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SOCIAL PRACTICES OF ACTORS IN THE COMMUNITY OF GENERASI BARU INDONESIA XI UNIVERSITAS SUMATERA UTARA IN THE ZERO WASTE LIFESTYLE PHENOMENON

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Abstract
This study aims to understand how members of the Generasi Baru Indonesia XI Universitas Sumatera Utara (GenBI XI USU) community engage in social practices related to the implementation of a zero waste lifestyle. The research addresses the issue of high waste production in Medan City and explores how youth communities respond to environmental challenges through sustainable living. A qualitative approach with a phenomenological method was used to explore the subjective experiences of community members. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving GenBI members who apply the 5R principles: refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and rot. The analysis was conducted using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, focusing on the concepts of habitus, capital, and field. The findings reveal that the formation of a zero waste habitus is influenced by family experiences, educational environments, and community activities. Social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capitals significantly support the sustainability practices adopted by community members. Moreover, the zero waste lifestyle becomes a site of symbolic contestation within the community, allowing members to demonstrate environmental awareness and strengthen their identity as responsible youth. This study highlights the role of communities as agents of change in fostering ecological habits through the internalization of sustinable values and practices within their social fields.

Keywords: Social Practice, Zero Waste Lifestyle, GenBI XI USU

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, waste management has emerged as one of the most critical environmental challenges, with extensive impacts on human life and ecosystems. Population growth, rapid urbanization, and steadily increasing consumption have contributed to a surge in waste volume (Devi, R., & Idrus, 2023), much of which remains poorly managed. According to data from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), approximately 2,01 billion tons of solid waste are generated annually, and this figure is projected to rise to 3,4 billion tons by 2050 (UNEP, 2015).

In Indonesia, waste management remains a major challenge, particularly in urban areas, where of the 67,8 million tons of annual waste, only about 40% is properly managed, while the remainder pollutes the environment (KLHK, 2020; UNEP, 2021), leading to the emergence of microplastics that endanger human reproductive health, including diminished fertility in women and reduced sperm quality in men (Geng et al., 2023; Zurub et al., 2024). Although the government has implemented pay-for-plastic policies, the outcomes remain suboptimal due to public inaction (Paramita & Firmansyah, 2024) and a similar condition is evident in the city of Medan, which holds the title of the dirtiest city in the metropolitan category (Herlinawati, 2019) managing only 800 tons of its 2.000 tons of daily waste (Sinaga, 2023). This issue has become increasingly critical following landfill fire incidents, which not only threaten public health through the release of toxic gases such as dioxins and carbon monoxide (Komalasari, 2023; Tambunan, 2023) but also exacerbate global climate change through methane emissions from the decomposition of organic waste (Weldon, 2020).

Food waste is the primary contributor to the waste composition in North Sumatra, leading to far-reaching consequences, including the depletion of water and energy resources, as well as increased methane emissions that intensify global warming (KLHK, 2024; Seberini, 2020). This phenomenon highlights a disparity; large quantities of edible food are discarded due to limited storage technology and overconsumption, while food insecurity remains a stark reality. Although Law Number 18 of 2008 (Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2008 tentang Pengelolaan Sampah) mandates the government to establish an integrated system and requires public participation in waste sorting to maintain environmental health, low public awareness remains a major obstacle to achieving efficient and sustainable waste management (Syahputra, 2021).

The zero-waste lifestyle phenomenon has emerged as a strategic response to these challenges. This lifestyle emphasizes the reduction of waste production by transforming

consumption patterns, extending product life cycles, and implementing the 5R principles: refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and rot. As concerns about climate change grow, this lifestyle is becoming increasingly popular among Indonesia's younger generation, who possess ecological awareness and a strong motivation to contribute to environmental preservation (Devi, R., & Idrus, 2023). Several regions in Indonesia, such as Cimahi, Bandung, Denpasar, and Gresik, have implemented zero waste programs at the regional level (AZWI, 2020), while individual practices continue to expand in Makassar (Devi, R., & Idrus, 2023), Yogyakarta (Firani, 2022), and Bali (Maulana & Dwipayanti, 2022).

The term "zero waste" was first introduced by chemist Paul Palmer in the 1970s as the name of his company, Zero Waste Systems, driven by concerns over the disposal of still-usable chemicals (Bogusz et al., 2021). Since the late 1990s, the concept has garnered global attention and has been implemented in various cities worldwide, from San Francisco to Tokyo (Zaman, 2023). The Zero Waste International Alliance (ZWIA, 2018), defines zero waste as the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health. The concept of zero-waste lifestyle was later popularized by Bea Johnson through her book Zero Waste Home (2013), based on the 5R principles: refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and rot. The first two principles emphasize waste prevention, reuse emphasizes responsible consumption, while recycle and rot focus on waste management (Tran, 2019), this challenges individuals to re-evaluate their consumption habits to mitigate negative impacts on the earth (Imran, 2023).

