



ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES OF WASTE MANAGEMENT: A STUDY IN KENDARI CITY

ETIKA LINGKUNGAN DAN PRAKTIK SOSIAL PENGELOLAAN SAMPAH: STUDI DI KOTA KENDARI

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Abstract

Waste management has become one of the most persistent environmental challenges confronting rapidly growing urban areas in Indonesia. While previous studies have primarily explained waste management through technical infrastructure, environmental awareness, or public policy, relatively little attention has been given to the interaction between environmental ethics and everyday social practices in shaping environmental behaviour. This study aims to examine how environmental ethics are translated into community waste management practices in Kendari City from the perspective of environmental sociology. A qualitative case study approach was employed using field observations, semi-structured interviews with 30 informants representing community members, religious leaders, community leaders, sanitation workers, and officials from the Kendari City Environmental Agency, as well as document analysis. The data were analysed using thematic analysis and interpreted through the analytical perspectives of Environmental Sociology, Social Practice Theory, Public Sphere Theory, and Political Ecology. The findings reveal that environmental ethics constitute an important normative foundation for environmental responsibility; however, their implementation in everyday waste management practices is mediated by socially embedded habitus, community values, institutional capacity, public discourse, and local governance. Waste management behaviour is therefore shaped not only by individual awareness but also by continuous interactions among social norms, institutional arrangements, and collective practices. The study concludes that sustainable urban waste management requires integrated approaches combining environmental ethics, community participation, participatory governance, and institutional collaboration. By integrating environmental ethics with environmental sociology, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the social dimensions of urban waste management and offers practical insights for strengthening community-based environmental governance in Indonesia.

Keywords : Environmental Ethics, Environmental Sociology, Waste Management, Social Practices, Kendari City.



Abstrak

Tujuan Pengelolaan sampah merupakan salah satu tantangan lingkungan yang paling kompleks di kawasan perkotaan yang berkembang pesat di Indonesia. Selama ini, sebagian besar penelitian menjelaskan persoalan pengelolaan sampah melalui aspek infrastruktur, kesadaran lingkungan, atau kebijakan publik, sementara hubungan antara etika lingkungan dan praktik sosial sehari-hari dalam membentuk perilaku lingkungan masih relatif kurang mendapat perhatian. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana etika lingkungan diterjemahkan ke dalam praktik sosial pengelolaan sampah masyarakat di Kota Kendari dari perspektif sosiologi lingkungan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif melalui observasi lapangan, wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap 30 informan yang terdiri atas masyarakat, tokoh agama, tokoh masyarakat, petugas kebersihan, dan pejabat Dinas Lingkungan Hidup Kota Kendari, serta analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik dan diinterpretasikan melalui perspektif Sosiologi Lingkungan, Teori Praktik Sosial, Ruang Publik, dan Ekologi Politik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa etika lingkungan menjadi landasan normatif yang penting dalam membangun tanggung jawab lingkungan, namun implementasinya dalam praktik pengelolaan sampah dimediasi oleh habitus sosial, nilai-nilai komunitas, kapasitas kelembagaan, diskursus publik, dan tata kelola lingkungan. Dengan demikian, perilaku pengelolaan sampah tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kesadaran individu, tetapi juga oleh interaksi berkelanjutan antara norma sosial, pengaturan kelembagaan, dan praktik kolektif masyarakat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengelolaan sampah perkotaan yang berkelanjutan memerlukan pendekatan yang mengintegrasikan etika lingkungan, partisipasi masyarakat, tata kelola partisipatif, dan kolaborasi antarlembaga. Integrasi antara etika lingkungan dan sosiologi lingkungan menjadi kontribusi utama penelitian ini dalam memperkaya pemahaman mengenai dimensi sosial pengelolaan sampah perkotaan sekaligus memberikan implikasi praktis bagi penguatan tata kelola lingkungan berbasis masyarakat di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci : Etika Lingkungan, Sosiologi Lingkungan, Pengelolaan Sampah, Praktik Sosial, Kota Kendari.

