SHIFT KEY
JURNAL TEOLOGI DAN PENGEMBANGAN PELAYANAN
E-ISSN: 2774-4469 | P-ISSN: 2089-3035
(https://jurnal.sttkao.ac.id/index.php/shiftkey)
OPEN ACCESS
VOLUME 16 NOMOR 1
JUNI 2026

Ecotheology-Based Christian Religious Education and Its Impact on Generation Z's Ecological Awareness

Susanti Embong Bulan
(Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Misi William Carey Medan, Indonesia: susantiebulan@gmail.com)

ARTICLE INFO; Received - 13 April 2026; Revised - 26 May 2026; Accepted - 25 June 2026; Available online - 30 June 2026; **DOI:** https://doi.org/10.37465/shifkey.v16i1.582

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi ekoteologi ke dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen serta potensi dampaknya terhadap kesadaran ekologis Generasi Z. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui tinjauan pustaka sistematis, penelitian ini mensintesis berbagai studi interdisipliner di bidang pendidikan lingkungan, teologi, dan pembelajaran generasi.Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan lingkungan semata tidak cukup untuk membentuk perilaku yang konsisten dalam menjaga lingkungan karena masih adanya kesenjangan antara nilai dan tindakan (*value–action gap*). Sebaliknya, ekoteologi menghadirkan dimensi moral dan spiritual yang memperkuat motivasi intrinsik serta tanggung jawab etis terhadap lingkungan. Selain itu, pendidikan berbasis ekoteologi selaras dengan karakteristik belajar Generasi Z, khususnya melalui pendekatan yang partisipatif, kontekstual, dan berbasis pengalaman.Penelitian ini mengusulkan sebuah kerangka konseptual integratif yang menghubungkan dimensi kognitif, afektif, spiritual, dan perilaku dalam pembelajaran ekologis. Namun, karena penelitian ini berbasis kajian literatur, temuan yang dihasilkan masih bersifat konseptual. Oleh karena itu, penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk menguji kerangka tersebut secara empiris melalui desain eksperimen, studi kasus di sekolah dan gereja, serta studi longitudinal pada berbagai konteks budaya dan pendidikan yang beragam

Kata Kunci: ekoteologi, Pendidikan Agama Kristen, kesadaran ekologis, generasi z, pendidikan lingkungan hidup.

Abstract

This study examines the integration of ecotheology into Christian Religious Education and its potential impact on Generation Z's ecological awareness. Using a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review, this research synthesizes interdisciplinary studies in environmental education, theology, and generational learning. The findings reveal that environmental education alone is insufficient to foster consistent pro-environmental behavior due to the persistent value–action gap. In contrast, ecotheology introduces moral and spiritual dimensions that strengthen internal motivation and ethical responsibility. Furthermore, ecotheology-based education aligns with Generation Z's learning characteristics, particularly participatory, contextual, and experiential approaches. This study proposes an integrative conceptual framework that connects cognitive, affective, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions in ecological learning. However, as a literature-based study, its findings remain conceptual. Future research is recommended to empirically test this framework through experimental designs, case studies in schools and churches, and longitudinal studies across diverse cultural and educational contexts.

Keywords: ecotheology, Christian religious education, ecological awareness, generation Z, environmental education..

A. INTRODUCTION

The ecological crisis has become one of the most urgent global challenges of the twenty-first century, affecting both natural ecosystems and human well-being. Phenomena such as climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss indicate a fundamental disruption in the relationship between humans and nature. These issues are not merely technical or scientific but also ethical and spiritual in nature, requiring a transformation of values and perspectives. Education plays a strategic role

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

in addressing this crisis by shaping ecological awareness and responsible behavior among individuals. Therefore, environmental education must move beyond cognitive knowledge toward fostering attitudes and actions that support sustainability.[1]

Research in environmental education demonstrates that knowledge alone is insufficient to generate pro-environmental behavior. Instead, effective educational approaches must integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Studies show that environmental education can influence conservation outcomes when learners are actively engaged in meaningful experiences. However, there remains a persistent gap between environmental awareness and actual behavior, often referred to as the "value-action gap." This highlights the need for more holistic and transformative educational models.[2]

