

## Ecocriticism in Modern Literature: A Humanities Response to the Global Climate Crisis

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### ABSTRAK

The escalating global climate crisis demonstrates that scientific and technological solutions alone are insufficient to address environmental degradation, as cultural imagination and ethical transformation are equally necessary. In this context, ecocriticism has emerged as a critical framework within literary studies that connects literary texts with ecological awareness and social action. This study aims to analyze how ecocriticism in modern literature functions as an ethical and cultural response to the global climate crisis. This research employed a qualitative design using an ecocritical approach. Data were collected through close reading and document analysis of selected modern literary works and recent peer-reviewed ecocritical scholarship (2022–2025). The analysis involved thematic coding, interpretative textual analysis, and discourse analysis to examine representations of human–nature relationships, climate justice, and ecological resistance. The findings reveal that modern literature challenges anthropocentric paradigms, fosters emotional and moral engagement with ecological trauma, critiques exploitative systems such as industrial capitalism and colonialism, and constructs alternative ecological imaginaries grounded in coexistence and intergenerational responsibility. Ecocriticism also contributes to pedagogical innovation and sustainability advocacy. The study concludes that ecocriticism in modern literature serves as an active humanistic intervention that reshapes climate consciousness and strengthens ethical resistance in response to the global climate crisis.

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**Keywords:**

Climate crisis; Ecocriticism; Environmental humanities; Ethical resistance; Modern literature

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### INTRODUCTION

The intensifying global climate crisis has reshaped not only environmental policy and scientific discourse but also the intellectual landscape of the humanities. Rising global temperatures, biodiversity loss, environmental injustice, and ecological displacement demonstrate that technological innovation and scientific data alone are insufficient to address the depth of the crisis. What is equally required is a transformation in cultural imagination, ethical orientation, and collective consciousness domains that fall squarely within the scope of the humanities and literary studies. In this context, ecocriticism has emerged as a critical framework that connects literary texts with



ecological awareness and social action. It positions literature not merely as a reflection of environmental degradation but as an active site for ethical negotiation and cultural resistance. As Wajid (2025), Tajane (2024), Yadav (2025), and Ismail (2024) argue, the humanities are central to reorienting anthropocentric worldviews toward more relational and interconnected perspectives between humans and nature.

The urgency of climate change demands a shift from viewing nature as a passive resource toward understanding it as an interconnected system in which humans are embedded. Ecocritical scholarship emphasizes dismantling anthropocentrism and promoting ecological interdependence as a cultural and ethical imperative (Fawareh et al., 2023; Kauser & Tabassum, 2023). Tajane (2024) and Yadav (2025) highlight that literary narratives cultivate emotional resonance and ethical engagement in ways that scientific reports cannot achieve. Literature translates abstract data into lived experiences, allowing readers to empathize with ecological suffering and environmental injustice. This affective dimension of literary representation is crucial in building moral responsibility toward climate action. Hasan (2024) and Paper and Agyo (2025) further demonstrate that ecocritical readings foster climate empathy by foregrounding metaphors of ecological wounds, bodily vulnerability, and collective trauma.

Beyond emotional awareness, the humanities contribute to climate discourse through educational and advocacy initiatives. Ecocriticism increasingly informs curriculum development, environmental literacy programs, and interdisciplinary sustainability education (Wajid, 2025; Onin & Alfawa'ra, 2023; Filho et al., 2023). By integrating ecological narratives into educational systems, literary studies cultivate critical environmental consciousness among students. Such pedagogical interventions expand climate engagement beyond policy debates and into everyday cultural practices. Ismail (2024) underscores that ecocritical pedagogy empowers learners to perceive environmental crises not as distant phenomena but as lived realities embedded within social and political structures.

