

## Understanding Sacred Food Behaviours: A Salutogenic Framework for Waste Reduction

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Sacred food waste lies at the intersection of cultural practice, environmental sustainability, and public health. Single-theory approaches have been insufficient to explain this complexity, limiting the development of effective health promotion strategies. This paper addresses this gap by adopting a salutogenic perspective that emphasizes the resources and pathways that promote well-being. **Objective:** To develop a novel, integrated conceptual framework—grounded in the salutogenic model—that explains sacred food waste across multiple levels. By integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Social Practice Theory (SPT), and Habitus, the framework provides a foundation for designing health-promoting interventions. **Methods:** An integrative literature synthesis framed within a salutogenic orientation was conducted. More than 60 studies were systematically reviewed to construct a multi-level framework and generate eight propositions explaining how to foster sustainable sacred food practices by enhancing Sense of Coherence (SOC) and leveraging institutional support as a Generalized Resistance Resource (GRR). **Results:** The framework illustrates how individual intentions (TPB), collective routines (SPT), and embodied dispositions (Habitus) interact. It argues that interventions should be salutogenic by design, enhancing comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness while aligning with spiritual values. Institutional support emerges as a critical GRR capable of reconfiguring practices and cultivating a sustainable environmental habitus. **Conclusion:** This integrated framework shifts the focus from merely “preventing waste” to promoting sustainable, health-enhancing practices. It provides an actionable guide for multi-level interventions that reduce waste while strengthening community health, food security, and spiritual well-being.

**Keywords:** Food Waste, Health Promotion, Salutogenesis, Social Practice Theory, Theory of Planned Behaviour

### INTRODUCTION

The global issue of food waste, where roughly one-third of all food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted, poses a serious threat to environmental sustainability and global food security (FAO, 2021, 2022, 2025). Although research has largely focused on waste generated in households, retail settings, and the hospitality sector, a culturally significant yet frequently overlooked domain is sacred food waste: food prepared for religious offerings,

rituals, and festivals. In many traditions, abundance symbolizes devotion and divine blessing, prompting the preparation of large quantities of food that are not fully consumed. This practice, deeply rooted in cultural and religious values, creates a paradox in which acts of faith inadvertently contribute to environmental degradation and social inequities. At the same time, sacred food rituals provide profound spiritual meaning, foster social cohesion, and strengthen intergenerational continuity, revealing a tension between wasteful material

outcomes and the salutogenic resources that sustain spiritual coherence and community resilience.

Existing research on pro-environmental behaviour has been dominated by individual-centric models, particularly the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which links behaviour to intention shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Although TPB-based studies explain significant variance in dietary and food-related behaviours, substantial unexplained variance remains—especially for deeply embedded or habitual practices (Etim *et al.*, 2025); (Tahir, 2023). In the context of sacred food waste, the issue is not merely a deficit of pro-environmental intention; behaviour is organised through shared rituals, cultural scripts, and embodied routines that are collectively reproduced over time. Practice-oriented research in food and consumption studies demonstrates that eating and wasting are patterned by social practices—bundles of meanings, materials, and competences—rather than by individual choice alone (Ozanne, Ballantine and McMaster, 2022); (Shove, Watson and Pantzar, 2012) (Warde, Welch and Paddock, 2017). This underscores that interventions targeting only individual attitudes are unlikely to transform sacred food practices that are structurally and culturally anchored.

This paper therefore argues for a paradigm shift from a pathogenic orientation—which focuses on deficits and “problems” such as excess waste—to a salutogenic orientation that foregrounds resources and pathways for health creation (Mittelmark *et al.*, 2022). The salutogenic model introduces Sense of Coherence (SOC)—comprising comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness—as a core construct explaining why some individuals and communities remain well under stress (Eriksson, 2016). Sacred food rituals can be understood as potential Generalized Resistance Resources (GRRs): they provide shared narratives, predictable ritual structures, social support, and spiritual meaning that strengthen SOC and help communities cope with uncertainty (Idan, Eriksson and Al-Yagon, 2022). Emerging evidence demonstrates that spirituality and religious life are closely linked to resilience, health-promoting lifestyles, and community capacity to respond to crises (Alinejad *et*

*al.*, 2025); (Howard *et al.*, 2023); (Jakovljevic, 2017); (Setioputro *et al.*, 2024). From this perspective, sacred food practices are not merely sites where waste is produced; they are also ecospiritual spaces in which spiritual coherence, collective identity, and community resilience are cultivated—resources that can be mobilised to reorient rituals toward more sustainable forms.