1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems have become one of the most pressing challenges confronting contemporary urban societies, particularly in rapidly growing cities in developing countries. Recent global assessments indicate that increasing urbanisation and changing consumption patterns continue to accelerate municipal solid waste generation, placing significant pressure on urban environmental governance (UNEP, 2024; Kaza et al., 2018). Among these challenges, municipal solid waste management represents a complex social and environmental issue that extends beyond technical and infrastructural concerns. Although improvements in waste collection systems and public services remain important, growing evidence suggests that environmental behavior is fundamentally shaped by social norms, cultural values, institutional arrangements, and everyday practices rather than by infrastructure alone (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992; Wilson et al., 2006). Consequently, environmental sociology has increasingly emphasized that sustainable waste management requires understanding how environmental behavior is socially produced, negotiated, and reproduced within particular community contexts.

Recent studies further demonstrate that achieving sustainable waste management requires more than technological improvements or regulatory interventions. Community participation, institutional capacity, social trust, and collaborative environmental governance have consistently been identified as critical determinants of successful urban waste management systems (Kaza et al., 2018; UNEP, 2024; Ferronato & Torretta, 2019). These findings suggest that environmental sustainability should be understood as a social process involving continuous interaction among citizens, institutions, and governance arrangements rather than merely a technical issue of waste collection. Recent empirical



research also indicates that pro-environmental behaviour is significantly influenced by social norms, community participation, and institutional trust rather than environmental knowledge alone. This growing body of evidence reinforces the importance of examining environmental behaviour from broader sociological perspectives that integrate values, collective practices, and governance processes (Ferronato & Torretta, 2019; Guerrero et al., 2013).

Indonesia has experienced significant urban expansion during the last two decades, accompanied by increasing volumes of municipal waste and mounting pressure on local governments to improve environmental management. Despite various national and local initiatives, waste accumulation continues to occur in many urban areas, reflecting persistent challenges in governance, public participation, and environmental awareness. Previous studies have shown that ineffective waste management is frequently associated with weak institutional coordination, limited community participation, and the persistence of informal disposal practices (Medina, 2000; Wilson et al., 2006). These findings indicate that waste management should not merely be understood as a technical service issue but as a social phenomenon embedded in everyday interactions between communities, institutions, and environmental governance. Recent studies further demonstrate that community participation and governance quality remain among the strongest determinants of sustainable waste management in developing countries (Ferronato & Torretta, 2019; Guerrero et al., 2013).

From the perspective of environmental sociology, everyday environmental behavior develops through continuous interactions between social structures, collective values, and routine practices. Bourdieu (1977) argues that social practices are shaped by habitus, namely socially constructed dispositions acquired through repeated experiences and interactions. Likewise, Habermas (1989) emphasizes that environmental awareness develops through communicative processes within the public sphere, where citizens negotiate shared values and collective responsibilities. Complementing these perspectives, political ecology highlights that environmental problems are inseparable from power relations, institutional arrangements, and unequal access to environmental resources (Robbins, 2012). Together, these perspectives provide an integrated framework for explaining why environmentally responsible behavior often differs from normative environmental expectations.

Within Indonesian society, religious values constitute an important element of everyday social life and frequently influence community attitudes toward public issues, including environmental protection. Environmental ethics derived from religious teachings encourage responsibility, cleanliness, stewardship, and respect for nature. However, environmental behavior is not determined solely by religious values. Instead, these values interact with broader social practices, local governance, public discourse, and institutional contexts. Consequently, understanding environmental behavior requires examining how ethical values are translated, negotiated, and sometimes weakened within everyday social practice rather than assuming a direct relationship between environmental ethics and individual behavior.

Kendari City represents an appropriate empirical setting for examining these dynamics. As one of the rapidly developing urban centers in eastern Indonesia, Kendari continues to experience increasing environmental pressure associated with population growth, urban expansion, and rising household waste generation. Field observations reveal that waste accumulation remains visible in several public spaces despite the existence of municipal waste management services. This situation indicates that environmental management challenges extend beyond service provision and involve broader issues related to community behavior, social norms, and environmental governance. Consequently, Kendari provides an important context for understanding how environmental ethics and social practices interact within everyday urban life.

