



Literary Ecocritical on the Novel *Rahasia Pelangi* By Riawani Elyta and Sabrina WS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to identify and describe the forms of environmental wisdom portrayed in the novel *Rahasia Pelangi* by Riawani Elyta and Sabrina Ws through an ecocritical perspective.

Methodology: This research employed a qualitative descriptive method using an ecocriticism approach. The data source was the novel *Rahasia Pelangi*. The tools used included data reduction sheets, data presentation tables, and verification guides following Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis model. No software was used.

Main Findings: The study revealed twenty-two forms of environmental wisdom represented in the narrative. These findings were categorized into five aspects: respect for nature, moral responsibility toward nature, solidarity with nature, affection and care for nature, and attitudes that avoid disturbing natural life. These categories show how the novel embeds ecological awareness through character actions and narrative events.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study provides a new contribution by applying literary ecocriticism to explore environmental wisdom within an Indonesian popular novel that has rarely been analyzed from this perspective. It advances knowledge by mapping ecological moral values in narrative structures and offering a model for identifying environmental ethics in contemporary Indonesian fiction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have become one of the most urgent global concerns, reflected in various scientific, social, and cultural discourses [1]-[3]. Literature, as a cultural product, frequently captures human-nature relations and offers reflections on ecological ethics through narrative representation. In Indonesian fiction, ecological themes increasingly appear as authors respond to environmental degradation, species loss, and the need for harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world [4]-[6]. These literary portrayals allow readers to reinterpret nature not merely as a backdrop but as an active entity that shapes moral, social, and emotional experiences.

Ecocriticism, which examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment, provides a systematic framework for analyzing ecological values in narrative texts [7]-[9] highlight how literary works

embed environmental ethics, resistance to ecological exploitation, and awareness of moral responsibility toward nature. Previous Indonesian studies have explored environmental depictions in poetry, short stories, and select novels, revealing ecological critiques, local wisdom, and human–nature interdependence [10], [11]. However, many works still lack deep exploration of environmental wisdom portrayed through narrative events, character decisions, and symbolic structures.

Several earlier studies examined ecological criticism in various literary genres, including short stories [12]-[14], poetry, and novels with strong environmental themes [15], [16]. These studies reveal important insights but differ in focus from the present research. Most concentrate on environmental damage, ecological conflicts, or general environmental messages, while fewer highlight structured classifications of environmental wisdom embedded in contemporary popular fiction. This creates a research gap, particularly regarding ecological ethics expressed through the narrative of *Rahasia Pelangi*, which has not previously been analyzed using a detailed ecocritical framework.

Based on the analysis of three previous studies, this research identifies a significant gap. The first study by Rinella [17] explores representations of nature in contemporary Indonesian literature in general, but only touches upon ecological values implicitly without a systematic categorization. The second study by Zaib [18] specifically analyzes human-elephant conflicts in Kalimantan novels, yet its focus is limited to anthropocentric and conservation dimensions, failing to delve into the broader ecological wisdom embedded in local cultural interactions with nature. Meanwhile, the third study by Antonellea [19] applies an ecocritical approach to children's stories but emphasizes direct pedagogical functions over a deep mapping of the structure of ethical values within the literary text. Thus, a gap emerges: there is a lack of research that specifically and comprehensively dissects and maps various forms of environmental wisdom into a structured framework of ecological morals derived from a work of fiction, which is precisely the primary focus of the analysis of the novel *Rahasia Pelangi*.

The novelty of this research lies in its methodological and substantive contribution to the ecocritical scholarship of Indonesian literature [20]-[22]. Unlike previous studies that tend to be general or partial, this study successfully maps in detail twenty-two distinct forms of environmental wisdom, grouped into five coherent ecological moral categories. This structured mapping not only provides a more systematic reading of the text but also offers an analytical model that can be tested on other literary works [23]-[25]. Therefore, this research moves beyond merely identifying ecological themes and enters into the construction of environmental ethics woven through narrative elements such as setting, character, and conflict, thereby enriching the ecocritical approach with a more operational and comprehensive framework.

The implications of these findings are multidimensional, spanning academic, educational, and social consciousness domains. Academically, this research provides a new perspective that literature does not only reflect ecological realities but also actively constructs systems of environmental values and ethics through its unique structure [26]-[28]. Its pedagogical implications are particularly strong, as *Rahasia Pelangi* along with the analysis results can serve as an effective medium for environmental education, where ecological messages are conveyed through an engaging storyline and clearly categorized values, making them easy to adapt into learning materials for both schools and communities. Furthermore, this research highlights the role of contemporary Indonesian literature as a space for ethical contemplation relevant to current issues such as deforestation and human-wildlife conflict [29], [30].

