



## The Role of Ecopreneurship on Women's Empowerment in Surabaya

Wininatin Khamimah<sup>1\*</sup>, Dewi Urip Wahyuni<sup>2</sup>, Eka Yuliati<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Indonesia (STIESIA), Indonesia

Corresponding Author e-mail: [wininatinkhamimah@stiesia.ac.id](mailto:wininatinkhamimah@stiesia.ac.id)

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**Abstract:** *Ecopreneurship embodies the capacity to identify everyday community challenges and transform them into viable business opportunities that simultaneously address environmental issues. The spirit of ecopreneurship aligns with efforts to empower women, particularly housewives. Those who previously lacked independent income now gain greater empowerment through ecopreneurship. This study aims to: 1) Analyze the role of ecopreneurship in enhancing women's economic and social independence in Surabaya; 2) Formulate ecopreneurship as a policy recommendation for the Surabaya City Government in green economy-based empowerment programs. This research adopts a qualitative approach, with the primary method being a literature review, without requiring primary data collection in the field. All data sources are secondary, encompassing various materials related to the research object, such as academic textbooks, peer-reviewed scientific journals, national and international seminar papers, official government reports, and other credible publications. This study finds that in the Surabaya context, ecopreneurship is highly relevant for women through the utilization of local potentials, such as organic waste processing or upcycled products, to support the city's green economy. Ecopreneurship proves effective in enhancing women's economic and social independence in Surabaya. Ecopreneurship can also serve as a policy recommendation for the Surabaya City Government in green economy-based empowerment programs.*

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## Introduction

Rapid urbanization and changing consumption patterns have resulted in a continuous increase in waste generation, particularly plastic waste, which poses significant environmental challenges when not properly managed. Along with population growth and economic expansion, urban societies generate increasingly diverse volumes and types of waste as a consequence of lifestyle changes and rising demand for goods and services (Khamimah, 2021). Inadequate waste management systems may lead to severe environmental degradation and public health risks. Recognizing these challenges, the Indonesian government has introduced regulatory frameworks, including Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2018 on Marine Waste Management and Presidential Regulation No. 97 of 2017 concerning the National Policy and Strategy for Household Waste Management, which aim to achieve a 30% reduction and 70% waste handling target by 2025.

Surabaya, the capital city of East Java Province and the second-largest city in Indonesia, represents a critical urban context for examining waste-related environmental issues. With a population of approximately 3.02 million people and a population density of 8,995 people per square kilometer, Surabaya functions as a major center of trade, industry, and education in Eastern Indonesia (BPS Surabaya, 2024). These urban characteristics contribute to substantial household and plastic waste generation. To address this issue, the Surabaya City Government has institutionalized community-based waste management initiatives, such as waste banks and environmental cadres at the neighborhood level. While these initiatives promote waste sorting and recycling practices, their implementation often remains focused on waste collection and disposal, with limited emphasis on transforming waste into sustainable economic resources.

Waste, both organic and inorganic, possesses considerable potential to be converted into value-added products through innovative and creative

processes. When waste is processed into recycled goods or ecocrafts, environmental pollution can be reduced while simultaneously generating economic benefits. In this context, ecopreneurship emerges as a form of entrepreneurship that integrates environmental sustainability principles into business activities. Unlike conventional entrepreneurship, which primarily emphasizes profit maximization, ecopreneurship adopts a triple bottom line approach that balances economic performance, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility (Dixon & Clifford, 2006). Ecopreneurship is characterized by sustainability-oriented business practices, eco-innovation, and ecological commitment, enabling entrepreneurs to transform environmental challenges into viable economic opportunities (Kirkwood & Walton, 2010; Aravik et al., 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, ecopreneurship functions not only as an income-generating activity but also as a mechanism that links environmental problem-solving with broader socioeconomic outcomes. Through entrepreneurial thinking, sustainability development orientation, and ecological behavior such as waste reduction, reuse, and recycling ecopreneurship facilitates the conversion of waste into marketable products while maintaining environmental integrity. As such, ecopreneurship provides a structured pathway through which environmental initiatives can contribute to inclusive economic development.

Within this framework, women's empowerment emerges as a multidimensional outcome of ecopreneurial engagement. Women, particularly housewives in urban settings, often experience limited access to formal employment opportunities while possessing proximity to household waste resources and flexible time availability. Participation in ecopreneurship enhances women's access to productive assets, entrepreneurial skills, income-generating opportunities, and decision-making capacity, thereby strengthening both economic independence and social agency (Rusdianti et al., 2019). Consequently, women are positioned

not merely as beneficiaries of environmental programs but as active economic actors within the green economy.