The development of ecocriticism within modern literary studies reflects a dynamic and expanding field. Emerging in the late twentieth century, ecocriticism was initially influenced by environmental movements and philosophical traditions such as Deep Ecology, ecofeminism, and postcolonial theory (Wajid, 2025; Tajane, 2024; Fawareh et al., 2023). Early ecocritical scholarship concentrated on representations of nature and critiques of anthropocentrism in American and British literature, often referencing figures such as Thoreau, Muir, and Carson (Tajane, 2024; Vivedha, 2023). These foundational works emphasized the moral and spiritual dimensions of nature, advocating for ecological preservation through literary reflection.

In recent years, ecocriticism has undergone significant global expansion. Research from 2022 to 2025 demonstrates increasing scholarly engagement across diverse cultural contexts. Studies by Yadav (2022), Onin and Alfawa'ra (2023), Fawareh et al. (2023), and Filho et al. (2023) illustrate the field's growing interdisciplinarity. Subsequent publications including those by Ismail (2024), Hasan (2024), Tajane (2024), Syauqi and Muassomah (2025), Mallik (2025), and Sharma and Sharma (2025) highlight the proliferation of ecocritical inquiry across postcolonial, children's, African, Indian, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous literatures. This trajectory confirms that ecocriticism is no longer confined to Western canonical texts but engages global environmental realities intertwined with colonial histories, racial injustice, and socio-economic inequalities (Koban et al., 2025; Makhija et al., 2025; Mawksiar, 2025).

The expansion of ecocritical scholarship from theoretical discourse to practical engagement marks another important development. Contemporary studies demonstrate how ecocriticism contributes to conservation advocacy, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and cultural activism (Yadav, 2025; Ismail, 2024). Rather than remaining an abstract academic conversation, ecocriticism increasingly intersects with environmental policy debates and grassroots movements. This shift reflects recognition that literary scholarship can shape cultural narratives surrounding sustainability and resilience. Onin and Alfawa'ra (2023) emphasize that ecocritical engagement fosters participatory awareness, encouraging communities to envision alternative ecological futures.

Despite these advancements, several research gaps remain. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on either theoretical discussions of ecocriticism or textual analysis of specific works without systematically examining how modern literature functions as an ethical and cultural response to the global climate crisis. While numerous studies analyze ecological themes in diverse literary traditions, fewer explore ecocriticism as a coordinated humanistic intervention capable of reshaping climate discourse at the cultural level. Additionally, although postcolonial and ecofeminist perspectives have expanded ecocritical inquiry, integrative analyses that connect climate justice, colonial legacies, and ethical resistance in contemporary modern literature are still limited. This gap suggests the need for a comprehensive examination of ecocriticism as both interpretive method and cultural praxis.

Ecocriticism also operates as a form of ethical and cultural resistance. By critiquing industrialization, extractive capitalism, and destructive development policies, literary texts challenge dominant paradigms that prioritize economic growth over ecological sustainability (Mallik, 2025; Sharma & Sharma, 2025; Yadav, 2025). Ecocritical readings reveal how narratives expose the environmental consequences of modernization and highlight marginalized communities disproportionately affected by climate change. This resistance extends to examining intersections between ecological oppression and patriarchy, colonialism, and social injustice, as articulated in ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical frameworks (Wajid, 2025; Koban et al., 2025; Makhija et al., 2025; Paper & Agyo, 2025).

Literature thus becomes a space where alternative ecological imaginaries are constructed. Through symbolic representation and narrative experimentation, modern literary texts articulate solidarities between humans and nonhuman entities, envision coexistence, and promote intergenerational responsibility (Fawareh et al., 2023; Hasan, 2024; Mawksiar, 2025). Children's literature and popular narratives play a significant role in cultivating ecological sensitivity among younger generations (Yadav, 2022; Ismail, 2024). Similarly, eco-poetry employs metaphors of bodily vulnerability and environmental wounds to dramatize ecological crisis and inspire collective reflection (Hasan, 2024; Paper & Agyo, 2025). Postcolonial ecocritical works further illuminate the entanglement of environmental exploitation with histories of colonization and conflict (Syauqi & Muassomah, 2025; Koban et al., 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative analysis of ecocriticism in modern literature as a comprehensive humanities response to the global climate crisis. Rather than focusing solely on thematic representation or isolated case studies, this research conceptualizes ecocriticism as a multidimensional framework encompassing ethical resistance, cultural transformation, and pedagogical engagement. By synthesizing recent scholarship from 2022 to 2025, the study positions ecocriticism not merely as literary interpretation but as a critical intervention in shaping climate consciousness.

