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Eco-Spirituality in “Sedekah Laut” Tradition: The Basis of Religious Moderation and Ecological Education in Coastal Communities

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Abstrak

Artikel ini secara kritis mengkaji makna, nilai, simbol, dan relasi antar aktor dalam tradisi “Sedekah Laut”, yang merupakan manifestasi pendidikan lingkungan berbasis kultural dan spiritual. “Sedekah Laut” serves as a barrier against various climate crises. Melalui teori ekofeminisme, kajian ini mengintegrasikan perempuan, alam, dan spiritualitas. Kajian riset ini menempatkan “Sedekah Laut” tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai pilar moderasi beragama pada aspek budaya, tetapi juga sebagai ruang pendidikan ekologis yang berkeadilan gender. The location of this qualitative study is in Kecamatan Wonokerto, Kabupaten Pekalongan. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, serta dianalisis melalui model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil riset menunjukkan bahwa “Sedekah Laut” memiliki filosofi, makna, dan simbol ekologis. Menjadi instrumen inklusif dan adaptif untuk menghadapi krisis iklim. “Sedekah Laut” menjadi ruang pendidikan lingkungan, yang menempatkan perempuan sebagai aktor penting, baik pada ranah domestik maupun ritual. Kajian ini memberikan ide baru dengan membangun pendidikan lingkungan yang menggabungkan tradisi lokal dan spiritual yang mendukung perempuan dan alam. Implikasi teoretis kajian ini memperluas cakrawala pendidikan lingkungan ke arah spiritual-ekologis, sementara secara praktis, melalui “Sedekah Laut”, tradisi dapat menjadi model edukasi ekologi yang inklusif, kontekstual, emansipatoris, berkelanjutan, dan berorientasi pada keadilan iklim.

Kata Kunci: “Sedekah Laut”, Perubahan Iklim, Pendidikan Ekologi, Tradisi, Moderasi Beragama.



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Abstract

This article critically examines the meaning, values, symbols, and relationships between actors in the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition as a manifestation of culturally and spiritually based environmental education. “*Sedekah Laut*” serves as a mitigation tool amidst the climate crisis. Through ecofeminist theory, this study integrates women, nature, and spirituality. This research positioned “*Sedekah Laut*” not only as a pillar of religious moderation in the cultural aspect but also as a space for ecological education that embraces gender equity. The location of this qualitative research was Wonokerto District, Pekalongan Regency. Data were obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The research results indicate that “*Sedekah Laut*” possesses ecological philosophy, meaning, and symbolism. It serves as an inclusive and adaptive instrument for addressing the climate crisis. “*Sedekah Laut*” serves as a space for environmental education, emphasizing women as key actors, both in the domestic and ritual spheres. This study offers a novelty in the form of a reconstruction of environmental education based on local traditions and spirituality that favors women and nature. The theoretical implications of this study expand the scope of environmental education to include spiritual-ecological aspects, while in practice, “*Sedekah Laut*” can serve as a model for ecological education that is inclusive, contextual, emancipatory, sustainable, and focused on climate justice.

Keywords: “*Sedekah Laut*”, *Climate Change*. *This study focuses on ecological education, tradition, and religious moderation.*

INTRODUCTION

Climate change threatens the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of coastal communities. Pekalongan City, a coastal area in northern Java, is one of the areas most significantly impacted by climate change, ranging from worsening abrasion and tidal flooding to declining fisheries productivity. Daily tidal flooding affects 51% of the area, with a maximum inundation height of 1.1 meters. This scenario is made worse by the fact that the land is sinking by 30 to 50 cm per year (Maharlika et al., 2020). Climate change not only threatens ecology but also erodes the cultural and economic resilience of coastal communities. Communities are adapting to flooding (Kartika et al., 2019), modifying adaptive houses (Sari et al., 2025), and shifting from rice farming to alternative livelihoods (Artiningsih et al., 2017), despite low individual adaptive capacity (Purifyningtyas & Wijaya, 2016). In the face of the ecological crisis, the community continues to uphold the tradition of “*Sedekah Laut*” (Sea Alms), an annual ritual that serves as an expression of gratitude, a spiritual endeavor to safeguard the marine environment, and a means of fostering a sustainable economy.

