation, and environmental sustainability. The literature was analyzed thematically and synthesized integratively to identify relationships among religious values, institutional practices, food security, and climate adaptation. The findings indicate that pesantren have significant conceptual potential to support community-based food security through values of self-reliance, social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and productive resource management. The integration of pesantren-based practices and productive waqf may provide a value-oriented framework for strengthening local food systems and community resilience to climate-related challenges. The study implies that pesantren can be positioned not only as Islamic educational institutions but also as potential actors in sustainable food security and climate resilience initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

The world is currently facing serious threats to global resilience, with climate change emerging as one of the contributing factors. Climate change has significantly affected global resilience, particularly in terms of food security and economic stability. Various threats arising from climate change have directly affected food security. This is evidenced by the 2018 Indonesian Food Security Index report published by the Food Security Agency, which indicated a decline in food security conditions in Indonesia. A total of 81 out of 416 regencies and 7 cities received low

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Food Security Index scores based on the indicators of food availability, affordability, and utilization (Mardhiah et al., 2026). These findings indicate the need for multidimensional efforts to strengthen food security so that the national food system can become more resilient to economic and climate changes, as well as social dynamics.

The decline in food security caused by climate change also indicates the vulnerability of developing countries in terms of agricultural systems and socioeconomic conditions, including Indonesia. Given Indonesia's highly diverse geographical conditions, the impacts of climate change on food crop yields do not occur uniformly across the country. The agricultural sector, as a fundamental component of food security, is among the sectors most vulnerable to increasingly extreme climate change (Anjani et al., 2024). The increasing occurrence of extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts, tropical storms, and unstable temperature patterns, has the potential to reduce agricultural production. In addition to disrupting food and agricultural sectors, climate change also has the potential to trigger social instability and widen economic inequality. Its economic impacts are also substantial, with projected losses potentially reaching approximately 3.45% of Indonesia's total Gross Domestic Product in the future (Hakim et al., 2025).

These conditions indicate that adaptation responses cannot rely solely on technological innovation or policy adjustments. Adaptation must also address the values, behaviors, and perspectives of communities, as climate resilience ultimately depends on the extent to which communities are able to collectively transform their lifestyles and decision-making processes. An adaptation approach that relies solely on technological innovation or policy adjustments is therefore insufficient. Various analyses, including the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, emphasize that social values, cultural norms, justice, and local knowledge play important roles in determining whether an adaptation strategy can be accepted and implemented effectively (Carmona et al., 2023). In line with this perspective, O'Brien and Sygna emphasize that changes in societal values and perspectives are an important component of transformative adaptation (O'Brien et al., 2023). Accordingly, a values-based approach can serve as an important foundation for ensuring that adaptation processes are more substantive, inclusive, and sustainable.

Although various studies have examined the technical and policy dimensions of addressing climate change and food security, attention to values-based approaches, including the role of religious institutions such as pesantren, in food security issues remains relatively limited. Nevertheless, the potential and strategic role of pesantren in these areas have received increasing attention. As educational institutions and social communities, pesantren have the potential to contribute to climate change mitigation efforts and the strengthening of food security. This potential is demonstrated, among other initiatives, through the concept of *eco-pesantren*, which seeks to teach students that environmental stewardship is a form of religious commitment to the implementation of Islamic principles. Such practices can be implemented through green curricula and environmentally friendly agricultural practices, the use of clean energy, and climate change adaptation training for students and surrounding communities (Bahri et al., 2026). Although sustainability discourse is currently still dominated by technological and economic approaches, pesantren provide opportunities for transformation through their educational, spiritual, and values-based functions, which can foster environmental awareness both within pesantren communities and in the broader society. This demonstrates that institutions grounded in values and spirituality have the potential to contribute to sustainability studies, which have traditionally focused more heavily on technical solutions.

Previous studies on food security in Indonesia have generally emphasized technical, economic, and policy aspects, while value-based and spiritual dimensions, as well as the role of socio-religious institutions, have received relatively limited in-depth attention (Abdullah, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2025; Medias, 2017). Nevertheless, pesantren occupy a unique position as spaces for education and social interaction and as centers of values that influence community life. This research gap provides the basis for the research question of how pesantren, as value-based institutions, can contribute to strengthening food security and supporting climate change adaptation.