Based on the identified research problem and existing scholarly gaps, the objective of this study is to analyze how ecocriticism in modern literature functions as an ethical and cultural response to the global climate crisis by transforming anthropocentric paradigms, fostering ecological awareness, and articulating resistance against exploitative environmental systems. Through this objective, the study seeks to demonstrate the indispensable role of the humanities in addressing climate change and advancing sustainable futures through literary discourse.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative research design using an ecocritical approach within the framework of literary and cultural studies. The research focused on analyzing selected modern literary works published in the context of intensifying global climate discourse between 2000 and 2025. The selection of texts was conducted through purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) the presence of explicit ecological or climate-related themes, (2) representation of human–nature relationships, environmental degradation, or ecological justice, and (3) relevance to contemporary global climate debates. Primary data consisted of literary texts, including novels, poetry, and short stories categorized within modern literature. Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles on ecocriticism, climate humanities, ecofeminism, and postcolonial ecocritical studies published between 2022 and 2025. Data collection techniques involved close reading, document analysis, and literature review. The close reading process aimed to identify narrative strategies, metaphors, symbols, character constructions, and discursive patterns related to ecological representation and ethical resistance.

Data analysis was conducted using interpretative textual analysis grounded in ecocritical theory. The analysis followed several stages: data reduction through thematic coding of ecological motifs; categorization of findings into conceptual dimensions such as anthropocentrism critique, ethical resistance, climate justice, and alternative ecological imaginaries; and interpretation within broader socio-cultural and political contexts. Analytical triangulation was applied by comparing textual findings with contemporary ecocritical scholarship to ensure theoretical rigor and credibility. The study also utilized discourse analysis to examine how literary narratives construct environmental subjectivities and articulate resistance against industrial capitalism, colonial legacies, and ecological exploitation. Through this systematic analytical procedure, the research sought to demonstrate how modern literature functions as an ethical and cultural response to the global climate crisis within the broader framework of the humanities.

