

Ecological Sin and Its Impact on Environmental Crisis: A Case Study of Landslides and Floods in Kali Village, Minahasa

Dosa Ekologis dan Dampaknya terhadap Krisis Lingkungan: Studi Kasus Tanah longsong dan Banjir di desa Kali Minahasa

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How to Cite: Riedel Christian Gosal. (2025). Dosa Ekologis dan Dampaknya terhadap Krisis Lingkungan: Studi Kasus Tanah longsong dan Banjir di desa Kali Minahasa doi: 10.36526/js.v3i2. 6136

Received : 17-08-2025

Revised : 07-09-2025

Accepted: 22-10-2025

Keywords:

Ecological Sin,
Environmental Crisis,
Landslides,
Flood,
Kali Village

Abstract

This study investigates the interconnection between ecological sin and environmental crisis in Kali Village, Minahasa, where recurring landslides and flooding are symptoms of deeper moral, spiritual, and structural failures. Despite the growing environmental degradation driven by deforestation, unsustainable land conversion, and waste mismanagement, community and ecclesial awareness of ecological responsibility remains limited. Drawing on qualitative case study methods, the research employed in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, field observations, and document analysis with 30 participants, including church leaders, congregants, local residents, and environmental activists. Thematic analysis revealed that environmental destruction is not merely a technical issue but a manifestation of extractive capitalism, weak local governance, and disconnection between Christian doctrine and ecological practice. While the Church holds significant moral authority, its response has largely been charitable and reactive, failing to address systemic injustices or integrate ecological sin into theological teaching. Many congregants perceive environmental harm as an economic necessity rather than a spiritual transgression, reflecting their fragmented understanding of stewardship. The study further identifies a critical gap between the church's potential as a transformative agent and its current inaction, particularly in advocating policy change or empowering communities through ecological education. The findings underscore that ecological degradation is inseparable from social injustice, where vulnerable groups bear the brunt of decisions made by external actors and indifferent institutions. The research concludes that a theological reframing is urgently needed one that redefines the church's mission as intrinsically ecological. To be credible, the church must move beyond symbolic stewardship and embrace a prophetic and participatory role in environmental restoration, grounding its mission in justice, accountability, and creation care.

INTRODUCTION

Ecological disasters are no longer merely technical or environmental issues; they reflect profound moral and spiritual crises in humanity's relationship with nature. Amid the widespread exploitation of natural resources, Kali Village in Minahasa Regency has become an area increasingly vulnerable to ecological degradation due to deforestation, changes in land use, insufficient public awareness of the harmful effects of waste, and unsustainable economic expansion. The recurring phenomena of landslides and excessive water discharge during rainy seasons are not solely caused by natural factors but are primarily triggered by human actions that disregard ecological balance.

Environmental degradation in Kali Village has reached an alarming stage, marked by the loss of forest cover due to deforestation and illegal encroachment for agricultural and residential

purposes (Harianto et al., 2022; Mukti, 2023; Mutolib et al., 2019; Yamani et al., 2025). While often driven by economic necessity, these activities are frequently carried out without consideration of their long-term impacts on soil stability and hydrological systems. Excessive consumption patterns and extractive capitalism further exacerbate this situation, as highlighted by Tampubolon et al., (2022), who demonstrate how global economic systems drive local exploitation without regard for ecological fragility. Local communities, particularly farmers, women, and children, bear a brunt of disasters that are preventable in many ways (Amalia et al., 2019). Paradoxically, awareness of ecological responsibility remains strikingly low both at the individual level and within religious communities. Yet, as Kusuma et al., (2023) emphasize, religious perspectives hold significant potential in shaping collective consciousness toward environmental stewardship. This is where spirituality and ethics become essential, not only as reflections of faith but also as foundations for tangible action in preserving creation.

