

From Praxis to Religious Articulation: Ecosufism as an Interpretive Horizon in the Ecoenzyme Practice of the BESTARI Community, Palembang

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Abstract : This study examines how ecosufism functions as an interpretive horizon for environmental awareness that develops through repeated engagement in ecoenzyme practice within the Clean and Sustainable Environment (BESTARI) community in Palembang City. Using a qualitative instrumental case study design, with practice theory as its analytical lens, the study treats ecoenzyme production within BESTARI as a bounded case for examining how ecological and religious meaning develop within community-based ecological practice. The findings indicate that environmental awareness within the BESTARI community is not formed as a normative prerequisite for action but instead develops through repeated engagement in organic waste management practices: initially pragmatic domestic ecoenzyme practices gradually shape ecological dispositions through repetition, material engagement, and social interaction. For a minority of participants (2 of 10), these dispositions were subsequently articulated through Islamic vocabularies, including stewardship (khalifah) and moderation (zuhud), while the majority described the same practice in purely practical or social terms. Ecosufism, therefore, does not always function as the initial foundation of ecological action but can instead emerge, for some, as an outcome of practical experience in social life. On this basis, the study proposes, as a provisional analytical framework bounded by this single case, a Practice-Generated Ecosufism Framework: ecological awareness may form through a dialectical relationship between material practice, dispositional formation, and, for some participants, the articulation of religious values.

Keywords : *ecoenzyme; ecological religiosity; ecosufism; Islamic environmental ethics; practice theory.*



Abstrak : Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana ekosufisme berfungsi sebagai horizon interpretatif bagi kesadaran lingkungan yang terbentuk melalui praktik ekoenzim dalam komunitas Lingkungan Bersih dan Lestari (BESTARI) di Kota Palembang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus instrumental, dengan teori praktik sebagai lensa analitis, menempatkan praktik ekoenzim di BESTARI sebagai kasus terbatas untuk mengkaji bagaimana makna ekologis dan religius berkembang dalam praktik ekologis berbasis komunitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran lingkungan dalam komunitas BESTARI tidak terbentuk sebagai prasyarat normatif yang mendahului tindakan, melainkan berkembang melalui keterlibatan berulang dalam praktik pengelolaan limbah organik: praktik ekoenzim yang pada awalnya bersifat pragmatis domestik secara gradual membentuk disposisi ekologis melalui repetisi, keterlibatan material, dan interaksi sosial. Pada sebagian kecil partisipan (2 dari 10), disposisi tersebut kemudian diartikulasikan melalui kosakata Islam, termasuk tanggung jawab sebagai khalifah dan sikap moderasi (zuhud), sementara mayoritas partisipan menjelaskan pengalaman yang sama semata dalam istilah praktis atau sosial. Dengan begitu, ekosufisme tidak selalu berfungsi sebagai landasan awal tindakan ekologis, tetapi dapat muncul, bagi sebagian, sebagai hasil dari pengalaman praksis dalam kehidupan sosial. Atas dasar ini, penelitian ini mengajukan, sebagai kerangka analitis sementara yang terikat pada kasus tunggal ini, Practice-Generated Ecosufism Framework: kesadaran ekologis dapat terbentuk melalui relasi dialektis antara praktik material, pembentukan disposisi, dan, bagi sebagian partisipan, artikulasi nilai religius.

Kata kunci : *ekoenzim; ekosufisme; etika lingkungan Islam; religiositas ekologis; teori praktik.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic waste remains a persistent environmental challenge in Indonesia, closely tied to everyday patterns of consumption, disposal, and household waste management. National waste generation in 2023 reached approximately 56.63 million tons, of which 60.99% (34.54 million tons) went unmanaged (Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023) while Palembang alone generates approximately 1,500 tons of waste per day (Tanjung, 2024). Ecoenzyme production, the fermentation of household organic waste into a usable liquid, has emerged as one community-based response to this problem (Ullly et al., 2024). The relevant question, however, is not simply how organic waste can be processed, but how repeated engagement with such material practices may shape the ways people understand and enact ecological responsibility.

Three bodies of scholarship inform this question but leave it only partially answered. The first, spanning religion-ecology and Islamic environmental ethics, treats

religious tradition as a normative source of ecological orientation: Islamic environmental thought emphasizes human responsibility toward creation, moderation, and stewardship (Foltz, 2003; Nasr, 1996; Tucker, 2009), a normative reading corroborated by recent studies documenting khalifah- and amanah-based stewardship as the stated rationale for Muslim environmental practice in Indonesia (Basri et al., 2024; Muchtar et al., 2026), and ecosufism specifically frames Sufi spirituality as a resource for ecological responsibility (Fikri et al., 2024; Gufron & A. Hambali, 2022; Solehudin & Chodijah, 2026). This literature generally assumes that religious value precedes and motivates ecological action, without explaining how such meanings become connected to the practical activities through which ecological engagement is enacted.

The second, on embodied piety and lived religion, offers a different premise: that religious disposition is not simply held prior to action but cultivated through repeated bodily practice. Mahmood's (2005) ethnography of Egyptian women's mosque piety shows disposition forming through iterated ritual repetition instead of preceding it, and McGuire (2008) extends this claim beyond ritual specialists to argue that religious meaning in general is enacted through everyday embodied conduct, not transmitted intact from doctrine. Within the Sufi tradition specifically, this premise is not new: spiritual training (*riyāḍah*) has long been treated as a precondition for gnosis, not a consequence of it (Ernst, 1997). What remains unexamined is whether this practice-first logic extends to a domain with no built-in ritual structure at all, ordinary household waste management, where no formal spiritual curriculum organizes repetition.