Despite the growing body of literature addressing waste management, ecopreneurship, and women's empowerment, these themes are predominantly examined as separate domains. Existing studies on waste management largely emphasize technical and environmental aspects, while ecopreneurship research focuses on business performance and sustainability outcomes, and studies on women's empowerment tend to address social or economic dimensions in isolation. As a result, limited research has explicitly positioned ecopreneurship as a bridging mechanism that connects waste-based environmental initiatives with women's empowerment, particularly within metropolitan contexts. Academically, Surabaya offers a relevant analytical setting due to its institutionalized community-based waste management system and urban governance structure, which enables an examination of how ecopreneurship operates within a complex urban environment. Therefore, this study aims to :

1. Analyze the role of ecopreneurship in enhancing women's economic and social empowerment in Surabaya
2. Formulate policy recommendations for the Surabaya City Government in developing green economy-based empowerment programs.

By positioning ecopreneurship as an integrative mechanism linking waste management and women's empowerment, this research contributes to the theoretical development of ecopreneurship literature and provides empirical insights for urban sustainability and gender-responsive policy formulation.

Theoretical framework of the research as follow:

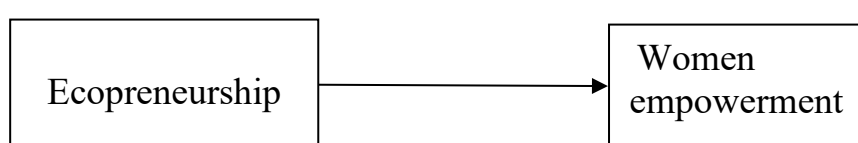


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of research

## Research Methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach, defined as a type of research that does not rely on statistical procedures or numerical calculations to obtain its results. This approach emphasizes in-depth exploration of meaning, logical reasoning processes, and situational definitions within specific contexts, particularly those closely related to the dynamics of everyday community life. This aligns with the view of Abdullah et al. (2014), which highlights the flexibility of qualitative methods in capturing the essence of social phenomena. The primary method used is library research, as the research object the role of ecopreneurship in empowering women in Surabaya requires comprehensive analysis from various written sources to provide a holistic overview without needing primary data collection in the field.

The data used in this research is qualitative, meaning it cannot be measured or quantified using numerical scales but is explored through narrative descriptions and interpretations. All data sources are secondary, encompassing diverse materials related to the research object, such as academic textbooks, peer-reviewed scientific journals, national and international seminar papers, official government reports, and other credible publications. The selection of secondary sources ensures completeness of historical and theoretical information supporting in-depth analysis of entrepreneurship issues and their economic impacts in Indonesia.

In qualitative research, data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory research for direct experiences, systematic observation of phenomena, and extensive library studies. The primary data sources come from archival documents, leading newspaper articles, business and economics magazines, indexed scientific journals, and other recent publications, as outlined by Abdullah et al. (2014). The data processing is carried out in stages, starting from data reduction to filter essential information, data classification based on relevant themes and categories, to data presentation in coherent narrative form that facilitates

interpretation.

The data analysis process in qualitative research is inductive, where patterns and findings emerge from the data itself, and is continuous throughout the research to allow dynamic adjustments. This approach aims to achieve outcomes in the form of deep understanding, development of new concepts, and construction of innovative theories relevant to the research context, as emphasized by Abdullah et al. (2014). Thus, the analysis is not only descriptive but also generative in producing theoretical insights that contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge.

## Result and Discussion

Based on the synthesis of previous studies, ecopreneurship has been consistently identified as a strategic approach to simultaneously address environmental problems and promote women's economic empowerment, particularly in urban contexts. The literature indicates that waste-based ecopreneurial activities contribute to income generation, skill development, and increased environmental awareness among women. Quantitative findings reported in earlier studies show improvements in entrepreneurial knowledge, participation rates, and household income following involvement in green business initiatives, especially when supported by institutional programs. However, these findings are often presented in fragmented forms across studies, making it necessary to consolidate them to better understand overall trends and implications.

**Table 1. Summary of Literature Synthesis on Ecopreneurship and Women's Empowerment**

Study	Context	Main Focus	Key Findings
Widati et al. (2024)	Urban Indonesia	Green SMEs	Ecopreneurship strengthens women-led SMEs and local economies
Sari et al. (2023)	East Java	Waste-based crafts	Women ecopreneurs

			generate social and economic value
Munirah et al. (2024)	Rural Indonesia	Skills training	Increased women's income and market access
Kuntariningsih et al. (2026)	Creative economy	Capacity building	65% increase in entrepreneurial knowledge
Abdullah et al. (2024)	Madura	Technosociopreneurship	Digital platforms expand women's business reach
Maya et al. (2025)	Surabaya	Institutional support	DWP and GOW enhance women's green business sustainability