In order to harness this potential, we develop a novel conceptual framework that situates three powerful theoretical lenses—TPB, Social Practice Theory (SPT), and Bourdieu’s concept of Habitus—within an overarching salutogenic model. TPB illuminates how beliefs and perceived control shape intentions around sacred food preparation and disposal; SPT explains how ritualised routines organise what is cooked, offered, shared, and discarded; and Habitus captures the deeply embodied, historically sedimented dispositions that make certain forms of ritual abundance feel “natural” and spiritually appropriate. Integrating these perspectives within a salutogenic orientation allows us to move from asking, “Why do people continue to waste sacred food?” to “How can sacred food practices be reconfigured so that they strengthen SOC, spiritual coherence, and community resilience while reducing environmental harm?”

This paper makes three key contributions. First, it introduces a salutogenic perspective to the study of food waste, reframing sacred food rituals as both a source of environmental risk and a reservoir of health-promoting resources. Second, it proposes an integrated, multi-level framework that captures the interplay between individual agency, social practices, and environmental habitus in shaping sacred food waste. Third, it provides an actionable guide for health promotion practitioners and policymakers to design culturally sensitive interventions that align environmental sustainability with spiritual well-being, food security, and community health.

## METHODS

### Study design and analytic orientation

This study employs an integrative literature synthesis framed within a salutogenic orientation to develop its conceptual framework. An integrative

approach was selected as it enables the combination of theoretical and empirical work from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and health promotion to address a complex, multi-level phenomenon. Rather than focusing only on risk, deficits, or “problematic” behaviours, the analysis explicitly considers the resources, capacities, and pathways through which sacred food practices can be reoriented toward more sustainable and health-promoting forms. The synthesis involved the systematic identification, critical appraisal, and interpretive integration of relevant studies to construct a novel, salutogenically oriented theoretical model.

### Literature Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and Google Scholar for the period 2000–2025. The search strategy combined terms related to food waste, religion and sacred practice, health promotion, and the three core theoretical lenses. Search strings included combinations of “food waste” or “food loss” with “religion”, “religious”, “sacred”, or “ritual”, as well as “food waste” with “health promotion”, “salutogenesis”, or “Sense of Coherence”. These were complemented by theory-focused searches linking the Theory of Planned Behaviour to food and waste, Social Practice Theory to food, eating, and waste, and Bourdieu’s habitus to food, ritual, and religion.

The initial search yielded just over 300 records. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts for relevance to food waste, religion or sacred practice, and/or one of the three focal theories, 85 articles were retained for full-text review. Through iterative reading, backward and forward citation tracking, and assessment of theoretical saturation, a final corpus of 47 core studies was identified. These studies provided the empirical and conceptual foundation for integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Social Practice Theory (SPT), Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, and the salutogenic model of health—including Sense of Coherence (SOC) and Generalized Resistance Resources (GRRs).

### Conceptual Framework and Propositions

Based on this synthesis, we developed a multi-theoretical framework that integrates TPB, SPT, and Bourdieu’s concept of habitus within an overarching salutogenic model. From this framework, we derive eight key propositions that explain why sacred food waste persists and how it can be transformed through health-promoting interventions.

#### The Role of Individual Intention (Theory of Planned Behaviour)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) posits that behavioural intention is the most direct antecedent of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This intention is shaped by an individual’s attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of sacred food waste, this implies that an individual’s conscious decision-making process is a critical starting point. Accordingly, we formulate the following first proposition:

**Proposition 1:** An individual’s pro-environmental attitude (e.g., “wasting food is wrong”), positive subjective norms (e.g., “my community values conservation”), and high perceived behavioural control (e.g., “I am confident I can reduce waste”) will positively influence their intention to reduce sacred food waste.

However, the literature consistently highlights a substantial gap between such intentions and actual behaviour, particularly in contexts where practices are culturally and spiritually embedded. This well-documented intention-behaviour gap indicates that rational-choice models alone are insufficient for explaining sacred food waste. Accordingly, we introduce a second proposition that recognises the limits of individual intention:

**Proposition 2:** The positive relationship between an individual’s intention to reduce food waste and their actual behaviour is significantly weakened in religiously significant contexts, due to the moderating influence of collective social practices and deeply ingrained cultural dispositions.

#### The Power of Collective Routines (Social Practice Theory)

Social Practice Theory (SPT) offers a powerful lens for understanding why the intention-behaviour gap persists (Shove, Watson and Pantzar, 2012). SPT shifts analytical attention from individual

decision-making to shared social practices, which are constituted by interlocking elements of meanings, materials, and competences. From this perspective, food waste is not an isolated individual act but an outcome of performing a social practice—such as a religious feast—where these elements converge. This leads to our next propositions:

**Proposition 3:** The persistence of sacred food waste is shaped by the routinised entanglement of specific meanings (e.g., abundance signifies divine blessing and social status), materials (e.g., large serving platters, oversized cooking pots), and competences (e.g., skills in bulk cooking rather than portion control) that constitute the social practice of religious feasting.