Research on local traditions within the context of environmental education is still limited. Research reveals that “*Sedekah Laut*” is an expression of gratitude to God for safety and abundant fish catches (Wahyudi, 2011; Suryanti, 2017), but only a few understand it as a means of maintaining natural balance and environmental responsibility (Taufiq, 2018). Most studies assess that the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition has spiritual, social, economic,

and educational dimensions, helping restore community solidarity and overcome social fragmentation (Rahayuwati et al., 2020; Widati, 2011). Amidst risks and vulnerabilities, tidal flooding, and significant sea level rise (Akbari et al., 2021; Handayani, 2021), “*Sedekah Laut*” should serve as a representation of local wisdom to encourage environmental management.

To date, research on traditions has tended to separate cultural and environmental approaches dichotomously, without exploring the epistemological integration of the two in everyday community practices (Shiva, 2005). However, the symbolic meaning and function of ritual communities demonstrate how traditional practices can contribute to climate resilience by fostering collective knowledge, capacity, and responsibility for the sustainability of marine ecosystems. Locality-based environmental education is more effective in building ecological awareness than instructional models.

Theoretically, a constructivist perspective still dominates environmental education studies, emphasizing individual rationality (Robottom, 2004). These studies provide little space for the dimensions of ecological ethics, spirituality, and gender relations within the context of local wisdom. This study utilizes ecofeminist theory, offering a new perspective that ecological damage and the subordination of women share the same ideological roots: patriarchal domination of nature and women's bodies (Shiva, 2016; Warren, 2000). In the context of “*Sedekah Laut*”, coastal women play a role not only in the rituals and logistics of the event but also as managers of ecological values and spiritual ethics. Unfortunately, this dimension is neglected in environmental education theory, even though women are often the primary actors in ecological practices within households and specific communities (Gaard & Gruen, 1993). Thus, there is a theoretical gap in understanding the contributions of women and local traditions as critical subjects of environmental education.

Previous studies tend to focus on the identity, culture, and socio-economic aspects of the tradition but have not yet explored the epistemology of the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition as a contextual and adaptive basis for religious ethics to address the climate crisis, which is the core of the discourse on religious moderation in Indonesia.

This study aims to bridge the gap between the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition as a cultural field and the articulation of culturally and spiritually based environmental education, simultaneously exploring its role as a medium for religious moderation. This research positions women and the community as active subjects in a dialogical, participatory, and

transformative environmental education process. An ecofeminist approach is used as an analytical instrument for “*Sedekah Laut*”’s ritual practices and local values. It is not merely a cultural symbol but a living, grounded, participatory, and sustainable form of ecological education. This article hopes to enrich the study of “*Sedekah Laut*” from a critical perspective on environmental education and uncover the relationship between women and nature in the face of the climate crisis in the coastal areas of Pekalongan, Indonesia.

METHODS

This research was conducted within a critical qualitative paradigm that seeks not only to understand the reality of “*Sedekah Laut*” but also to explore the structures of meaning, power relations, and cultural practices of communities in addressing climate change. Through in-depth study, the meaning, function, and power relations of the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition are examined within the context of environmental education, which is imbued with local, spiritual, and ecological values. A critical paradigm can open up interpretive space for ecological practices that have been marginalized within the dominant narrative of environmental education, which is highly technocratic and masculine. The researcher assumes that local knowledge and women's experiences in coastal communities regarding “*Sedekah Laut*” are primary sources for developing a contextual and emancipatory environmental education model.

This research focuses on the practice and meaning of “*Sedekah Laut*” as a form of environmental education for coastal communities in Wonokerto District, Pekalongan Regency. This area was chosen because it is one of the most seriously affected by tidal flooding and abrasion on the north coast of Java and is also the location where the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition is still practiced today. This location also reflects the complex dynamics between ecology, spirituality, and social structures, including gender relations in environmental conservation.