One community that has adopted these principles is Generasi Baru Indonesia Universitas Sumatera Utara (GenBI USU), a community of Bank Indonesia scholarship awardees. Although its primary focus is not on environmental issues, GenBI XI USU actively implements sustainability-related programs. These include "GenviroTalks" under the theme "Our Planet, Our Responsibility," the "GenBI Planting" initiative, which repurposes used materials into planting media, and the mandatory use of personal tumblers and bags at every event. Furthermore, their educational outreach, such as "GenBI Community Education: Value Your Money, Value Your Environment," provides instruction on household waste management.

In this context, the concepts of habitus, field, and capital within the framework of Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice (Jones, P., Bradbury, L., & Boutillier, 2016) become relevant for understanding how zero-waste values, norms, and habits are

internalized by community members. Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice explains how individuals and groups interact within society through patterns of practice that are often unconscious, yet influenced by larger social structures (Riawanti, 2017).

Previous research, such as that conducted by Maulana & Dwipayanti (2022) and Rustan, Agustang, & Idrus (2023), has examined how the Theory of Planned Behavior and the 5R principles are adopted by individuals in university and household. Furthermore, literature reviews indicate a shifting focus toward digital media, where platforms like Instagram serve as informal learning spaces to shape the eco-friendly identities of the younger generation. Sociologically, the application of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of Habitus has begun to emerge in Firani (2022), however, it has thus far remained limited to analyzing general consumption patterns or specific geographic backgrounds without considering the organizational structures that bind these individuals.

Despite the application of Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice in existing literature, a significant research gap remains regarding the conceptualization of a community as an authoritative field. Previous studies have tended to view zero waste practices as either the result of personal awareness or broad social influence; however, none have specifically explored how an organized community, such as GenBI XI USU, functions as a strategic space for the production and reproduction of such habitus. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical data on how economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital within a community encourages members to adopt zero-waste practices within the community arena.

The novelty of this research lies in its examination of GenBI as an arena of contestation, where a dialectic occurs between childhood habitus and the structural demands of the community. This research offers a new perspective by deconstructing how zero-waste practices are sustained through the simultaneous utilization of Bourdieu's four types of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic, under the influence of the "Generasi Baru Indonesia" identity. This provides a new contribution to environmental sociology, where green practices are no longer viewed merely as moral acts, but rather as a form of status reproduction and the contestation of capital within a social structure.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method to understand the experiences of community members (Abdussamad, 2021). Phenomenology, according to Edmund Husserl, is the study of what appears (Nuryana,

A., Pawito, & Utari, 2019), emphasizing the meaning of individual experience. Berger and Luckmann further argue that social reality is subjectively constructed but can become objective through interaction (Hasbiansyah, 2008). The phenomenological approach in this study serves as an instrument to examine how zero-waste social practices are produced through the dialectic between members' consciousness and structural demands within the GenBI community. Through phenomenology, the researcher is able to reveal how actors' habitus undergoes negotiation, and even contestation, when confronted with the rules of the game within the GenBi field, which require informants to accumulate capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic). This research is conducted in Medan City, North Sumatra, a metropolitan area currently facing waste management issues. Amid limited infrastructure, Generasi Baru Indonesia XI USU is a community that implements the 5R principles (refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, rot).

Informants were selected using purposive sampling. The main informants consist of six members of the Environmental Division of GenBI XI USU who actively implement three principles of the zero-waste lifestyle—refuse, reduce, and reuse. The key informants include the Chairperson and the Secretary of the Environmental Division of GenBI XI USU, who possess an understanding of the organizational structure, internal policies, and community programs related to zero waste practices. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of community activities (Neuman, 2014). The researcher was directly involved in community activities to observe how actors practice the zero-waste lifestyle in their daily lives, supported by flexible questioning to explore narratives of lived experiences related to actors' habitus and capital, as well as the collection of visual and written archives as empirical evidence in the field. Data analysis was conducted following the Miles and Huberman model in three stages (Sugiyono, 2019), including data reduction to filter relevant information, data presentation in the form of matrices or descriptive narratives, and conclusion drawing or verification to reveal zero-waste social practices as the result of the dialectic between actors' internal dispositions and organizational structural demands.