This understanding has direct implications for intervention design. If behaviour is embedded within and sustained by a practice, then interventions must target the practice itself—not merely the individual performing it. This represents a significant departure from traditional awareness-based approaches.

**Proposition 4:** Interventions that aim to reconfigure the elements of a social practice—for example, by introducing new materials (e.g., smaller or standardised serving utensils) or reframing meanings (e.g., redefining generosity as “ensuring everyone has enough, with nothing left over”)—will be more effective in reducing sacred food waste than interventions targeting individual attitudes alone.

### The Influence of Embodied Dispositions (Habitus)

While SPT explains how practices are structured, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus helps explain why these practices become so deeply ingrained and resistant to change (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus refers to the embodied, often unconscious dispositions acquired through long-term immersion in a particular social environment. This “feel for the game” makes certain actions feel natural, appropriate, and even morally or spiritually required, while alternatives may feel intuitively wrong.

**Proposition 5:** An individual’s environmental habitus—shaped by years of socialisation within a religious community—creates pre-cognitive, embodied dispositions that make waste-generating practices (e.g., preparing

excessive food) feel culturally appropriate and personally authentic, thereby reinforcing their persistence even when individuals hold conscious pro-environmental intentions.

This final layer illuminates the deep-seated, almost automatic nature of these behaviours. Habitus is the mechanism that anchors a social practice within the individual body and sense of self, making change particularly challenging. Consequently, an effective intervention must engage all three levels simultaneously.

**Proposition 6:** Multi-level interventions that concurrently address individual intentions (TPB), reconfigure the elements of social practices (SPT), and cultivate a more sustainable environmental habitus through repeated, alternative ritual forms (Habitus) will be significantly more effective in producing lasting transformations in sacred food practices than interventions grounded in any single theoretical approach.

### Salutogenic Orientation: Sense of Coherence and Institutional Support

To extend this framework, we embed it within a salutogenic model of health, which emphasises the resources and processes that promote well-being rather than focusing solely on risk and pathology (Antonovsky, 1987). Two concepts are central here: Sense of Coherence (SOC)—comprising comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness—and Generalized Resistance Resources (GRRs), which encompass the material, social, and cultural-spiritual resources that enable individuals and communities to cope, adapt, and thrive.

In religious settings, institutions such as temples, mosques, churches, monasteries, and shrines can serve as powerful GRRs by providing theological guidance, leadership, social norms, and practical infrastructures that make sustainable sacred food practices both feasible and spiritually meaningful. Building on the previous propositions, we therefore introduce two explicitly salutogenic propositions:

**Proposition 7:** Religious institutions that function as Generalized Resistance Resources (GRRs)—by providing material support (e.g., composting facilities, redistribution channels), social support

(e.g., leadership modelling, collective commitments), and spiritual support (e.g., theological reframing of sufficiency and stewardship)—will strengthen individuals' Sense of Coherence (SOC), thereby facilitating the transition from wasteful to sustainable sacred food practices.

**Proposition 8:** Interventions that simultaneously enhance all three components of SOC—Comprehensibility (e.g., helping communities understand the multi-level drivers and impacts of sacred food waste), Manageability (e.g., providing concrete resources, skills, and organisational structures to manage offerings sustainably), and Meaningfulness (e.g., aligning sustainable practices with core spiritual values of gratitude, non-harm, and care for creation)—will achieve significantly higher levels of sustained behavioural change and generate positive material, social, and spiritual health outcomes than interventions targeting only one or two SOC components.

Together, these eight propositions operationalise a salutogenic, multi-level framework that links individual intentions, social practices, embodied habitus, and institutional GRRs, providing a coherent conceptual foundation for future empirical testing and intervention design.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Theoretical Contribution of the Integrated Salutogenic Framework

This integrative review, drawing on more than 60 core studies across psychology, sociology, public health, and environmental science, develops a novel multi-level conceptual framework to explain the persistence of sacred food waste. Its primary theoretical contribution lies in the synergistic integration of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Social Practice Theory (SPT), and Bourdieu's concept of Habitus, all situated within Antonovsky's overarching Salutogenic Model [1][2]. This integration moves beyond deficit-oriented, pathogenic explanations and instead adopts a salutogenic perspective that highlights the resources and pathways supporting health and well-being [3]. By conceptualizing institutional support as a Generalized Resistance Resource (GRR) and positioning waste reduction as a health-promoting behaviour that strengthens Sense of Coherence (SOC), the framework offers a

more holistic and actionable foundation for fostering sustainable sacred food practices.