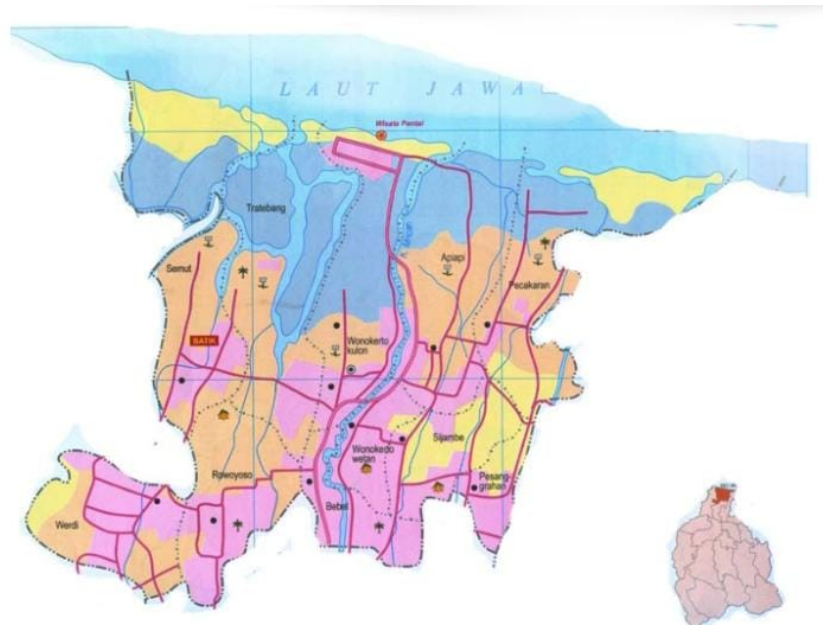


Figure1. Wonokerto District, Pekalongan

Data collection techniques used three main methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, women who lead rituals, fishermen, and local religious leaders to understand the ecological narratives they construct. Participatory observation was conducted during the implementation of “*Sedekah Laut*” and the daily activities of the community, particularly women, in managing the environment. Documentation included photos of activities, ritual archives, and local texts such as prayers and traditional songs used in “*Sedekah Laut*”. All three techniques were used to understand the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition in an ecological context comprehensively.

The data obtained were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (Miles and Huberman, 1994), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Conclusions were drawn analytically and reflectively, connecting taboo data with the theoretical framework of ecofeminism. Through this method, the local values of “*Sedekah Laut*” can foster ecological awareness and environmental education based on gender and social justice.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Climate Crisis, Environmental Damage, and the Irony of Women in “*Sedekah Laut*”

The climate crisis and environmental disasters are global issues. Coastal areas are the most vulnerable. The climate crisis directly impacts coastal communities in Wonokerto District, Pekalongan Regency. The environmental conditions in Wonokerto generally reflect the global problem of the ecological crisis.

Key environmental crisis issues exist in Wonokerto. As shown in the image above, these include waste, flooding, polluted rivers, global warming, air pollution, the destruction of marine ecosystems, clean water, forest destruction, abrasion, and soil pollution. These crises are intensifying due to climate change and human activities (Iqbal et al., 2024; Griggs, 2017). Rising sea levels, extreme weather, and pollution threaten densely populated and economically vital coastal ecosystems, infrastructure, and livelihoods (Senapati & Gupta, 2014; Yonglong Lu et al., 2018).

In addition, human activities such as urbanization, industrialization, and resource exploitation exacerbate vulnerability, leading to ecological degradation, biodiversity loss, and increased disaster risk (Ramessur, 2013; S. Moser et al., 2012). Coastal areas require community-based management that includes women. Effective management requires integrated, adaptive, and transformative strategies, including improved risk communication, ecosystem-based management, and coordinated policy responses (Ligang Zhang et al., 2020; Gamper & M. Arbinolo, 2021). Without effective action, the continued functioning of coastal systems and the well-being of climate-dependent communities are at significant risk (Ramessur, 2013; Yonglong Lu et al., 2018).