Within the framework of Christian theology, environmental destruction cannot be separated from the concept of sin, particularly ecological sin, which is understood as a violation of humanity's divine calling to be stewards of creation (Putra & Keluanan, 2022). They underscored that the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 has ongoing ecological consequences that persist to this day. Nevertheless, the understanding of ecological sin remains largely confined to academic discourse and is rarely internalized in the daily lives of congregations. Sarimbangun & Talumepa, (2025) called for the church to take an active role in responding to ecological crises, while Manguju, (2022) stressed the need to cultivate awareness of humans as being spiritually and ecologically interconnected with nature. Unfortunately, there remains a scarcity of systematic efforts to link theology, ethics, and disaster mitigation at the local level. Although churches hold great potential as agents of change, they often remain trapped in pastoral narratives that fail to address structural issues, such as extractive capitalism Tampubolon et al., (2022) or ecological injustice. This limitation is compounded by the lack of pastoral strategies that integrate ecotheology into teaching and ministries (Pangihutan & Jura, 2022; Potts, 2023; Runtuwene, 2025). As a result, congregants often view nature as a resource to be exploited, rather than a sacred creation to be protected.

Several studies have explored the legal and policy aspects of natural resource management (Manik & Rambe, 2024), and the ecological and social impacts of palm oil plantation expansion (Amalia et al., 2019). Marlianingrum et al., (2021) have developed a socio-ecological systems approach to understand mangrove dynamics, while Amalia examine the social and ecological dimensions of land-use change. On the other hand, research on ecological awareness from religious perspectives is also emerging, such as the works of Arauf, (2021); Hasan, (2022) in Islamic thought and Sadowski, (2025); and Watling, (2008) in Christian contexts. However, most of these studies adopted a macro-level perspective or were conducted outside the context of indigenous and rural communities in Indonesia. In-depth research on ecological sin within the context of local disasters, such as landslides and floods, is still limited, especially in studies that integrate theological reflection, Christian ethics, and on-the-ground ecological realities at the community level. Although Wanget et al. (2024) suggested that pastoral counseling strategies can bridge faith and environmental action, no study has specifically examined extractive capitalism through the lens of ecological sin within local church contexts (Potts, 2023). These gaps highlight the need for a holistic approach that connects economic structure, spiritual awareness, and ecological responsibility.

Although churches have initiated environmental programs, as shown by Gosal et al., (2023) in their study of GMIM congregants, a significant gap remains between doctrinal understanding and real-life practice. Previous research has tended to focus on purely theological aspects or technical environmental analyses, rarely integrating both in a critical, context-specific manner. To date, no study has thoroughly explored how the concept of ecological sin can serve as an ethical foundation for reflecting environmental destruction in Kali Village, especially in relation to economic structures and social vulnerability. Furthermore, there is a lack of pastoral strategies grounded in empirical findings on congregants' awareness of ecological responsibility. This gap becomes even more critical

as disasters recur, while the church's response remains largely reactive and charitable, rather than preventive and transformative. Therefore, there is a pressing need for research that bridges theology, ethics, and lived ecological realities in a contextual manner. This study seeks to fill this gap through an interdisciplinary approach that is deeply rooted in local reality.

What distinguishes this research is its contextual methodology, which integrates ecological theology, Christian ethics, and socio-ecological analysis within a real-life disaster setting. Unlike previous studies, which tend to be theoretical or broad in scope, this study treats Kali Village as a living laboratory to understand how ecological sin operates within the social, economic, and spiritual fabric of the community. The innovation lies in the integration of the concept of ecological sin with analyses of extractive capitalism and social vulnerability, which is rarely addressed in the Indonesian theological literature. Moreover, this study does not merely offer critique; it also proposes concrete pastoral strategies that churches can adopt as stewardship expressions. A participatory approach, engaging congregants in faith reflection and environmental action, is central to this research, setting it apart from conventional theological studies. Thus, this work aims not only to deepen understanding but also to become a tool for community transformation. Through this novelty, this study has the potential to serve as a model for other churches in disaster-prone regions.