Previous studies on waste management have predominantly examined environmental behavior from perspectives of infrastructure provision, environmental awareness, public policy, or technical management systems. Comparatively limited attention has been given to understanding how environmental ethics are negotiated through social practices, habitus, public discourse, and local governance in shaping everyday waste management behavior, particularly within medium-sized

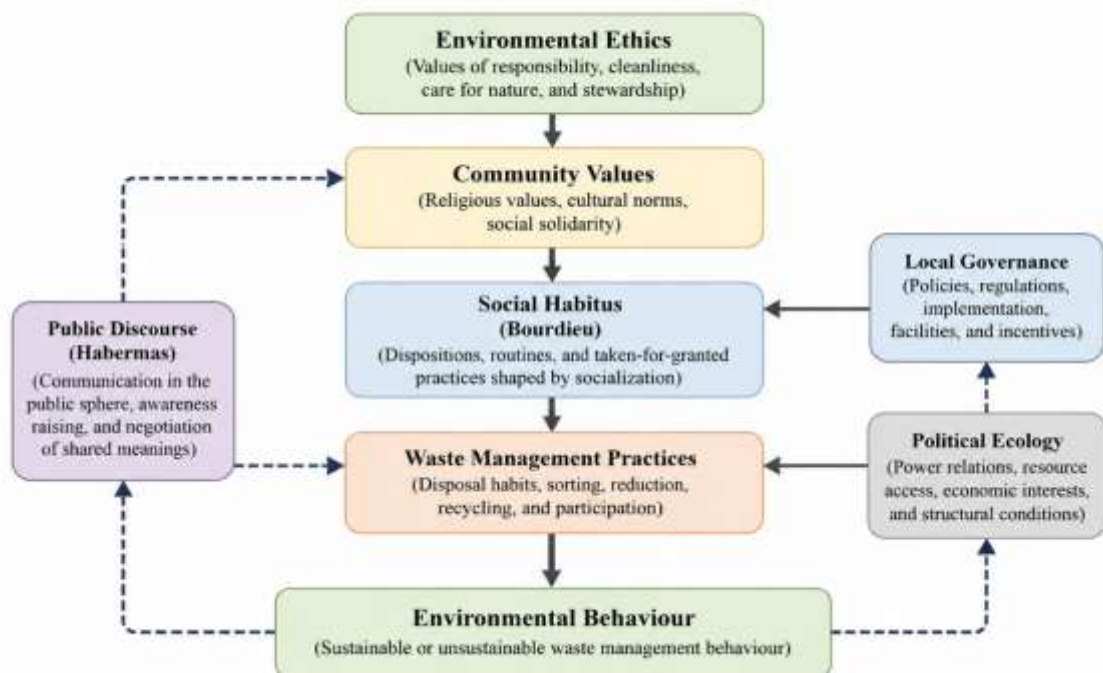


Indonesian cities. This gap is important because environmental behavior emerges through continuous interactions among values, institutions, and social practices rather than through individual awareness alone.

This study addresses this gap by integrating environmental ethics with environmental sociology to examine waste management practices in Kendari City. Rather than treating environmental ethics solely as a normative framework, this study analyzes how ethical values interact with habitus, communicative processes, and governance structures in influencing everyday environmental behavior. Accordingly, the study seeks to answer three research questions: (1) How are environmental ethics reflected in everyday waste management practices in Kendari City? (2) What social factors influence community waste management practices? (3) How do habitus, public discourse, and local governance shape environmental behavior? By integrating environmental ethics with theories of social practice, this study contributes to environmental sociology by providing an empirically grounded explanation of waste management behavior in an urban Indonesian context while offering policy implications for strengthening community-based environmental governance.