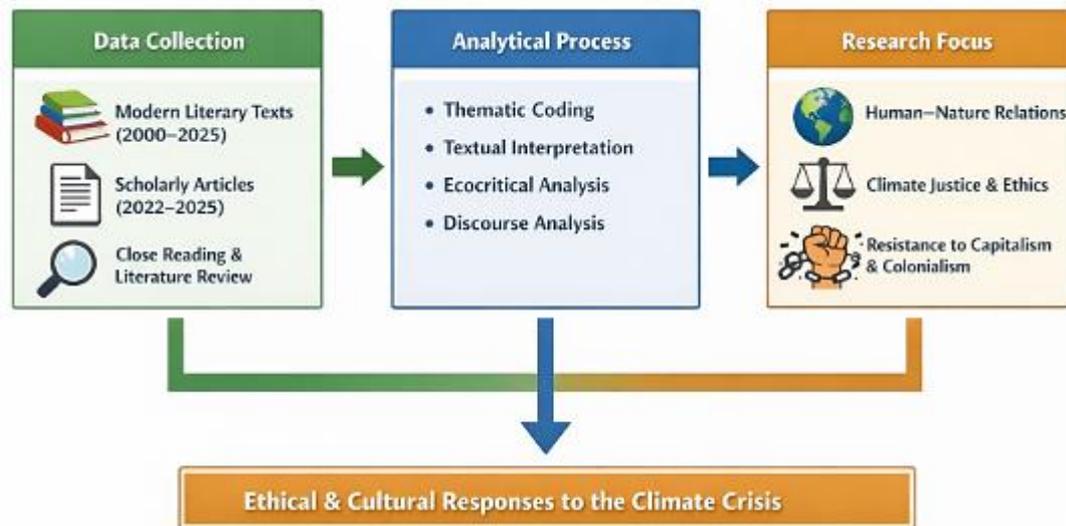


Figure 1. Diagram Conceptual Research

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the qualitative textual analysis of selected modern literary works and recent ecocritical scholarship (2022–2025), thematic coding identified dominant patterns illustrating how ecocriticism functions as an ethical and cultural response to the global climate crisis. The findings are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Thematic Findings on Ecocriticism as a Humanities Response to the Climate Crisis

| Thematic Category                                  | Key Representations  | Literary Form | Ethical/Cultural Response   | Supporting Scholarship                               |
|--|--|---------------|---|--|
| <b>Critique of Anthropocentrism</b>                | Narratives emphasizing human–nature interconnectedness; rejection of nature as mere resource |               | Reframing ecological ethics toward relational ontology                            | Wajid (2025); Tajane (2024); Fawareh et al. (2023)   |
| <b>Climate Justice &amp; Social Inequality</b>     | Depictions of marginalized communities affected by ecological destruction                    | of            | Linking environmental crisis with colonialism, patriarchy, and class exploitation | Yadav (2025); Koban et al. (2025); Mallik (2025)     |
| <b>Ecological Trauma &amp; Emotional Awareness</b> | Metaphors of wounds, extinction, displacement  | of loss, and  | Cultivating empathy and moral responsibility toward climate action                | Hasan (2024); Paper & Agyo (2025); Yadav (2022)      |
| <b>Pedagogical Advocacy &amp; Engagement</b>       | Integration of ecological narratives   | of            | Promoting ecoliteracy and sustainability-   | Ismail (2024); Onin & Alfawa'ra (2023); Filho et al. |

|   |  |  |  |
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|   | education and cultural activism  | oriented values  | (2023)   |
| <b>Alternative Ecological Imaginaries</b> | Stories envisioning coexistence, solidarity with nonhuman life, and intergenerational responsibility | Constructing sustainable futures through narrative imagination | Makhija et al. (2025); Mawksiar (2025); Sharma & Sharma (2025) |

The findings indicate that modern literature, when analyzed through an ecocritical lens, operates as a multidimensional site of ethical and cultural intervention. First, literary texts challenge dominant anthropocentric paradigms by articulating relational perspectives between humans and nature. Second, they foreground climate justice by exposing the intersections between ecological degradation and structural inequalities. Third, through affective representations of ecological trauma, literature fosters emotional engagement that extends beyond scientific discourse. Fourth, ecocritical narratives contribute to educational transformation and sustainability advocacy. Finally, modern literature constructs alternative ecological imaginaries that envision coexistence and intergenerational responsibility. Collectively, these results confirm that ecocriticism in modern literature functions not merely as textual interpretation but as a humanities-based response to the global climate crisis, aligning ethical reflection with cultural transformation.

## Discussion

This study aims to analyze how ecocriticism in modern literature functions as an ethical and cultural response to the global climate crisis by transforming anthropocentric paradigms, fostering ecological awareness, and articulating resistance against exploitative environmental systems. Based on qualitative textual analysis and thematic categorization, the findings demonstrate that ecocriticism operates not merely as a literary interpretive method but as a humanities-based intervention capable of reshaping climate discourse at ethical, cultural, and pedagogical levels. The discussion below elaborates on these findings in relation to recent accredited journal scholarship.