The third, practice theory, offers a parallel but more general starting point by locating social life in routinized practice instead of pre-existing belief: practices are configurations of materials, competences, and meanings reproduced through repeated enactment (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002; Shove et al., 2012), such that ecological orientation may develop through participation in material routines instead of preceding it. To the best of our knowledge, no empirical study has combined these three literatures to examine how repeated ecological practice within a Muslim community relates to the subsequent articulation of religious meaning, particularly in a domain that lies outside any formal ritual or educational structure, ordinary household waste transformation (cf. Febriani et al., 2023; Fikri et al., 2024, which remain textual and normative, not practice-based).

This gap is directly relevant to ecoenzyme practice within the BESTARI (Lingkungan Bersih dan Lestari) community in Palembang, whose members have sustained the practice for several years through continuing, community-based participation. This community should be distinguished from the setting of the authors' earlier interpretative-phenomenological study of Muslim ecoenzyme practitioners in Palembang (Ishamiyah et al., 2026); the two studies differ in location, participant composition, fieldwork period, and analytical lens, detailed further in the Method section and revisited in the Discussion. The present study instead adopts an instrumental case study and practice-theoretical perspective, treating BESTARI as a bounded setting for examining how repeated ecological activity relates to ecological dispositions and, among some participants, to religious articulation.

Accordingly, this study examines how repeated ecoenzyme practice relates to ecological dispositions within the BESTARI community and how these dispositions are, for some participants, articulated through Islamic ethical and spiritual vocabularies. The analysis traces four empirically observed themes, entry into practice, change in domestic routine, social interaction, and religious articulation, treated as traceable aspects of

community life, not predetermined stages; in the Discussion, these four themes are read through three analytical layers, material practice, dispositional formation, and religious articulation, that organize the empirical findings into the study's proposed framework. The research argument is that ecological disposition in this case forms through repeated material engagement and precedes religious articulation instead of following from it, which subsequently emerges only among some participants, not uniformly across the community. Building on this argument, the study's principal contribution is the Practice-Generated Ecosufism Framework: a mechanism-based account of how material practice, dispositional formation, and religious articulation relate to one another, developed inductively from the BESTARI case and offered as a novel analytical sequence, not a new normative Islamic value.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using an instrumental case study design, appropriate when a case is examined to illuminate a broader theoretical issue instead of being treated solely as an object of interest in its own right (Stake, 1995). Practice theory served as the analytical lens, while the BESTARI (Lingkungan Bersih dan Lestari) community in Palembang provided the empirical setting, selected because its ecoenzyme practice had been sustained for several years through community-based participation. The case was bounded by the ecological practices and meaning-making processes occurring within BESTARI; the study did not compare BESTARI with other communities or assess the ecoenzyme's environmental effectiveness. This setting is empirically distinct from the authors' earlier interpretative-phenomenological study of ecoenzyme practitioners in Siring Agung Subdistrict, Palembang (Ishamiyah et al., 2026): fieldwork here was conducted from May 2025 to February 2026, a period that does not overlap with the fieldwork underlying the earlier study, and only one participant, the BESTARI community coordinator, appears in both studies.

Fieldwork began with informal engagement through the community coordinator to establish rapport and identify variation in members' points of entry and experience before purposive selection of participants. Ten women aged 35 to 45 were ultimately included, based on active involvement in BESTARI and direct experience in ecoenzyme production; six (P1, P3, P5, P7, P9, P10) had joined in 2021 and four (P2, P4, P6, P8) in 2022, giving participants three to five years of involvement at the time of fieldwork. Recruitment concluded once the ten participants represented the range of entry points and experiences identified during initial engagement, as further encounters with the broader membership did not surface analytically new patterns.

Data were collected over ten months, a period necessary because ecoenzyme production follows a fermentation cycle of three months or longer, through semi-structured in-depth interviews (45 to 90 minutes, conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and audio-recorded with permission), participant observation during community gatherings held approximately every two to three weeks, and relevant community documentation. Interviews addressed participants' entry into BESTARI, initial motivations, experiences of practice, changes in domestic waste management, community interaction, and the meanings through which they interpreted these experiences. Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's 2006 thematic analysis conducted abductively (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012): transcripts and field notes were coded for recurring actions, changes in practice, and forms of meaning-making, then grouped into three analytical categories, material practice, dispositional formation, and articulation, that functioned as analytical guides,

not fixed conclusions, with divergent accounts retained and examined instead of discarded. Coding was carried out by a single researcher; to mitigate individual interpretive bias, emerging codes were periodically discussed and deliberated (musyawarah) with fellow researchers before being finalized.

Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of interview, observation, and documentary data, repeated engagement with participants to clarify earlier accounts, and reflexive attention to how the researcher's presence and growing familiarity with participants might shape interaction and interpretation. Ethical considerations were addressed throughout: all participants gave written informed consent after being informed of the study's purpose, participation was voluntary, and identities were protected through anonymized codes (P1–P10) in all transcripts and reporting. Because the study involved no clinical intervention, vulnerable populations, or sensitive health-related data, it was not submitted for formal institutional ethics committee review; this reflects the applicable institutional policy at the time of the study, and researchers working under different institutional requirements should follow their own institution's procedures. Participant protection was instead secured procedurally through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and careful anonymized handling of interview and observational material throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting.