For the coastal communities of Wonokerto, the climate crisis and environmental damage are part of their history, identity, and tradition. The community's patriarchal culture influences their response to climate change, both through mitigation and adaptation. The Wonokerto community uses the Sea Alms tradition as a survival strategy, both for mitigation and adaptation. This tradition is a crucial moment, rich in meaning and philosophy, and a forum for reflection on the relationship between humans, nature, and God.

Ironically, environmentally damaging practices taint the meeting place of the triangular axis of humans, nature, and God in Sea Alms. In practice, this tradition, steeped in spirituality and ecological ethics, generates waste, garbage, and pollution. The boats used to float offerings often carry non-organic cargo, such as plastic bottles, synthetic

fabrics, and packaged food (Nisa, 2025). After the procession concludes, the remains of the offerings are seen floating and scattered along the shoreline (Nur, 2025). Three days after the ritual, visual documentation reveals an increase in waste volume, including plastic waste and food scraps. Religious leaders have denied this situation. Bambang (2025) revealed,

“There are mechanisms to reduce waste and clean the environment. In fact, with “Sedekah Laut”, we educate the public to protect the environment and the balance of nature,” said Bambang (2025).

Ecofeminists criticize the “*Sedekah Laut*” practice, which should ideally be an agent of ecological awareness. Ecofeminist criticism suggests that many symbolic traditions and spiritualities fail to become ecological practices (Warren, 2000). Shiva (2005) points out the tension between tradition, spirituality, women, and ecology. In *Earth Democracy* (2004), Shiva explains that local spirituality must align with ecological practices, not simply serve as symbols or cultural rhetoric. Women are actively participating in the Sea Alms procession, which shows that they care about the environment. The use of natural materials, on the one hand, and the rejection of Styrofoam and the promotion of organic offerings such as rice, fruit, and local flowers, demonstrate women's ecological commitment.

However, the dominant patriarchal structure within the “*Sedekah Laut*” procession often excludes their knowledge, best practices, and voices from decision-making. According to ecofeminism, domination over nature is closely linked to the marginalization of women's voices (Gaard & Gruen, 1993). Nonetheless, women are key actors in sustainable environmental education. Therefore, women's involvement in the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition in Wonokerto provides a space for women's participation in determining the direction and orientation of ecological resource management.

“*Sedekah Laut*”: Procession, Cultural, Spiritual, and Ecological Values

Based on theoretical studies and field findings, the study of ecological education rooted in cultural and spiritual practices through “*Sedekah Laut*” can be analytically explained, detailing the ritual process, its ecological significance, and the aspects of environmental education involved in the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition.

Based on the diagram above, the “*Sedekah Laut*” process is carried out through several main stages: initial preparation; opening, tahlil (religious recitation), recitation of the Koran, and prayer; the release of offerings (larung); entertainment and social activities;

and community reflection and evaluation. Each stage has its own main activities and actors. The “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition in the Wonokerto area of Pekalongan represents local spiritual, ecological, and divine relationships. “*Sedekah Laut*” serves as an instrument for coastal communities to care for the sea as a mechanism and source of life (Amanatin et al., 2024). Through this ritual, the community expresses gratitude and hopes for safety and an abundance of marine resources (Isnaeni, 2020). The following describes the procession, activities, and actors involved in the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition.

Table 1. Procession, Activities, Actors

Procession Stages	Main Activities	Actors Involved
Initial Preparation	Determining a good day, preparing offerings (buffalo head, agricultural produce, flowers, and tumpeng rice), decorating the ship, and holding committee meetings	Fishermen, traditional figures, village officials, women, fisherwomen, and youth from the youth organization
Opening, tahlil, recitation, and prayer	Reading prayers together, recitation, tahlil, or prayers for the safety of fishermen and the sea	Religious figures (kyai, ustazs), fishing communities, women, village government
Offerings (Larung)	Offerings are floated out to sea using decorated boats, accompanied by prayers and traditional music	Main fishermen, traditional figures, ceremony leaders, women's representatives
Entertainment and Social Activities	Traditional arts performances (wayang golek, sintren), boat races, eating together, seafood bazaar	Residents, local artists, small and medium enterprises, young fishing communities
Community Reflection and Evaluation	Officials' remarks, closing prayers, planning of social activities or improvement of fishermen's facilities	Local government, maritime services, community leaders, fishermen groups