Table 1. Informants Data

No.	Informant's Initials	Sex	Age	Category
1	DA	Male	21 years old	Key Informant
2	AAS	Female	22 years old	Key Informant

3	DAS	Female	20 years old	Main Informant
4	OVS	Female	23 years old	Main Informant
5	DRA	Female	22 years old	Main Informant
6	ANP	Female	21 years old	Main Informant
7	ABDS	Female	22 years old	Main Informant
8	RRH	Male	20 years old	Main Informant

Source: Researcher's Processed Data (2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Zero Waste Habitus of GenBI XI USU Members

The introduction of the zero-waste concept to the informants in this study occurred through three primary channels: educational institutions, social media, and the family environment. Most informants had been acquainted with the fundamental concepts of zero waste since their school years through environmental education and the 3R principles (reduce, reuse, recycle). Three out of the six key informants stated that they were introduced to values or principles akin to zero waste as early as elementary or high school, even if the specific term "zero waste" was not explicitly used at the time.

"*In elementary school, I had already learned about it, but it wasn't as complex as the 5R zero waste framework*" (OVS, February 28, 2025).

DAS added that since elementary school, they had been introduced to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Similarly, ABDS received education on waste management during high school, while ANP recalled being taught to process organic waste into fertilizer as early as elementary school (March 5, 2025).

"*The school taught to manage waste, for example, using items that can still be used*".... (ABDS, March 12, 2025).

Schools serve as the initial arena for the formation of an ecological habitus through formal policies and socialization. Schools with "Adiwiyata" status (Green Schools) reinforce these habits through plastic bans in canteens and the provision of reusable plates to replace single-use containers. These experiences indicate that eco-friendly habitus begins to take shape early on through institutional conditioning.

Digitally, social media and online community campaigns provide inspiration and raise awareness, encouraging the younger generation to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. ANP said that Melati Wijsen's movement and the Bye Bye Plastic Bags community in Bali

inspired her to reject single-use plastics (March 5, 2025). Meanwhile, RRH acknowledged that social media content on the topic of natural disasters made him realize the importance of an eco-friendly lifestyle (March 3, 2025).

Domestically, the family plays a vital role in internalizing values of efficiency and sustainability through generational practices, such as repurposing containers, processing food scraps, and the habit of bringing home-cooked meals.

...."*my grandmother also enjoys making doormats out of patchwork*"..... (DAS, February 26, 2025).

These inherited practices foster long-term values of efficiency and sustainability. OVS mentioned that her father diligently composts kitchen waste, while OVS acts as a "familial bridge" in mobilizing other family members to protect the environment (February 28, 2025). DRA has been accustomed to bringing lunch boxes and tumblers since elementary school (March 7, 2025), while ANP reported that their family supports energy-saving practices such as Earth Hour (March 5, 2025).

Although these foundational values were established early on, involvement in the GenBI XI USU community served as a critical turning point that deepened their understanding. Through the Environmental Division, informants began to implement the 5R principles more structurally and realized that their previous practices were, in fact, integrated into a "zero waste" lifestyle identity.

...."*since joining GenBI, I have begun to realize the importance of a zero waste lifestyle*"..... (RRH, March 3, 2025).

DRA also revealed that she only became familiar with the specific term "zero waste" after participating in a zero-waste vlog activity organized by the GenBI XI USU Environmental Division.

...."I learned about zero waste through the zero waste lifestyle vlog activity held by the GenBI 11 USU Environmental Division. Actually, I have done several activities that fall under the zero waste category, but I only discovered they were classified as such through my involvement in GenBI"..... (March 7, 2025).

GenBI as a Field for Internalization and Externalization of Zero Waste

The GenBI USU community functions as a strategic field for internalizing and externalizing the zero waste habitus of its members. The internalization of this habitus begins with internal community policies, such as the obligation to bring tumblers or water bottles and the prohibition of using single-use packaging in every activity. These rules,

which have been instilled since the introduction of new members, are reinforced through routine reminders from the chairperson or project leader before activities take place, as observed in WhatsApp group communications.

Picture 1. Reminders from the General Chairperson and Project Leader
Source: Researcher (2024)

These internal rules create new norms within the community, encouraging members to bring their own drinking bottles consistently, refuse single-use plastics, and utilize items that are still usable. This process demonstrates that zero-waste practices are more easily carried out consistently within a supportive social environment. In addition, GenBI members gain a deeper understanding of zero waste, not only in terms of waste reduction but also in waste management and sustainable campaigns.