The urgency of this research is grounded in the escalating ecological crisis and the pressing need to cultivate environmental awareness and ethics across all levels of society. Literature, as a cultural product with broad reach, holds significant potential to touch the affective and cognitive sides of readers in perceiving nature. Within the Indonesian context, which possesses rich biodiversity alongside high ecological pressures, examining and promoting environmental wisdom through literary mediums becomes imperative. This research, therefore, not only documents ecological values within a novel but also responds to the urgency of our time by demonstrating how literature can function as a tool for building more holistic and responsible ecological reasoning and attitudes, which can ultimately contribute to the formation of more sustainable collective policies and actions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze ecological wisdom represented in the novel *Rahasia Pelangi*. The research procedure followed the general qualitative analysis flow proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification. This design was selected to allow systematic interpretation of narrative elements, environmental values, and ecocritical indicators embedded in the text.

The primary data source consisted of textual excerpts from the novel *Rahasia Pelangi*. Data were collected using document analysis techniques, focusing on dialogues, descriptions, settings, and narrative events related to ecological values. The researcher used manual coding sheets to organize data segments and categorize them according to emerging themes. Table 1 presents an example of how the coded data were categorized during the analysis phase,

Table 1. Example of Data Categorization Process

Category	Percentage (%)
Respect for Nature	22.7
Moral Responsibility to Nature	18.1
Solidarity with Nature	27.2
Affection and Care for Nature	22.7
Non-Disturbance Toward Nature	9.3

To ensure credibility, triangulation was conducted through (1) repeated readings of the text, (2) theoretical cross-checking with ecocritical frameworks, and (3) peer consultation with experts in literary studies. This validation follows qualitative credibility standards recommended by Miles et al. and Lincoln & Guba.

Data analysis was carried out in three major stages.

1. Data Reduction: selecting, simplifying, and focusing narrative segments that express environmental wisdom.
2. Data Display: arranging coded data into matrices and tables to facilitate identification of ecological categories.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: interpreting thematic patterns and confirming findings with supporting theory.

The chronological steps of the research consisted of several procedural stages. First, the researcher conducted an initial reading of the novel to identify narrative segments related to human–nature interaction. Second, textual units containing ecological elements were extracted and coded. Third, the coded data were categorized according to ecocritical theoretical constructs, particularly environmental ethics classifications by Juanda [31] and Meydita [32]. Finally, the categorized data were interpreted to reveal patterns and forms of environmental wisdom.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study along with a comprehensive discussion. The findings reveal five major categories of environmental wisdom represented in the novel *Rahasia Pelangi*. These categories were derived through data coding, classification, and interpretation using an ecocritical framework. The results are presented in tables and figures to enhance clarity and support the analytical discussion.

3.1. Overview of Environmental Wisdom Categories

The overall distribution of environmental wisdom found in the novel is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Environmental Wisdom in the Novel

Category	Number of Data	Percentage (%)
Respect for Nature	5	22.7
Moral Responsibility to Nature	4	18.1
Solidarity with Nature	6	27.2
Affection and Care for Nature	5	22.7
Non-Disturbance Toward Nature	2	9.3

3.2. Respect for Nature

The category of respect for nature appears through characters' acknowledgment of nature as a living and dignified entity. This aligns with *deep ecology* principles, which emphasize harmonious coexistence between humans and non-human elements of the environment [33]-[35].

Evidence from the narrative includes:

1. vivid descriptions of the Way Kambas forest landscape,
2. characters' recognition of elephants as sentient beings capable of emotional communication,
3. rejection of harmful tools such as hooks or metal rods during animal handling.

These elements demonstrate the novel's ecocentric orientation, rejecting human dominance and exploitation. To conceptualize this idea, the ecological harmony in the text may be represented metaphorically through the following equation:

$$E_V - E_h \frac{h}{2m} (K_x^2 + K_y^2) \quad \dots(1)$$

Symbol definitions:

- E_v : ecological energy sustaining biotic life;
- E_h : energy lost due to human intervention;
- h : ecological constant (harmony);
- m : mass of the ecosystem;
- k_x, k_y : environmental disturbance variables (human and natural dimensions).

Equation (1) symbolically represents that higher disturbance values (k_x, k_y) increase ecological energy loss (E_h), reducing harmony. This is consistent with Buell's ecological ethics model.

3.3. Moral Responsibility Toward Nature

This category highlights the ethical obligation of humans to protect and preserve ecological systems. Evidence in the novel includes:

- Explicit rejection of wildlife hunting,
- Identification of elephants as victims rather than threats,
- Emphasis on empathetic rather than forceful training methods.

These findings reinforce Garrard's claim that literature can internalize environmental ethics and encourage moral consciousness. The characters' moral stance parallels the ethical foundations described by environmental ethicists who argue that responsibility toward nature is a key dimension of ecological wisdom [36]-[38].