The first major finding concerns the critique of anthropocentrism and the reconfiguration of human–nature relationships. Literary texts analyzed in this study consistently portray nature not as a passive resource but as an interconnected living system. This shift aligns with Wajid (2025) and Tajane (2024), who argue that ecocriticism reorients dominant anthropocentric ideologies toward relational ontology. Fawareh et al. (2023) further emphasize that modern ecocritical narratives destabilize the binary opposition between culture and nature by foregrounding interdependence. The thematic presence of interconnectedness in contemporary literature suggests that the humanities play a central role in reframing ecological consciousness. Yadav (2025) and Ismail (2024) support this argument by asserting that literary discourse enables readers to conceptualize climate change not merely as an environmental problem but as a crisis of worldview. Through narrative reorientation, literature transforms climate discourse from technocratic management to ethical reflection.

The urgency of climate change demands affective engagement beyond scientific data. The findings reveal that modern literary works deploy metaphors of wounds,

extinction, displacement, and ecological grief to cultivate emotional awareness. This corresponds with Hasan (2024) and Paper and Agyo (2025), who demonstrate that eco-poetry and contemporary narratives translate environmental trauma into embodied metaphors. Tajane (2024) and Yadav (2022) argue that such literary strategies evoke empathy, bridging the gap between abstract climate statistics and lived human experience. In this regard, literature functions as a medium for ethical awakening. While science quantifies environmental degradation, literature humanizes it. The cultivation of ecological empathy represents a crucial humanities contribution to climate action, as emotional resonance often precedes moral responsibility.

The findings also confirm that ecocriticism contributes significantly to climate justice discourse. Literary texts increasingly expose how environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized communities. Yadav (2025) and Koban et al. (2025) emphasize that postcolonial ecocriticism links ecological destruction with colonial histories and geopolitical exploitation. Similarly, Mallik (2025) and Sharma and Sharma (2025) highlight the intersection of capitalism, environmental extraction, and social inequality. The thematic presence of climate injustice in the analyzed texts indicates that ecocriticism extends beyond environmental preservation to interrogate systemic power structures. This aligns with eco-Marxist and postcolonial perspectives that situate ecological crisis within broader political economies (Makhija et al., 2025). Through such critique, literature becomes a site of ethical resistance against exploitative development paradigms.

Another significant dimension revealed by the findings is the pedagogical and advocacy role of ecocriticism. Contemporary scholarship demonstrates that ecocritical frameworks increasingly influence sustainability education and ecoliteracy initiatives. Filho et al. (2023) and Onin and Alfawa'ra (2023) discuss the integration of environmental narratives into curricula aligned with Sustainable Development Goals. Ismail (2024) further underscores that ecocritical pedagogy cultivates environmental responsibility among students by embedding ecological themes within literary studies. The thematic category identified in this research—pedagogical engagement—confirms that literature serves as a bridge between academic discourse and public awareness. By incorporating ecological narratives into education, the humanities facilitate long-term cultural transformation.

The developmental trajectory of ecocriticism further contextualizes these findings. Originating in the late twentieth century and influenced by Deep Ecology, ecofeminism, and environmental activism, ecocriticism initially focused on representations of nature in Western literature (Tajane, 2024; Vivedha, 2023). Early scholarship emphasized critique of anthropocentrism in canonical American and British texts (Fawareh et al., 2023). However, as shown in recent publications from 2022 to 2025, ecocriticism has undergone rapid global expansion. Studies by Yadav (2025), Syauqi and Muassomah (2025), and Mawksiar (2025) demonstrate how ecocritical inquiry now encompasses African, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous literatures. This expansion reflects recognition that climate change is a global phenomenon requiring culturally diverse responses.

The transformation from theoretical conversation to practical engagement represents another critical development. Yadav (2025) and Ismail (2024) argue that ecocriticism increasingly intersects with activism and conservation efforts. Rather than remaining confined to academic analysis, literary scholarship now participates in shaping environmental narratives within civil society. This shift is evident in the findings, which show that modern literature articulates visions of coexistence, intergenerational

responsibility, and ecological solidarity. Makhija et al. (2025) and Hasan (2024) highlight that such narratives challenge dominant growth-oriented ideologies and propose sustainable futures rooted in ethical reciprocity.