According to the community, traditional leaders, and fishermen, the “*Sedekah Laut*” is not merely a cultural ceremony but also a means of strengthening social solidarity, uniting various elements of society in a collective spiritual and ecological space. Capistrano and Charles (2012) elucidate that the collective maintenance of cultural and ecological values significantly contributes to the conservation of coastal resources through community-based marine traditions.

The practice of “*Sedekah Laut*” is considered a form of *nguri-uri* (preserving) culture based on the principles of simplicity, symbolism, identity, togetherness, and implicitly conveying a message of environmental conservation. Mbah Bambang, a coastal elder from Jamban, said:

“Alhamdulillah, it's always crowded here every year. The sea offering isn't just about offerings; it is also about cooperation among fishermen. The offerings are complete, but what's more important is the togetherness and cooperation that emerge from this ritual. The ritual is about mutual care. It maintains balance between humans, nature, the ocean, and each other.” (Bambang, 2025).

The prayers, offerings, and sacred symbols used in “*Sedekah Laut*” reflect its spiritual aspect. The sea is considered a living entity with a soul (*spirit segoro*) and, therefore, is treated with immense reverence. This ritual reflects ecological theology, which values creation as a manifestation of divine will. The prayers recited ask for safety and express gratitude for the continued existence of life dependent on the sea. This aligns with the spiritual ecofeminist perspective developed by Shiva (2014), which emphasizes the importance of restoring the sacred relationship between humans and nature as the basis for environmental ethics (Shiva & Mies, 2014). In this context, “*Sedekah Laut*” contains ethical teachings that can foster ecological awareness.

““*Sedekah Laut*”, or sea purification, is crucial for balance, harmony, and the preservation of nature, the sea, and the earth. Javanese people, especially the elders, have always emphasized that this activity is a form of respect for the ocean. Because we work at sea, we hope to be granted unhindered safety.”

Ironically, although the “*Sedekah Laut*” is rich in symbolism and meaning, its ecological values have not been fully articulated in systematic and sustainable environmental education practices.

Table 2. Meaning and Value of “*Sedekah Laut*”

Symbolic Meaning	Socio-Cultural Values
A form of respect for the sea and ancestors, as well as a symbol of spiritual readiness	Cooperation, social solidarity, cultural preservation
Describes the spiritual relationship between humans, God, and nature	Religiosity, devotion, gratitude, and ecological spirituality
The buffalo head symbolizes the rejection of animalistic nature and a request for natural balance	Human-nature harmony, respect for the sea, and environmental preservation
A celebration of togetherness and gratitude for the sustenance provided by the sea	Togetherness, local economy, and cultural revitalization
Marking the end of the ritual and the intention to maintain the sustainability of the sea	Social collaboration, adaptive planning, and strengthening local institutions

Referring to Table 2 above, “*Sedekah Laut*” contains meaning, values, and symbols in social, cultural, and ecological contexts. Although the important message of preserving the earth and the sea is very real, this tradition has not become the primary foundation of locally based environmental education, remaining limited to religious education (Madinah, 2024). Therefore, the philosophy and ecological values of the “*Sedekah Laut*”

ritual need further elaboration through a critical dialogue between cultural symbolism and ecological practice.

Culturally and spiritually-based ecological education

The “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition in Wonokerto District, Pekalongan, whether practiced in Wonokerto Village, Api-api Village, or Jambean Hamlet, holds enormous potential as a medium for environmental education. Active community participation at every stage of the procession, from preparation and implementation to evaluation, is imbued with ecological values based on local culture. According to Selamet (50), the sea is not only understood as an economic resource but also as a historical, sacred space that requires respect and protection.