Generation Z represents a key demographic in the context of sustainability due to their exposure to digital information and global environmental issues. This generation tends to have a relatively high level of awareness regarding ecological challenges but often struggles to translate this awareness into consistent action. Research indicates that their learning preferences emphasize participation, critical thinking, and experiential engagement. As a result, educational strategies must be adapted to align with these characteristics. Consequently, innovative pedagogical approaches are required to effectively foster ecological responsibility among Generation Z.[3] Christianity offers foundation for environmental responsibility through creation, stewardship, and moral accountability. Ecotheology has emerged as important field that reinterprets biblical teachings in response to ecological crises. It emphasizes the interconnected relationship between God, humanity, and the natural world. While earlier interpretations of Christian theology were sometimes criticized for promoting anthropocentrism, recent ecotheological developments seek to correct this imbalance. Thus, ecotheology provides a relevant framework for integrating faith and ecological responsibility.[4]

---

[1] Nicole M. Ardoin, Alison W. Bowers, and Estelle Gaillard, "Environmental Education Outcomes for Conservation: A Systematic Review," *Biological Conservation* 241 (2020): 108224, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.108224; Justin Dillon. "On Learners and Learning in Environmental Education: Missing Theories, Ignored Communities". In *Towards a Convergence Between Science and Environmental Education* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).

[2] Louise Chawla and Debra Flanders Cushing, "Education for Strategic Environmental Behavior," *Environmental Education Research* 13, no. 4 (2007): 437–440, https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620701581539; Anja Kollmuss and Julian Agyeman, "Mind the Gap," *Environmental Education Research* 8, no. 3 (2002): 239–242, https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620220145401; Annika M. Wyss, Daria Knoch, and Sebastian Berger. "When and how pro-environmental attitudes turn into behavior: The role of costs, benefits, and self-control." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 79 (2022): 101748.

[3] unice Tan, Leena Wanganoo, and Mahima Mathur, "Generation Z, Sustainability Orientation and Higher Education Implications," *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching* 6, no. 1 (2023): 314–318, https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2023.6.1.ss2.

[4] J. J. Johnson Leese, "Ecofaith: Reading Scripture in an Era of Ecological Crisis," *Religions*

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

Despite the growing body of research on environmental education and ecotheology, there is still a lack of integration between these fields within formal educational contexts, particularly in Christian Religious Education. Most environmental education studies focus on secular approaches, while ecotheological studies tend to remain at the level of theological reflection. Furthermore, research on Generation Z often emphasizes awareness but rarely explores the role of faith-based education in shaping ecological behavior. This indicates a significant research gap in combining ecotheology, Christian Religious Education, and ecological awareness. Therefore, there is a need for an interdisciplinary approach that bridges these domains.[5]

Based on the identified research gap, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How can ecotheology be integrated into Christian Religious Education? (2) In what ways does this integration contribute to enhancing ecological awareness among Generation Z? The novelty of this research lies in its effort to combine environmental education, theological reflection, and generational analysis within a single framework. It seeks to explore how ecotheological principles can be applied in educational practices to foster both awareness and action. In addition, the study contributes to the development of a contextual and faith-based educational model that addresses ecological challenges. Ultimately, it highlights the transformative role of Christian Religious Education in promoting sustainable and responsible living.This study contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it proposes an interdisciplinary framework that bridges environmental education, ecotheology, and generational learning. Practically, it offers pedagogical insights for designing faith-based environmental education that is relevant to contemporary learners. By doing so, this research positions Christian Religious Education as a strategic space for cultivating ecological responsibility.

B. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review design to examine the integration of ecotheology into Christian Religious Education and its contribution to the

10, no. 3 (2019): 154, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030154; Johannes M. Luetz and Richard G. Leo, "Christianity, Creation, and the Climate Crisis," in *Beyond Belief* (Cham: Springer, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67602-5_18; Tomasz Twardziłowski, "The Command to Rule over the Creation (Gen 1:26–28)," *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2021): 9–15, https://doi.org/10.21697/ct.2020.90.5.02; Stefan Altmeyer. "Religious education for ecological sustainability: an initial reality check using the example of everyday decision-making". *Journal of Religious Education* 69 (2021): 57–74. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-020-00131-5.