Ecocriticism also functions as ethical resistance against industrialization and neoliberal capitalism. The texts examined frequently critique development policies that prioritize economic expansion over biodiversity protection. Mallik (2025) and Sharma and Sharma (2025) emphasize that literary narratives reveal the ecological consequences of extractive industries and urban expansion. This aligns with Wajid (2025), who frames ecocriticism as a form of cultural resistance against destructive modernization. By exposing the hidden costs of industrial progress, literature disrupts narratives of unlimited growth and re-centers ecological balance.

Furthermore, ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical approaches illuminate the intersectionality of ecological oppression. Tajane (2024) and Koban et al. (2025) argue that environmental exploitation often parallels patriarchal and colonial domination. The analyzed texts frequently depict marginalized women and Indigenous communities as custodians of ecological knowledge. Paper and Agyo (2025) demonstrate that eco-poetry highlights bodily vulnerability as a metaphor for environmental fragility. Such representations challenge hierarchical power structures and advocate for inclusive ecological ethics. The humanities, therefore, provide a platform for amplifying marginalized ecological voices.

The findings also reveal the role of children's and popular literature in cultivating ecological sensitivity. Yadav (2022) and Ismail (2024) assert that early exposure to environmental narratives fosters long-term ecological consciousness. Literary texts targeting younger audiences embed sustainability values through allegory and imaginative storytelling. This pedagogical dimension underscores the preventive potential of ecocriticism: by shaping ecological values early, literature contributes to generational cultural change.

In synthesizing these dimensions, it becomes evident that ecocriticism fulfills three interrelated functions. First, it transforms anthropocentric paradigms by reimagining human–nature relations. Second, it fosters ecological awareness through affective and ethical engagement. Third, it articulates resistance against exploitative environmental systems by exposing socio-political inequalities embedded within climate crisis narratives. These functions collectively address the study's objective of demonstrating ecocriticism as a humanities response to global climate crisis.

The convergence between textual findings and contemporary scholarship confirms that ecocriticism operates at the intersection of interpretation, advocacy, and ethical transformation. While scientific disciplines quantify environmental change, the humanities interrogate its cultural meanings and moral implications. Literature provides the imaginative space necessary for envisioning sustainable futures. As Wajid (2025) argues, climate crisis is not solely an environmental issue but a civilizational challenge requiring ethical reorientation. The present study supports this assertion by illustrating how modern literature embodies ecological consciousness and resistance.

Ultimately, the discussion affirms that ecocriticism is not a peripheral literary trend but a critical framework central to contemporary climate discourse. By integrating relational ontology, climate justice, pedagogical advocacy, and ethical resistance, ecocriticism bridges literature and environmental action. In doing so, it demonstrates the indispensable role of the humanities in addressing the global climate crisis.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ecocriticism in modern literature functions as a significant ethical and cultural response to the global climate crisis by transforming anthropocentric paradigms, fostering ecological awareness, and articulating resistance against exploitative environmental systems. Through qualitative textual analysis, the findings demonstrate that literary works reconfigure human–nature relationships toward relational interconnectedness, cultivate emotional and moral engagement with ecological trauma, and expose the structural links between environmental degradation, capitalism, colonialism, and social injustice. Furthermore, ecocriticism extends beyond theoretical interpretation by contributing to pedagogical innovation, sustainability discourse, and cultural advocacy. The expansion of ecocritical scholarship across global literary contexts confirms that the humanities play an indispensable role in shaping climate consciousness and ethical responsibility. Therefore, ecocriticism in modern literature should be understood not merely as an analytical framework but as an active humanistic intervention that reimagines sustainable futures and strengthens ethical resistance in the face of escalating climate challenges.

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