3. RESULTS

Participants' Points of Entry into Ecoenzyme Practice

Interview data reveal a fairly consistent pattern in how participants first became acquainted with ecoenzyme practice. All ten participants joined the BESTARI community between 2021 and 2022, precisely during the COVID-19 pandemic (see the Methods section), and the majority described their initial involvement as a response to social invitation or community activity during that period, without citing ecological or religious considerations as a primary motivation. P1 (41 years old) recounted that she began making ecoenzyme after being invited by a friend when household activity increased during the pandemic, motivated by the simple hope of keeping her home cleaner and safer. For P2 (38 years old), involvement began instead with curiosity about something widely discussed within the community, before she gradually became accustomed to collecting fruit and vegetable scraps. P4 (35 years old) offered a third variation on the same trajectory: her interest also began with community activity during the pandemic, and only later did she realize that kitchen scraps could be repurposed into natural detergent. P3 (42 years old) captured a related but distinct shift, stating that after trying to make ecoenzyme she became more aware of the amount of kitchen waste generated daily, indicating that for her the change in perception preceded any change in belief. Across all four accounts, none of the initial interview excerpts employed terms such as worship (ibadah), trust (amanah), stewardship (khalifah), or an obligation to protect the environment.

Table 1. Points of Entry into Ecoenzyme Practice: Supporting Participants and Representative Data

Empirical Pattern	Supporting Participants	Representative Data
Initial motivation for entry: social invitation or pandemic-era community activity, without explicit religious or ecological	P1, P2, P4	"I first joined because of a community activity during the pandemic. From there I became interested, because it turned out kitchen waste could be

motivation at the outset		used to make detergent.” (P1, P2, P4) [original: “Awalnya saya ikut karena kegiatan komunitas waktu pandemi. Dari situ saya jadi tertarik karena ternyata sampah dapur bisa dimanfaatkan untuk membuat deterjen.”]
Change in perception of kitchen waste as an early shift, preceding any change in belief or values	P3	Paraphrased account: increased awareness of daily kitchen-waste volume after starting the practice (P3); no verbatim quote recorded for this account.

The data show that all four participants documented in depth for this theme joined ecoenzyme practice for social or circumstantial reasons tied to the pandemic period, not because of prior religious or ecological conviction (see Table 1). P3 alone reports a shift in how she perceived kitchen waste occurring before any accompanying shift in belief or values.

From this data, four patterns stand out in this theme. First, entry motivation is uniformly social or circumstantial across P1, P2, and P4, not value-driven. Second, entry clusters within the same narrow pandemic window (2021–2022), suggesting a shared situational trigger and not individually staggered motivations. Third, none of the four accounts documented in depth employs religious or ecological vocabulary at the point of entry. Fourth, P3's account introduces a distinct secondary pattern within the same theme: a change in perception of waste that precedes, and appears to set up, the behavioural changes reported in the next theme (3.2).

Taken together, these patterns suggest that religious and ecological meaning, where they eventually appear, attach to ecoenzyme practice after the fact instead of motivating it from the start. Entry into the practice functioned as a low-cost, circumstantial event and not an expression of prior conviction. Section 4.1 returns to this sequencing through the lens of practice theory.

This pattern also weighs against an alternative, simpler explanation: that BESTARI recruited members who were already ecologically or religiously inclined, so that the absence of such vocabulary at entry merely reflects a recruitment filter and not a genuine sequence. The data available here do not support that reading. Recruitment operated through ordinary social invitation during a period of heightened domestic activity, not through any stated ecological or religious criterion, and none of the four entry accounts documented in depth describes being selected for, or selecting into, the practice on such grounds. The circumstantial character of entry therefore appears to describe how disposition begins to form, not an artefact of who was recruited.

Changes Reported by Participants in Domestic Practice

Change did not stop at how participants perceived waste. As their involvement continued, ecoenzyme practice began to shape new routines within their domestic lives. P6 (38 years old) described how fruit and vegetable scraps were no longer discarded immediately but were instead collected for fermentation, a habit that formed gradually and eventually extended to storing scraps in the refrigerator prior to processing them into ecoenzyme. P5 reported reducing her use of household chemical products after becoming accustomed to producing her own ecoenzyme, stating: “with ecoenzyme, I

rarely buy floor cleaner like I used to, because I more often use what I ferment myself.” P3 recounted a failed batch caused by an improperly sealed fermentation container, alongside the doubt she felt about the practice's reliability during the early stages of her involvement; instead of causing her to abandon the practice, this failure became part of how she learned to sustain it.

Table 2. Changes in Domestic Practice: Supporting Participants and Representative Data

Empirical Pattern	Supporting Participants	Representative Data
Formation of new routines: collecting fruit and vegetable scraps before fermenting them; reduced use of household chemical products	P5, P6	“Now I collect the fruit and vegetable scraps first before throwing them away, to use later for making ecoenzyme.” (P6) [original: “Sekarang saya kumpulkan sisa buah dan sayur dulu sebelum dibuang, nanti dipakai untuk membuat ekoenzim.”]; “with ecoenzyme, I rarely buy floor cleaner like I used to, because I more often use what I ferment myself.” (P5)
Learning through the experience of fermentation failure, treated as part of the learning process, not a reason to stop	P3	“The process of sorting waste and waiting for fermentation is interesting, even though it once failed because the container was not sealed properly.” (P3) [original: “Proses memilah sampah dan menunggu fermentasi itu menarik, walaupun pernah gagal karena wadahnya tidak tertutup rapat.”]

The data show that participants' domestic routines changed gradually, not all at once: organic scraps that were once discarded began to be collected for fermentation, some household chemical products were replaced with self-made ecoenzyme, and early failures were absorbed into the learning process instead of ending participants' involvement.

