

Seasoldier Surabaya's Meaning-Making of Environmental Issues

Pemaknaan Gen Z Seasoldier Surabaya terhadap Isu Lingkungan

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ABSTRACT

Climate change and the broader environmental crisis underscore the importance of community engagement in fostering environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior. This study examined how members of Seasoldier Surabaya interpret environmental issues through their participation in community activities. The study adopted a qualitative design and applied Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with two Generation Z members of Seasoldier Surabaya who had actively participated in community activities for at least one year. The findings showed that members perceive their involvement in Seasoldier Surabaya not merely as participation in environmental action, but also as a personal and social experience that strengthens concern for environmental issues. Community engagement generates emotional satisfaction, a sense of belonging, and social support, while also reshaping members' perspectives on the relationship between the self, others, and the environment. This involvement further strengthens their commitment to sustaining pro-environmental behavior over time. In addition, the community's egalitarian and supportive structure plays a central role in maintaining consistent member engagement. These findings suggest that interpretations of environmental issues emerge through collective experiences that are internalized within the community context.

Keywords: climate change, environmental crisis, Generation Z, Pro-environmental behavior

ABSTRAK

Perubahan iklim dan krisis lingkungan mendorong pentingnya keterlibatan komunitas dalam membangun kepedulian dan perilaku pro lingkungan. Penelitian ini bertujuan memahami bagaimana anggota Seasoldier Surabaya memaknai isu lingkungan melalui keterlibatan mereka dalam kegiatan komunitas. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik analisis *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA). Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur terhadap dua anggota aktif Seasoldier Surabaya yang termasuk Generasi Z dan telah terlibat dalam kegiatan komunitas selama minimal satu tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan dalam Seasoldier Surabaya dimaknai bukan hanya sebagai partisipasi dalam aksi lingkungan, tetapi juga sebagai pengalaman personal dan sosial yang membentuk kepedulian terhadap isu lingkungan. Pengalaman mengikuti kegiatan komunitas menghadirkan kepuasan emosional, rasa diterima, dukungan sosial, serta perubahan cara pandang terhadap hubungan antara diri, orang lain, dan lingkungan. Keterlibatan tersebut juga memperkuat komitmen anggota untuk mempertahankan perilaku pro lingkungan secara berkelanjutan. Selain itu, struktur komunitas yang egaliter dan suportif berperan penting dalam menjaga konsistensi keterlibatan anggota. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pemaknaan terhadap isu lingkungan terbentuk melalui pengalaman kolektif yang dihayati secara personal dalam konteks komunitas.

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Kata Kunci: perubahan iklim, krisis lingkungan, generasi z, perilaku pro-lingkungan

INTRODUCTION

The coastal area of Surabaya, particularly the Wonorejo region, is ecologically significant but highly vulnerable. Nurdin (2011) explains that the Wonorejo mangrove area has ecological and educational value because of its coastal biodiversity and its potential for conservation and ecotourism. Despite these strengths, the region faces serious environmental challenges. Fatmalah et al. (2023) report that inorganic waste in the Wonorejo mangrove area can inhibit mangrove regeneration. Rachmadiarazaq et al. (2023) further note that waste management at the Wonorejo Mangrove Ecotourism site still requires better facilities and infrastructure to support long-term sustainability. Together, these studies show that environmental problems in Wonorejo are not abstract concerns. They are concrete challenges that affect the surrounding ecosystem and the daily lives of local communities.

Environmental communities play a crucial role in responding to these challenges. They function not only as advocates for conservation campaigns but also as actors who implement direct environmental action. Seasoldier Surabaya represents one such community. As a non-governmental organization, Seasoldier runs a mangrove conservation program that includes environmental education, seedling propagation, planting, and growth monitoring (Seasoldier, t.t.). Previous studies have mainly examined Seasoldier from the perspective of communication and campaign strategy. For instance, Septiana and Angelita (2024) analyzed Seasoldier's brand activation strategy during a public event designed to increase environmental awareness. As a result, the literature often frames Seasoldier primarily as an environmental campaign community, even though it is also directly involved in conservation work and environmental cleanup activities (Seasoldier, t.t.).