Externally, this zero waste habitus is manifested through a series of work programs that are educational, advocative, and practice-oriented. The externalization of zero waste can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Externalization of Zero Waste

Project Name	The Main Purpose	Division	Documentation
GEnviroTalks–GenBI Environment Talks, 2024	To elevate public discourse on the environmental crisis and the importance of protecting the environment, as well as encourage real action.	Environmental Division	

GenTing–GenBI Planting, 2024	To demonstrate sustainable planting techniques while operationalizing the reuse principle by repurposing inorganic waste as planting media.	Environmental Division	
GenVition–GenBI Vlog Competition, 2024	To disseminate digital education on waste reduction and incentivize the practical adoption of a zero-waste lifestyle within the community.	Environmental Division	
GEMAS–GenBI Edukasi Masyarakat, 2025	To empower the community, specifically households, with technical literacy in waste classification and domestic waste management.	Environmental and Education & Culture Division	
GenMerakyat–GenBI Mengabdi Masyarakat, 2025	To implement a circular economy model through the creation of a "mini garden" utilizing upcycled materials at the community service site (Sidorejo Village).	Community Service Division (Inter-divisional Collaboration)	

Source: Researcher's Processed Data (2025)

Capital as a Support for Zero Waste Practices

Social Capital

Social capital is formed through cross-disciplinary student networks within the GenBI community. This community serves as a platform for self-development and the exchange of ideas, where internal support and facilities provided by Bank Indonesia reinforce members commitment to a low-waste lifestyle. DA, as the General Chairperson, emphasizes that GenBI USU functions not only as a community of scholarship awardees but also as a platform for personal development and social awareness. The networking within GenBI facilitates the exchange of ideas, such as when DA promoted recycling projects among members.

...."*have collaborated with the Plastic Wise community, as well as with other divisions to create podcasts and implement real actions on waste management*"..... (DA, March 14, 2025).

The community provides an environment that facilitates and normalizes zero-waste practices.

...."*If we have a gathering, environment staff usually bring their own tumblers. For activities or games, the prizes are often tumblers*" ..... (OVS, February 28, 2025).

Picture 2. The Provision of Tumblers by Bank Indonesia
Source: Researcher (2025)

Membership in the GenBI community grants individuals access to a supportive network of relationships. Interaction with peers who share similar interests creates a learning space that fosters the adoption of a zero-waste lifestyle.

Cultural Capital

The success of these actions depends heavily on cultural capital, namely the accumulation of environmental knowledge and the technical skills required to implement the 5R principles systematically. Within the GenBI community, cultural capital is manifested through environmental literacy, technical proficiency in maintaining a low-waste lifestyle, and self-awareness, all of which serve as the primary drivers of 5R practices.

..."*The resources that exist in me include knowledge of zero waste, followed by awareness, and a network to communicate and educate others about zero waste*"..... (OVS, February 28, 2025).

Furthermore, understanding the types and characteristics of waste is a critical component of zero-waste practices. As noted by informant DAS, the ability to distinguish between organic, inorganic, hazardous and toxic waste, and residual waste is a technical skill that is not innate, but rather acquired. Within Bourdieu's theoretical framework, such knowledge falls under embodied cultural capital, a form of knowledge and understanding deeply embedded within an individual that shapes how they think and act.

Research findings indicate that GenBI community members who actively practice a zero-waste lifestyle typically possess or have developed relevant cultural capital. This capital is acquired not only through formal education but also through community experiences and access to digital information. RRH shared systematic knowledge regarding the core principles of zero waste.

...."*The 5R principle is a sequence of actions that we can take to minimize waste. So before thinking about recycling, we should start by rejecting and reducing items that have the potential to become waste*"..... (RRH, March 3, 2025).

This indicates that the informant possesses a systematic conceptual understanding of the 5R principles in zero waste. Beyond merely listing the five principles, the informant understands the hierarchy of priorities, emphasizing prevention and reduction over immediate recycling. Such a conceptual grasp enables individuals to develop a prevention-oriented lifestyle.

Practices such as bringing home-cooked meals, repurposing used goods, or 'thrifting' also reflect cultural capital in the form of sustainable lifestyle and knowledge inherited from the family. Additionally, several informants highlighted learning activities such as producing eco-enzymes, upcycling, and creating organic fertilizers as outputs of their cultural capital.

...."*I apply the rot principle by composting organic waste, such as food scraps, into ecoenzymes stored in jerry cans* "..... (DRA, March 7, 2025).