Environmental education rooted in local awareness is crucial, given that conventional educational models often fail to address the affective and spiritual dimensions of the community (Sterling, 2010). In this context, “*Sedekah Laut*” serves as an important vehicle for instilling locally based ecological values. A leader in the Jambean community, Bambang, described the sea as the mother of life (*ibu segoro*). It sustains humans. It is the source of sustenance, the sacredness of which must be maintained.

During the almsgiving ceremony, people bring offerings containing the fruits of the land and sea to the ocean as a symbol of reciprocity for what has been taken. This practice symbolically embodies the concept of ecological balance, similar to the principle of ecological reciprocity in political ecology literature (Martinez-Alier, 2002), namely the recognition that nature is not an object of exploitation but rather a living partner that needs to be cared for. Atin, a resident of Jambean, said:

“*Sedekah Laut*” is not just a ritual. For us women, it is also a form of responsibility to protect the sea. We prepare the offerings, from rice, side dishes, and flowers to traditional snacks. This ceremony symbolizes the need to respect the sea, as our lives depend on it. So it's not just a tradition; it also has environmental educational value.” (Atin, 2025).

Atin's statement above encourages all parties to avoid exploitation. It teaches responsibility and consideration for future generations and the sustainability of nature.

Field findings indicate that “*Sedekah Laut*” is a medium for ecological learning for people, young and old, rich and poor. Through the “*Sedekah Laut*”, a sustainable transformation of knowledge, traditions, and symbols occurs. Children are involved as actors, guardians, and inheritors of the ecological values of the “*Sedekah Laut*”. Atin, a coastal female figure, said:

“Usually, women actively organize the event, from cooking to collecting offerings. It's a symbol of cooperation and mutual assistance. Furthermore, through the “*Sedekah Laut*”, we also teach children to understand that the ocean is a source of life and must be protected. We always tell them: don't damage the ocean, don't greedily take small fish, and don't throw plastic into the river. We consider that part of our worship.” (Atin, 2025).

Through the “*Sedekah Laut*”, women play a crucial role and act as catalysts for local community transformation. Women provide access, build networks, and create spaces for community-based ecological education. Women play a crucial role in preparing the procession's needs, providing offerings, selecting environmentally friendly materials, and managing post-ritual beach cleanliness.

Various ecological dimensions in Wonokerto District manifest the ecological spirit of the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition. For instance, these ecological dimensions include respect for the sea as a living entity, balance and harmony in nature, gratitude and ecological responsibility, social mechanisms for nature conservation, intergenerational ecological education, and resistance to an exploitative economy. These ecological dimensions have interconnectedness, meaning, messages, and implications for environmental sustainability, as shown in the following table.

Table 3. Ecological Dimensions, Meaning, and Implications of “*Sedekah Laut*”

Ecological Dimension	Analytical Description	Ecological meaning and message	Implications for Environmental Sustainability
Respect for the Sea as a Living Entity	The sea is seen not just as an economic resource, but as a living entity that has a soul and must be respected.	Raising awareness that humans are part of the ecosystem, not the masters of nature	Encourage more ethical and ecologically balanced exploitation behavior
Balance and Harmony of Nature	Rituals symbolize the cosmic balance between humans, nature, and God; damage to nature is understood as a moral and ecological imbalance	Emphasizing the importance of harmony and moral responsibility towards nature	Become the basis of values in environmental management based on local ethics
Gratitude and Ecological Responsibility	“ <i>Sedekah Laut</i> ” is an expression of gratitude for marine products and an awareness of giving back to nature.	The reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, giving and caring for each other	Teaches the importance of balance between resource utilization and conservation
Social Mechanisms of	The procession is carried out collectively as a social control mechanism	Tradition becomes a non-formal	Improving community-based environmental