To address this issue, the reviewed literature was synthesized and summarized to identify key empirical patterns related to the implementation of ecopreneurship, women's participation, and institutional support mechanisms. Overall, the literature indicates that government-backed organizations such as Dharma Wanita Persatuan (DWP), Gabungan Organisasi Wanita (GOW), and PKK play an important role in facilitating training, improving access to resources, and expanding networking opportunities for women engaged in waste-based businesses. Several urban case studies, including those conducted in Surabaya, demonstrate that such institutional support is associated with increased participation of women in environmentally oriented micro- and small-scale enterprises. However, the magnitude of these impacts varies considerably depending on local conditions, program continuity, and participants' capacity to translate training into sustainable business practices.

Despite these positive outcomes, the implementation of ecopreneurship faces notable limitations. Many women-led ecopreneurial initiatives remain small in scale and operate primarily at the household or community level. Limited access to start-up capital, inadequate technological skills, and weak product standardization constrain these enterprises' ability to expand and compete in broader markets. In the context of waste-based ecopreneurship, inconsistent supplies of recyclable materials and insufficient waste-processing infrastructure further restrict production capacity. These structural barriers suggest that ecopreneurship, while promising, cannot function as a standalone solution without complementary economic and institutional reforms.

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of women's businesses also presents significant challenges. While short-term training programs often enhance knowledge and motivation, business sustainability requires continuous innovation, market adaptation, and managerial competence. Several studies highlight that women entrepreneurs frequently experience difficulties in maintaining stable income due to market volatility, limited digital literacy, and restricted access to distribution channels. In urban areas such as Surabaya, competition within the creative and green economy sectors intensifies these challenges, particularly for businesses reliant on locally confined markets. Consequently, women's ecopreneurship often serves as a supplementary source of income rather than a primary livelihood, thereby limiting its overall empowerment potential.

Another critical issue identified in the literature is the risk of greenwashing. Some ecopreneurial initiatives adopt environmental labels or narratives without generating substantial ecological benefits. This risk is amplified when environmental claims are driven more by program compliance or funding requirements than by measurable environmental performance. In the absence of clear indicators and accountability mechanisms, ecopreneurship initiatives may prioritize symbolic environmental actions over substantive waste reduction or resource efficiency. Such practices undermine the credibility of green

entrepreneurship and weaken its contribution to sustainable development goals.

Furthermore, a strong reliance on government programs introduces the risk of institutional dependency. Although organizations such as DWP and GOW provide essential support, excessive dependence on these programs can reduce entrepreneurial autonomy and resilience. When policy priorities shift or program funding declines, women-led ecopreneurial businesses may struggle to survive independently. Therefore, fostering self-reliant business models, strengthening market-oriented skills, and encouraging linkages with the private sector are crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of women's ecopreneurship initiatives.

From an academic perspective, the Surabaya context offers insights that extend beyond its empirical relevance. As a metropolitan city with structured waste management policies and active women's organizations, Surabaya provides a dynamic setting in which to examine the intersection of urban environmental governance, ecopreneurship, and gender empowerment. The city's high level of institutional density enables an analysis of how policy frameworks and organizational support interact with grassroots entrepreneurial practices. This contributes to the literature by moving beyond descriptive accounts of women's participation toward a more critical understanding of the structural enablers and constraints shaping urban green economies.

Overall, the findings suggest that ecopreneurship holds significant potential to link waste management with women's empowerment in urban settings. However, its effectiveness depends on addressing implementation constraints, ensuring business sustainability, mitigating greenwashing risks, and reducing dependency on government programs. These considerations underscore the need for integrated policy and capacity-building approaches that prioritize long-term resilience, genuine environmental impact, and economic independence for women entrepreneurs.

## Conclusion

Ecopreneurship plays a more comprehensive role than conventional entrepreneurship, as it not only generates economic benefits but also addresses environmental and social challenges. In the context of Surabaya, ecopreneurship contributes to enhancing women's economic and social independence by enabling the productive use of waste in environmentally oriented business activities, supported by institutional programs such as Dharma Wanita Persatuan (DWP) and Gabungan Organisasi Wanita (GOW). Surabaya thus represents an important urban setting for examining women-led ecopreneurship within the frameworks of the green economy and the circular economy.

However, the sustainability of women's ecopreneurship remains constrained by limited access to capital, uneven skills development, domestic role burdens, and potential dependence on government support. Therefore, ecopreneurship can be recommended as a policy instrument for the Surabaya City Government in green economy-based empowerment programs, provided that it is strengthened through market-oriented strategies, greater business independence, and environmentally accountable business development.

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