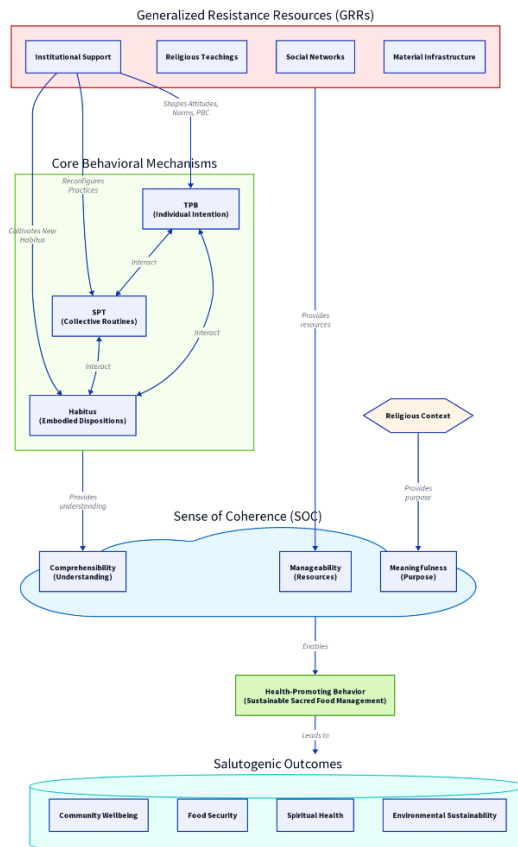
The analysis confirms that, at the individual level, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) remains a robust predictor of pro-environmental intentions [4][5][6]. Recent meta-analyses consistently demonstrate that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (PBC) significantly shape intentions to reduce food waste [7][8][9][10]. Nevertheless, these studies also highlight a persistent intention-behaviour gap, in which strong intentions fail to materialize into consistent action, indicating that individual-centric models alone are insufficient to fully explain food waste behaviours [11][12][13].

At the practice level, SPT offers a critical analytical lens, demonstrating that food waste is not an isolated individual decision but an outcome embedded in the performance of socially shared routines [14][15]. Studies in both hospitality and household contexts show that waste is “baked into” everyday rhythms of cooking, serving, and hosting, rendering interventions that focus solely on individual awareness largely ineffective [16][17][18][19]. Our framework extends this insight by illustrating how the entanglement of meanings (e.g., abundance as devotion), materials (e.g., oversized serving platters), and competences (e.g., bulk-cooking skills) creates a powerful lock-in effect that sustains wasteful practices [20][21].

At the embodied-cultural level, the concept of environmental habitus elucidates the deep-seated, almost automatic nature of these behaviours [22][23]. Drawing on Bourdieu, we argue that long-term religious and cultural socialisation cultivates pre-cognitive dispositions that make wasteful actions feel “natural” and “right,” thereby reinforcing their persistence even when they conflict with conscious pro-environmental values [24][25][26].

By integrating these three theoretical layers under a salutogenic umbrella, our framework (Figure 1) provides a more holistic explanatory account. It posits that individual intentions (TPB) are shaped and constrained by social practices (SPT), which themselves are anchored in embodied dispositions (Habitus). This multi-level dynamic is

mediated by the religious context and sustained by institutional support, which functions as a critical Generalized Resistance Resource (GRR) enabling individuals and communities to move toward the positive end of Antonovsky's health continuum.



**Figure 1: An Integrated Salutogenic Framework for Sustainable Sacred Food Practices**

### Intention-Behaviour Gaps in Sacred Food Context: A Salutogenic Reading

The first proposition of the framework posits that pro-environmental attitudes, supportive subjective norms and high PBC foster intentions to reduce sacred food waste. Evidence from TPB-based studies of household food waste broadly supports this claim: attitudes such as “wasting food is morally wrong”, perceived social disapproval of waste, and confidence in food management skills are consistently associated with stronger waste-reduction intentions (Attiq *et al.*, 2021); (Srivastava, Singh and Srivastava, 2021).