The purpose of this research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relationship between ecological stress and the environmental crisis in Kali Village, Minahasa, particularly in recurring cases of landslides and floods. It explores how human actions that harm the environment can be understood as ethical and spiritual transgressions within the framework of Christian faith. Additionally, this study aims to identify the primary factors contributing to ecological degradation, including the role of extractive capitalism, excessive consumption patterns, and weak local regulations. Special attention is given to the impact of disasters on vulnerable groups, such as farmers, women, and children, who are most directly affected. The research also intends to assess the level of awareness and understanding among church congregants regarding ecological sin and stewardship responsibilities. Through interviews and participatory observations, the researcher aims to explore how Christian ethical values can be practically applied to environmental protection. These findings are expected to inform the development of pastoral programs that respond effectively to ecological crises. Overall, this study seeks to strengthen the church's role as an agent of ecological restoration and social justice during an increasingly threatening environmental crisis.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to explore the relationship between ecological sin and environmental crises in Kali Village, Minahasa. This method was chosen for its ability to uncover the meanings, lived experiences, and perceptions of the participants within their unique social and spiritual contexts. An exploratory design was adopted to open space for critical reflection on the church's role in responding to ecological crises, particularly in shaping congregants' awareness of their stewardship responsibilities toward creation. The research site was purposively selected in Kali Village, which has become the epicenter of recurring landslides and high-volume water runoff due to deforestation and changes in land use. The location was chosen based on its high ecological vulnerability and predominance of a Christian community, positioning the church as a central actor in local social and spiritual life. Through this approach, the researcher sought to understand how economic structures, religious beliefs, and environmental degradation intersect in a specific local context. The case study methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of complex, context-bound phenomena that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods. This research design aims to generate findings that are contextually grounded, rich in meaning, and theologically and socially relevant.

The research population included various key groups with direct or indirect involvement in environmental and religious issues in the village. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants who possessed deep insight into the research topic. Religious leaders and church pastors

were included because of their spiritual authority to teach and promote eco-theological values within the congregation. Church members and local residents, particularly those most vulnerable to ecological disasters, were also engaged to ensure that their voices and experiences were represented. In addition, environmental activists and ecological advocates were involved as alternative knowledge holders, who often proposed community-based conservation strategies. Informants were selected progressively, with careful attention paid to diversity in perspectives, roles, and life experiences. This iterative process ensured that the collected data reflected the social and spiritual complexity of community responses to environmental crises. By involving multiple stakeholders, this study strives to construct a balanced, nuanced, and comprehensive understanding of local reality.

The data were collected using a combination of complementary qualitative techniques to ensure richness, depth, and validity. In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with approximately 30 participants, including religious figures, congregants, affected community members, and environmental advocates. These conversations focused on the participants' understanding of ecological sin, moral responsibility, and the church's role in environmental protection. Field observations were conducted intensively to assess the physical state of the environment, such as deforested hillsides, polluted waterways, and landslide scars—visible evidence of ecosystem degradation. Systematic field notes were maintained to document visual observations and relevant social interactions. The documentary analysis included church publications, disaster reports, local environmental policies, and scholarly literature on eco-theology and Christian ethics. This multi-method approach enabled the researcher to gather data across the spiritual, social, ecological, and institutional dimensions. By integrating multiple sources and techniques, this study establishes a robust foundation for thorough and insightful analysis.

Data analysis was conducted systematically using thematic analysis to identify the patterns, meanings, and relationships within the collected data. The process began with transcribing interviews and performing initial coding to categorize data according to key themes, such as ecological awareness, the concept of sin, and the church's role. These emerging themes were further refined through internal discussions and critical reflections on field data. Narrative analysis was applied to understand the life stories and personal experiences of informants, particularly how they interpreted faith in the face of ecological disasters. To enhance credibility, data triangulation was employed by comparing the findings from the interviews, observations, and written documents. This cross-verification helped minimize researcher bias and strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings. Based on the analysis, a contextual pastoral framework was developed, rooted in Christian ethics and responsive to the lived realities of the Kali Village community. The proposed framework was designed to guide the church in embracing a transformative and sustainable ecological mission.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Environmental Degradation as a Consequence of Exploitative Practices and Weak Local Governance

Kali Village is experiencing severe ecological degradation, marked by deforested hills, soil erosion, river sedimentation, and frequent landslides, including within residential areas. Paradoxically, the main road leading to the village office, which is highly prone to landslides, has become a dumping site for household waste. This is not solely due to public negligence but primarily because of the absence of adequate waste management infrastructure. The village government has only issued verbal instructions against dumping waste in the area without providing concrete solutions, such as building a proper waste disposal site (TPS) or launching environmental education programs. Furthermore, the conversion of forested land into agricultural plots on steep slopes is carried out intensively without ecological consideration, and local communities have never been trained in environmentally sustainable farming practices. These exploitative practices are

exacerbated by illegal logging involving external actors, who take advantage of weak supervision and overlapping permits. The findings indicate that environmental damage in Kali Village is not merely the result of individual actions but also a consequence of failed local governance in integrating ecological protection with economic development.