Based on the theoretical discussion and the identified research gap, this study develops a conceptual framework that explains how environmental ethics interact with community values, social habitus, public discourse, local governance, and political ecology in shaping waste management practices. The framework serves as the analytical foundation for interpreting the empirical findings and is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Environmental Ethics and Social Practices of Waste Management



Source: Developed by the authors based on Bourdieu (1977), Habermas (1989), Robbins (2012), and Spaargaren and Mol (1992).

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework developed in this study. Environmental ethics provide the normative foundation that shapes community values regarding environmental responsibility. These values are translated into everyday social practices through the formation of social habitus, while public discourse, local governance, and political ecology interact to reinforce or constrain waste management practices. The framework assumes that environmental behaviour



emerges from the dynamic interaction between ethical values, social structures, institutional arrangements, and routine practices rather than from individual awareness alone.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to examine the relationship between environmental ethics and social practices of waste management in Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to explore meanings, values, social interactions, and everyday practices that shape environmental behaviour within their natural social settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative inquiry is particularly suitable for understanding how individuals construct meaning and interpret social reality through everyday experiences and interactions (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

The research was conducted in several locations in Kendari City where waste accumulation frequently occurs, including residential areas, roadsides, and public spaces. These locations were selected purposively because they represent areas experiencing persistent waste management problems and provide opportunities to observe community waste management practices directly.

Primary data were collected through field observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation. Field observations were conducted to identify waste disposal behaviour, environmental conditions, and everyday interactions related to waste management. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken to explore participants' perceptions of environmental ethics, waste disposal practices, community participation, and local environmental governance. Documentation, including field photographs, government reports, and relevant policy documents, was used to complement and verify the empirical findings.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling and subsequently expanded through snowball sampling to identify participants with relevant knowledge and experience. The study involved 30 informants representing key stakeholders in urban waste management, including local residents, community leaders, religious leaders, sanitation workers, and officials from the Kendari City Environmental Agency (DLH). The diversity of participants enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives regarding environmental ethics, community behaviour, and waste management governance.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants

No.	Informant Category	Number	Main Information
1	Local residents	15	Everyday waste management practices and environmental behaviour
2	Community leaders	4	Community participation, local norms, and collective action
3	Religious leaders	3	Environmental ethics and religious values
4	Sanitation workers	4	Waste collection, operational challenges, and public services
5	Kendari City Environmental Agency (DLH) officials	4	Environmental policies, governance, and waste management programs
Total		30	

Data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis began with repeated reading of interview transcripts, field notes, and documentation to achieve data familiarisation. Initial codes were then generated and grouped into broader categories representing recurring patterns related to environmental ethics, community values, waste management practices, governance, and environmental behaviour. These themes were subsequently reviewed and refined through constant comparison across different participant groups before being interpreted using the analytical perspectives of Environmental Sociology, Social Practice Theory (Bourdieu), Public Sphere



Theory (Habermas), and Political Ecology. This analytical strategy enabled the study to connect empirical findings with broader sociological explanations of environmental behaviour.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation was systematically compared to ensure consistency across different sources. Preliminary interpretations were also confirmed with selected participants through member checking to improve the credibility of the findings. These procedures are widely recognised as essential strategies for ensuring the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the objectives of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential, and all information obtained during interviews was anonymised and used exclusively for academic research purposes.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Waste Management Practices in Kendari City

Field observations revealed that waste management remains one of the major environmental challenges in Kendari City. Waste accumulation was frequently observed in residential areas, roadsides, drainage channels, vacant land, and several public spaces despite the availability of municipal waste collection services. The persistence of unmanaged waste indicates that environmental problems in Kendari cannot be explained solely by limitations in waste collection infrastructure but also by the everyday practices of community members regarding waste disposal.

The field photographs collected during this study further illustrate that illegal waste disposal occurs in locations that are easily accessible to local residents, suggesting that these places have gradually become socially accepted dumping sites. Such practices demonstrate how environmental behaviour is reproduced through repeated everyday actions rather than isolated individual decisions. Similar observations have been reported by Medina (2000), who argues that waste management problems in developing countries are closely associated with informal disposal practices and weak community participation. Likewise, Wilson et al. (2006) emphasize that ineffective waste management frequently reflects broader institutional and social conditions rather than technical deficiencies alone.