However, these intentions frequently fail to translate into behaviour in contexts where food is symbolically linked to blessing, hospitality and religious

merit. Meta-analytic work on food waste behaviour highlights that habit strength, planning routines and everyday constraints often overshadow intentions (Attiq *et al.*, 2021); (Malau *et al.*, 2025). (Heidig, Dobbelstein and Mason, 2025) show that in a dual-country study (Germany and South Africa), ability-related factors—habits and knowledge—have stronger effects on household food waste than motivational variables, even when people report high concern about waste. Similar findings appear in broader pro-environmental behaviour research, where habit and perceived control often dominate intentions in predicting action (Klößner, 2013) (Nielsen, 2017)

In sacred settings, this intention-behaviour gap is likely amplified because ritual obligations, social expectations and sacred meanings of abundance add further layers of constraint. Studies of religious tourists and pilgrims show that religious commitment can encourage pro-environmental concern but does not automatically reduce waste unless practices and infrastructures make sustainable options easy and legitimate (Kala and Chaubey, 2024); (Hassan *et al.*, 2022); (Rivetti, Splendiani and Dini, 2025). Research on religiosity and household food waste likewise finds complex patterns: intrinsic religiosity can discourage waste through moral teachings, but strong norms of generosity and status associated with lavish hospitality may push in the opposite direction (Hassan *et al.*, 2022).

These findings support Proposition 2: in religiously significant contexts, the positive link between intention and behaviour is weakened by powerful collective practices and cultural scripts that normalise surplus and inhibit portion control. From a salutogenic standpoint, this suggests that strengthening SOC requires more than intensifying moral messages; it demands that communities perceive waste reduction as intelligible within their ritual logics (comprehensibility), supported by adequate material and organisational resources (manageability), and aligned with their deepest spiritual commitments (meaningfulness).

### Sacred Food as Social Practice: Meanings, Materials and Competences

SPT helps to unpack how sacred food waste is “locked in” at the level of

collective routines. (Shove, Watson and Pantzar, 2012) conceptualise practices as configurations of meanings, materials and competences that hang together and reproduce themselves over time. (Osman *et al.*, 2020) shows how even well-designed workplace behaviour-change programmes struggle when they do not alter these constituent elements of practice.

Empirical SPT-inspired studies provide concrete illustrations relevant to sacred food. University students' food waste, for example, is shaped by shared routines of cooking collectively, irregular schedules, and social norms around hosting and sharing, rather than by individual attitudes alone (Ozanne, Ballantine and McMaster, 2022). In food service and hotel settings, menu design, buffet display norms, serving utensils, and staff competences jointly generate systematic over-production and plate waste (Nielsen *et al.*, 2020); (Sezerel and Filimonau, 2023); (Wyss, Knoch and Berger, 2022). Interventions that reconfigure sorting infrastructure, signage and routines in multi-unit housing have been shown to shift waste-sorting practices more effectively than moral appeals alone (Naujokas and Bobinaite, 2025).

These studies suggest that sacred feasts and offerings can be analysed as bundles of practice elements in which meanings, materials and competences are tightly interwoven. Meanings include notions of abundance as an expression of devotion, prestige, or communal solidarity. Materials include large cooking pots, generous ladles, fixed menus and decorative displays that demand visual fullness. Competences encompass skills in mass cooking and ritual preparation, but not necessarily in portion planning or leftover management. Evidence from temple-waste studies underscores this embeddedness: research in Bali and India documents large volumes of organic waste generated from offerings and ritual food, often disposed of in ways that create additional environmental pressures (Bhaikatti *et al.*, no date); (Wijaya and Putra, 2021); (Wijaya *et al.*, 2023). Reviews of temple-waste utilisation show that technical solutions such as composting and refuse-derived fuel can significantly reduce environmental impact but typically leave ritual logics and serving norms untouched (Wijaya and Putra, 2021); (Yadav, Juneja and Chauhan, 2015).

Taken together, these findings support Proposition 3: sacred food waste persists because it is reproduced through routinised configurations of meanings, materials and competences that are collectively shared and regularly enacted. A salutogenic lens extends this interpretation by asking how these same practice elements might be reconfigured as GRRs that make sustainable practices more manageable. For instance, redesigned serving utensils, flexible menu planning, and shared competences in redistribution can function as concrete resources that help communities enact their pro-environmental intentions without sacrificing the symbolic richness of ritual.

### **Habitus and Environmental Habitus: Why Practices Feel “Right”**

While SPT describes how practices are structured, habitus explains why they are emotionally compelling and resistant to change. Bourdieu's theory emphasises that long-term socialisation generates embodied dispositions that make certain ways of acting feel natural, dignified and morally appropriate (Silva and Bartolozzi Ferreira, 2023).

Recent work on environmental habitus shows how such dispositions can either support or undermine sustainability. (Bhaskara, 2023) traces how chefs' environmental habitus develops over time through family upbringing, vocational training and workplace cultures, shaping their comfort with food-waste-reduction techniques in professional kitchens. Ruiu and colleagues conceptualise digital-environmental and techno-environmental habitus to capture the intertwining of technological practices and environmental concern, illustrating how structural inequalities and past experiences shape the uptake of sustainable behaviours (Ruiu, Ruiu and Ragnedda, 2024).