Eco-enzymes are products of fermented organic waste (typically fruit peels, vegetables, or food scraps) used for various eco-friendly purposes, including water purification and natural cleaning solution. This process demonstrates that the informant does not merely discard organic waste but returns it to nature in a beneficial form, aligning with the core ethos of zero-waste.

Informant DRA stated that she gained the courage to explore upcycling and recycling practices after joining GenBI XI USU. Through her involvement in GenBI, she was able to create economically valuable works, such as keychains made from recycled paper. Her work was later presented in an Entrepreneurship class. While cross-disciplinary educational backgrounds strengthen the understanding of environmental regulations and responsibilities, technical knowledge gaps remain a significant barrier to more complex practices like composting.

Picture 3. Keychains from Waste Paper
Source: Informant DRA (2025)

Economic Capital

From Bourdieu's perspective, economic capital plays a pivotal role in determining access to consumption choices. Informants acknowledge that eco-friendly products, despite being more sustainable, are generally more expensive than their single-use counterparts.

..."*natural items, such as cotton swabs made from wood or tissues made from bamboo fiber are more expensive. Tumblers cost more than plastic bottles. Lunch boxes are obviously more expensive than styrofoam. So the economic aspect is certainly a supporting factor*"..... (DAS, February 26, 2025).

Limited economic capital can sometimes hinder the full implementation of a zero-waste lifestyle, for instance, when purchasing eco-friendly products that tend to be more expensive or accessing specialized recycling facilities. However, informant ANP views this as a long-term investment.

...."*by using tumblers we no longer need to purchase drinks outside, therefore, we can save money if we remain consistent*"..... (ANP, March 5, 2025).

In Bourdieu's framework, this reflects how cultural capital (knowledge and skills related to minimizing waste) can be converted into economic capital through cost savings and consumption efficiency. This practice demonstrates that sustainability is not inherently synonymous with high costs, particularly when practiced consistently and independently.

Nevertheless, the implementation of zero waste still necessitates economic support in the form of access to sustainable goods. In this regard, Bank Indonesia provides reusable tumblers and coffee cups to scholarship awardees, which helps reduce

dependency on single-use products. The utilization of these institutional facilities, along with the reuse of secondhand items, and the restriction of overconsumption, are manifestations of economic efficiency framed within environmental ethics. Consequently, economic capital plays a dual role: it can act as an initial barrier to accessing sustainable tools, yet it also transforms into a form of efficiency once the zero-waste habitus is established.

Symbolic Capital

This sequence of practices ultimately generates symbolic capital. Several informants reported being esteemed or perceived as "environmentally committed" by their peers and the broader community, as stated by OVS.

...."*One time, when I spoke about zero waste in a public forum. people felt my thoughts were more advanced and admire how i could be so aware of the issue*" ..... (OVS, February 28, 2025).

Zero waste practices are not merely viewed as functional waste management actions but also as a source of identity and social recognition. This reflects how such practices generate symbolic capital, a form of power derived from the recognition of values deemed prestigious by society. From Bourdieu's perspective, symbolic capital operates through perception and recognition. When an individual is perceived as "highly enlightened" or "progressive" due to their eco-friendly lifestyle, they attain a higher symbolic position within their social sphere.

.... "*GenBI also granted an award for my effort in repurposing used goods, especially during my time at the community service location*"..... (RRH, March 3, 2025).

The awards bestowed by GenBI XI USU upon members who actively implement zero-waste principles, particularly in upcycling used materials, constitute a vital form of symbolic capital that shapes and reinforces social practices. These accolades are not merely forms of appreciation; they serve as social legitimacy that imbues individual actions with value and meaning within the community context.

In this regard, the informants' creativity in transforming waste into functional items, whether during community service or as speakers in environmental education programs, is recognized as a valuable and commendable act. This grants informants a higher symbolic standing within the social field and reinforces their identity as agents of change committed to sustainability.

Picture 4. Certificates of Appreciation
Source: Researcher (2025)

Zero Waste Practices of Members in the GenBI XI USU Community

Refuse

The refuse principle is the first step in zero-waste practice. Informants reject the use of single-use plastics, particularly after joining GenBI.

...."*the most crucial thing is to refuse plastic bottles, it is better to bring a reusable water bottle and our own tote bags from home*"..... (ANP, March 5, 2025).

By choosing to bring their own water bottles from home and carrying tote bags when shopping, informants actively reduce potential waste at its source. This act of refusing single-use plastics not only demonstrates environmental concern but also reflects cultural capital in the form of an internalized understanding of a more sustainable way of living.

...."*I have switched to stainless steel straws to reduce waste*" ..... (DRA, March 7, 2025).