From this data, three related patterns emerge in this theme, plus a fourth that connects it back to Theme 3.1. First, a routinisation of collection: P5 and P6 both describe organic waste shifting from something discarded to something set aside for processing. Second, a substitution pattern: P5 replaced a purchased chemical product with a self-fermented one. Third, a resilience pattern: P3's failed batch was absorbed as a learning experience, not a reason to stop. Fourth, and consistent with 3.1, none of these three participants frames the change as motivated by newly adopted belief; the routines instead appear to precede and generate the conviction that the practice matters, and not the other way around.

Behavioural change in this theme tracks the rhythm of repeated practice, not a prior decision. Participants did not adopt these routines because they had already concluded that ecoenzyme mattered; the routines became the evidence for that conclusion. This uptake-before-conviction pattern is read through practice theory in Section 4.1.

A competing explanation for the substitution pattern is also worth setting aside explicitly: P5's reduced purchase of chemical cleaner could reflect ordinary cost-saving and not any disposition specific to ecoenzyme practice. The data do not allow this

possibility to be ruled out with certainty, but two features of the account make a purely economic reading incomplete. First, the substitution is described as following from, not preceding, sustained production experience, consistent with the routine forming the preference, not a prior cost calculation driving uptake of the routine. Second, P3's persistence through a failed batch is not readily explained by cost-saving at all, since abandoning an unreliable homemade substitute for a cheap commercial product would have been the more economical choice; her continuation instead tracks the kind of habit-protecting persistence Section 4.1 returns to.

Interaction and Social Dynamics within the Community

Ecoenzyme practice, the data show, unfolds within a social structure that is relatively loose and not bound by formal rules. Participants reported the absence of any written rules concerning waste management within the community. Regarding involvement that ceased or diminished, participants stated that this was not regarded as a problem, as it was considered each member's individual decision, particularly given that the community had once numbered around ninety-nine members, some of whom were no longer active. P7 (45 years old) directly described the social dimension of this activity, explaining that it strengthened relationships among members and encouraged mutual knowledge-sharing: "when someone succeeds, we usually tell each other how, so that others can try it too." This experience was reinforced by P8, who explained that the mutual cooperation (gotong royong) involved in making ecoenzyme fostered a sense of care and closeness among members, making the community a comfortable space for shared learning. P10, one of the community's founders, added that the activity functions not only as waste management but also as an occasion for kinship (*silaturahmi*) among members. Direct commentary on the social dimension of the practice was documented for three of the ten participants analyzed (P7, P8, P10); no participant in the analyzed excerpts reported conflict, negotiation, or dissatisfaction with the community's loose structure.

Table 3. Interaction and Social Dynamics: Supporting Participants and Representative Data

Empirical Pattern	Supporting Participants	Representative Data
Strengthening of social relations and mutual cooperation through sharing of practical knowledge; loose membership structure	P7, P8	"when someone succeeds, we usually tell each other how, so that others can try it too." (P7)
Multifunctionality of the activity: a means of kinship (<i>silaturahmi</i>) alongside waste management	P10	Paraphrased account: describes the ecoenzyme activity as an occasion for kinship (<i>silaturahmi</i>) in addition to waste management (P10); no verbatim quote recorded for this account.

The data show that BESTARI's social structure is informal and low-pressure: there are no written rules, members can reduce or stop participating without consequence, successful techniques are shared informally between members, and at least one founding member experiences the activity as much as a form of kinship as a waste-management task.

From this data, three patterns describe this theme, alongside a fourth methodological point that qualifies all three. First, an absence of formal rules paired with tolerance for reduced or discontinued participation. Second, a habit of volunteering successful techniques to other members, reported by both P7 and P8. Third, and distinct from the first two, an account that frames the activity as kinship, not logistics (P10). Fourth, the evidentiary base for this theme is narrower than for Themes 3.1 and 3.2: of the three participants cited, only P7's contribution is supported by a verbatim quotation in the material analyzed for this article; P8's and P10's accounts are represented here through paraphrase instead of direct quotation.

Within the limits of this narrower evidentiary base, cohesion in BESTARI does not appear to presuppose shared religious or ecological conviction; sociality seems to function as its own entry channel, prior to either kind of meaning-making. Because this reading rests on paraphrased as well as verbatim material, it is treated cautiously here and revisited in the Reflection (Section 4.4), including a tentative resonance with the Sufi concept of *ukhuwah*, and flagged as a direction requiring data collected specifically on relational dynamics within the community.

This informality carries a further implication worth stating plainly here, ahead of its fuller treatment in the Reflection (Section 4.4): a social structure that tolerates reduced or discontinued participation without consequence offers little institutional pressure to keep any given member engaged. If cohesion in BESTARI is, as this data suggests, a channel into the practice and not a mechanism enforcing its continuation, then the same looseness that lowers the cost of entry documented in 3.1 may equally lower the cost of exit, a possibility the data cannot adjudicate directly but which qualifies how much weight the social-dynamics theme can bear as an explanation for practice that continues, not practice that merely begins.

Variation in Religious Articulation among Participants

Not all participants explicitly linked their experience to religious vocabulary. Interview data show that ethical and religious reflection appeared only among some participants, while the majority emphasized practical benefits and the social dimension of communal life without direct reference to a religious value framework. P9 (43 years old), the participant who expressed such a connection most directly, stated: “the process of waiting for fermentation taught patience and made me think that caring for nature is also our responsibility.” Other participants who described a similar experience of waiting explained it instead in practical terms, without connecting it to any religious framework. P10 offered a more integrative account, describing her motivation as involving three dimensions at once (religion, environment, and communal solidarity) without positioning any single dimension as paramount.