In environmental psychology, participation in activities such as mangrove

planting, beach cleanups, and environmental organizations constitutes pro-environmental behavior in the public sphere. Xing et al. (2022) state that such behavior in public spaces is defined by collective action, including involvement in environmental protection activities and organizations. However, most studies on pro-environmental behavior have focused on private behavior or on broad psychological factors that influence behavior (Xing et al., 2022). Public environmental action also develops through social processes. It shows that social identity and social trust are associated with participation in pro-environmental behavior in public contexts. These findings indicate that environmental action is shaped not only by individual knowledge or concern but also by shared experience, social relationships, and meanings developed through collective engagement.

This gap becomes more visible when the focus shifts to local environmental communities. In the context of Wonorejo and Surabaya, previous studies have largely examined ecotourism potential, environmental management, and ecological problems such as waste (Nurdin, 2011; Fatmalah et al., 2023; Rachmadiarazaq et al., 2023). Research on Seasoldier has similarly emphasized digital campaigns and environmental communication (Septiana and Angelita, 2024). Although these studies clarify the ecological context and describe the characteristics of environmental movements, they do not explain how community members experience and interpret their involvement in addressing local environmental issues. What remains insufficiently understood is not only what community members do, but also how they internalize, interpret, and sustain their engagement as part of their lived experience.

This study addressed that gap by examining the lived experiences of members of the Seasoldier Surabaya community as they participate in environmental action. This focus aligns with a phenomenological approach, which seeks to understand how individuals experience and interpret a particular

phenomenon. Kilmartin and Day (2024) argue that phenomenology emphasizes experience as it is lived by participants. Accordingly, this study investigated how members of Seasoldier Surabaya interpret their pro-environmental behavior through participation in mangrove planting and beach cleanup activities. The study focused on members' experiences of engagement in concrete community actions rather than on evaluating program effectiveness or campaign success. The main research question is: How do members of Seasoldier Surabaya interpret their pro-environmental behavior through their involvement in environmental activities? To answer this question, the study examined members' emotional responses during activities, the effects of these experiences on social relationships, the perceived personal benefits, and the forms of emotional satisfaction that emerge from participation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to examine how Generation Z members interpret their concern for environmental issues through participation in an environmental nonprofit organization. The study selected IPA because this approach focuses on how individuals make sense of lived experience and incorporates double hermeneutics, through which the researcher interprets the meanings participants construct (Smith et al., 2022). Accordingly, the study did not merely describe participants' experiences. It also examined how participants understood, reflected on, and interpreted those experiences within the context of organizational involvement.

Participants

The study selected participants according to criteria aligned with the research question. Eligible participants were active members of Seasoldier Surabaya, belonged to Generation Z, and had participated in

organizational activities for at least one year. These criteria ensured that each participant had sufficient experience to reflect meaningfully on the phenomenon under study. In line with IPA, the study included two participants who met these criteria. The small sample was not intended to support generalization. Instead, it enabled an in-depth exploration of experience within a small and relatively homogeneous group, which is consistent with IPA principles (Smith et al., 2022).

The study also considered the organizational context in interpreting the limited number of participants. At the time of data collection, Seasoldier Surabaya had 127 members. The study did not include membership data from other regions because it focused specifically on the Surabaya branch. However, the organization's presence in other regions indicates that Seasoldier has a broader community network. During data collection, many eligible Generation Z members were in an intensive academic period, which reduced their availability to participate.

Research Procedure

The study followed four stages: preparation, data collection, data analysis, and validity checking. During the preparation stage, the researcher established participant criteria, contacted potential participants, obtained institutional approval, provided informed consent, and developed a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide aimed to support an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences related to their involvement in pro-environmental activities at Seasoldier Surabaya (Smith et al., 2022). The researcher used the questions flexibly and adapted them to the narrative flow, experiences, and interpretations that emerged during the face-to-face interviews.

The interview guide covered several domains. These domains included participants' motivations for joining Seasoldier, their experiences during environmental activities, changes in perspective and behavior following participation, the personal meaning of their

involvement, and the emotional and social experiences associated with organizational activities. The researcher also developed a separate interview guide for a significant other to obtain supplementary data and additional perspectives on how participants' involvement was perceived and expressed within the organizational context.