This practice shows that consumers have control to refuse goods that are harmful to the environment. By bringing their own necessities from home, informants not only reject plastic products but also transform reactive consumption patterns into conscious consumption. Refuse reflects a habitus formed through habits and awareness of the environmental impact of consumption and represents cultural capital in the form of an internalized understanding of a more sustainable way of living.

Reduce

Reduce is associated with the reduction of consumption, both in terms of quantity and frequency of using items that have the potential to become waste.

...."*I prefer to bring a lunch box from home to avoid using styrofoam, instead of adding waste, I just bring what is already available*"..... (DAS, February 26, 2025).

DRA and ABDS also reduce the purchase of single-use items by bringing their own equipment and avoiding food waste. The small choices they make reflect values and environmental orientation. The willingness to cook independently is not only a matter of economic efficiency but also a conscious strategy to avoid waste and food packaging. In

addition, it reflects cultural capital in the form of practical knowledge, such as how to manage food waste to prevent unnecessary disposal. The community also facilitates this practice by providing refillable water dispensers at the basecamp or for outdoor activities.

...."Making tumblers as a mandatory habit, providing education through activities and competitions such as zero waste vlogs, and providing facilities such as water dispensers so that members do not need to buy packaged drinks"..... (AAS, March 5, 2025).

Collectively, GenBI members also reduce the potential generation of food waste by purchasing ingredients and cooking together during GenBI activities. This moment is evident in the "Upgrading" event, where the consumption committee consists of a combination of individuals from each division who prepare the ingredients, cook in large portions, and distribute them to members.

Picture 5. The Consumption Committee Prepares Meals
Source: Researcher (2024)

Reduce also reflects awareness of the economic and health impacts of excessive consumption. Economic and cultural capital support this practice through the availability of tools and knowledge.

Reuse

The reuse principle is implemented by reusing consumable items such as water bottles, food containers, tote bags, and used banners. Reuse not only serves a practical function but also acts as a means for new members to absorb ecological values directly through active participation.

Picture 6. Reusable Tote Bags and Tumblers Provided by Bank Indonesia
Source: Documentation of the Publication and Socialization Division (2025)

The reuse principle is also applied in GenBI planting activities, where members use inorganic waste, such as used bottles as planting media. This program reflects the mobilization of cultural capital in the form of technical knowledge of urban farming and sustainable waste management.

Picture 7. Reuse Practices in GenBI Planting Program
Source: Documentation of the Publicization and Socialization Division (2024)

In addition, banners used for activities are repurposed as seating mats, reflecting creativity and efficiency.

Picture 8. Reusing Used Banners
Source: Researcher (2024)

This practice shows that reuse within the community is not limited to personal items but also extends to aspects of community logistics management. In addition to being a form of cost efficiency, it is also part of a collective commitment to waste reduction. This knowledge is not formally taught but is transmitted through practice across generations. The reuse of used banners reflects the community members' understanding of maximizing the value of items that can still be utilized. Reuse practices demonstrate how cultural capital (skills and creativity) and social capital (cooperation among members) become key strengths in implementing this principle.

Recycle

Recycling is realized through waste sorting and the production of ecobricks from used plastic bottles. The recycling principle in zero waste practices is not only aimed at reducing waste volume but also serves as a broader framework of thinking, namely the circular economy. Activities such as producing ecobricks from used plastic bottles reflect the application of circular economy principles at the micro level. In community service

activities, GenBI members invite participants to produce ecobricks from used bottles and packaging waste. However, ecobricks are not viewed as a long-term solution.

...."*ecobricks actually collect waste, so if they are neglected, they just end up piling up as more trash*"..... (DAS, February 26, 2025).

There are divergent perspectives regarding waste management. For DAS, activities such as creating ecobricks are perceived merely as ordinary waste collection and sorting, lacking inherent meaning or value unless accompanied by functional utilization, either from an economic and environmental standpoint.

Picture 9. Plastic Waste Processing
Source: Researcher (2025)

Thus, recycling practices within GenBI XI USU are not carried out through industrial processes but are implemented through waste sorting, ecobrick production, and subsequent integration into community education activities.

Rot

Rot or decomposition is the least common practice, primarily due to limitations of space and time. Some informants possess the cultural capital to support the implementation of composting practices; however, these cannot be carried out due to the lack of supporting infrastructure and time constraints that hinder decomposition activities at the GenBI secretariat. Nevertheless, there are forms of adaptation at the household level.

...."*I apply the rot principle by composting organic waste, such as food scraps, into ecoenzymes stored in jerry cans, then the resulting liquid can later be used to purify ponds or rivers near my home*"..... (DRA, March 7, 2025).