[5] Roger S. Gottlieb, "Religion and Ecology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195178722.003.0001; Randolph Haluza-DeLay, "Religion and Climate Change," *WIREs Climate Change* 5 (2014): 261–265, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.268; D. J. Chandler, "Creation Care," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 1 (2021): 112–115, https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320947103.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

ecological awareness of Generation Z. A systematic literature review was considered appropriate because it enables the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of interdisciplinary scholarly works related to environmental education, ecotheology, and generational learning.[6] Data collection was conducted through structured searches in academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Crossref using keywords including "ecotheology," "Christian Religious Education," "environmental education," "ecological awareness," and "Generation Z." The study focused on peer-reviewed journal articles and seminal academic books published between 2002 and 2025 to capture contemporary developments in ecological education and theological discourse. The inclusion criteria consisted of publications discussing ecotheology, environmental education, Christian Religious Education, sustainability, or Generation Z learning characteristics, while publications, studies, and sources unrelated to educational or theological discussions were excluded from the analysis.[7]

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and synthesis of findings.[8] Relevant concepts from the literature were categorized into thematic patterns to identify relationships between ecotheology, environmental education, and ecological awareness among Generation Z. The findings were subsequently organized into several major themes concerning environmental education, the value–action gap, theological foundations of environmental responsibility, ecotheology as a transformative educational framework, and participatory learning approaches for Generation Z. To enhance analytical rigor, the study employed source triangulation and evaluation by comparing perspectives from theology, environmental education, and generational studies.[9] Through this approach, the research provides a systematic and academically rigorous analysis of ecotheology-based Christian Religious Education within ecological discourse.

C. DISCUSSION

1. Environmental Education and Ecological Awareness

Environmental education is widely recognized as a crucial instrument for fostering ecological

[6] Karen Chapman, "Characteristics of Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 47, no. 5 (2021): 102396, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102396; John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018), 73–75.

[7] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 168–170.

[8] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101, https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

[9] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 74–76; Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 243–245.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

awareness and promoting sustainable behavior. Research shows that it extends beyond the transmission of knowledge by shaping attitudes, values, and practical competencies. A systematic review confirms that environmental education contributes significantly to conservation outcomes when it incorporates participatory and context-based approaches. Moreover, such education creates opportunities for collaboration between learners, communities, and environmental stakeholders. These findings highlight the transformative potential of environmental education in addressing ecological challenges.[10] The literature also indicates that effective environmental education must integrate multiple dimensions of learning. Cognitive understanding alone is insufficient without emotional engagement and behavioral application. Studies emphasize that environmental education programs that combine these dimensions are more likely to produce lasting behavioral change. Additionally, place-based and experiential learning approaches enhance the relevance of environmental issues for students. Consequently, the integration of knowledge, values, and action is essential for meaningful ecological learning.[11]

The findings demonstrate that environmental education alone is insufficient to ensure pro-environmental behavior, primarily due to the persistent value–action gap identified in prior studies. While learners may acquire ecological knowledge, this knowledge does not automatically translate into consistent environmental practices. This study argues that the integration of ecotheology provides a critical missing dimension by embedding moral and spiritual motivations into environmental learning. By framing ecological responsibility as a theological and ethical obligation, ecotheology strengthens internal commitment beyond cognitive understanding. Therefore, the integration of environmental education and ecotheology represents a more holistic approach to fostering ecological awareness.[12]

This integrative perspective also contributes to bridging the divide between secular and faith-based educational paradigms. Environmental education has often been positioned within a scientific framework, which, although important, may lack the moral depth needed to sustain long-term behavioral change. The inclusion of ecotheological perspectives introduces values, beliefs, and spiritual meaning into the learning process. As a result, ecological awareness becomes not only an intellectual concern but also a matter of faith and identity. This expanded framework enhances the potential of education to influence both attitudes and actions. Consequently, ecotheology enriches environmental education by addressing its motivational limitations.[13]

---

[10] Nicole M. Ardoin, Alison W. Bowers, and Estelle Gaillard, "Environmental Education Outcomes for Conservation," *Biological Conservation* 241 (2020): 108224, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.108224

[11] Louise Chawla and Debra F. Cushing, "Education for Strategic Environmental Behavior," *Environmental Education Research* 13, no. 4 (2007): 437–440.

[12] Anja Kollmuss and Julian Agyeman, "Mind the Gap": 239–242; Annika M. Wyss, Daria Knoch, and Sebastian Berger. "When and how pro-environmental attitudes turn into behavior: The role of costs, benefits, and self-control": 101748.