Table 4. Variation in Religious Articulation: Supporting Participants and Representative Data

Empirical Pattern	Supporting Participants	Representative Data
Religious articulation (patience, responsibility toward nature) appears only among a small minority of participants	P9	“The process of waiting for fermentation taught patience and made me think that caring for nature is also our responsibility.” (P9) [original: “Proses menunggu fermentasi itu mengajarkan kesabaran dan membuat saya

Integration of three orientations at once (religion, environment, communal solidarity), with no single dimension dominating	P10	berpikir bahwa menjaga alam juga tanggung jawab kita.”] Paraphrased account: motivation described as simultaneously religious, ecological, and communal (P10); no verbatim quote recorded for this account.
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The data show that explicit religious articulation was documented for two of the ten participants analyzed (P9, P10), while the remaining eight described comparable experiences, including the same experience of waiting during fermentation, in practical or social terms without invoking religious vocabulary in the excerpts analyzed for this article.

From this data, three patterns emerge, plus a fourth methodological qualification. First, a two-against-eight split: religious articulation is present in the data but is not majority behaviour. Second, where articulation occurs it does not take one shape: P9 stays close to a single register, patience tied to responsibility for nature, while P10 holds religious, ecological, and communal motives together without ranking them. Third, across all four themes reported in this article, religious articulation arrives last in the sequence and is never structurally required for the practice to continue. Fourth, as with Theme 3.3, the verbatim-quotation base for this theme is narrow: only P9's account is supported by a direct quotation in the material analyzed; P10's account is represented through paraphrase.

This variation is itself a meaningful finding, not a supplementary note: it suggests that religious articulation is not an automatic outcome of engagement in ecoenzyme practice, but one possible mode of meaning-making that emerges, for some participants, once ecological disposition has already formed through repeated experience. Given the two-participant base for this pattern, the claim is offered as a provisional reading bounded by this case, not a generalizable finding, a limitation carried forward into the Discussion.

Cross-referencing this theme against participants' year of joining (Table 5) adds a further pattern not visible within Theme 3.4 alone: both participants who articulated a religious register, P9 and P10, joined BESTARI in 2021, placing them among the community's longest-tenured members at the time of fieldwork, while none of the four participants who joined in 2022 (P2, P4, P6, P8) did so. Among the six 2021 joiners, religious articulation appears in two of six accounts; among the four 2022 joiners, it appears in none. This distribution is consistent with, though it does not by itself confirm, an account in which longer accumulated practice increases the likelihood that disposition becomes available for religious articulation, a possibility examined through Mahmood's (2005) account of embodied cultivation in Section 4.1. Given a sample of ten, this tenure pattern is reported as a lead for the interpretation that follows, not a tested claim.

4. DISCUSSION

Materiality, Repetition, and Dispositional Formation: A Dialogue with Practice Theory

The results of this study show that ecoenzyme practice within BESTARI follows a consistent sequence across the four themes reported above: participants entered the practice for social and pragmatic reasons (3.1), gradually developed new domestic habits through repetition (3.2), engaged socially through informal, low-formality cooperation

documented on a more limited evidentiary base (3.3), and only a minority went on to articulate the experience in religious terms, on an equally limited evidentiary base (3.4).

Treating religious articulation as an empirical variable, present for some participants and absent for others, instead of assuming it from the outset, follows a broader methodological turn in the study of Muslim environmentalism. Recent scholarship has argued that understanding how Islam and ecology relate requires close attention to lived Islam, the practices through which people actually act, instead of confining analysis to formal theological texts (Bagir, 2025). The BESTARI case responds directly to that call: it asks not what Islamic teaching says ecological practice should look like, but what religious meaning, if any, a specific group of practitioners actually attaches to a specific ecological practice, and at what point in their engagement with it.

This sequence, pragmatic entry gradually giving rise to habitual change, is consistent with practice theory's view of social life as a configuration of material objects, competence, and meaning, reproduced through repeated enactment (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012). Read through this lens, organic waste and fermentation containers function as material elements, the skill of formulating material composition reflects competence, and participants' shifting view of waste, from residue to material retaining usefulness, reflects meaning transformed through practice. Because coenzyme fermentation does not yield results instantly, participants must sustain engagement across a defined waiting period; this repetition is consistent with Bourdieu's 1977 concept of habitus, disposition formed through accumulated practical experience more than through cognitive reflection alone, which helps explain why the domestic changes reported in section 3.2 preceded any explicit value articulation instead of following it.

Two features of this setting help explain the sequence. Entry occurred during a period when social invitation carried no ideological cost: availability and curiosity were enough to join. Competence then formed through trial and error. P3's failed batch illustrates the mechanism: an improperly sealed container and a failed ferment taught what instruction alone had not. Disposition therefore had a low-cost route to form before any vocabulary was needed to sustain it.

Reckwitz's and Bourdieu's accounts explain why disposition forms at all, but not why, for two of ten participants, that disposition surfaced specifically as religious vocabulary instead of remaining purely technical. Mahmood's 2005 account of pious embodied cultivation supplies the missing mechanism: in her ethnography, repeated bodily discipline, not prior belief, produces a disposition available for religious uptake, so that piety is the outcome of cultivated practice, not its precondition. Read this way, P9's and P10's religious articulation is not evidence that they privately held Islamic convictions all along and simply voiced them later; it is evidence that sustained embodied engagement with coenzyme fermentation left a disposition available to be read religiously, one that eight other participants, who underwent materially identical repetition, apparently did not draw on in the same terms within the excerpts analyzed. This distinguishes practice-generated ecosufism from a straightforward instance of habitus formation: the same practice-based mechanism produces divergent outcomes across otherwise similar participants, a divergence Bourdieu's original formulation does not itself predict and that this study can describe but, given its case-study design, cannot fully explain.