According to OVS, the implementation of the rot principle cannot be further developed within GenBI because its outputs are not immediately visible within a single day. OVS also expressed hesitation in adopting decomposition practices through eco-enzyme production. The existence of such alternatives for composting practices indicates

that although the rot principle faces structural constraints, it allows for the emergence of more flexible practices outside the GenBI arena.

Discussion

The Contestation of Actors in Zero Waste Practice at GenBI XI USU

From Bourdieu's perspective, there exists a field that becomes an arena of struggle in which actors compete to maintain or seize positions, dominance, and legitimacy over values and practices considered valid. This struggle is not always physical but is often symbolic, manifested through contests over meaning, recognition, and authority within the community. In this study, the symbolic struggle related to zero-waste practices occurs within the internal field of GenBI itself. The GenBI community field displays internal competition among members who collectively collaborate in various programs of the Environmental Division. Interestingly, this field presents a dual dynamic: on the one hand, members collectively collaborate in Environmental Division programs, while on the other hand, they are embedded in internal competition facilitated by the organization's evaluation system. The reward mechanism for consistent members, along with sanctions in the form of warning letters for less active members, creates collective discipline while simultaneously opening a space for symbolic struggle in which each individual seeks to maintain their reputation and social position through consistency in zero-waste practices.

Within this field, cultural capital serves as the primary source of symbolic legitimacy that determines the hierarchy of roles among members. In-depth knowledge of zero-waste principles and sustainability issues is not merely technical insight but an instrument of power that grants certain actors the privilege to occupy strategic positions. This is clearly evident when informants with high levels of cultural capital, such as DAS, ANP, OVS, and RRH, are entrusted with major responsibilities as educators, project leaders, and official representatives of the division in community service activities. This legitimacy does not emerge instantly but is the result of the accumulation of capital derived from academic background, personal experience, involvement in environmental organizations, and access to digital information.

Critically, cultural capital within the GenBI community functions as a sharp differentiator of social positions; the higher the cultural capital possessed by an individual, the greater the opportunity to gain trust, responsibility, and symbolic legitimacy from other members. Thus, cultural capital within the GenBI community not

only serves as a tool to strengthen environmentally friendly practices functionally but also acts as a means of negotiating power in determining who is deemed worthy of leading and formally representing the community. Consequently, zero-waste practices in this field become a manifestation of actors' strategies to secure their positions and reputations within an organizational structure that demands sustained performance.

Social capital plays a role in strengthening individuals' bargaining positions. Members who are able to build strategic relationships with administrators or possess extensive social networks tend to more easily obtain important roles in collaborative projects, which in turn serve as stepping stones to increase their chances of receiving a second-year scholarship. This dynamic creates a competitive atmosphere, particularly among the 2022 cohort members, such as DAS, OVS, ANP, and RRH, who demonstrate higher levels of activity compared to the 2021 cohort (DRA and ABDS). Recognition of participation is formalized through certificates of appreciation, instruments that not only add symbolic value but also reinforce individual reputations within the collective.

Although GenBI is not oriented toward profit accumulation, zero-waste practices remain intertwined with individuals' economic capacity. The use of environmentally friendly products such as high-quality tumblers, stainless containers, reusable straws, and eco-enzymes becomes a class marker associated with economic capital. Members with higher economic capital tend to be more consistent in displaying a lifestyle that is "presentable," thus positioning them as ideal representations of an ecological lifestyle. Although the community facilitates certain supporting tools, the ability to independently invest in zero-waste products is often interpreted as a sign of greater seriousness and commitment, which carries symbolic effects in the struggle for positions within the field.

Ultimately, contestation among members is directed toward the accumulation of symbolic capital. However, the process of acquiring this capital is inseparable from the dynamics of symbolic violence, which operates subtly through the normalization of certain lifestyle standards. Moreover, a strict evaluation system and competition for advanced scholarships create structural pressures that compel members to continuously capitalize on zero-waste practices, which are then accepted as taken for granted. Within this context, forms of resistance emerge as members attempt to negotiate the authority and integrity of their practices. This resistance is evident when several informants adopt a critical stance toward programs perceived as merely performative. Even the inconsistency in applying the rot principle at the secretariat can be interpreted as a form

of passive resistance to organizational demands that often prioritize immediate results over time-consuming waste processing practices.