Nature Conservation	against exploitative behavior	regulatory system in protecting the sea	governance and customary norms
Intergenerational Ecological Education	This tradition instills ecological values through the involvement of young people and the passing on of indigenous knowledge	Environmental education based on culture that lives in society	To be a means of sustaining ecological awareness across generations
Resistance to Exploitative Economy	“ <i>Sedekah Laut</i> ” rejects the view of the sea as merely an economic commodity, and emphasizes spiritual values and the balance of nature	Forms of Eco-Resistance Against Maritime Capitalism”	Strengthening the paradigm of sustainable development based on local wisdom

Table 3 above shows that the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition is rich in ecological messages and can be used as an instrument for environmental education. The ecological message further elucidates the principles of harmony, balance, and respect for nature. Both explicitly and implicitly, the philosophy, rituals, and symbols of the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition teach a life of harmony with nature, the earth, and the sea. For example, offerings of earth and sea produce, flowers, water, coconuts, and incense reflect the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This symbolism aligns with the perspective of ecospiritual education, which emphasizes that ecological education must address the spiritual and cultural realms as the foundation for sustainable ecological behavior (Palmer et al., 2014).

The internalization of ecological values in the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition occurs naturally through the appreciation of values, spirituality, and community participation, integrated into the ritual. Nonetheless, the educational potential of the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition remains underutilized. There is no explicit integration between the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition and popular education, educational curricula, or education and training in coastal areas. In practice, ecology, the environment, and natural disasters have not yet been integrated into the educational landscape. Parents, community leaders, teachers, and educators are still searching for the right strategy to transform the ecological values of “*Sedekah Laut*”.

Positioned within the paradigm of religious moderation, such integration strengthens a model of Islamic education that is contextual, grounded, and socially engaged. “*Sedekah Laut*” shows that religious expression can help people become more aware of the environment, feel more responsible for their actions, and work together as a community. When the ecological values embedded in the tradition are incorporated into learning processes, religious moderation becomes not merely a discourse of tolerance and

balance but a lived ethical framework that shapes human relationships with nature. In this sense, “*Sedekah Laut*” contributes to the formation of an ecologically conscious religiosity mode of faith that acknowledges environmental stewardship as part of the moral and spiritual mandate entrusted by God (Anggraeni et al., 2023). Thus, the tradition becomes an instructive medium for moderating religious life while simultaneously promoting sustainable environmental practices in coastal communities.

Frequently, the “*Sedekah Laut*” procession structure fails to formally recognize this strategic role and position. In fact, this condition is reflected in Wonokerto, where the relationship between tradition, spirituality, and ecology is inseparable from the dynamics of gender inequality. Gaard and Gruen (1993) argue that ecofeminism highlights the inseparability of ecological sustainability from gender equity. Women's empowerment in the traditional “*Sedekah Laut*” ceremony is an essential prerequisite for equitable, culturally grounded, and sustainable environmental education.

The main problem so far is that environmental education tends to be cognitive and theoretical, not based on local wisdom, and lacks concrete action (Gigliotti, 1990). However, in the context of sustainable development (Education for Sustainable Development), local aspects and real-world practices are crucial. This means that the ecological values of “*Sedekah Laut*” need to be integrated into education. Culturally and spiritually based ecological education and literacy can be an effective strategy for raising environmental awareness.

Religious Moderation and Ecofeminism-Based Environmental Education

“*Sedekah Laut*” involves various actors: fishermen, community leaders, traditional figures, the government, and the general public. In the context of ecological education, “*Sedekah Laut*” is essentially an inclusive and participatory cultural arena. Women and youth are two key groups in maintaining the continuity of tradition, guardians of ecological values, and hold crucial positions in maintaining the sustainability of traditions.

Women act as drivers of tradition, promoters of education, and social dynamists. Small roles and initiatives, like pre-activity preparation, sorting environmentally friendly offerings, and post-ritual beach cleanups, enable this. People often marginalize this crucial role. Men make the decisions. In response to this fact, an ecofeminist approach becomes relevant to build balanced and equitable relationships between actors. “*Sedekah Laut*” can be an effective vehicle for ecological education if it acknowledges, recognizes, and

strengthens the role of women as agents of change in the context of environmental education (Warren, 2000; Shiva, 2005).