Transposed to sacred food, these insights clarify Proposition 5: within religious communities, an environmental (or non-environmental) habitus is built through repeated participation in rituals, teachings, and family practices around offerings and feasts. For many believers, preparing “too much” food for religious events does not feel wasteful but instead expresses piety, respect for guests and adherence to ancestral custom. Studies of religiously motivated consumption and hospitality show that such moral-

emotional logics can override abstract environmental messages (Bretter *et al.*, 2023); (Kala and Chaubey, 2024); (Partridge *et al.*, 2019); (Hassan *et al.*, 2022)

(Yamin *et al.*, 2023) *Cultures Framework* further reinforces this interpretation by demonstrating how values, narratives and institutional arrangements interact to stabilise cultural patterns, but can also create openings for transformation when new stories and exemplars emerge.

A salutogenic approach does not treat this environmental habitus simply as an obstacle, but also as a reservoir of meaning that can be redirected. When sustainable sacred food practices are framed as faithful continuations of core religious values—such as compassion, justice, gratitude and care for creation—they can enhance meaningfulness within SOC rather than threatening it. Over time, repeated participation in reconfigured rituals can cultivate a new environmental habitus in which sufficiency, careful planning and redistribution feel as spiritually “right” as lavish abundance once did, thereby strengthening both ecological responsibility and spiritual coherence.

### Faith-Based Contexts as Salutogenic Settings

Empirical work directly addressing religion and food waste remains limited but is growing. Studies on temple cuisine and Hindu food offerings document how recipes, distribution practices and post-ritual handling of food are shaped by theological ideas about purity, merit and generosity (Gutiérrez, 2018). Research on temple-waste management in India and Bali shows both the scale of organic waste generated by sacred activities and the potential of valorisation strategies such as composting, biogas, and refuse-derived fuel to reduce environmental impacts (Sari, Suryawan and Septiariva, 2023); (Wijaya *et al.*, 2023).

In Muslim-majority settings, studies of faith-based environmental initiatives illustrate how religious teachings can legitimise and accelerate behaviour change. (McKay, 2013) shows that Islamic conservation messages in mosques and pesantren in West Sumatra can successfully mobilise pro-conservation behaviours when religious leaders

explicitly frame caring for nature as a religious duty. More recent work on Indonesia’s “Green Islam” movement documents initiatives such as eco-pesantren, eco-mosques, and religiously framed waste-reduction campaigns, including efforts to reduce food waste during religious events (Sabrina, 2020); (Zulkifli, 2023).

At the micro level, (Nuryana *et al.*, 2024) report that food-waste education in an Indonesian pesantren—combining nutrition, religious messages, and practical training—reduced plate waste and improved students’ awareness of both environmental and health consequences. This aligns with broader evidence that school-based and community-based interventions combining information, social norms and practical strategies are among the more effective consumer-level food-waste interventions (Agarwal *et al.*, 2024); (Aschemann-Witzel *et al.*, 2015); (Cloutier, 2024).

Read through the integrated framework, these studies lend empirical support to Proposition 6: faith-based settings are uniquely positioned to implement multi-level interventions that simultaneously target individual intentions (through sermons and teachings), practices (through changes to serving routines and infrastructure), and environmental habitus (through repeated, embodied rituals that normalise sufficiency and redistribution). They also illustrate how religious institutions can act as GRRs, providing material, social and spiritual resources that enhance SOC and enable communities to perceive sustainable sacred food practices as understandable, doable and deeply worthwhile.

### Implications for Health Promotion and Intervention Design

The integrated TPB-SPT-habitus framework, situated within a salutogenic model, has several implications for health promotion practice in sacred food contexts. First, it reinforces the need to move beyond information campaigns. Systematic reviews show that isolated awareness campaigns or simple behavioural “nudges” often yield small, short-lived reductions in food waste unless they are embedded in broader practice change (Toro and Aksümer, 2024); (van Herpen *et al.*, 2023); (Waitz *et al.*, 2021). Practice-level interventions—such as

redesigning buffets, standardising portion tools, providing containers for leftovers, and restructuring event timetables—tend to achieve more sustained effects (Gonçalves *et al.*, 2023); (Smit, 2019); (Zaidi *et al.*, 2022). From a salutogenic perspective, these interventions increase manageability by supplying concrete GRRs that enable communities to act on their intentions.

Second, the framework highlights the importance of engaging religious leaders as co-designers. Faith-based conservation and food-waste initiatives succeed when religious leaders actively articulate scriptural justifications for sustainability and model new practices (Gottlieb, 2006); (Ives and Baker, 2024); (McKay, 2013). Health promotion interventions in temples, churches and mosques can leverage concepts such as stewardship, gratitude and justice to re-signify “abundance” from excess to sufficiency and redistribution. This strengthens meaningfulness by aligning sustainable practices with core spiritual narratives, thereby enhancing SOC rather than undermining it.