2. Limited Understanding of Ecological Sin Among Church Congregants and Leaders

Although the church doctrinally teaches human responsibility as a steward of creation (Genesis 2:15), the concept of ecological sin remains largely unfamiliar to most congregants. Sin is narrowly understood as personal moral transgressionssuch as lying, adultery, or skipping worship, rather than as a consequence of harming the natural world. During interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), one congregant stated, 'Cutting down trees is an economic issue, not a sin,' highlighting the significant gap between theological teaching and everyday reality. Environmental issues are rarely addressed in sermons, liturgies, or religious education, leaving the doctrine of stewardship an unactualized ideal. Even when disasters such as floods and landslides occur, the church tends to respond in a charitable manner, providing logistical aidrather than engaging in reflective or preventive action. Pastors admit that the church remains focused on spiritual salvation, and is not yet prepared to discuss environmental destruction as a manifestation of collective sin. As a result, ecological awareness among congregants remains low and environmentally destructive actions are not perceived as having moral or spiritual implications.

3. The Church's Unfulfilled Role as an Agent of Change: Between Potential and Limitations

The church in Kali Village holds significant potential as a social and spiritual agent of change; however, its role in addressing environmental issues remains highly limited. To date, there are no systematic environmental programs, such as community tree-planting initiatives, eco-congregant groups, or liturgical services, that include repentance for ecological harm. Congregants, particularly the younger generation, expressed disappointment with the church's silence during the ecological crisis. In an FGD, one member remarked, 'The church speaks of love, but remains silent when forests are destroyed and waste is dumped indiscriminately. How can this love be real?' Environmental activists have also criticized the church's inaction, arguing that its silence is not neutral but rather a form of passive complicity in environmental exploitation. Some pastors admit that they fear being perceived as interfering in political matters if they speak about land grabbing or local policy decisions. At the same time, there is a clear dissonance between teaching and practice; for instance, a pastor who preaches stewardship yet supports clearing forested hillside land to expand the church's garden for income generation. Economic pressures, at both the individual and institutional levels, frequently override ecological commitments. Nevertheless, there are emerging signs of critical reflection among younger church leaders who are beginning to question whether the church should take on a prophetic role on behalf of suffering creation.

Discussion

1. Environmental Degradation as a Consequence of Exploitative Practices and Weak Local Governance

Environmental degradation in Kali Village cannot be understood merely as a natural phenomenon but as the outcome of systematic exploitation and fragile local governance. As Tampubolon and Purba (2022) have shown, extractive capitalism often enters rural areas through quiet collaboration between external actors and weak local authorities. In this context, illegal logging is not simply an individual act but part of an unregulated economic ecosystem where short-term profit outweighs long-term sustainability. Despite its formal authority, the village government has failed to act as a guardian of the environment due to limited resources, poor oversight, and a lack of political courage. The irony is evident when landslide-damaged roads are used as dumping sites not because the community lacks concern but because no viable alternatives have been provided. As Manik and Rambe (2024) emphasize, environmental policies that are not implemented participatorily tend to fail because communities are given prohibitions without practical solutions. This situation reflects a form of environmental injustice, in which local people bear the risks of exclusionary policies. Thus,

environmental damage in Kali Village is not merely an ecological issue but a matter of justice, participation, and collective responsibility.

The fact that forest conversion occurs without training in environmentally sustainable farming reveals a failure of ecological education by local authorities. Communities do not resist change; however, they are denied access to the knowledge and technology required for sustainable agriculture. As Amalia et al. (2019) observe, deforestation is often driven by economic necessity but worsened by the absence of institutional support. However, according to (Mukti, 2023), land-use change can be managed wisely when accompanied by ecological education and incentives. However, there are no training programs, agricultural extension services, or rewards for forest conservation in Kali Village. Consequently, the community is trapped in a cycle of degradation: clearing land landslides disaster clearing new land landslides. This shows that environmental governance is not only about regulation but also about capacity building and empowerment. Without ecologically empowering communities, every ban only adds to the moral burden without offering a way out.