The study did not treat the significant other as a primary source of data. Instead, this source served to confirm, supplement, and verify the consistency of information provided by the main participants in relation to their daily lives and community engagement. Data from the significant other was used selectively to deepen understanding of participants' experiences, particularly with regard to behavioral change, consistency of engagement, and the alignment between participants' narratives and observations from close associates.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which focuses on interpreting the meanings participants assign to their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2022). The analysis followed the principle of double hermeneutics, which allowed the researcher to reinterpret participants' meaning-making processes. The analysis proceeded through five stages: 1) repeated reading of each transcript; 2) initial noting of keywords, linguistic features, and emotional expressions; 3) development of emergent themes through the grouping of initial notes; 4) identification of thematic connections and structures within each individual case; and 5) generation of superordinate themes that captured the broader structure of participants' experiences. The analysis was inductive. The researcher did not impose themes from predefined theoretical categories. Instead, themes emerged through repeated engagement with the transcripts and iterative thematic development.

The research process began with a verbatim transcription of the interview results.

Each transcript was read multiple times to achieve a comprehensive understanding of each participant's experience. Preliminary notes were made on significant sections, with attention to expressions, word choices, emotional responses, and narrative accounts that held particular meaning for the participants. These notes informed the identification of initial themes for each case, followed by an examination of relationships among themes until superordinate themes emerged that more fully represented the participants' experiences. Throughout the analysis, findings were compared across transcripts to identify both patterns of similarity and unique aspects of each participant's experience.

The study established credibility through several qualitative strategies consistent with IPA. Member checking was used to verify the accuracy of participants' accounts and to preserve interpretive validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Participants were invited to clarify, confirm, or revise the researcher's interpretations. Peer debriefing was also conducted through collaborative discussion among researchers regarding emergent and superordinate themes. This process helped test the logical coherence of the analysis, identify assumptions requiring bracketing, generate alternative interpretations, and strengthen analytical depth (Smith et al., 2022). These discussions also supported a more critical evaluation of the data.

The study further applied source triangulation through interviews with the founder of Seasoldier Surabaya, who served as the significant other. This source provided an external perspective from someone familiar with the community context and capable of assessing the consistency of participants' accounts (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this study, the significant other did not function as the principal source of experience. Rather, this source supported contextual understanding and strengthened the interpretation of participants' narratives.

RESULTS

Gen Z's Pathway into Seasoldier Surabaya

Both participants reported that they first encountered Seasoldier through a university independent study project. Their involvement began as an academic requirement, developed through repeated participation in community activities, and eventually led to formal membership in Seasoldier.

"Well, the first time I came here was for a project, a course project. That's how it started. I was in a group with her; we were in the same group. There were four of us in our group during the fifth semester last year. So last year, what was it called? We were just hanging out, and we're communication studies students." (SJ1112025:15)

"The process was just like that. First, we did independent studies here, and since they already knew what kind of people we were and how we performed, they recruited us." (SV1112025:57)

These accounts indicate that membership in Seasoldier does not occur through open enrollment alone. Prospective members first participate in the organization's activities, after which leaders evaluate their engagement, performance, and commitment. Members who demonstrate sustained involvement are then invited to join formally. In this context, membership emerged as an organic extension of earlier participation, interpersonal connection, and recognized contribution.

Interpreting Engagement with Environmental Issues

Both participants described a stronger understanding of environmental issues after joining Seasoldier. SV acknowledged that prior knowledge of environmental issues had been limited and that earlier concern had been relatively low. Participation in community activities increased this awareness and

encouraged behavioral change, particularly in reducing plastic use.

"I realized I didn't know as much about the environment as I thought. The more I learn, the more I see how much I still have to learn, and that's why I keep getting involved" (SV1112025:101).

"It's an overlooked issue. Governments rarely realize that even small environmental problems can have a ripple effect on everything" (SV1112025:185).

"The more I learn, the more I want to cut down on my plastic use" (SV112025:240).

Mangrove planting also exposed participants to the practical complexity of conservation work. They learned that mangroves require careful handling because improper planting can damage seedlings and reduce survival. This experience fostered responsibility and sharpened ecological awareness.

"Because if, say, we just plant them haphazardly, you know, just planting them without any care, without this or that, the mangroves can get stressed." (SJ1112025:173)

"During monitoring, sometimes there are quite a few of them, and it feels like, 'Oh my God, do we really have to plant them again like that?' even though we're already confident they can survive here. But maybe it's because of the weather or something. We just don't know, since we only monitor them every two or three months, so we're unaware of the external factors at play." (SJ1112025:187)

Both participants exhibited a marked improvement in environmental understanding and awareness after participating in various Seasoldier activities. These findings show that direct participation deepened ecological understanding. Field experience helped

participants recognize the environmental consequences of individual actions, the fragility of restoration efforts, and the need for sustained care in conservation practice.