To address this question, this study aims to explain the contribution and function of productive waqf within sustainability systems while exploring the role of pesantren as a model of social institution with the potential to promote climate adaptation at the community level. This conceptual study focuses on three main areas: (1) waqf as a value and practice within the Islamic tradition; (2) the characteristics of pesantren as educational institutions and communities; and (3) their relationship to the sustainability agenda and food security. Within these boundaries, the study is expected to provide an initial, more human-centered and holistic foundation for understanding how values and spirituality can complement technical approaches to addressing climate change.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using an integrative literature review to synthesize and integrate various perspectives on religious values, pesantren institutions, productive waqf, food security, and climate change adaptation. This approach was selected because it enables the integration of diverse conceptual and empirical findings from a range of sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and identify relationships among concepts that have received limited integrated scholarly attention (Arafeh, 2016; Assarroudi et al., 2018; Engkizar et al., 2025; Kyngäs, 2020). Rather than focusing on quantitative measurements, the study emphasized meaning, context, patterns, and relationships among the ideas identified in the literature.

Data were collected through a systematic search of relevant literature from academic sources, including Google Scholar and other scholarly databases. Publications published between 2015 and 2025 were considered to maintain the relevance of the review to contemporary developments. Sources were selected based on inclusion criteria, namely literature addressing one or more aspects related to productive waqf, the strategic role of pesantren, food security, climate change adaptation, environmental sustainability, and social and religious values. Based on the selection process, 15 key sources were included in the analysis, considering their relevance, alignment with the research focus, and contribution to the development of the conceptual framework.

The data sources consisted of three categories. First, academic literature, including journal articles, books, and research reports addressing waqf, pesantren, food security, climate change adaptation, sustainability, and social and religious values. Second, institutional and policy documents, such as waqf management guidelines, eco-pesantren program reports, pesantren policy documents, and documents related to environmental sustainability and food security. These documents were used to enrich the understanding of the implementation of institutional values and practices discussed in the academic literature. Third, conceptual interpretation was conducted on information identified in the literature and documents. This interpretation focused on the context, meaning, patterns of practice, and relationships among concepts emerging from the reviewed sources rather than serving as a substitute for field observation (Bahri et al., 2026; Bakri, 2021; Herdiansyah et al., 2019).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis combined with integrative synthesis. The thematic analysis followed the stages proposed by Braun, including familiarization with the data, identification of relevant patterns and themes, organization of themes, and interpretation of relationships among themes. In this study, the analysis focused on three major thematic categories: (1) religious and social values and principles; (2) institutional practices and the roles of pesantren and productive waqf; and (3) contributions to food security and climate change adaptation. The identified themes were subsequently compared and integrated to examine the conceptual relationships among productive waqf, pesantren, religious values, food security, and environmental sustainability (Braun & Steiger, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2022; Clarke & Braun, 2018; Nemati et al., 2018).

The final stage involved an integrative synthesis to develop a conceptual framework explaining how religious values can be translated into institutional practices within pesantren and productive waqf management oriented toward food security and climate change adaptation. Thus, the review does not merely summarize previous research findings but integrates diverse perspectives to develop a conceptual understanding of the potential role of pesantren and waqf as components of community-based food security and environmental sustainability strategies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Productive waqf represents an innovative form of waqf management in which waqf assets are not merely left idle but are professionally managed to generate sustainable income for the welfare of the community. According to Munawar (2021) productive waqf represents a transformation from traditional waqf into a form of waqf that is professionally managed by a *nazhir* to “increase the beneficial value of waqf assets” (Juliana, 2017; Suprayogi et al., 2023). In the context of strengthening food security, productive waqf can be utilized to support agriculture through waqf land or cash waqf capital managed through *musaqah*, *ijarah*, or other contractual schemes, thereby increasing food production while maintaining land stability (Cahyo & Muqorobin, 2019). In addition, the potential of productive waqf in the energy sector is substantial, as waqf can be invested in renewable energy projects or green economic infrastructure, in line with Islamic economic perspectives on sustainable development (Zaldi & Tanjung, 2023). Examples of its implementation can be observed in productive waqf management models in Indonesia, where *nazhir* develop waqf land into agroproductive areas or utilize cash waqf funds as business capital for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises related to the food sector (Urif et al., 2019). Through structured and professional management, productive waqf is not merely a form of continuous charity but can also serve as a strategic instrument for managing community resources, supporting economic self-reliance while maintaining socioeconomic sustainability.