Figure 2. Field Observations of Waste Accumulation in Public Areas of Kendari City

Source: Author's field documentation (2026).

As illustrated in Figure 2, waste accumulation was observed along roadsides, residential areas, and public open spaces, indicating that unmanaged waste has become a recurring feature of several urban environments in Kendari City. The photographs consistently show that unmanaged waste is concentrated in locations with high public accessibility, suggesting that repeated disposal practices have gradually normalized the use of these spaces as informal dumping sites.

The observed environmental conditions also indicate that waste disposal behaviour varies across neighbourhoods, reflecting differences in community participation, local leadership, and public awareness. Areas with stronger community initiatives generally exhibited cleaner public spaces, whereas locations with limited community engagement experienced repeated waste accumulation. This finding suggests that environmental quality is strongly influenced by local social organisation rather than solely by municipal service provision.

These findings support the argument of environmental sociology that environmental problems emerge through continuous interactions between social behaviour, institutional arrangements, and environmental governance (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992). Recent empirical studies similarly demonstrate that sustainable urban waste management depends on the interaction between community participation, institutional capacity, and governance rather than technological intervention alone



(UNEP, 2024). These findings indicate that waste accumulation in Kendari City should not merely be understood as a technical problem of waste collection but as a socially constructed environmental issue resulting from the interaction between community behaviour, institutional arrangements, and environmental governance. This empirical evidence provides the foundation for analysing how environmental ethics are translated into everyday social practices, as discussed in the following section.

Environmental Ethics and Community Values

The interview findings indicate that environmental ethics are generally recognized by community members as an important moral principle in everyday life. Most informants acknowledged that maintaining environmental cleanliness is a shared responsibility and constitutes a desirable social norm within the community. Community leaders, religious leaders, and local government officials consistently emphasized that environmental responsibility should be understood as a collective obligation rather than merely an individual choice. Nevertheless, this normative understanding has not always been translated into consistent waste management practices.

Interviews further revealed that residents generally possess sufficient knowledge regarding the negative impacts of improper waste disposal on public health and environmental quality. However, environmental awareness alone was insufficient to encourage environmentally responsible behaviour. Many participants explained that routine waste disposal practices were strongly influenced by daily habits, the availability of waste collection facilities, and the behaviour of other community members. Consequently, waste disposal decisions were often shaped by practical considerations rather than ethical reflection.

These findings suggest that environmental ethics function primarily as a normative value system, while everyday waste management behaviour is mediated by broader social and institutional contexts. Similar observations have been reported in previous studies indicating that environmental values frequently coexist with environmentally unsustainable practices when institutional support, social norms, and governance mechanisms remain weak (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992; Wilson et al., 2006). In other words, the existence of environmental ethics does not automatically generate pro-environmental behaviour unless supported by conducive social structures and collective practices.

These findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating that environmental ethics become socially effective only when supported by collective norms, institutional arrangements, and active community participation. Environmental responsibility therefore represents not merely an individual moral commitment but a socially embedded process shaped by continuous interaction between communities, institutions, and everyday social practices (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992; Wilson et al., 2006).

The findings also demonstrate that environmental ethics within Kendari City are socially embedded rather than individually determined. Community values concerning environmental responsibility are continuously negotiated through interactions among households, neighbourhood organisations, religious institutions, and local government. Consequently, environmental ethics should be understood as a dynamic social process rather than a fixed moral principle. This perspective is consistent with environmental sociology, which argues that environmental behaviour emerges through the interaction between values, institutions, and everyday social practices rather than through individual environmental awareness alone (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992).

Furthermore, the empirical findings indicate that environmental ethics constitute an important foundation for community behaviour but require continuous reinforcement through social institutions and public participation. Religious gatherings, neighbourhood meetings, environmental campaigns, and community clean-up activities were identified as important mechanisms for strengthening collective environmental responsibility. However, participants also noted that these initiatives were often implemented irregularly and had not yet become sustainable community practices. As a result, environmental ethics remained stronger at the level of normative discourse than in everyday environmental behaviour.