Gen Z's Perception of Hands-On Conservation Activities

Both participants became formal members at the same time and engaged in similar activities, including mangrove maintenance, beach cleanups, and environmental education in elementary schools. SV initially approached these activities with discomfort, but later developed a strong appreciation for field-based engagement. SV viewed these experiences as central to understanding environmental problems and to recognizing the need for environmental education in schools.

"Because I used to be a really squeamish person. Honestly, I was really, really squeamish. But ever since I got involved, planting mangroves and getting all muddy, I've actually come to enjoy planting things." (SV16112025:239)

"I even thought at one point that, you know, there really should be environmental education in schools." (SV16112025:61)

SJ reported a similar shift. Initial physical discomfort during mangrove planting gradually changed into curiosity and motivation to participate again. This hands-on involvement also strengthened a sense of discipline and obligation toward continued engagement.

"Well, what do you call that? That tingling feeling? It's something new, but it's kind of exciting, you know? It's like a new and exciting experience, so I want to dive in again." (SJ1112025:89)

"I've been coming here like this because my goal is to be helpful, so whether I like it or not, I have to get involved." (SJ16112025:395)

These accounts suggest that direct involvement in conservation activities reshaped both participants' self-perceptions and pro-environmental orientations. Initial discomfort did not deter participation. Instead, it became part of a transformative process that strengthened interest, commitment, and motivation to support environmental action and education.

The Formation of Worldview, Social Relations, and Community Meaning

Participation in Seasoldier also changed how both participants understood the organization and their relationships with others. At first, participants assumed that Seasoldier operated through a hierarchical structure marked by distance between senior members, newcomers, and the leader. Continued participation altered this perception. SJ came to view Seasoldier as an egalitarian and supportive community despite generational differences among members.

"I've come to realize that in a non-governmental organization like this, there really is a sense of care. The Sea Soldier community is very supportive. We feel like we're on the same wavelength, even though he [the leader] isn't from our generation." (SJ16112025:8)

"I've come to realize that in a non-governmental organization like this, people genuinely care." (SJ16112025:458)

This experience also encouraged SJ to share environmental knowledge with others in their immediate social environment.

"I shared some of my experience. Don't do this, or it'll have consequences later. I feel like I need to change and be more mindful of the environment, so I can help others become more aware too." (SJ16112025:145;131)

SV likewise described Seasoldier as a space of camaraderie and mutual support rather than merely an environmental organization.

"I think the most meaningful thing, the most important thing, is the bond among fellow soldiers." (SV16112025:283)

"They see us all as the same. We're friends, we're like family. Even though there's an age difference, you know." (SV16112025:285)

SV also linked this supportive environment to a stronger commitment to environmental education for children.

"Our goal is to educate the children so they don't use plastic. We do this through workshops, you know. We hold eco-printing activities." (SV16112025:16)

These findings indicate that participation in Seasoldier changed how both participants understood community, leadership, and collective action. What they initially perceived as hierarchy later became a sense of equality, care, and shared purpose. This shift strengthened emotional commitment and extended environmental awareness beyond the organization into broader social relationships.

Personal Benefits, Personal Growth, and Social Recognition

Both participants described substantial personal benefits from their involvement in Seasoldier. These benefits included stronger environmental literacy, greater confidence, new practical skills, and a sense of accomplishment. SV reported a clear change in everyday habits and interests, including a new enjoyment of gardening at home.

"Ever since I started getting my hands dirty, I've enjoyed planting things at home. Even if the plants die or don't take root, I still love planting. Before this, I was really squeamish. Honestly, I was

really, really squeamish." (SV16112025:239)

SV also described gaining knowledge and adapting to an environmental setting that had initially felt unfamiliar.

"I like this world, even though I used to feel like it wasn't really my thing. The first time I went out for independent study, I went straight to the mangroves. I got bitten by mosquitoes and was covered in mud, but the longer I stayed, the more I felt like I had to stick with it so I could understand." (SV11122025:322)

In addition, SV perceived the organization as highly receptive to members' ideas.

