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## Social norms drive conservation intentions in Indonesia’s songbird trade system

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### Abstract

Wildlife trade represents a major driver of biodiversity loss, yet conservation interventions often fail when they do not account for the behavioural and social dynamics underlying resource use in multifunctional landscapes. In Indonesia, the songbird trade is deeply embedded in socio-cultural practices and semi-formal market systems, linking rural bird capture with urban demand and competitive bird-keeping. These dynamics unfold within forest–agriculture mosaics where biodiversity, livelihoods, and land-use practices intersect.

This study examines conservation intention among actors involved in the songbird trade in Central Java using an integrated behavioural framework. A total of 827 respondents were surveyed across six rural forest-adjacent villages and the urban centre of Purwokerto. Structural equation modelling was used to analyse the influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on intentions to stop wild bird capture. To contextualize these relationships, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key actors, including bird catchers, traders, breeders, hobbyists, and competition participants.

Across both rural and urban contexts, subjective norms emerged as the strongest predictor of conservation intention (rural = 0.63; urban = 0.57), while attitudes and perceived behavioural control showed comparatively weaker effects. Qualitative findings indicate that behaviour is shaped by social expectations, reputational dynamics, and systems of collective legitimacy rather than individual evaluation alone. While pro-conservation attitudes and environmental awareness were widespread, these did not consistently translate into behavioural intention, highlighting an attitude-behaviour gap. Perceived behavioural control further reflected structural constraints, particularly among economically dependent actors.

These findings suggest that conservation behaviour in wildlife trade systems is strongly socially embedded and shaped by both normative environments and structural feasibility. Interventions that leverage peer influence, shift social expectations, and improve access to viable alternatives are likely to be more effective than approaches focusing solely on awareness or individual attitudes. More broadly, the results highlight the importance of integrating behavioural insights into the governance of multifunctional socio-ecological systems.

**Keywords:** Behavioural change, conservation behaviour, governance, Indonesia, rural-urban dynamics, social norms, wildlife trade