Weak supervision and overlapping permits create space for exploitation by outside actors, who often have no emotional or moral connection to the area. The presence of entrepreneurs from outside the region cutting trees en masse reflects the extractivist dynamics that have long been criticized in the academic literature. Sarimbangun and Talumepa (2025) demonstrate that in many rural cases, external actors exploit natural resources without social accountability. Local communities become passive observers as profits are extracted from their land. From a theological perspective, this is not only a violation of nature but also of the biblical principle of social justice. The church, as a community of faith, should be capable of challenging such structures—not only through prayer but also through advocacy. However, in reality, the church rarely engages with such structural issues. Therefore, environmental protection cannot be left solely to individuals; it requires systemic transformation involving the government, society, and religious institutions.

The use of landslide-prone roads as waste disposal sites reveals how the environmental crisis has blurred the line between public safety and daily survival in the Philippines. People do not dump waste there out of indifference, but because no other options exist. This condition reflects what is known as ecological marginalization, where vulnerable groups are forced into unsustainable choices to survive. As Marlianingrum et al. (2021) show, coastal and mountain communities often face similar dilemmas between preserving ecosystems and meeting basic needs. Instead of offering solutions, the village government worsens the situation by issuing warnings without taking concrete action. Such an approach creates a cycle of dependency and frustration, wherein people feel judged without being supported. From an ethical standpoint, this reveals a failure in the distribution of ecological responsibilities. If the entire burden is placed on ordinary citizens, the system is neither fair nor sustainable.

Environmental damage in Kali Village shows that ecology and economy cannot be separated in a critical analysis. Actions such as opening new farmland or cutting trees can no longer be seen as free choices but as responses to structural pressures. Extractive capitalism, as critiqued by Tampubolon and Purba (2022), creates conditions where nature is exploited not because of ignorance but because of market logic that dictates survival. Local communities do not reject development; they reject development that destroys their homes and livelihoods. In this context, the village government should act as a mediator between development and conservation, rather than as a passive observer or silent accomplice. However, in practice, local governance often reinforces exploitation. Therefore, environmental protection must begin with inclusive, participatory, and transparent governance reforms. Without this, every conservation effort will remain temporary and fail to address the root causes.

These findings remind us that the ecological crisis is not merely technical but deeply moral and political. Environmental destruction in Kali Village reflects structural injustice that sacrifices both nature and people for the benefit of a select few. As Kusuma et al., (2023) assert, religious

approaches hold great potential for shaping collective awareness of environmental protection. However, this potential can only be realized if churches and religious institutions dare to step out of their comfort zones and engage with structural issues in society. The church cannot merely preach stewardship in sermons; it must walk alongside the community in advocating for the right to a healthy environment. Therefore, environmental governance should be viewed as a form of public stewardship. If the church truly desires to be an agent of change, it must expand its calling from the worship space to the public sphere, and from personal spirituality to social justice.

2. Limited Understanding of Ecological Sin Among Congregants and Church Leaders

The limited understanding of ecological sin among congregants reveals a significant gap between theological doctrine and everyday practice. Although the Bible clearly calls humanity to “work and take care of” the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15), many believers still separate faith from ecological responsibility. Sin is understood in individualistic and moralistic terms, without addressing the structural and ecological dimensions of human violations against creation. Putra and Keluanan (2022) argue that the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 brought not only spiritual consequences but also ecological ones; however, this insight has not been internalized in church teaching. Consequently, harming nature is not seen as a sin but as a morally neutral economic activity. In Kali Village, the statement “cutting trees is about economics, not sin” reflects the fragmentation between faith and lived reality. As a teaching community, the church bears great responsibility for bridging this gap. Without the integration of theology and ecology, faith risks becoming a form of spiritualization detached from the real world.

