



The Community Fragmentation and Local Social Transformation due to Mining Activities in Raja Ampat, Papua : A Review from the Perspective of Structural Inequality

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Abstract

This research examines the issue of mining in Papua. Papua, with its abundant natural resources, often becomes the primary target of mining exploitation. Despite the economic potential promised by the government, these mining activities frequently leave a legacy of environmental damage, community fragmentation, and profound social transformation. This case study highlights the impact of mining activities on local communities in Raja Ampat, Papua, an area known for its extraordinary underwater natural beauty. Using the perspective of structural inequality, this article analyzes how mining activities widen socioeconomic gaps, erode social cohesion, and fundamentally alter the structure of local society. Through Bourdieu's theory, it is explained that inequality in society occurs not only through economic control but also through the mastery of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. The study delves into the urgency of a more holistic and just development approach to prevent the negative impacts of mining and maintain socio-environmental sustainability in Papua.

Keywords : mining; community fragmentation, structural inequality; Raja Ampat; Global South

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INTRODUCTION

The Global South is often the main target of extractive industries, including mining, as part of a resource-based economic development agenda. In Indonesia, West Papua, especially the Raja Ampat islands, has attracted attention not only for its ecological wealth but also for its economic potential through nickel mining on small islands like Gag, Kawe, and Waigeo. Mining activities conducted by national and multinational companies in this region not only bring about physical changes to the landscape but also create social tensions that trigger community fragmentation and significant local social transformation. A study by Ulat et al. (2024) on Gag Island, Raja Ampat, revealed that despite an increase in community income due to the mining project, environmental damage and a decline in traditional quality of life have triggered conflicts and social unrest within the community. Social changes due to mining cannot be understood solely as ecological and economic consequences, but also as a result of unequal power relations. The perspective of structural inequality emphasizes that the relationship between the state, corporations, and local communities exists in a systemic imbalance that reinforces the dominance of elites over marginalized groups. From 2017 to 2020, the central government, through the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), reopened opportunities for exploration and limited production in the name of investment and "nickel down streaming". Indigenous communities and NGO responded by strengthening their resistance, one of which was through the Save Raja Ampat coalition. Extractive projects like nickel mining are often implemented without genuine participatory mechanisms, ignoring indigenous rights and the voices of affected communities. The arrival of mining has created a difference in interests among residents; some support it because they see short-term economic opportunities like jobs, while others oppose it due to the ecological and cultural impacts that threaten their identity and community survival. This tension is further exacerbated by non-transparent licensing mechanisms and a lack of meaningful public consultation.

Raja Ampat, West Papua, is known as a world-class marine conservation area, home to over 75% of the world's coral species, and indigenous communities that have lived in harmony with nature for generations. The central government and mining investors promise development and improved welfare through the exploitation of mineral resources, but the reality on the ground shows environmental damage, the loss of community access to their living spaces, and an increase in local social conflicts. Pasinringi (2022) identified that local governments often fail to manage mining conflicts fairly due to power relations that tend to favor investors. Through Bourdieu's theory, it is explained that inequality in society occurs not

only through economic control but also through the mastery of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. In Raja Ampat, mining companies and the state hold control over economic resources and the discourse of development, which is used to legitimize mining's presence, even if it harms local communities. Community fragmentation occurs as a division of internal social relations within indigenous communities, whose solidarity and response to mining expansion have varied. Some traditional leaders and civil groups have organized protests, media campaigns, and even reports to legal and human rights institutions. For example, the indigenous communities of Kawe and Gag have protested against the presence of PT Gag Nikel because the company's activities have caused sedimentation that damages marine ecosystems and threatens the livelihoods of fishermen. Research by Fitrianti et al. (2024); Tjoetra et al. (2023) analyzes that the displacement of traditional social structures, the fracturing of internal solidarity, and the emergence of inter-community tensions due to differing interests in the project are a result of uneven regional development policies by investors and the government. The voices of anti-development residents are often met with intimidation or stigmatization for rejecting mining investment, reflecting structural inequality in the power relations between local communities, the state, and corporations.