Third, interventions should be explicitly designed for practice reconfiguration, not just individual choice. Within the TPB-SPT-habitus lens, reconfiguring materials, meanings and competences—through new serving infrastructures, revised ritual scripts and training in portion planning or creative reuse (Elimelech *et al.*, 2024); (Hebrok, 2018); (Varpa and Heinonen, 2022), not only reduces waste but also builds shared competencies that function as GRRs. In turn, this supports both manageability and comprehensibility, as communities see how small, concrete adjustments at each event cumulatively transform their practice.

Fourth, the framework underscores the need to cultivate a new environmental habitus through repeated rituals. Long-term change requires making sustainable patterns feel emotionally and spiritually “normal”. Institutionalising rituals such as post-feast redistribution, regular community “zero-waste” events during religious months, and public recognition of congregations that successfully steward sacred food can gradually reshape what counts as a “good” religious event (Chidester, 2014); (Kasih *et al.*, 2023) (Paine, 2014). Over time, these repeated

practices can re-align environmental habitus with pro-environmental values, strengthening the coherence between what communities believe, what they do, and how they experience their spiritual-environmental identity.

Finally, the framework encourages integrating environmental and health outcomes. Food-waste reduction in sacred contexts has direct implications for nutrition and household food security, particularly when surplus food is safely redistributed. Case studies in Indonesian pesantren show that food-waste education can simultaneously reduce plate waste and improve balanced eating (Nuryana *et al.*, 2024). This resonates with public health arguments that tackling food waste is part of a broader agenda to ensure equitable, sufficient and culturally appropriate diets. From a salutogenic viewpoint, sacred food interventions that reduce waste, improve diet quality and reinforce spiritual meaning contribute to a more robust SOC and to spiritual-environmental well-being at community level.

### **The Salutogenic Pathway: Fostering a Sense of Coherence**

The core innovation of our framework is its salutogenic orientation. Instead of asking, “Why do people waste food?” (pathogenic question), we ask, “What resources enable people to practice sustainable sacred food management?” (salutogenic question). The answer lies in fostering a strong Sense of Coherence (SOC), which consists of three components: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness (Eriksson, 2016) (Hochwalder, 2024). Comprehensibility refers to the extent to which one perceives stimuli as structured, predictable, and explicable. Our integrated framework enhances comprehensibility by providing a clear map of the multi-level factors driving sacred food waste. For practitioners and religious leaders, this understanding transforms the problem from a chaotic, unpredictable issue into a structured one with identifiable leverage points (Patuano, Shentova and Aceska, 2022); (Pleyer, Pesliak and McCall, 2024).

Manageability is the belief that one has the resources to meet the demands posed by these stimuli. This is where institutional support, framed as a GRR, becomes critical. When religious

institutions provide tangible resources—such as smaller serving utensils, community refrigerators for leftovers, or partnerships with food banks—they directly enhance the perceived manageability of reducing waste (Idan, Eriksson and Al-Yagon, 2022); (Jonas *et al.*, 2014); (Maschkowskil *et al.*, 2008). These GRRs empower individuals and communities to act on their intentions, bridging the intention-behaviour gap (van Leeuwen *et al.*, 2018); (Veiga *et al.*, 2022).

Meaningfulness is the motivational component, the feeling that life's challenges are worthy of engagement. In the context of sacred food waste, meaningfulness is cultivated by connecting the act of waste reduction to core religious and spiritual values (Menatti, 2026); (Polhuis *et al.*, 2021). When reducing waste is framed not as a sacrifice but as an act of stewardship, gratitude, or compassion, it becomes a deeply meaningful practice that reinforces spiritual identity and well-being (Bauer, 2017); (Moksnes, 2021).

Furthermore, the concept of the Belief Effect offers a powerful extension to the salutogenic model in this context. Strong beliefs about the purity or sanctity of food can affect how individuals perceive and potentially even absorb nutrients, contributing to a positive health outcome through the 'belief effect' (Crum *et al.*, 2011); (Harris and Johns, 2011); (Potthoff, Jurinec and Schienle, 2019). This psychosomatic mechanism, where belief influences physiological outcomes (Chouraqi *et al.*, 2021) (Long *et al.*, 2024), underscores the profound connection between spiritual well-being and physical health. When sacred food is consumed with a strong conviction of its spiritual benefits, it can enhance the body's response to the nutrients it provides (Arslan and Aydin, 2024); (Ratcliffe, Baxter and Martin, 2019), adding another layer to the health-promoting aspects of these practices.