Overall, the findings demonstrate that environmental ethics in Kendari City represent a necessary but insufficient condition for improving waste management practices. The translation of ethical values into everyday environmental behaviour depends upon continuous interactions among community values, social norms, institutional support, and governance arrangements. This finding provides an important foundation for examining how environmental ethics become embedded within community habitus, as discussed in the following section.

Social Habitus and Everyday Waste Practices

The findings demonstrate that waste management practices in Kendari City are strongly influenced by socially embedded routines rather than solely by individual environmental awareness. Although most participants acknowledged that disposing of waste properly is environmentally responsible, everyday behaviour frequently reflected long-established habits that had been reproduced over time within neighbourhoods and family environments. Consequently, waste disposal practices became routine social actions performed with limited reflection on their broader environmental consequences.

From the perspective of Bourdieu (1977), these findings can be interpreted through the concept of habitus, referring to durable dispositions that guide individuals' perceptions and everyday practices. Rather than emerging from rational decision-making alone, environmental behaviour develops through repeated social experiences that gradually become accepted as normal patterns of action. In the context of Kendari City, repeated waste disposal in roadsides, vacant land, and drainage areas has gradually become part of everyday community practice in several neighbourhoods, reinforcing behavioural patterns that persist despite increasing environmental awareness.

The field observations presented in Figure 2 support this interpretation. Waste accumulation repeatedly occurred in locations that were easily accessible and commonly used by local residents, suggesting that these public spaces had gradually acquired social legitimacy as informal waste disposal sites. Such recurring practices illustrate that environmental behaviour is socially reproduced through collective routines rather than isolated individual decisions. Similar arguments have been advanced within environmental sociology, emphasizing that environmental practices are embedded within broader systems of social organisation and everyday life (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that community behaviour is shaped by reciprocal interactions among family members, neighbours, and local social networks. Participants described that waste disposal practices were often influenced by observing how other residents managed household waste. In neighbourhoods where indiscriminate waste disposal had become commonplace, similar behaviour tended to be reproduced by other community members. Conversely, areas characterised by active neighbourhood organisations and regular environmental initiatives generally displayed stronger collective commitments to maintaining environmental cleanliness. These observations suggest that social interaction functions as an important mechanism through which environmental practices are continuously reproduced and normalised.

The analysis also reveals that habitus is not immutable. Community initiatives such as neighbourhood clean-up campaigns, environmental education programmes, and religious activities promoting environmental responsibility were reported to encourage gradual behavioural change. Although these interventions had not yet transformed waste management practices comprehensively, they demonstrate that socially embedded routines can be reconstructed through sustained collective engagement and institutional support. This finding is consistent with Bourdieu's proposition that habitus evolves through changing social experiences and transformations in the surrounding social field (Bourdieu, 1977).

Overall, the findings indicate that environmental ethics alone cannot fully explain everyday waste management behaviour. Instead, environmental behaviour emerges from the interaction between ethical values and socially constructed habitus that has developed through repeated community practices. Consequently, improving urban waste management requires not only strengthening environmental awareness but also transforming the everyday social routines through



which environmental behaviour is reproduced. This argument provides an important foundation for examining the roles of public discourse, institutional governance, and power relations in shaping environmental behaviour, as discussed in the following section.

Public Discourse, Governance, and Environmental Behaviour

Beyond individual behaviour and community habitus, the findings indicate that waste management practices in Kendari City are also shaped by the quality of public discourse and the effectiveness of local environmental governance. Interviews with community leaders and officials from the Kendari City Environmental Agency (DLH) revealed that waste management has become a shared public concern; however, communication and collaboration among local government, community organisations, and residents remain inconsistent. Environmental campaigns and community clean-up activities have been implemented in several neighbourhoods, yet these initiatives are often episodic and have not developed into sustained collective practices capable of transforming everyday environmental behaviour.