[13] Roger S. Gottlieb, "Religion and Ecology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*; Randolph Haluza-DeLay, "Religion and Climate Change": 261–265.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

2. The Value Action Gap in Environmental Behavior

Despite these positive outcomes, a significant gap remains between environmental awareness and actual behavior. This phenomenon, often referred to as the "value-action gap," continues to challenge educators and researchers. Evidence suggests that individuals may possess environmental knowledge but fail to act accordingly due to various internal and external barriers. These barriers include lack of motivation, limited opportunities, and social influences. Therefore, addressing this gap requires more comprehensive and action-oriented educational strategies.[14] Further findings reveal that behavioral change in environmental contexts is influenced by a combination of personal and contextual factors. Environmental education must therefore focus on developing not only knowledge but also skills and motivation for action. Programs that emphasize active participation and real-world problem solving are more effective in fostering pro-environmental behavior. In addition, institutional support and policy frameworks play an important role in reinforcing sustainable practices. This highlights the need for systemic approaches to environmental education.[15]

The study further highlights the importance of adapting educational approaches to the characteristics of Generation Z. This generation is known for its high exposure to global issues, including environmental concerns, yet often requires meaningful engagement to translate awareness into action. Traditional teacher-centered approaches are less effective in fostering deep ecological commitment among these learners. Instead, participatory and experiential learning strategies are more aligned with their preferences. Ecotheology-based education provides opportunities for such engagement by combining reflection, action, and real-life application. Therefore, it offers a relevant pedagogical response to the needs of Generation Z.[16]

In addition, the integration of ecotheology supports the development of critical thinking and moral reflection among learners. By engaging with theological perspectives on environmental issues, students are encouraged to evaluate their values and actions. This process fosters a deeper sense of responsibility and ethical awareness. Furthermore, contextual learning approaches make environmental issues more tangible and personally relevant. As a result, learners are more likely to develop sustainable habits and behaviors. This demonstrates the effectiveness of ecotheology-based education in addressing

[14] Anja Kollmuss and Julian Agyeman, "Mind the Gap," *Environmental Education Research* 8, no. 3 (2002): 239–242.

[15] Annika M. Wyss, Daria Knoch, and Sebastian Berger. "When and how pro-environmental attitudes turn into behavior: The role of costs, benefits, and self-control": 101748.

[16] Eunice Tan, Leena Wanganoo, and Mahima Mathur, "Generation Z": 314–318; Dentina Nababan and Dorlan Naibaho. "Kepribadian Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Terhadap Pembentukan Akhlak Peserta Didik: Studi Kasus SD Negeri 095197 Hutabayuraja". *Indonesian Journal of Service* 1, no. 1 (April 5, 2025): 61–83. https://doi.org/10.46362/ijs.v1i1.57.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.[17]

Practically, ecotheology-based Christian Religious Education can be implemented through various participatory and experiential learning models. These include project-based ecological learning, school gardening programs, ecological Bible reflection activities, environmental stewardship liturgies, recycling initiatives, and community-based environmental service projects. Such approaches encourage learners to connect theological reflection with concrete ecological practices in everyday life.[18] In this way, ecological awareness is not merely understood cognitively but is internalized through reflective and transformative experiences that shape ethical responsibility and sustainable behavior.

In addition, digital learning platforms may be utilized to engage Generation Z through online ecological campaigns, collaborative environmental projects, and social media-based reflection activities. These pedagogical strategies not only strengthen cognitive understanding but also foster spiritual formation, moral reflection, and participatory engagement among learners.[19] Ecotheology-based pedagogy therefore functions not only as a theoretical educational framework but also as a praxis-oriented approach that integrates faith, environmental ethics, and social responsibility. Consequently, Christian Religious Education may become a transformative space for cultivating ecological consciousness and sustainable lifestyles among young people.

3. Theological Foundations of Environmental Responsibility

In the context of Christian Religious Education, theological perspectives provide an important moral and spiritual foundation for environmental responsibility. The concept of stewardship, rooted in biblical teachings, emphasizes that humans are entrusted by God to care for creation responsibly rather than exploit it for unlimited human interests.[20] This perspective positions ecological responsibility as an integral dimension of Christian faith and ethical practice. Recent developments in ecotheology further argue that environmental destruction reflects not only a social and ecological crisis but also a spiritual

[17] Louise Chawla and Debra F. Cushing, "Education for Strategic Environmental Behavior": 437–440.

[18] Louise Chawla and Debra F. Cushing, "Education for Strategic Environmental Behavior": 437–452; Martha C. Monroe et al., "Identifying Effective Climate Change Education Strategies: A Systematic Review of the Research": 791–812.

[19] Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 45–60; Eunice Tan, Leena Wanganoo, and Mahima Mathur, "Generation Z, Sustainability Orientation and Higher Education Implications: An Ecopedagogical Conceptual Framework": 314–323.

[20] D. J. Chandler, "Creation Care: A Call to Christian Educators and Church Leaders," *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 18, no. 1 (2021): 112–128, https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320947103; Tomasz Twardziłowski, "The Command to Rule over the Creation (Gen 1:26–28) in the Ecological Hermeneutics of the Bible," *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2021): 9–32, https://doi.org/10.21697/ct.2020.90.5.02.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

crisis resulting from distorted human relationships with God, humanity, and nature.[21] Therefore, ecological education within Christian Religious Education should move beyond doctrinal instruction toward the formation of ecological ethics and sustainable lifestyles.