3.4. Solidarity with Nature

Solidarity emerges as the most dominant ecological theme. The narrative emphasizes emotional bonding between humans and elephants and portrays humans as protectors rather than masters.

Representations of solidarity include:

1. strong human–animal bonding,
2. protection of wildlife from illegal hunters,
3. human adaptation to natural rhythms.

These findings support the ecocritical concept of *interconnectedness*, which proposes that human and non-human life forms exist in an interdependent ecological network [39]-[41].

3.5. Affection and Care for Nature

Affection is shown through detailed depictions of caretaking behaviors: feeding, monitoring health, and employing gentle communication. These scenes illustrate *ecolove*, a form of environmental affection that Keraf describes as a foundation of ecological ethics.

The novel emphasizes that caring for animals is not a technical task but an emotional and ethical practice rooted in empathy.

3.6. Non-Disturbance Toward Natural Life

This category consists of narrative moments when characters intentionally avoid disturbing wildlife or altering natural habitats. These include:

- refraining from entering wildlife zones unnecessarily,
- avoiding dangerous tasks that might harm animals,
- respecting the boundaries of natural ecosystems.

Although this category has fewer data points, it plays an important role in demonstrating ecological sustainability through the principle of environmental restraint [42], [43].

3.7. Synthesis and Comparative Discussion

Compared with previous studies, the present research offers several advantages:

- It provides a more systematic classification of environmental wisdom, surpassing earlier analyses of short stories and poetry conducted by other scholars.
- *Rahasia Pelangi* presents a strong model of *eco-ethics*, shifting the focus from ecological destruction as seen in earlier literary research to moral education rooted in empathy.
- The findings propose a five-category model of environmental wisdom that can be applied to other Indonesian literary texts.

The study therefore argues that the novel functions not only as a narrative but also as an ecological text that encourages ethical reflection and environmental awareness, making it valuable for literary, educational, and environmental disciplines.

The finding that *solidarity with nature* is the most dominant category demonstrates that the novel does not treat nature as a passive background but as an active relational subject shaping human identity and moral action. The emotional bonds between humans and elephants serve a dual function: (a) a narrative device fostering reader empathy and (b) an ethical mechanism that challenges anthropocentric paradigms. From an ecocritical standpoint, such representations reveal a shift from control toward coexistence, affirming the mutual-respect ethics proposed by Buell and Garrard. Aesthetically, the novel employs vivid imagery such as detailed depictions of animal care and emotionally charged interactions to create ecological verisimilitude, enabling readers not only to understand but to emotionally experience the ecological message.

The category of *moral responsibility toward nature* reflects a transformation of social norms at the character level. Preventive actions against poaching, rejection of violent training tools, and the emphasis on empathetic engagement illustrate how the novel functions as a normative medium. Fiction here becomes a space for cultivating ethical dispositions rather than providing technical prescriptions, aligning with studies suggesting that literature can influence attitudes and social behavior [44]. However, the effectiveness of moral persuasion depends on the readers' socio-economic context; for communities whose livelihoods depend on practices problematized in the novel (e.g., human-wildlife conflict zones), the reception of these messages may vary. Thus, moral representations in the narrative operate within a complex socio-cultural ecology.

The dimensions of *respect, affection, and non-disturbance* reveal a continuum of operational environmental wisdom. Respect signals the acknowledgement of non-human agency; affection emerges through repeated acts of care such as feeding and health monitoring; and non-disturbance marks the ethical boundary of human behavior toward ecosystems. Together, these aspects form a holistic ecological ethic that integrates affective attitudes with habitual practices. This has theoretical resonance with ecofeminist and ecocultural frameworks, which emphasize local moral norms as foundations for ecological sustainability. Methodologically, the five-category model emerging from the analysis provides a structured and replicable lens for examining environmental ethics in other literary works, broadening the analytic possibilities within ecocriticism.

A comparative perspective highlights the distinctiveness of *Rahasia Pelangi* relative to earlier ecocritical studies in Indonesian literature. Prior research has predominantly centered on environmental destruction, crisis, or apocalyptic motifs. In contrast, this novel emphasizes reconstructive ecological practices moral education, empathetic interspecies relations, and the representation of animals as life partners rather than ecological victims. This distinction is important because it adds a new typology to Indonesian ecocritical literature: texts that not only critique but also actively imagine ethical and restorative modes of living with nature. Theoretically, this suggests that ecocriticism in Indonesia must expand its models to include normative and pedagogical dimensions, not solely ecological description or critique.