This reading departs from both major strands of existing scholarship. Normative ecosufist literature has generally treated religious value as the point of departure for ecological action (Febriani et al., 2023; Rahmi & Taufik, 2024), an assumption shared by religion-ecology scholarship's expectation that religious orientation precedes practice (White, 1967), an expectation still visible in recent work treating religious narrative as an antecedent of pro-environmental behaviour instead of a consequence of it (Das et al., 2025). The present findings instead show religious articulation emerging, for a minority of participants, after sustained material engagement. This finding also departs from the authors' own earlier study of Muslim ecoenzyme practitioners in Siring Agung Subdistrict, Palembang, which employed an interpretative-phenomenological approach to document individual practitioners' subjective spiritual meaning-making and produced a three-dimensional account centred on material transformation, waiting, and relational awareness (Ishamiyah et al., 2026). That study's ten participants are distinct from the present sample except for the BESTARI coordinator, who appears in both; its fieldwork was conducted during a separate period that does not overlap with the present study's (May 2025 February 2026); and its analytical object, individual lived experience of spirituality, differs from the present study's community-level, practice-theoretical account of when and how religious articulation emerges at all. The two studies consequently offer complementary, not overlapping, contributions: the earlier study describes the texture of spiritual meaning among those who already articulate it, while the present study examines the conditions under which such articulation arises, and does not, in the first place.

Beyond ecosufism specifically, this sequencing also speaks to the broader "lived religion" turn in the sociology of religion, which argues that religion is better studied as it is enacted in everyday, often mundane conduct than as a fixed doctrinal package individuals either hold or do not (McGuire, 2008). BESTARI's pattern, a majority sustaining ecologically consequential practice without ever framing it religiously, and a minority doing so only after the practice was underway, is consistent with McGuire's broader claim that religious meaning attaches unevenly and non-obligatorily to everyday practice instead of uniformly governing it from the outset. The present case extends that claim into a domain, ecological practice, that lived-religion scholarship has not typically examined, and does so within a single Islamic community, where McGuire's largely North American and Christian-context evidence base does not travel automatically. This extension is offered cautiously, given the boundedness of a single case, but it suggests the practice-first pattern documented here in ecosufism is not an artifact specific to Islamic environmental ethics; it may instead be a local instance of a more general dynamic in how religious meaning attaches to practice across traditions.

A closer parallel, and a sharper test of this claim, comes from the waste sadaqah (sedekah sampah) movement documented elsewhere in Java, where community waste management is framed as religious charity from its very naming, before any member joins (Chubachi, 2025; Yandri et al., 2023). BESTARI is the reverse case: its own name is civic, not religious, and none of the entry accounts in 3.1 drew on religious vocabulary at the point of joining. The contrast indicates that religious framing of ecological practice is a design choice made, or withheld, when a community first organizes and names itself, not an automatic feature of Muslim collective action; where it is made early, as in waste sadaqah, vocabulary is available from the outset, whereas BESTARI's participants had none ready to hand until disposition had already formed.

From Disposition to Cosmological Articulation: An Interpretive Reading

The terms *khalifah* and *zuhud* are analytical categories proposed here to interpret patterns in the data, not terms invoked verbatim by participants. As section 3.4 showed, only two of ten participants linked their experience to a religious framework at all, and even their vocabulary drew on patience and responsibility for nature, not formal theological terminology. With this caveat, the pattern is read through Islamic cosmology on humanity's responsibility as *khalifah* on earth (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30) and the prohibition against corrupting the earth (QS. Al-A'raf: 56), and through *zuhud* as moderation ordering the relationship between humans and consumption, not rejection of the material world (Knysh, 2017)(Knysh, 2017). Similarly, the experience of waiting reported in section 3.2 resonates conceptually with *riyāḍah*, spiritual training cultivated through repeated, disciplined practice (Ernst, 1997; Karamustafa, 2007), though this reading too rests on conceptual resonance, not on participants' own description. A further connection to self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is conceivable but is not pursued as an interpretation of the present data; it is noted instead in the Reflection below as a direction for future research designed specifically to test it.

This reading gains specificity from Mahmood's 2005 account of how pious disposition is cultivated, not instructed: in her study, women did not become more pious because they first adopted correct belief and then acted on it; repeated bodily discipline itself produced the capacity to interpret experience religiously. Applied here, P9's statement that waiting for fermentation "taught patience and made me think that caring for nature is also our responsibility" reads not as the application of a prior *khalifah* framework to a new activity, but as an instance of exactly this mechanism: sustained, disciplined waiting generated an interpretive capacity that the vocabulary of *khalifah* and *zuhud* subsequently gave shape to. This also clarifies why the same fermentation waiting period, reported by several participants, produced *khalifah*- and *zuhud*-adjacent articulation in only one case: on Mahmood's account, embodied repetition builds capacity, not certainty, so cultivated disposition still requires an available vocabulary, and some occasion for drawing on it, before it surfaces as religious language. The data cannot establish what specifically supplied P9 with that vocabulary and occasion, since this was not systematically probed in the interviews; this is flagged as a concrete gap for future data collection and left unresolved here.