From the perspective of Habermas (1989), environmental responsibility is strengthened when public issues become subjects of open communication and rational deliberation within the public sphere. Public discourse enables citizens to negotiate shared norms, collective responsibilities, and common solutions through participatory communication. The findings of this study, however, suggest that discussions concerning waste management in Kendari are generally limited to short-term responses to visible environmental problems rather than continuous public engagement. Consequently, opportunities to cultivate long-term environmental awareness through communicative action remain limited.

The empirical findings also reveal that environmental governance is influenced by institutional capacity and patterns of community participation. Although municipal waste collection services operate in many parts of the city, several informants highlighted that irregular collection schedules, limited waste facilities, and uneven service coverage often encourage residents to dispose of household waste in nearby vacant land or along roadsides. These conditions demonstrate that environmental behaviour is influenced not only by personal values but also by the institutional environment within which everyday decisions are made. Similar observations have been reported by Medina (2000) and Wilson et al. (2006), who argue that weaknesses in local governance frequently reinforce environmentally unsustainable practices in rapidly growing urban areas.

The findings further support the perspective of political ecology, which views environmental problems as outcomes of interactions among social institutions, governance arrangements, and power relations rather than merely the consequences of individual behaviour (Robbins, 2012). In the context of Kendari City, waste accumulation reflects not only community practices but also the unequal distribution of environmental services, institutional responsibilities, and opportunities for meaningful public participation. Consequently, environmental degradation should be understood as a governance issue involving multiple actors whose decisions collectively shape urban environmental quality.

Recent studies on urban environmental governance similarly emphasize that successful waste management depends upon collaborative governance involving local governments, civil society, and community organisations. Institutional coordination and participatory decision-making have been shown to improve both environmental performance and public compliance with waste management policies (UNEP, 2024; Kaza et al., 2018).

Another important finding concerns the relationship between environmental ethics and public institutions. Religious leaders, neighbourhood organisations, and local government each promote environmental responsibility through different institutional channels. However, these initiatives frequently operate independently, resulting in fragmented environmental communication and limited coordination across institutions. The absence of an integrated community-based environmental governance model reduces the effectiveness of environmental education and weakens the collective capacity to translate environmental ethics into sustained social practice.



The findings demonstrate that environmental behaviour in Kendari City is produced through the interaction between community values, social habitus, public discourse, and institutional governance. Strengthening waste management therefore requires more than expanding physical infrastructure; it also demands the development of participatory governance, continuous public communication, and stronger collaboration among community organisations, religious institutions, and local government. These findings reinforce the argument that environmental sustainability is fundamentally a social and institutional process rather than solely a technical or administrative concern.

Integrating Environmental Ethics and Social Practices: An Environmental Sociology Perspective

The findings presented in this study demonstrate that waste management behaviour in Kendari City cannot be adequately explained through environmental awareness, infrastructure availability, or individual responsibility alone. Rather, environmental behaviour emerges from a dynamic interaction among environmental ethics, community values, social habitus, public discourse, and local governance. This interaction reflects the multidimensional character of environmental problems, in which ethical principles are continuously negotiated, reinforced, or weakened through everyday social practices and institutional arrangements.

The conceptual framework developed in this study (Figure 1) provides an integrated explanation of these interactions. Environmental ethics constitute the normative foundation that shapes community values concerning environmental responsibility. However, these values do not directly determine behaviour. Instead, they are translated into everyday practices through socially embedded habitus, which develops through repeated interactions within families, neighbourhoods, and broader community networks. At the same time, public discourse and local governance influence whether environmentally responsible practices are strengthened or constrained by institutional support, communication, and opportunities for collective participation. Consequently, environmental behaviour should be understood as the outcome of reciprocal interactions between ethical values, social structures, and governance processes rather than as the product of individual awareness alone.

This finding extends previous studies that have primarily explained waste management through technical infrastructure, environmental education, or public policy (Medina, 2000; Wilson et al., 2006). While these factors remain important, the present study demonstrates that environmental behaviour is equally shaped by social practices and institutional contexts. In this regard, the study reinforces the central proposition of environmental sociology that environmental problems are socially produced and reproduced through everyday interactions between individuals, communities, and institutions (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992). By integrating Environmental Sociology with Social Practice Theory, Public Sphere Theory, and Political Ecology, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of urban waste management behaviour in the context of a medium-sized Indonesian city.