This study primarily adopts an ecotheological stewardship perspective while also engaging ecojustice theology in interpreting environmental responsibility. Leonardo Boff argues that ecological degradation is closely related to exploitative anthropocentrism and social injustice, whereas Sallie McFague emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation through her metaphor of the world as the "body of God." Similarly, Jürgen Moltmann highlights the relational dimension of creation theology by emphasizing the interdependence between God, humanity, and the natural world.[22] These perspectives challenge dominative interpretations of Genesis and encourage a more relational and restorative understanding of humanity's role within creation. Consequently, ecotheology serves not merely as a theological reflection but also as a transformative ethical framework for cultivating ecological awareness and environmental responsibility within Christian Religious Education.

Within the context of Christian Religious Education, ecotheology functions as a transformative pedagogical framework that redefines the purpose and scope of religious instruction. Rather than focusing solely on doctrinal knowledge, ecotheology encourages the reinterpretation of biblical teachings through an ecological lens. This approach enables learners to understand environmental stewardship as their faith. It aligns religious education with contemporary global challenges, particularly ecological crises. Christian Religious Education becomes integrating faith, knowledge, and environmental responsibility.[23] The transformative potential of ecotheology also lies in its ability to challenge anthropocentric interpretations of theology. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of all creation, ecotheology promotes a more holistic and relational worldview. This shift has significant implications for how learners perceive their role within the natural world. It encourages a move from domination toward stewardship and care. In this way, ecotheology contributes to the formation of ethical and environmentally conscious individuals. Thus, it strengthens the relevance of Christian education in addressing modern ecological issues.[24]

---

[21] Roger S. Gottlieb, "Introduction: Religion and Ecology—What Is the Connection and Why Does It Matter?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195178722.003.0001; Randolph Haluza-DeLay, "Religion and Climate Change: Varieties in Viewpoints and Practices," *WIREs Climate Change* 5 (2014): 261–279, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.268.

[22] Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 67–72; Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 25–30; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 1–15.

[23] J. J. Johnson Leese, "Ecofaith": 154.

[24] Tomasz Twardziłowski, "The Command to Rule over the Creation": 9–15; Johannes M. Luetz and Richard G. Leo, "Christianity, Creation, and the Climate Crisis".

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

4. Ecotheology as a Transformative Educational Framework

The literature highlights that ecotheology functions not only as a theological perspective but also as a transformative educational framework in shaping ecological consciousness. Ecological hermeneutics encourages a reinterpretation of biblical texts that emphasizes responsibility, care, and relationality within creation. This approach enables religious teachings to remain relevant in addressing contemporary environmental crises while providing a moral and spiritual foundation for ecological ethics. In this sense, ecotheology shifts the focus of religious education from doctrinal transmission to value-oriented formation. As a result, learners are invited to understand environmental responsibility as an integral part of their faith identity.[25] Ecotheology-based education integrates scriptural reflection with practical engagement, allowing learners to connect faith with real-world environmental action. This integration strengthens the internalization of ecological values by linking belief, reflection, and practice in a coherent learning process. It also supports the development of critical awareness and moral responsibility in responding to environmental issues. Consequently, scriptural engagement becomes interpretative formative, shaping attitudes and behaviors toward sustainability. Thus, ecotheology serves as a bridge between theological understanding and transformative educational practice.[26]

The findings also underscore the importance of institutional support in implementing ecotheology-based education. Effective integration requires alignment between curriculum design, teaching practices, and institutional policies. Educational institutions and religious communities must work collaboratively to create environments that promote ecological responsibility. This includes incorporating environmental themes into curricula, encouraging experiential learning, and fostering community engagement. Without such systemic support, the impact of educational initiatives may remain limited. Therefore, ecotheology-based education should be understood as part of a broader institutional transformation.[27]

Despite its transformative potential, the implementation of ecotheology-based Christian

[25] Tomasz Twardziłowski, "The Command to Rule over the Creation (Gen 1:26–28) in the Ecological Hermeneutics of the Bible": 9–15; J. J. Johnson Leese, "Ecofaith: Reading Scripture in an Era of Ecological Crisis": 154; Ruthnawaty Setiawan, Dunant F. Soukotta, and Juan Tan. "Implementasi Prinsip Ulangan 6:7 Dalam Pendidikan Iman Anak Di Keluarga Kristen (Implementation of the Principle of Repetition 6:7 in Children's Faith Education in Christian Families): Suatu Kajian Teologis Dan Pedagogis (A Theological and Pedagogical Study)". *MODERATE: Journal of Religious, Education, and Social* 3, no. 1 (2025): 21–40. https://doi.org/10.46362/moderate.v3i1.22.