Therefore, the struggle for symbolic capital through appointments as project leaders, educators, or the official "face" of GenBI XI USU in various external activities represents the culmination of a prolonged contestation. Members are not merely competing for structural positions or the assurance of a second-year scholarship; rather, they are negotiating their identities amid tensions between ecological idealism, infrastructural limitations, and the demand to consistently demonstrate excellence. Those who are ultimately recognized as the "most consistent" are the actors who most successfully navigate symbolic violence and transform their daily practices into authority that is legitimately recognized by the entire community.

The Process of the Formation of Actors' Social Practices in GenBI XI USU

The process of the formation of social practices within the GenBI XI USU community, particularly in implementing the 5R principles in a zero-waste lifestyle, can be understood through Bourdieu's theory of practice, which emphasizes the dialectical relationship between habitus, field, and capital. Habitus, as a system of dispositions shaped by social experience, serves as the foundation for members in forming ways of thinking and acting toward environmental issues. Practices such as bringing personal cups or water bottles, refusing single-use plastics, sorting waste, and utilizing waste are not merely momentary rational decisions but are expressions of habitus that have been internalized in everyday life through education and family upbringing.

This ecological habitus does not emerge in a vacuum but is rooted in cultural capital in the form of environmental knowledge, as well as social capital derived from supportive interactions among members. Within the GenBI field, practices of refuse and reduce emerge as dispositions in which members feel uncomfortable or even "ashamed" when using single-use plastics, indicating that these rules have become embedded within their cognitive and bodily structures. Reuse is institutionalized as a community norm through the use of reusable items, such as repurposed banners and food containers.

However, there are limitations in the implementation of zero waste practices within the GenBI XI USU community, indicating a gap between ecological aspirations and operational realities in the field, particularly in the aspects of recycle and rot. Although members have made efforts to sort waste and produce ecobricks, these recycling activities have not yet been systematically integrated with external institutions such as

waste banks. As a result, the circular economy principle remains at the micro level and has not been able to generate broader economic or environmental impacts through standardized waste distribution.

This condition is further exacerbated by inconsistencies in implementation at the GenBI USU basecamp, where the rot or composting principle is the least practiced. Structural constraints, including limited space, the absence of supporting infrastructure, and time limitations that do not allow for immediate outputs at the secretariat, make decomposition practices difficult to develop collectively. Consequently, although informants possess cultural capital in the form of technical knowledge for processing organic waste, these practices tend to remain individual and flexible outside the GenBI community arena, while the basecamp environment itself has not yet been able to serve as a consistent model for comprehensive waste management.

The GenBI community plays a significant role as a dynamic field in which the exchange of various forms of capital (cultural, social, economic, and symbolic) occurs to strengthen commitment to a zero-waste lifestyle. Through concrete programs such as 5R campaigns and community education, members not only absorb values discursively but also externalize their habitus into a broader environment. This ongoing process of practice reproduction positions the 5R principles as part of the GenBI "social world," appearing natural despite being the result of historical construction through shared experiences. Ultimately, zero-waste practices within this community are the product of the interplay between the formation of habitus, the possession of various forms of capital, and an organizational structure that reproduces these sustainability values.

Through the continuous reproduction of practices, the 5R principles are not only enacted as an individual lifestyle but have become part of the GenBI USU "social world," appearing natural or objective, although they are in fact the result of historical construction derived from shared experiences. This aligns with Bourdieu's concept of opus operatum, which posits that established practices are the product of habitus and capital within a field. In this context, zero waste practices within the GenBI community cannot be understood solely in terms of individual behavior or decision-making, but rather as the outcome of a social process involving the formation of habitus, the possession of various forms of capital (cultural, social, economic, symbolic), and structures that support and reproduce these practices.

CONCLUSION

Zero-waste practices within the GenBI XI USU community manifest a dialectic between individual ecological habitus and the competitive power structures within the community's field. Members who demonstrate the highest levels of activity and consistency in implementing zero waste are frequently appointed to strategic positions. This rivalry does not manifest as an overt conflict but rather as a subtle competition involving the accumulation of cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital possessed by each individual. The scholarly contribution of this research to environmental sociology lies in its understanding of how cultural capital, in the form of 5R technical knowledge and social capital represented by community networking, serves as the primary engine for transforming consumption behavior from reactive to conscious. Theoretically, this study extends Bourdieu's framework by demonstrating that environmental practices can function as a strategy for symbolic capital accumulation to attain social legitimacy and secure economic capital in the form of continued scholarships. The practical implications emphasize the necessity of infrastructural support at the community level to overcome structural barriers to recycle and rot principles, as well as the need for systematic integration with external institutions, such as waste banks, to actualize a more consistent and impactful circular economy.

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