"We have a proposal to create a program like this—oh, sure, that's always fine. They're always open to us." (SV11122025:6)

SJ similarly described improved environmental literacy and the acquisition of organizational skills, including event management and partner negotiation.

"That's right, I don't have any experience with them, and I never really thought I'd understand much about mangroves or their different types." (SJ16112025:289)

"First, it's about good organizational skills. Second, it's knowing how to organize effective events. Third, it's about recruiting partners, and fourth, of course, it's about the environment itself." (SJ16112025:42)

SJ also felt that the organization recognized and valued their contribution.

"As the leader, Ryan probably sees that we're the kind of people who really care about the environment, and maybe our

performance is noticed and appreciated.” (SJ1112025:40)

Both participants also emphasized the importance of acceptance and support within the community.

“Most of the other members were in their 30s or older, like Ryan. They already had kids. We felt they were looking out for us, almost like older siblings. That’s how it seemed at first.” (SJ16112025:10)

“To be completely honest, compared to other organizations, I feel truly accepted at Seasoldier.” (SV16112025:331)

Overall, Seasoldier provided both participants with cognitive, practical, and social gains. These benefits strengthened their engagement with environmental issues and reinforced their sense of recognition within the community.

Satisfaction and Emotional Responses During Activities

Both participants described environmental activities in Seasoldier as emotionally meaningful and increasingly satisfying over time. SV initially experienced discomfort but later reported enjoyment, happiness, and a strong sense of belonging.

“Yeah, I’m happy, even though it smells like a sewer... yeah, I’m just happy. And this isn’t my world—it’s a new world—so I feel like I have to dive right in too.” (SV11122025:277, 287)

“To be completely honest, compared to other organizations, I feel truly accepted at Seasoldier.” (SV16112025:331)

“But at first, I was like, ‘What’s this all about?’ but after a while I just started to enjoy it. I actually liked it. Just yesterday,

I planted five thousand seedlings from morning until just before sunset.” (SV1112025:271)

SJ also described field-based activities as enjoyable and emotionally rewarding, especially when shared with friends and volunteers.

“Anyway, after a while it gets pretty fun. Once you’ve done it a few times, it’s actually fun.” (SJ16112025:395.c)

“For me, satisfaction is like feeling happy. I enjoy the experience, especially with my friends, and meeting new volunteers. I love chatting with lots of people, planting mangroves, meeting new people, and sharing experiences like that.” (SJ1112025:189)

SJ further reported a sense of pride when their work produced visible results.

“It’s like a source of pride, you know, because we’re the ones who planted them, and we have to check on each mangrove.” (SJ1112025:171)

These accounts show that emotional fulfillment increased as participation deepened. Initial unease gradually shifted into enthusiasm, pride, and attachment. Social interaction and visible contribution strengthened participants’ sense of belonging and positioned conservation work as a source of motivation and positive emotion.

Although these themes do not represent rigid stages, the participants’ narratives suggest a general progression of experience. This progression begins with personal motivation, develops through positive emotional experiences, and extends toward concern for others and the environment.

Figure 1. Superordinate Themes and Emergent Themes in SV and SJ

The diagram illustrates the relationships among these emergent themes. After conducting an in-depth analysis of each case, the researcher examined the relational patterns across both participants. The analysis shows that, although SV and SJ shared the same community context, they constructed meaning through distinct interpretive pathways. Their accounts converged in positive emotional experiences, social support, and ecological engagement. However, they differed in their initial value orientations and in the ways they developed ecological commitment.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that participation in Seasoldier reshaped how both participants understood environmental issues, community relationships, and their own roles in environmental action. Their experiences did not remain at the level of activity participation. Instead, these experiences developed into a broader process of meaning-making that influenced daily habits, emotional responses, and social commitments. This pattern indicates

that pro-environmental engagement emerged through lived experience rather than through abstract knowledge alone.

At the beginning of her involvement, SV focused mainly on health and politics and had little connection to environmental issues. She joined Seasoldier because she recognized this gap and wanted practical experience in environmental action. Early participation expanded her knowledge while exposing how limited her previous understanding had been. This realization motivated her to engage more seriously in environmental initiatives. She especially valued activities related to children's education because these activities gave her both personal satisfaction and a sense of meaningful contribution.