The church tends to respond to disasters charitably rather than reflectively, indicating the dominance of the rescue paradigm over restoration. Post-flood or post-landslide aid is important, but it does not address the root causes of the crisis. Wanget et al., (2024) show that churches’ responses to environmental issues are often reactive and unsustainable. In Kali Village, there are no liturgies asking forgiveness for environmental harm or sermons linking disasters to collective moral failure. This shows that the church is not yet ready to enter uncomfortable territory: that disasters may be consequences of communal sin. As Manguju (2022) states, the church must cultivate awareness of humans’ spiritual and ecological interconnectedness with nature. However, as long as the church focuses only on saving souls and ignores the restoration of creation, its role will remain limited. Ecological sin must not be taught as an academic concept but as a concrete call to repent and act.

The limited grasp of ecological sin also reflects the dominance of anthropocentric theology in church teaching. In many sermons, humans remain the center of salvation history, while nature is seen merely as a backdrop or resource. Arauf, (2021) critique that such an approach has neglected the ecotheological dimension of Christian faith. The Bible does not teach domination over nature but stewardship, which includes responsibility, humility, and care. However, in practice, stewardship is often reduced to a symbolic duty rather than real action. In Kali Village, there are no church programs that teach sustainable farming or faith-based waste management. Consequently, congregants fail to see the link between faith and the environment. The church must expand its hermeneutics from the text to the soil, from doctrine to the village. Only then can ecological sin become a part of deep faith reflection.

This situation highlights the need for contextual and ecological theological education. Despite their spiritual authority, pastors are often untrained in ecotheology or environmental ethics. They are taught soteriology, eschatology, and homiletics, but rarely about ecological responsibility in the light of Scripture. Thomson, (2025) stressed the importance of theological education grounded in ecological spirituality so that church leaders can critically interpret the signs of the times. In Kali Village, some pastors admit that they are not prepared to discuss environmental destruction as a collective sin. This is not due to indifference but a lack of theological training and support. Therefore, the church must reform its theological curriculum at both the seminary and congregational levels. Without this, future leaders will repeat the same pattern: speaking of love while remaining silent in the face of the ecological crisis.

The alienation of the concept of ecological sin is further reinforced by consumer culture, which is deeply embedded in congregational life. Wasteful lifestyles, indiscriminate waste disposal, and natural resource exploitation are rarely associated with faith. However, as Sihura, (2022) argues, ecology and economy cannot be separated in Christian ethics. The church must boldly challenge the destructive consumer culture not only through sermons but also through communal practices such as sharing economies, waste banks, or communal organic farming. In Kali Village, the church could pioneer a waste bank or an organic farming group to support the program. However, as long as the church sees economics as a worldly matter, it will miss the opportunity to be a transformative agent. Ecological sin is not only about cutting trees but also about lifestyle, consumption patterns, and structural injustice.

This discussion leads to a crucial conclusion: the church must undergo radical theological reframing. From a church focused only on saving souls to one that restores creation. From a community centered on worship to one that lives in stewardship. From a place that only teaches personal sin to a space that addresses structural and ecological sin. As Sarimbangun and Talumepa (2025) urge, the church's mission cannot be separated from the ecological crises. If the church truly believes that "creation groans and suffers" (Romans 8:22), it must stand with the suffering Earth. In Kali Village, this means that the church must boldly teach that harming nature is a sin and that stewardship is worship. Only then can faith remain relevant in the face of an increasingly visible crisis.

3. The Church's Unfulfilled Role as an Agent of Change: Between Potential and Limitations

The church in Kali Village holds great potential as an agent of change; however, this potential remains unrealized in actual programs or actions. Despite being a spiritual and social center, the church lacks systematic environmental initiatives such as tree planting, eco-congregational groups, or ecological liturgies. Its presence in the ecological crisis remains reactive and charitable rather than preventive or transformative. Gosal et al. (2023) found that many church members in other regions share similar disappointment over the church's silence on environmental issues. In FGDs, young members expressed that the church speaks of love yet remains silent when forests are destroyed. This reveals a crisis of credibility, that is, the gap between teaching and practice. If the church cannot model care for creation, how can it model love for creation?

The critique from environmental activists that the church's silence is not neutrality but passive complicity is a serious warning that must be reflected upon by it. In prophetic theology, silence in the face of injustice is not neutrality but moral failure. The church, as the body of Christ, is called to speak for the weak, including the suffering earth. However, many pastors admit that they fear being seen as entering politics if they speak about land grabbing or village policies. However, as Wanget et al. (2024) affirmed, pastoral counseling cannot focus only on the individual; it must address structural issues. The church does not need to become a political party, but it must become a prophetic voice that challenges injustice. In Kali Village, the church can serve as a mediator between the community and the government not as an opponent, but as a peacemaker advocating for ecological justice.