Spiritual values embedded in the Islamic tradition, particularly through Sufi teachings, provide an important ethical foundation for shaping sustainable behavior. The concept of *zuhd* is one of the key principles relevant to contemporary sustainability issues. From a Sufi perspective, *zuhd* does not mean rejecting worldly life but rather refers to “releasing inner dependence on excessive material pleasures” and encouraging a more conscious lifestyle in managing daily consumption (Zuhdi & Widyawati, 2022). This simple lifestyle is consistent with the concept of a low ecological footprint, in which minimal consumption, self-control, and prioritization of basic needs constitute effective ecological strategies. The social dimension of *zuhd* is also reflected in the promotion of solidarity and simplicity, which not only regulates an individual's relationship with oneself but also with the environment and surrounding community.

This ethical framework is further strengthened by the concept of eco-religious perspectives in Islamic environmental ethics, which explains that the relationship between humans and nature is based on the moral awareness that protecting the Earth is part of a spiritual trust (*amanah*) and provides a philosophical foundation for green economies and social sustainability in Indonesia (Yusali & Suman, 2014). This perspective rejects an exploitative consumerist paradigm and positions humans as stewards (*khalifah*) who are responsible for ensuring the continuity of ecosystems. In this context, simplicity is not merely a personal practice but part of an ecological ethical framework with broader social consequences.

In addition to simplicity, *gotong royong*, or collective mutual assistance, constitutes a strong pillar of social sustainability. Within the framework of resource management, collective action can reduce social costs, maximize available labor, and accelerate task completion. Studies on eco-religious perspectives emphasize that *gotong royong* within religiously grounded communities can strengthen solidarity, efficiency, and social stability, all of which are crucial for responding to rapidly changing environmental and social pressures (Kasdi, 2016). *Gotong royong* also reduces sectoral self-interest and encourages communities to avoid excessive dependence on market mechanisms that tend to promote individualistic behavior.

Furthermore, *adab* and discipline are key elements in maintaining the consistency of sustainable practices. Moral education and the habituation of everyday behaviors, such as self-control, orderliness, and commitment to rules, have direct implications for self-management and adherence to sustainable practices. Studies in Islamic psychology emphasize that self-control developed through the concept of *zuhd* contributes to psychological well-being, the ability to restrain excessive consumer desires, and the maintenance of inner balance, thereby enabling individuals to adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles more consistently (Sari et al., 2025). Thus, *adab* should not be understood merely as abstract morality but as a form of social discipline that functions as a sustainable structure for long-term ecological and social action.

When the values of *zuhd*, *gotong royong*, and discipline are collectively practiced within Muslim communities, particularly in traditional institutions such as pesantren, they can create a social ecosystem with considerable potential for sustainability. Historically, pesantren have maintained cultures of simplicity, togetherness, and daily governance based on *adab*. Within such environments, spiritual values can become durable social dispositions rather than merely formal programs. From an eco-Sufism perspective, spiritually oriented religious practices can structure how people perceive and utilize natural resources, allowing practices such as maintaining cleanliness, conserving energy, managing waste, or implementing organic farming to become rooted in religious behavior rather than being perceived merely as technical ecological requirements (Arre et al., 2021). This values-based orientation enables communities to respond to environmental crises not through fear alone but through spiritual depth and moral discipline.

Furthermore, the framework of Islamic ecological ethics explains that the development of a sustainability-oriented mindset must begin with a proper epistemological understanding of the relationship between humans and nature. When this relationship is understood as one of trust and responsibility, sustainable practices are no longer merely optional but become spiritual and moral obligations embedded in Muslim identity. This approach provides a strong philosophical foundation for values-based sustainability programs rather than approaches based solely on regulation or technocracy (Jaafar et al., 2025). Thus, integrating the values of *zuhd*, simplicity, *gotong royong*, and discipline into social practices can create an ethical ecosystem that serves as a strong foundation for sustainability transformation. Spiritual values not only strengthen individual moral resilience but also create social

structures that are efficient, adaptive, and responsive to contemporary ecological challenges.

Productive waqf plays an important role in strengthening food security through the utilization of waqf land for agriculture. In a case study at Pondok Modern Mantingan, Sunjoto and colleagues found that productively managed waqf land made a tangible contribution to the empowerment of local communities; income generated from waqf-based agriculture improved farmers' livelihoods and increased local community participation in waqf management (Jan et al., 2026). Beyond agriculture, waqf also has substantial potential to provide access to clean water through the development of water-related waqf infrastructure. Akhtar (2024) explained that clean water waqf, when properly managed, can increase agricultural productivity by enabling more stable irrigation for farmers. This also improves community well-being, as the distribution of waqf water through the construction of dedicated pipeline networks can reduce community dependence on expensive and unstable water sources.