[26] Johannes M. Luetz and Richard G. Leo, "Christianity, Creation, and the Climate Crisis: Ecotheological Paradigms and Perspectives," in *Beyond Belief* (Cham: Springer, 2021); Hendry Corneles Mamengko Runtuwene, "Ecotheology: Integrating Faith, Creation Care, and Contextual Practice in Indonesian Protestant Congregations": 145–150.

[27] Jelle Boeve-de Pauw and Peter Van Petegem, "Eco-School Evaluation beyond Labels": 1250–1255; Martha C. Monroe et al., "Climate Change Education Strategies": 791–794.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

Religious Education also faces several challenges. Some conservative theological communities may resist ecological reinterpretations of biblical texts due to concerns regarding doctrinal authority and theological tradition.[28] In addition, schools and churches may experience limitations related to curriculum structure, institutional priorities, and insufficient teacher competence in environmental theology and participatory ecological pedagogy. These conditions may hinder the integration of ecological themes into existing educational frameworks and religious practices.

Furthermore, ecological education often competes with academically oriented curricula that prioritize cognitive achievement over ethical and ecological formation. Limited institutional support, inadequate environmental literacy among educators, and the absence of contextual learning resources may also reduce the effectiveness of implementation.[29] Therefore, the successful integration of ecotheology into Christian Religious Education requires institutional commitment, curriculum adaptation, teacher training, and collaborative engagement between schools, churches, and local communities. In this sense, ecotheology-based education should be understood not only as a pedagogical innovation but also as part of broader institutional and cultural transformation.

This study demonstrates that integrating ecotheology into Christian Religious Education offers a novel and comprehensive framework for enhancing ecological awareness among Generation Z. It contributes to the academic discourse by bridging environmental education, theological reflection, and generational learning within a unified perspective. This integrative model not only addresses the limitations of existing approaches but also provides practical implications for educators and institutions. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of knowledge, faith, and action, the study highlights the transformative potential of education in responding to ecological crises. Ecotheology-based education emerges as a strategic pathway for shaping a more sustainable and ethically responsible generation. This study offers a novel contribution by integrating ecotheology, environmental education, and generational perspectives into a unified analytical framework.

5. Generation Z and Ecological Learning Characteristics

Another finding relates to the characteristics of Generation Z. This generation has grown up in an era dominated by digital technology, social media, and rapid access to global information, including environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. As a result, Generation Z tends to demonstrate high ecological awareness compared to previous generations.

[28] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, 34–40; Roger S. Gottlieb, "Introduction: Religion and Ecology—What Is the Connection and Why Does It Matter?".

[29] Stefan Altmeyer, "Religious Education for Ecological Sustainability: An Initial Reality Check Using the Example of Everyday Decision-Making," *Journal of Religious Education* 69 (2021): 57–74; Martha C. Monroe et al., "Identifying Effective Climate Change Education Strategies: A Systematic Review of the Research": 791–812.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

Exposure to environmental campaigns through digital platforms has contributed to the development of greater concern for sustainability and social responsibility. However, several studies indicate that awareness alone does not automatically lead to consistent ecological behavior. Many young people still experience difficulties in translating environmental concern into concrete and sustainable action.[30]

Research further shows that Generation Z prefers learning environments that are interactive, participatory, and closely connected to real-life experiences. Traditional teacher-centered approaches are often considered less effective in engaging this generation because they tend to emphasize passive reception of information rather than active involvement. In contrast, experiential and contextual learning approaches encourage learners to participate directly in problem-solving activities, collaborative projects, and community-based environmental initiatives. These approaches not only strengthen cognitive understanding but also foster emotional engagement and personal responsibility toward ecological issues. Consequently, educational strategies aimed at Generation Z must integrate reflective, practical, and technology-supported learning experiences to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