This sequencing carries a real trade-off. Functionally, it removes conviction as a precondition: someone can begin producing coenzyme, sustain the habit, and remain part of BESTARI without ever adopting a religious or ecological rationale, which is why participation reached ten people whose original motivation was nothing more than a pandemic-era invitation. The same feature is a liability. Disposition formed this way rests on repetition and social presence, not internalized commitment; among the eight participants who articulated no religious frame at all, nothing in the data suggests their practice would survive the community's dissolution or their own withdrawal from it. Practice-generated ecosufism, in other words, may explain how ecological habits start without yet explaining what would make them last.

This concern about durability is not merely speculative; it is consistent with the habit-change literature outside religious studies. Verplanken and Wood (2006) show that habits persist because they are cued by stable environmental and social conditions, not because they are backed by internalized belief, and that habits accordingly weaken or collapse when those environmental cues are disrupted, regardless of how long they were

sustained beforehand. Applied here, this suggests that BESTARI's eight religiously unarticulated participants may be sustaining ecoenzyme practice primarily because the community structure, the coordinator's continued organizing, the twice-monthly gatherings, the informal exchange of technique, keeps supplying the cues that maintain the habit. If that structure changed, Verplanken and Wood's framework predicts the practice itself would be vulnerable to lapsing, independently of whether participants had come to value it. Religious articulation, on this reading, would not be decorative to the durability question: it is one of the few resources in this dataset that appears to relocate the source of continuation from external cue to internalized commitment, which is precisely why its absence among the majority is a liability worth taking seriously, not dismissing as a neutral descriptive fact.

Section 3.3 documented relationships reinforced through shared learning and informal visiting, including one founding participant's description of the practice as an occasion for kinship (*silaturahmi*) alongside waste management (P10), on a narrower evidentiary base than the other themes in this study (see 3.3). Read cautiously, this pattern resonates with the Sufi concept of *ukhuwah*, mutual care and shared responsibility that does not require institutional obligation (Iqlima Khoirunnisa et al., 2025; Sepiana et al., 2025; Wijaya, 2025), and not a claim that every collective activity automatically manifests Sufi value; the loose membership structure, evidenced by the absence of written rules and members' unsanctioned freedom to withdraw, is read here as a form of care that requires no formality. This reading, like the *riyāḍah* and *tazkiyat al-nafs* readings above, remains interpretive: the data document warmth and continuity of relationship but not the more concrete forms of care or conflict that would allow the *ukhuwah* reading to be tested more rigorously, a limitation future research could address through data collected specifically on relational dynamics within the community.

Practice-Generated Ecosufism: The Study's Central Contribution

Building on the readings in sections 4.1 through 4.4, and forming the central contribution of this Discussion, this section proposes practice-generated ecosufism as a provisional analytical proposition explaining how repeated engagement in ecological practice can precede, and among some participants subsequently be followed by, articulation within the horizon of Islamic cosmology, instead of religious teaching serving as the starting point of action. The proposition comprises three layers: material practice (3.1, 4.1), dispositional formation (3.2, 4.1), and articulation (3.4, 4.3).

The relationship among these three layers is dialectical, though each transition is supported by data to a different degree. Material practice to dispositional formation is supported by the pattern of habitual change reported in section 3.2, such as collecting fruit and vegetable scraps before disposal and reduced use of household chemical products. Dispositional formation to articulation is more limitedly supported, evident only among participants who explicitly linked the experience of waiting during fermentation to patience and responsibility for nature (P9, see 3.4), while others exhibited the same disposition without this transition. The feedback loop from articulation back to material practice, which conceptually presumes that religious meaning-making reinforces continued practice, finds no direct support in the data: no participant cited religious articulation as a reason for sustaining or intensifying practice. This arrow is therefore presented as a conceptual proposition open to future testing, not an empirical finding, shown in Figure 1 as a dashed line to distinguish it from the two data-supported transitions.

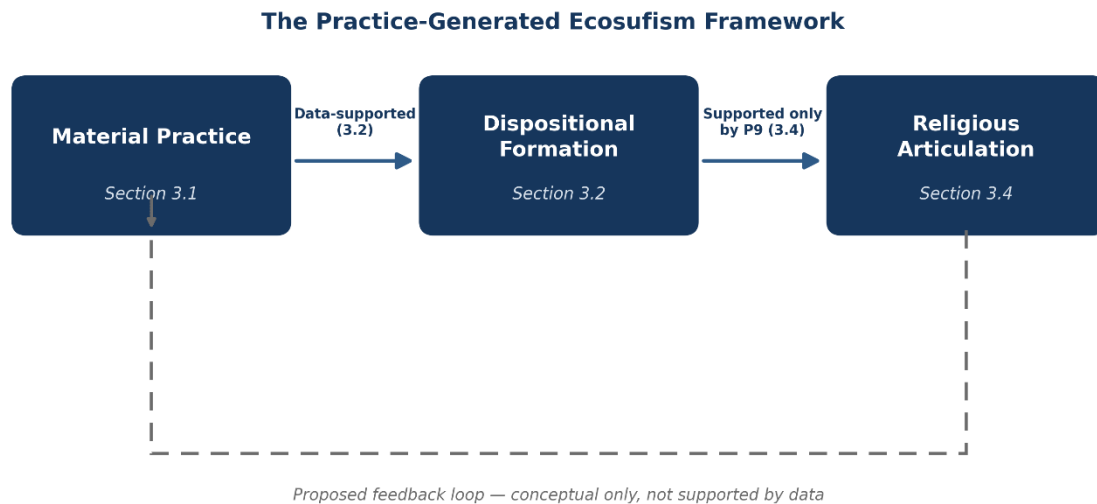


Figure 1. The Practice-Generated Ecosufism Framework: A Dialectical Model of Environmental Awareness Formation [Source: Author's own elaboration]