In the energy sector, productive waqf can be directed toward environmentally friendly renewable energy projects. A study on energy waqf, including waqf for solar panels and biogas, indicates substantial potential in Indonesia due to the combination of abundant sunlight and growing concern about climate change (Behzadi & Sadrizadeh, 2023). Waqf funds allocated to such energy projects can provide not only short-term material benefits but also contribute to climate change mitigation and local energy stability.

From a social perspective, the benefits of productive waqf are also substantial. As an economic instrument for community welfare, productive waqf can create employment opportunities for local communities, strengthen microeconomic activities, and improve collective well-being. Research by Akhtar (2024) shows that productive waqf can “mobilize” the people's economy through inclusive social investment schemes. In addition, waqf schemes based on *muamalah* contracts, such as *musaqah* in waqf-based agriculture, enable the horizontal redistribution of resources, not only from the wealthy to the less advantaged but also by strengthening connections among communities and social solidarity (Yanti, 2022).

One of the most fundamental barriers to the development of productive waqf is the low level of waqf literacy and environmental literacy among communities and *nazhir*. Many waqf managers do not yet have a comprehensive understanding of productive waqf concepts, particularly in terms of Islamic jurisprudence, management, and ecological sustainability. Mursal et al (2024) emphasize in their study that limited public knowledge about waqf often causes waqf management to stagnate and prevents it from developing into an independent productive model. In addition, Munawar (2021) notes that low environmental literacy and limited understanding of sustainability are factors that weaken the transformation of waqf assets into ecological assets capable of adapting to climate change.

The next challenge concerns technical aspects, particularly the limited competence of *nazhir* in professionally managing waqf assets. Many managers lack technical expertise in sustainable agriculture, water management, and renewable energy. Research by Dzimar et al (2026) demonstrates that limited digital and technological literacy hinders waqf innovation, including the digitalization of management and the use of appropriate technologies to increase productivity. Similar findings were reported by Jan et al (2026), who explained that without technological support and professional human resources, the development of productive waqf is unlikely to reach an optimal scale.

From a funding perspective, a common constraint is the limited availability of initial capital required to transform inactive waqf assets into productive units. Several programs require substantial initial investments in irrigation systems, clean water

infrastructure, agricultural nurseries, or solar panel installations, which cannot be covered by routine waqf funds alone. Priyadi et al (2023) study indicates that challenges in productive waqf are closely related to limited liquidity and the absence of stable business models, making programs economically unsustainable. The absence of innovative financing mechanisms, such as collaboration with government institutions or the private sector, causes many productive waqf initiatives to remain at the conceptual stage (Herdian, 2025).

The most significant challenge identified across many studies is weak waqf governance, particularly in relation to the managerial capacity of *nazhir*. Limited transparency, the absence of standardized reporting, and inadequate long-term planning prevent the potential of productive waqf from being fully realized. The waqf management is often constrained by insufficient professionalization of *nazhir* and the absence of rigorous auditing mechanisms (Ghozali & Annas, 2024). Another challenge that cannot be overlooked is institutional readiness to manage productive waqf, particularly within educational institutions such as pesantren and higher education institutions. Many institutions possess substantial waqf assets with significant development potential but lack the structural readiness required to manage them professionally. Urif et al (2019), emphasize that educational institutions with considerable potential for productive waqf development often face failure because of inadequate internal management, limited training, and insufficient organizational capacity. This situation demonstrates that the success of productive waqf is determined not only by the size of the assets owned but also, to a significant extent, by the institution's capacity to establish effective governance, develop competent human resources, and implement transparent and sustainable operational mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that pesantren have considerable potential as value-based social institutions that can contribute to food security and climate resilience. Their role extends beyond religious education to the formation of values and everyday practices, including simplicity, mutual assistance, discipline, and environmental responsibility. The integration of these values with productive waqf management provides a conceptual pathway for supporting sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and the economic self-reliance of pesantren and surrounding communities.

However, realizing this potential requires stronger environmental literacy, technical capacity, funding mechanisms, and waqf governance. The study therefore highlights the importance of combining religious and community-based values with institutional capacity and cross-sector collaboration. Conceptually, the findings position pesantren and productive waqf as complementary components of sustainability strategies that connect Islamic values with food security and climate resilience. Future empirical studies are needed to examine the implementation and measurable impacts of this framework in pesantren communities.

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