In addition, Generation Z is strongly influenced by digital culture and social media engagement in shaping environmental awareness. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X have become important spaces for ecological campaigns, climate activism, and environmental advocacy among young people. Through digital participation, Generation Z increasingly encounters environmental narratives related to climate justice, sustainability, and ethical consumption. However, recent studies also indicate the growing phenomenon of eco-anxiety among young people, namely psychological distress and fear caused by climate change and ecological uncertainty.[31] In this context, ecotheology-based Christian Religious Education may provide not only ecological knowledge but also spiritual resilience, ethical reflection, and constructive forms of environmental engagement within digital culture. Therefore, ecological education for Generation Z should integrate participatory digital pedagogy, spiritual formation, and action-oriented environmental practices.[32]

Ecotheology-based education offers a relevant pedagogical framework for Generation Z because it combines spiritual reflection with environmental action. Ecotheology encourages learners to understand environmental responsibility not merely as a social obligation but also as an expression of faith and moral commitment. Through participatory learning activities such as ecological reflection,

[30] Eunice Tan, Leena Wanganoo, and Mahima Mathur, "Generation Z": 314–318.

[31] Panu Pihkala, "Eco-Anxiety and Environmental Education," *Sustainability* 12, no. 23 (2020): 10149, https://doi.org/10.3390/su122310149; Maria Ojala, "Coping with Climate Change among Adolescents: Implications for Subjective Well-Being and Environmental Engagement," *Sustainability* 5, no. 5 (2013): 2191–2209, https://doi.org/10.3390/su5052191.

[32] Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–15; Eunice Tan, Leena Wanganoo, and Mahima Mathur, "Generation Z, Sustainability Orientation and Higher Education Implications: An Ecopedagogical Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching* 6, no. 1 (2023): 314–323, https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2023.6.1.ss2.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

community service, environmental campaigns, and creation-care practices, students are invited to connect theological values with everyday ecological behavior. This integrative approach supports the development of critical thinking, ethical awareness, and sustainable habits among learners. Therefore, ecotheology-based Christian Religious Education has strong potential to foster deeper ecological engagement among Generation Z by bridging awareness, spirituality, and practical action.

D. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the integration of ecotheology into Christian Religious Education as a conceptual approach to fostering ecological awareness among Generation Z. The findings suggest that combining environmental education with theological reflection can address the limitations of knowledge-based approaches, particularly the persistent value–action gap. By incorporating moral and spiritual dimensions, ecotheology provides an additional motivational foundation that may support the internalization of ecological responsibility. The primary contribution of this study lies in proposing an integrative conceptual framework that connects cognitive understanding, spiritual values, and behavioral engagement within ecological learning. Unlike conventional environmental education models, this framework emphasizes the role of faith-based meaning-making in shaping sustainable behavior.

In practical terms, this study highlights the importance of: (1) integrating ecological themes into Christian Religious Education curricula. (2) applying participatory and experiential pedagogies. (3) strengthening institutional support through school–church collaboration. However, the conclusions of this study are limited by its literature-based design and lack of empirical validation. Therefore, the findings should be understood as conceptual rather than definitive. Future research is recommended to empirically test this framework through: (1) Experimental studies measuring behavioral change. (2) Case studies in schools and church communities. (3) Longitudinal research examining long-term impact. (4) Cross-cultural comparisons to assess contextual applicability. Such studies will be essential to validate and refine the proposed model.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Altmeyer, Stefan. "Religious education for ecological sustainability: an initial reality check using the example of everyday decision-making". *Journal of Religious Education* 69 (2021): 57–74. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-020-00131-5.

Anthony, Brendon M., Wendy L. Billock, Geoffrey M. Bishop, Michael J. Anthony, and Carolyn A. Bishop. “Surveying Environmental Perspectives among Faculty at an Institution of Christian Higher Education.” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 29, no. 2 (2020): 137–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2020.1800539.

Ardoin, Nicole M., Alison W. Bowers, and Estelle Gaillard. "Environmental education outcomes for conservation: A systematic review". Biological Conservation, 241 (2020): 108224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.108224.

Boeve-de Pauw, Jelle, and Peter Van Petegem. “Eco-School Evaluation beyond Labels: The Impact of Environmental Policy, Didactics and Nature at School on Student Outcomes.” *Environmental Education Research* 24, no. 9 (2018): 1250–1267. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2017.1307327.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Chandler, D. J. "Creation Care: A Call to Christian Educators and Church Leaders". *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, *18*, no. 1 (2021), 112-128. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320947103

Chapman, Karen. "Characteristics of systematic reviews in the social sciences". *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 47, no. 5 (2021): 102396. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102396.

Chawla, Louise, and Debra F. Cushing. "Education for Strategic Environmental Behavior". *Environmental Education Research*, 13, no. 4 (2007): 437–452. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620701581539.

Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018.