SV's development was not entirely smooth. She felt disappointed when she observed that some partners did not consistently practice the environmental values they promoted. This inconsistency created tension between her growing awareness and the realities she encountered in the field. At the same time, these experiences encouraged her to make concrete changes in daily life beyond formal organizational participation. Her decision to start gardening at home illustrates how environmental knowledge has been translated into personal practice.

SJ entered Seasoldier with a different starting point. She wanted to deepen her understanding of environmental issues and sought specific knowledge, such as information about mangroves, to contribute more effectively. Her acceptance within the community, especially through recognition from the Seasoldier leader, strengthened her sense of belonging. This supportive environment expanded her social network, increased her self-confidence, and gave her activities a clearer sense of purpose. She also took pride in developing new skills, particularly in recruiting partners and building relationships, which she viewed as important aspects of personal growth.

The findings suggest that SV and SJ's engagement is rooted in a personal need for

growth through environmental action. This process illustrates how egoistic value, defined as the desire to enhance one's capabilities and achieve personal satisfaction (De Groot & Thørgersen, 2019), can develop into sustained pro-environmental behavior. In both participants, egoistic value did not manifest as conventional greed but instead became a constructive motivation for self-improvement. For SV, initial unfamiliarity with environmental issues acted as a catalyst for her enthusiasm to learn, viewing activism as a means to overcome ignorance rather than solely as external service. In contrast, SJ's egoistic values were primarily oriented toward personal benefit, with her efforts to raise awareness and increase impact motivated first by self-interest and subsequently by concern for the surrounding environment.

Beyond personal motivations, the experiences of SV and SJ illustrate that their involvement extended beyond self-interest and elicited significant emotional responses during their participation in Seasoldier activities and engagement with environmental issues. Initially, SV experienced discomfort when participating in the mangrove planting activity. However, planting thousands of saplings marked a turning point, resulting in satisfaction and happiness, despite enduring consequences such as the persistent unpleasant odor of the pond. Following this experience, curiosity and personal joy motivated SV to explore environmental issues further and foster a connection with the natural world. This sense of happiness was reinforced by the supportive community, including shared jokes, conversations, and acceptance, which contributed to a feeling of being valued and free to express oneself. The resulting comfort and emotional satisfaction have sustained SV's ongoing engagement. SV's experience suggests that initial feelings of discomfort or disgust do not necessarily impede participation; rather, these emotions can be transformed into satisfaction and joy.

An inclusive and accepting organizational climate fosters emotional

security, enabling SVs to feel validated regardless of age and allowing SJ to experience comfort through collective appreciation and social support. Positive reinforcements such as fluid interactions, friendship, and logistical convenience transform environmental conservation activities from burdensome ecological tasks into enjoyable social experiences.

For SJ, the emotional connection was apparent from the very beginning. She felt accepted by the members of Seasoldier and derived comfort from small, enjoyable moments, such as humorous interactions during fieldwork and the nostalgic ambiance of outdoor activities. Tasks that initially seemed burdensome became engaging, particularly when she felt a sense of accomplishment after planting mangroves or acquiring new experiences related to her interest in environmental health issues. Even minor aspects, such as sharing snacks during activities, contributed to her overall sense of comfort.

Pleasant emotional experiences are a primary driver of SV and SJ's engagement in environmental activities, as articulated by the concept of hedonic value, which highlights the pursuit of comfort, pleasure, and positive experiences (De Groot & Thørgersen, 2019). Within the context of pro-environmental behavior, individuals with pronounced hedonic values typically avoid actions perceived as uncomfortable, tiring, or reducing enjoyment. Consequently, their support for eco-friendly behavior increases when such actions also yield personal benefits of comfort or pleasure. SV and SJ exemplify how pleasure, curiosity, and affective comfort function as intrinsic incentives that sustain commitment to environmentally supportive practices, even when these activities require physical effort. SV experiences comfort through acceptance by the Seasoldiers, while SJ feels at ease due to care from older Seasoldiers and participation in stimulating activities. As their involvement deepens, their orientation broadens from a focus on personal enjoyment or achievement to

include concern for the well-being of others and the surrounding environment. This progression facilitates an understanding of how their motivation evolves beyond individual interests.

SV experiences significant social support through close, open, and mutually respectful community relationships. This environment has motivated her to enhance her personal habits and to engage in creative educational initiatives that inform children about the dangers of plastic. Her dedication to long-term change is grounded in the belief that personal consistency can serve as a model with broad influence. Additionally, the community's egalitarian and accepting nature further encourages her to contribute to collective well-being.