Unlike most studies of ecosufism, which take Islamic teaching as the point of departure for explaining ecological action, this study's findings point to the reverse sequence: in the case of BESTARI, engagement in material practice precedes the formation of ecological disposition, which is subsequently followed, among some participants, by religious articulation. The principal contribution therefore lies not in introducing a new concept of Islamic value but in proposing a mechanism through which the relationship between ecological practice and religious meaning-making forms. This shifts ecosufist analysis away from asking how Islamic values drive ecological action, toward asking how everyday ecological practice may become a medium for the emergence of religious meaning. This shift in focus is what distinguishes practice-generated ecosufism from the normative frameworks that preceded it.

This shift complements normative ecosufist scholarship, which has generally positioned religious value as the point of departure for ecological action (Febriani et al., 2023; Rahmi & Taufik, 2024), and extends religion–ecology scholarship's usual assumption that religious orientation precedes practice (White, 1967). The novelty of practice-generated ecosufism thus lies in the sequence it proposes, not in the Islamic content it contains: religiosity is not assumed present from the outset but may develop through sustained practical engagement. This framework is offered as an analytical proposition derived from a single case with specific characteristics: an urban, domestic community with an entirely female membership. This boundary condition means the framework may not hold for communities with a different gender composition, domain of activity, or social context, so its generalizability requires further testing and cannot be assumed to hold universally.

These findings carry implications across four domains, though the durability concern raised in Section 4.4 qualifies all of them. For faith-based environmental communities, majelis taklim or religious study groups seeking to encourage ecological participation could position technical skills training, such as ecoenzyme production, as the primary point of entry, instead of relying on prior dissemination of religious values to motivate involvement, consistent both with the pattern observed in BESTARI and with habit-change evidence showing that establishing a concrete practice is generally a more effective route to sustained behavioural change than first securing belief change to

sustained behavioural change (Verplanken & Wood, 2006), though this sequencing has not been tested here comparatively against value-first approaches. For Sufi education, everyday material practices such as ecoenzyme fermentation may be employed as a medium of contemporary *riyāḍah*, with Sufi educators designing spiritual exercises grounded in concrete domestic activity so that values such as patience and responsibility for nature are cultivated through direct practice alongside, not in place of, textual study. For community empowerment more broadly, the finding that ecological disposition can precede, without requiring, religious articulation suggests that environmental programs need not await value change as a precondition for behavioural participation. For future ecosufism research, the Practice-Generated Ecosufism Framework, along with the *riyāḍah*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and *ukhuwah* readings offered above, awaits testing in communities of different gender composition, activity domain, and social context, and through methods designed specifically to probe the psychological-spiritual dimension these readings only gesture toward here. Because Section 4.4 shows that practice-based habituation is only as durable as the social structure sustaining it, any of these applications should build in deliberate mechanisms, recurring gatherings, designated coordinators, structured technique-sharing, for maintaining the environmental and social cues on which the habit depends, instead of assuming that early engagement alone will carry participation forward indefinitely. All four implications hold within the bounds of this study's urban, domestic, and entirely female research setting and should not be assumed to generalize automatically.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that ecological awareness within the BESTARI community in Palembang is not a normative prerequisite that precedes action, but instead develops through repeated engagement in ecoenzyme practice that was initially pragmatic. Domestic practice changed gradually through repetition, material engagement, and social interaction, and, for a minority of participants, this disposition was subsequently followed by religious articulation expressed through the vocabulary of patience and responsibility for nature; this articulation did not emerge among all participants and is read as one possible pathway of meaning-making, not an automatic consequence of practice. The study's principal contribution, the Practice-Generated Ecosufism Framework, proposes not a new concept of Islamic value but a mechanism through which ecological practice and religious meaning-making become related, with claims scoped to the urban, domestic, and entirely female BESTARI case and offered for testing, including on its *riyāḍah*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and *ukhuwah* readings, in other settings.

This study has limitations that bound its claims. Data on the social dimension of the community do not capture more concrete forms of conflict or negotiation, and the interpretation connecting participants' experience to *riyāḍah* and *tazkiyat al-nafs* remains theoretical, since neither term was used by participants themselves; both are offered as conceptual possibilities for future research designed specifically to explore this psychological-spiritual dimension. The framework as a whole is derived from a single, gender-homogeneous, urban case and requires testing across communities of more diverse composition before its scope can be assessed beyond BESTARI.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions. A.I.: Conceptualization, investigation, data collection, formal analysis, and writing original draft preparation. W.: Conceptualization, supervision, methodology, and writing review and editing. Y.R.P.H.: Methodology, validation, formal analysis, and writing review and editing. W.A.A.: Data curation, investigation, and writing review and editing. I.M.: Conceptualization, theoretical interpretation, validation, and writing review and editing. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Ethical Approval. This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for research involving human participants. All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participation was voluntary, and participants' identities were protected through the use of anonymized participant codes (P1–P10). The study involved no clinical intervention, vulnerable population, or collection of sensitive health-related data. Under the applicable institutional policy at the time of the research, formal ethics committee review was not required; therefore, no ethical approval reference number was issued. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Data Availability Statement. The qualitative data supporting the findings of this study consist primarily of interview transcripts, field notes, observational records, and relevant community documentation. Because these materials may contain information that could potentially identify participants or reveal contextual details about the community, the complete dataset is not publicly available. De-identified data may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations.

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