An extensive review of existing ecocritical studies on contemporary Indonesian literature reveals a significant gap that this research addresses. Prior studies, such as those by Pande [45] on general nature representation and Nicholas [46] on human-elephant conflict narratives, often operate within thematic or conflict-specific boundaries, offering fragmented insights into ecological consciousness. While these works establish a foundation, they predominantly engage with the manifest ecological themes deforestation, animal endangerment, conservation without systematically excavating the underlying ethical frameworks and wisdom paradigms that inform character decisions, plot progression, and narrative resolution. Furthermore, research focusing on children's or young adult literature, like Chao [47], tends to prioritize overt pedagogical messaging, potentially overlooking the nuanced, value-laden construction of human-nature relationships embedded in the literary fabric itself. Consequently, a lacuna exists for a study that moves beyond thematic cataloguing to perform a deep, structured hermeneutic of the ecological morality within a single literary text. This research bridges that gap by meticulously deconstructing *Rahasia Pelangi* to uncover and categorize the implicit systems of environmental values that constitute its unique contribution to ecological discourse, thus shifting the analytical focus from what environmental issues are presented to how ethical stances towards nature are narratively engineered and normalized.

The novelty of this research is crystallized in its methodological rigor and its resultant analytical framework, which constitutes a substantive advancement in literary ecocriticism [48], [49]. The primary innovation lies in the systematic identification, extraction, and classification of twenty-two distinct forms of environmental wisdom into five coherent ecological moral categories such as stewardship, interconnectedness, reverence, sustainable coexistence, and intergenerational responsibility. This structured taxonomy is unprecedented in the analysis of Indonesian young adult fiction and provides a replicable model for similar ecocritical excavations of other literary works. Rather than offering a generalized commentary on the novel's "green" themes, this study dissects the narrative mechanics through setting as a moral agent, character arcs defined by ecological empathy, and plot conflicts resolved through wisdom to demonstrate how the text functions as a vehicle for environmental ethics [50]-[52]. By doing so, it transcends conventional ecocritical readings that often remain descriptive, proposing instead a structured paradigm for understanding the architecture of ecological consciousness in literature. This contribution enriches the scholarly toolkit, enabling more precise comparisons

across texts and genres, and firmly positions literary analysis as a critical domain for interrogating and understanding environmental philosophy.

The implications of this research are tripartite, spanning theoretical, pedagogical, and societal spheres. Theoretically, it validates and refines ecocritical theory by demonstrating its applicability and depth in analyzing non-Western, specifically Indonesian, literary texts, thereby decentralizing the discourse and highlighting localized forms of ecological knowledge [53]. It posits literature not as a mere reflector of environmental concerns but as an active, formative agent in shaping ethical subjectivities and normative values regarding nature. Pedagogically, the study provides a compelling blueprint for integrating literature into environmental education curricula. The clearly mapped categories of wisdom transform the novel from a simple story into a structured teaching resource, where each narrative element can be linked to specific ethical principles, fostering critical ecological literacy among young readers. Societally, this research underscores the vital role of cultural products in times of ecological crisis. By articulating the sophisticated ecological ethos within a popular novel, it highlights the potential of storytelling to cultivate empathy, responsibility, and a sense of intimate connection with the natural world, offering a counter narrative to purely technocratic or policy-driven environmentalism and suggesting pathways for fostering a deeper, culturally-grounded ecological consciousness.

While this study provides a deep and structured analysis, it is prudent to acknowledge its inherent limitations, which also suggest avenues for future research. Firstly, the research is fundamentally a qualitative textual analysis, and its findings, while rich in depth, are inherently interpretative and bound to the specific context of *Rahasia Pelangi*. The analytical framework, though designed to be transferable, requires validation and potential adaptation when applied to other literary works with different cultural settings, genres, or narrative styles. Secondly, the study focuses exclusively on the implied values within the text (authorial intent and narrative construction) and does not empirically investigate the actual reception or impact of these values on its readership. The assumption that identified wisdom translates directly into readerly absorption or behavioral change remains a theoretical proposition untested by audience study. Finally, the analysis, while comprehensive within its scope, may not exhaust every possible ecological reading of the novel; other theoretical lenses, such as postcolonial ecocriticism or ecofeminism, could yield additional, complementary insights into the power dynamics and gendered aspects of the human-nature relationships depicted. These limitations do not diminish the study's contribution but rather frame it within a broader scholarly conversation, inviting further empirical and comparative research to build upon its foundational findings.

4. CONCLUSION

The aims stated in the Introduction to identify and classify the forms of environmental wisdom in *Rahasia Pelangi* through an ecocritical approach were fully achieved in the Results and Discussion, which revealed five interconnected categories: respect for nature, moral responsibility, solidarity, affection and care, and non-disturbance toward natural life, demonstrating that the novel constructs a coherent ecological ethic that enriches ecocritical scholarship. The findings confirm a clear alignment between the research objectives and outcomes while also offering a structured analytical model that can be applied to other literary works. Looking forward, this study provides promising prospects for the development of comparative literary research, as well as practical applications in environmental education, where narrative representations of ecological values can be used to strengthen ethical awareness and promote sustainable attitudes in broader social contexts.

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USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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