### Theoretical Complementarity and the Role of Institutional Support

The power of the framework lies in the complementarity of the theories. TPB explains the what (the intention), but SPT and Habitus explain the why and how (why the intention fails and how the behaviour is reproduced). The salutogenic model provides the overarching purpose

(promoting health and well-being). Table 1 illustrates this interplay.

**Table 1. A Matrix Illustrating the Interplay Between TPB, SPT, Habitus, and the Salutogenic Model**

Theory	Explains...	Does Not Explain...	How Other Theories Fill the Gap
TPB	Formation of individual intentions.	The intention-behaviour gap; why behaviour persists against intention.	SPT & Habitus explain how social practices and embodied dispositions override conscious intentions.
SPT	How behaviours are locked into collective routines and material arrangements.	Individual agency and the origins of novel practices.	TPB provides a model for individual agency and intention formation that can initiate practice change.
Habitus	Why practices feel "natural" and are resistant to change; embodied dispositions.	How rapid behavioural change can occur; the role of conscious deliberation.	TPB explains conscious choice, while SPT shows how changes in materials or meanings can disrupt habitus.
Salutogenic Model	The underlying resources (GRRs) and motivational orientation (SOC) that enable positive change.	The specific mechanisms of behavioural performance.	TPB, SPT and Habitus provide the detailed mechanism through which SOC enhanced and GRRs are utilized to move towards health.

Institutional support is the lynchpin that connects these theoretical levels. As a powerful GRR, it can simultaneously:

1. Influence TPB Components: Shape attitudes through theological framing, reinforce subjective norms through leadership modelling, and enhance PBC by providing infrastructure

(Elhoushy and Jang, 2021); (Pundir et al., 2025); (Rahman et al., 2022).

2. Reconfigure Social Practices (SPT): Change the materials (e.g., providing standardized offering containers), alter the meanings (e.g., reframing abundance as spiritual sufficiency), and build competences (e.g., workshops on sustainable cooking) (Iliev, 2020); (Liu, Teng and Han, 2020)

Cultivate a New Habitus: Institute new, repeated rituals (e.g., a post-festival food redistribution ritual) that, over time, cultivate a new, sustainable “environmental habitus” (Bhaskara, 2023); (Lissillour, 2022).

### Limitations and Future Research

Despite its breadth, the current framework is still conceptual and relies on studies conducted in diverse cultural and religious settings. Empirical work directly focused on sacred food waste remains scarce; most available evidence comes from household, hospitality and tourism contexts, or from faith-based environmental initiatives that are not explicitly centred on food. This gap highlights the need for longitudinal, mixed-methods studies in temples, mosques, churches and other religious institutions to test the propositions derived from the integrated TPB-SPT-habitus model and its salutogenic extensions.

Future research should, first, in-depth qualitative studies, such as ethnography and participant observation, are needed to explore the specific meanings, materials, and competences that constitute sacred food practices in diverse cultural and religious contexts, and to understand how SOC is experienced locally (Belharar, Laamrani and Chakor, 2023); (Deksne et al., 2025). Second, quantitative, longitudinal studies are required to test the relationships proposed in the framework, particularly how institutional GRRs moderate the interplay between intentions, practices, and habitus over time (Brick et al., 2024); (Cheng and Cheng, 2023). Third, participatory action-research projects should be designed to co-create and evaluate multi-level, salutogenic interventions in partnership with religious communities. These studies would provide crucial evidence to guide the design of effective, scalable, and culturally-resonant health promotion strategies that not only reduce waste but

also enhance holistic community well-being (Smit, 2019); (Svennevik, 2022); (Warde, Welch and Paddock, 2017).

### CONCLUSION

The integrated salutogenic framework proposed in this paper represents a substantive paradigm shift for health promotion in the context of sacred food waste. Rather than viewing sacred food merely as a source of excess and inefficiency, the framework reframes it as a potential driver of health and well-being. By moving beyond a pathogenic orientation focused on “reducing” or “preventing” waste, toward a salutogenic orientation that emphasizes “promoting sustainable, health-enhancing practices,” the model offers a more holistic, empowering, and context-appropriate approach. It underscores that lasting behavioural change is seldom achieved through instruction or information alone, but through the creation of an enabling ecosystem of Generalized Resistance Resources (GRRs) that strengthens individuals’ Sense of Coherence (SOC). This occurs by enhancing comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness; mobilizing material, social, and spiritual resources; and embedding everyday eating practices within a coherent and valued social-spiritual framework. In doing so, the model recognizes that the belief effect itself—rooted in gratitude, stewardship, devotion, and collective identity—can play a powerful role in generating positive health outcomes.

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