Dillon, Justin. "On Learners and Learning in Environmental Education: Missing Theories, Ignored Communities". In *Towards a Convergence Between Science and Environmental Education*. Chapter 10. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315730486.

Gottlieb, Roger S., 'Introduction: Religion and Ecology—What Is the Connection and Why Does It Matter?', in Roger S. Gottlieb (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology.* Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2009. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195178722.003.0001.

Haluza-DeLay, R. "Religion and climate change: varieties in viewpoints and practices". WIREs Clim Change, 5 (2014): 261-279. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.268.

Kollmuss, Anja, and Julian Agyeman. "Mind the Gap: Why Do People Act Environmentally and What Are the Barriers to Pro-Environmental Behavior?" *Environmental Education Research* 8, no. 3 (2002): 239–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350462022014540.

Leese, J. J. Johnson. "Ecofaith: Reading Scripture in an Era of Ecological Crisis" *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 154. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030154.

Luetz, Johannes M. and Richard G. Leo. "Christianity, Creation, and the Climate Crisis: Ecotheological Paradigms and Perspectives". In: Luetz, J.M., Nunn, P.D. (eds) *Beyond Belief. Climate Change Management*. Cham: Springer, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67602-5_18.

Nababan, Dentina, and Dorlan Naibaho. "Kepribadian Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Terhadap Pembentukan Akhlak Peserta Didik: Studi Kasus SD Negeri 095197 Hutabayuraja". *Indonesian Journal of Service* 1, no. 1 (April 5, 2025): 61–83. https://doi.org/10.46362/ijs.v1i1.57.

McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Merriam, Sharan B., and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985.

Monroe, Martha C., Richard R. Plate, Annie Oxarart, Alison Bowers, and Willandia A. Chaves. "Identifying Effective Climate Change Education Strategies: A Systematic Review of the Research." *Environmental Education Research* 25, no. 6 (2019): 791–812. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2017.1360842.

Runtuwene, Hendry Corneles Mamengko. "Ecotheology: Integrating Faith, Creation Care, and Contextual Practice in Indonesian Protestant Congregations". *Educatio Christi* 6, no. 1 (2025): 145-70. https://doi.org/10.70796/educatio-christi.v6i1.215.

Setiawan, Ruthnawaty, Dunant F. Soukotta, and Juan Tan. "Implementasi Prinsip Ulangan 6:7 Dalam Pendidikan Iman Anak Di Keluarga Kristen (Implementation of the Principle of Repetition 6:7 in Children's Faith Education in Christian Families): Suatu Kajian Teologis Dan Pedagogis (A Theological and Pedagogical Study)". *MODERATE: Journal of Religious, Education, and Social* 3, no. 1 (2025): 21–40. https://doi.org/10.46362/moderate.v3i1.22.

Stevenson, Robert B. "Schooling and Environmental Education: Contradictions in Purpose and Practice." *Environmental Education Research* 13, no. 2 (2007): 139–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620701295726.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0

Tan, Eunice, Leena Wanganoo, and Mahima Mathur. "Generation Z, sustainability orientation and higher education implications: An ecopedagogical conceptual framework". *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching* 6, no. 1 (2023): 314-323. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2023.6.1.ss2.

Tambunan, Elia. "God Is the Creator of the Earth, But Man Is the Keeper: Kid's Responsibility in Caring the Environment Education and Religion". *CHEVRA: Indonesian Journal of Economic, Science, and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2026):19-25. https://doi.org/10.46362/chevra.v1i1.105.

Tomren, Tom Sverre. "What would Jesus do? - incarnation and soteriology in the light exology". in *Contemporary ecotheology, climate justice and environmental stewardship in world religions*, pp. 70-83. Steinkjer, Latvia: Embla Akademisk, 2021.

Twardziłowski, Tomasz. "The Command to Rule over the Creation (Gen 1:26–28) in the Ecological Hermeneutics of the Bible". *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2021): 9–32. https://doi.org/10.21697/ct.2020.90.5.02.

Wyss, Annika M., Daria Knoch, and Sebastian Berger. "When and how pro-environmental attitudes turn into behavior: The role of costs, benefits, and self-control". *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 79 (2022): 101748. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2021.101748.

Zsuzsanna Szerényi, Anna Széchy, and Tamás Kocsis. "Greening due to environmental education? Environmental knowledge, attitudes, consumer behavior and everyday pro-environmental activities of Hungarian high school and university students". *Journal of Cleaner Production* 48 (2013): 126–138. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2012.11.030.

© 2026 Shift Key: Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan | CC BY-SA 4.0