SJ's motivation to benefit others arises not from an abstract concept of altruism, but from a preference for activities with tangible utility. This is demonstrated by SJ's statement that she prefers activities that "are useful and beneficial." Consequently, SJ's participation in environmental activities is interpreted through the framework of concrete utility rather than symbolic engagement or a general appreciation of nature. SJ's social concern is therefore based on the perception that an activity is valuable when it produces a measurable impact on others or the environment. This analysis suggests that SJ's altruistic orientation is grounded in a practical understanding of contribution, which is consistent with the perspective that altruistic values direct individuals toward concern for others' well-being and can provide a critical basis for pro-environmental behavior (Stern, 2000; Steg and De Groot, 2019).

For both participants, altruistic values did not initially serve as a direct motivation to help. Instead, these values developed through relational experiences and the recognition that environmental issues are inherently linked to communal life. In SV's case, this value was demonstrated by efforts to initiate change within her immediate circle, such as encouraging her mother to reduce her use of single-use sachets. In contrast, SJ's altruistic values were reflected in her commitment to remain engaged and participate in community

activities as a form of responsibility toward collective goals, despite a demanding schedule. These findings suggest that concern for others extends beyond good intentions and is expressed through actions such as setting an example, maintaining presence, sharing knowledge, and considering broader societal benefits. Thus, altruistic values function as a bridge between individual change and wider social responsibility (Schwartz, 1994; Stern, 2000).

At SV, ecological awareness develops primarily through direct engagement with environmental issues that prompt moral reflection, rather than through conceptual knowledge alone. Participation in field activities transforms environmental issues, previously perceived as external to daily life, into matters of personal relevance. When SV asserts that they “must change,” beginning with themselves, this demonstrates that acquired knowledge has been integrated into daily habits. This transformation is reflected in efforts to reduce plastic consumption, select more environmentally friendly products, and influence immediate social circles. In this context, SV’s biospheric values are strengthened as ecological realities become internalized and require personal commitment. This observation supports the perspective that concrete experiences shape environmental decisions, problem interpretation, and psychological proximity to environmental challenges (Newell et al., 2014; Steg, 2023).

SJ’s sense of environmental responsibility emerged through direct involvement in caring for and monitoring mangroves, especially when confronted with the possibility that planted mangrove saplings might not survive. SJ’s emotional response to observing dead mangroves suggests a shift in perception, where nature is regarded not merely as an aspect of organizational activities but as an entity whose sustainability requires protection. These environmental experiences transition from being primarily social and enjoyable to fostering an awareness of

ecosystem fragility and the necessity of human responsibility. Consequently, SJ’s ecological concern arises from tangible encounters with nature’s vulnerability rather than from abstract knowledge. This observation aligns with the perspective that biospheric values motivate individuals to care for nature intrinsically, and that such values are reinforced through direct experiences of ecological consequences resulting from human actions or environmental threats (Steg & De Groot, 2019; Steg, 2023).

Pro-environmental behavior in both participants developed gradually through the interpretation of direct experiences, personal reflection, and social engagement. For SV, such behavior was evident in modifications to daily habits, including reducing plastic use, altering consumption choices, and encouraging family members to adopt similar practices. In contrast, SJ demonstrated pro-environmental behavior through active participation in mangrove planting, environmental education, and sustained engagement in activities considered meaningful. These distinct expressions suggest that environmental commitment is context-dependent and may be realized through diverse practices based on individual experiences and conceptualizations of involvement. This perspective is consistent with Stern (2000), who argues that environmentally significant behavior encompasses multiple forms of action in both private and public spheres, and cannot be reduced to a single behavioral type. The findings indicate that pro-environmental actions result from the interplay of knowledge, emotions, values, and relational contexts, which collectively reinforce such behaviors.

The experiences of SV and SJ illustrate that the four value orientations do not function independently but are interconnected within the process of meaning-making. For SV, initial egoistic motivations such as curiosity and the desire to expand personal capacity gradually developed into biospheric concern as she recognized the tangible effects of her daily actions on the environment. In the case of SJ, positive experiences, a sense of belonging, and pride in participation reinforced both social and

ecological commitments. Therefore, egoistic, hedonic, altruistic, and biospheric values in this study are best conceptualized as dynamic motivations rather than fixed categories. These findings are consistent with Schwartz's (1994) theory, which conceptualizes values as interconnected motivational goals, and also support the four values for pro-environmental behavior framework, which posits that environmentally friendly behavior can result from a combination of self-concern, concern for others, affective comfort, and environmental sustainability (Schwartz, 1994; Steg and De Groot, 2019).