The dissonance between teaching and practice, for instance, a pastor who preaches stewardship but supports clearing land for the church's garden, reveals an internal conflict within the faith community. Such actions are not only hypocritical but also damage the church's credibility among its congregants. Economic pressure at both the individual and institutional levels often overrides ecological commitment. However, if the church uses economic reasons to harm nature, it has replaced God with money. As Sihura (2022) notes, ecology and the economy must be viewed as two sides of the same Christian ethical coin. The church cannot ask its members to repent while engaging in exploitation. In this context, the Church must conduct an ecological audit of all its activities, including income sources and land use.

Nevertheless, there are seeds of hope in the form of critical questions from younger church leaders who are beginning to reflect on the church's prophetic role on Earth. They ask: If the church does not speak for the weak, then for whom are we testifying? Such questions mark the beginning

of this theological transformation. Manguju (2022) emphasizes the importance of cultivating awareness of humans as spiritual-ecological beings capable of seeing the connection between faith and nature. The church does not need perfect theology to act it can start small by planting trees, creating a waste bank, or holding outdoor worship services. What matters is the beginning, and beginning in the name of faith. In Kali Village, the church can become an inclusive center for the ecological movement, involving farmers, women, and children.

The church's role as an agent of change cannot be measured only by membership numbers but by its impact on the environment and society. If the church focuses only on numerical growth, it will lose its greater mission: the restoration of creation (Colossians 1:20). The church must dare to step beyond the four walls of its building and enter the wounded reality of the community. In Kali Village, the church can lead ecological education, policy advocacy, and ecosystem restoration. However, this requires courage, vision, and transformative leadership. Without it, the church remains spiritually relevant but socially ineffective.

This discussion leads to a clear calling: the church must become an eco-ecclesia—a faith community that lives in stewardship, speaks for the Earth, and acts for justice. As Kurniawaty et al. (2024) have said, creation theology must become the foundation of the church's entire mission. The church is not only an agent of salvation but also of restoration. In Kali Village, this means that the church must take bold, concrete steps: design ecological programs, form action groups, and speak out for justice. Only then can the church truly be salt and light in the midst of an ever-deepening crisis of faith.

CONCLUSION

The ecological crisis in Kali Village is not merely a consequence of natural forces but the result of deeply rooted exploitative practices and failed local governance. Economic pressures, extractive capitalism, and weak institutional oversight have created conditions in which environmental degradation is both inevitable and normalized. Communities are caught in a cycle of survival that prioritizes immediate needs over long-term sustainability, often without access to alternatives or ecological education. Despite its moral and spiritual authority, the Church has largely remained silent or reactive, limiting its role to charitable responses rather than transformative action. This silence reflects a broader theological gap, where stewardship is taught but not lived, and where ecological sin remains an abstract idea rather than a communal reality. Without addressing the structural roots of environmental harm, including land misuse and unequal power dynamics, conservation efforts will remain superficial. The findings demonstrate that ecological justice cannot be separated from social and economic justice, especially in vulnerable rural communities such as this one. Therefore, meaningful change requires a shift from individual blame to collective responsibility involving the government, civil society, and religious institutions.

A renewed theological vision is urgently needed, one that redefines the church's mission as integral to healing creation. The church must move beyond anthropocentric doctrines and embrace an eco-ecclesial identity, grounded in justice, advocacy, and embodied stewardship. This includes integrating ecological ethics into preaching, liturgy, education, and institutional practices, starting with self-examination of their economic choices. By becoming a prophetic voice, the Church can challenge environmental injustice and accompany communities in sustainable livelihoods. Small, context-based actions, such as waste banks, tree planting, or land restoration projects, can become acts of worship and resistance. The emerging awareness among younger church leaders offers hope for a transformative shift in ecclesiastical consciousness. Ultimately, the gospel's call to love one's neighbor and care for creation must be lived as one inseparable mission. In Kali Village and beyond, the church's credibility depends not only on its doctrines but also on its willingness to stand with the suffering earth.

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