Another important contribution concerns the role of environmental ethics. The findings indicate that ethical values function not merely as moral ideals but as social resources whose influence depends on the capacity of communities and institutions to internalise and reproduce them through everyday practice. Ethical principles become effective when supported by participatory governance, sustained public communication, and collective community action. Conversely, where institutional coordination is weak and environmentally responsible practices are not socially reinforced, ethical values tend to remain normative aspirations without significantly influencing daily behaviour.

The study also offers practical implications for urban environmental governance. Improving waste management requires integrated strategies that combine physical infrastructure with social interventions aimed at strengthening community participation, environmental education, neighbourhood-based initiatives, and collaboration among local government, community organisations, and religious institutions. Such an approach recognises that sustainable environmental management depends not only on technological solutions but also on the continuous construction of collective environmental responsibility within society.



Recent assessments on urban environmental governance similarly emphasize that successful waste management depends upon collaborative governance involving local governments, civil society, and community organisations. Institutional coordination and participatory decision-making improve environmental performance and strengthen public compliance with waste management policies (UNEP, 2024; Kaza et al., 2018).

This study contributes to environmental sociology by demonstrating that waste management is fundamentally a social process shaped by the interaction of values, habitus, governance, and public discourse. The empirical evidence from Kendari City confirms that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved solely through improvements in waste collection services or environmental regulations. Instead, sustainable waste management requires the simultaneous transformation of ethical values, everyday social practices, and institutional governance. This integrated perspective represents the principal contribution of the study and provides a useful analytical foundation for future research on environmental behaviour and community-based environmental governance in Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that waste management in Kendari City is not merely a technical issue related to waste collection or environmental infrastructure but fundamentally a social process shaped by the interaction between environmental ethics, community values, social habitus, public discourse, and local governance. The findings indicate that although environmental responsibility is widely recognised as an important social value, the translation of these ethical principles into everyday waste management practices remains inconsistent. Environmental behaviour is influenced not only by individual awareness but also by socially embedded routines, collective norms, institutional capacity, and opportunities for public participation.

From the perspective of environmental sociology, this study confirms that environmental problems are socially produced and reproduced through continuous interactions among individuals, communities, and institutions. The integration of Environmental Sociology, Social Practice Theory, Public Sphere Theory, and Political Ecology provides a comprehensive explanation of how environmental ethics are negotiated within everyday social life. Rather than functioning as an automatic determinant of environmental behaviour, ethical values become effective only when reinforced by supportive social practices, participatory governance, and sustained public communication. This integrated analytical perspective represents the principal theoretical contribution of the study.

The findings also generate important practical implications for environmental governance in Kendari City. Efforts to improve urban waste management should extend beyond expanding waste collection infrastructure and regulatory enforcement. Greater attention should be directed toward strengthening community participation, neighbourhood-based environmental initiatives, environmental education, and collaboration among local government, community organisations, educational institutions, and religious leaders. Such an integrated approach would facilitate the transformation of environmental ethics from normative values into sustainable everyday social practices.

This study is subject to several limitations. The research focuses on a single urban context and employs a qualitative case study approach; therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the specific social and institutional characteristics of Kendari City. Future studies are encouraged to undertake comparative research across different cities or regions, integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches, and examine the influence of socio-economic, cultural, and policy variables on environmental behaviour. Comparative investigations would contribute to a broader understanding of how environmental ethics and social practices interact across diverse urban settings in Indonesia.

This study concludes that sustainable waste management cannot be achieved solely through technological improvements or administrative interventions. Instead, environmental sustainability requires the simultaneous transformation of ethical values, everyday social practices, and institutional



governance. By highlighting the interaction between environmental ethics and social practices, this study contributes to the growing body of environmental sociology and offers an empirical foundation for developing more participatory and socially embedded approaches to urban environmental governance in Indonesia.

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