The findings of this study suggest that value orientations rooted in pro-environmental engagement do not exist as discrete categories but instead evolve dynamically in response to participants' experiences. Within the SV group, initial self-centered motivations, such as curiosity, the need to learn, and the desire to expand personal capabilities, developed into broader reflections on the environmental impact of daily behaviors. In contrast, for the SJ group, feelings of comfort, acceptance, and usefulness within the community formed the basis for a strengthened commitment to ongoing participation in meaningful activities. Therefore, egoistic and hedonistic values in this context do not function as opposites to altruistic and biospheric values; rather, they may serve as entry points for the development of social and ecological concern. This interpretation is consistent with Schwartz's (1994) value framework, which conceptualizes values as interconnected motivational goals, and with the approach of Steg and De Groot (2019), which demonstrates that pro-environmental behavior can be motivated by a combination of self-concern, positive affect, concern for others, and concern for nature.

The development of pro-environmental behavior in both participants emerges as a gradual process, progressing from personal experience to a more reflective and ethical commitment. Initially, their involvement stemmed from motives closely associated with individual needs, such as exploration, the

pursuit of meaningful experiences, or the search for an appropriate social environment. Through direct participation in community activities, interactions with other members, and concrete encounters with environmental issues, these experiences acquired greater significance. At this stage, eco-friendly actions are no longer perceived solely as organizational tasks, but as integral to how participants define their relationships with others and with nature. These findings support the perspective that pro-environmental behavior cannot be sufficiently explained by knowledge or attitudes alone, but must be understood as the outcome of interactions among values, emotions, direct experiences, and social context (Newell *et al.*, 2014; Steg, 2023). Although the trajectories of the two participants differ in form, both illustrate that repeated and meaningful engagement can expand an individual's orientation toward social and ecological responsibility.

The findings of this study indicate that experiences of involvement in environmental communities vary, even within the same organizational context. Participants SV and SJ illustrated that similar activities may be interpreted differently, depending on initial orientation, psychological needs, the quality of social relationships, and formative personal experiences. Within the Social Construction of Meaning (SCM) framework, these differences are significant because they show that meaning is not inherently attached to activities but is shaped through ongoing personal interpretation. Therefore, pro-environmental behavior in this study is best understood as the outcome of a personal, relational, and gradual process of meaning-making. Efforts to foster environmental commitment should be approached not only from an educational perspective but also by providing direct experiences, fostering a sense of community belonging, and creating opportunities for individuals to recognize that their involvement benefits others and the environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that environmental engagement among Seasoldier Surabaya members develops through a gradual personal and relational process. Both participants initially joined environmental activities to meet personal needs, including learning, gaining new experiences, completing tasks, and developing themselves. At this stage, ecological concern did not serve as their primary motive. Over time, direct participation in mangrove planting, beach cleanups, and community interactions deepened their understanding of the meaning and importance of these activities.

The findings also show that participants' value orientations changed over time. At first, self-oriented motives were reinforced by positive emotions, a sense of belonging, and supportive social relationships within the community. These experiences later developed into a broader concern for other people and the environment. Pro-environmental behavior, therefore, emerged not as a fixed attitude but as the outcome of meaning-making shaped by direct experience, personal reflection, and social engagement.

A central finding is that Seasoldier Surabaya functions not only as a platform for environmental action but also as a psychological space that provides acceptance, self-validation, and social support. The community's egalitarian and supportive climate helped sustain participants' engagement in environmental initiatives. These results suggest that environmental commitment grows not only through education or campaigns, but also through meaningful shared experiences and a strong sense of belonging.

Theoretically, this study suggests that the four value orientations in pro-environmental behavior are better understood as interrelated and evolving processes than as separate categories. Practically, the findings suggest that environmental communities can sustain member engagement more effectively when they combine ecological action with an inclusive and supportive organizational culture. Because this study involved only two

participants, the findings remain idiographic and context-specific. Future research should extend this work by including more diverse participants or by using longitudinal designs to examine how environmental engagement develops over time.

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