Ecofeminism understands that caring for, protecting, and preserving the earth and the sea is carried out by women (Puleo, 2017), both at the household, community, and public levels. The public sector continues to leave a legacy of misery due to women's role. Women strategically maintain rituals and traditions, upholding the values of simplicity and respect for nature. However, this role is still questioned by various parties whose interests are being challenged. Wati said:

“From my perspective, the *“Sedekah Laut”* is also a space for women to have a voice. Women are the deciding factor in tradition. We can convey environmental messages, reminding people that the sea does not only belong to male fishermen but also to everyone, including women and children. So we feel we have a significant role. We are the ones who make the decisions.” (Wati, 2025).

Wati's statement illustrates the contestation between men and women in the *“Sedekah Laut”* tradition. There is a struggle for influence and an unequal power relationship as a result of patriarchal cultural dominance. Women's voices tend to be ignored in formal decision-making processes. This situation requires reform. Therefore, the reconstruction of tradition as a medium for environmental education must be accompanied by the recognition and strengthening of women's ecological leadership. This is a crucial agenda in justice-based ecopedagogy (Bowers, 2001).

Women are, in fact, the primary actors in transforming ecological education through *“Sedekah Laut”*. Women determine the materials, from plastic and Styrofoam containers to woven bamboo, pandan leaves, or banana leaves. We need to foster this transformation by strengthening women's positions and roles. Before educating others, women need to be educated first. Women become caretakers of nature, nurturing mothers. Just as children tend to destroy the earth, women, as mothers, embrace and educate their children. Women cultivate, develop, and optimize the ecological potential within each human being. From a spiritual perspective, polluting the ocean is a denial of God's blessings. Vandana Shiva (2005) contends that ecologically oriented spirituality can cultivate resistance against a consumerist and detrimental culture.

Within the framework of religious moderation, *“Sedekah Laut”* plays a strategic role as an educative space that nurtures forms of religiosity that are inclusive, tolerant, and adaptive to local sociocultural dynamics. Through this practice, religion is not interpreted rigidly based solely on textual norms but is reflected contextually by taking into account

the ecological and social needs of coastal communities. “*Sedekah Laut*” thus becomes a medium for strengthening an ecologically grounded religious ethic, wherein authentic religiosity entails an awareness of responsibility for the preservation of nature as a divine trust (Anggraeni et al., 2024). This position situates tradition as an instrument of religious moderation that maintains social harmony and cultural identity and sustains ecological continuity amid the threats of the climate crisis and the exploitation of marine resources.

The “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition, besides its philosophy, meaning, symbols, and ecological message, can also provide a space for women's participation and reflection in determining policy, direction, and role in promoting climate justice. Through “*Sedekah Laut*”, women become key actors in transforming ecological values, maintaining a sustainable planet, and realizing climate justice.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that culture and religious moderation are important pillars in building capacity, knowledge, and environmental education to strengthen public awareness of environmental protection. For the coastal communities of Pekalongan, the “*Sedekah Laut*” tradition is not merely a cultural heritage or an annual ritual, but rather a meaningful spiritual and ecological expression. This collective practice reflects the reciprocal relationship between humans and the sea, grounded in values of respect, balance, and moral responsibility towards nature.

“*Sedekah Laut*” serves as a medium for culturally and spiritually based environmental education. Through ecopedagogical and ecofeminist approaches, this tradition fosters participatory, transformative, and emancipatory ecological awareness, particularly by involving women as agents of change. Protecting the sea and nature as sources of life requires more than just internalizing local cultural values and traditions; it requires locally based and gender-equitable ecological education.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the integration of culture, spirituality, and ecology to respond to the climate crisis. This innovative study expands the theoretical boundaries of locally based ecopedagogy and shows how traditional wisdom, like “*Sedekah Laut*”, can serve as a transformative source of ecological ethics to tackle the climate crisis. Practically, “*Sedekah Laut*” can serve as a medium for ecological education, influencing both, education policy, and sustainable development.

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