These phenomena indicate that mining in Raja Ampat is not just an environmental issue but also a matter of social justice and the rights of indigenous communities. Local communities not only face ecological damage but also the loss of power over their land, sea, and socio-cultural identity. This research aims to understand how mining activities in Raja Ampat have created community fragmentation and driven local social transformation within the framework of structural inequality. Using a qualitative approach based on a field case study in affected communities, the research elevates local voices as a core part of the narrative. The research focus is directed at three things: (1) how mining practices shape new social configurations, (2) the forms of resistance and accommodation undertaken by the community, and (3) how power relations color the changes in values and social relations at the local level. It is hoped that these findings can serve as social literature on the impacts of mining in Raja Ampat, as well as contribute to the theory of structural inequality and the dynamics of social change in a situation of extractive development that pressures indigenous and social spaces.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, aiming to deeply explore the social dynamics occurring in local communities in Raja Ampat due to mining activities. This approach was chosen because the primary focus of the research is to understand social reality from the perspective of local actors and to interpret how structural inequality contextually influences social change, conflict, and community fragmentation. A case study design was used to intensively trace social processes in a specific location, namely the indigenous community on Gag Island and its surroundings, which are directly affected by nickel mining activities. The intrinsic case study allows researchers to examine this case as a phenomenon with uniqueness and critical value in the context of development in the Global South.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, affected residents, environmental activists, local government representatives, and staff from the mining company. Interviews were semi-structured to obtain accurate and reflective narratives. In addition, participatory observation, especially in social activities, community forums, and daily interactions, was used to capture social dynamics that are not always verbally expressed. Document studies were also conducted on local policies (RTRW, conservation regulations, mining permits), reports from non-governmental organizations, and relevant local and national media news about the mining conflict in Raja Ampat.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which means choosing individuals or groups who have direct experience or deep knowledge of the researched issue. Key informants included: Indigenous residents from Gag and Kawe Islands, community leaders and village heads, local and national environmental activists, representatives of the district government (Environmental Agency, Bappeda), and legal and human rights advocates in West Papua. The criteria for informants were an age of 20-45 and above, both male and female.

Data analysis was conducted thematically: Interview transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly to understand the main patterns and meanings. Coding was performed on topics such as community fragmentation, power relations, social conflict, and community adaptation strategies⁴⁶. The main themes were then interpretively analyzed to understand their relationship with the theory of structural inequality and to build a critical narrative about social change in local communities. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources

and methods, member checking (validating findings with informants), and an audit trail of the data collection process to ensure research transparency and credibility.

The following table details the informants:

No.	Informant Category	Number of Informants	Selection Criteria	Objective
1.	Traditional Leaders/Government	3	Possesses traditional authority, understands the history of social conflicts related to mining issues in Raja Ampat	To explain traditional dynamics and responses to development projects and agreements by the government and other investors.
2.	Affected Residents	6	From areas around the mine, working as fishermen or farmers	To provide direct experience of the social and ecological impacts of mining.
3.	Environmental Activists	3	Activists involved in community advocacy	To provide information on advocacy narratives, conflicts, policies, and community responses to mining projects.
4.	Mining Company Representatives	4	Representatives from the mining company's workforce active in the Raja Ampat region	To provide the corporate perspective on the socio-economic benefits of the mining project.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Community Fragmentation and Structural Inequality

Mining activities in Raja Ampat have become a source of division within the local community, splitting it into pro-mining and anti-mining groups. Based on interviews with local Raja Ampat informants, the pro-mining community group is generally motivated by promises of economic opportunities, namely jobs and compensation, which in reality are only enjoyed by a small number of people, including local elites and those with strategic positions in the company. Meanwhile, the anti-mining group is concerned about the negative impacts, ranging from environmental damage to threats to traditional livelihoods. This difference in views triggers social conflicts that damage kinship ties and erode the sense of togetherness that has long been established.

As researched by Moraes et al. (2020), land and resource disputes due to mining projects in indigenous communities can worsen social cohesion. The failure of companies to accommodate indigenous and environmental interests, as revealed by Wahyuningtyas et al. (2021), is a major trigger for division and prolonged protests. Besides social division, mining activities in Raja Ampat also create significant economic inequality. Although the project was promised as an economic driver for the local Papuan community, the reality is that the benefits are not evenly distributed. A small portion of the community experiences a drastic improvement in their standard of living, while the majority lose their traditional livelihoods, such as farming or fishing, due to environmental damage. A study by Setyowati and Susilo (2020) in East Kalimantan proved that income inequality significantly increases in mining areas, confirming that economic benefits are not enjoyed fairly by all segments of society. Meanwhile, Tsing and Anna (2022) found that mining projects in Africa worsen poverty for vulnerable groups who lose access to natural resources.

The official start of mining activities in Raja Ampat in 2017 by PT. Gag Nikel also slowly eroded the cultural and traditional values that were deeply rooted in the local community. The value system, which was originally based on collectivity and respect for nature, has now shifted to being materialistic. Land, which was previously considered an ancestral heritage and a communal identity, is now treated as a commodity that can be traded for financial gain. This shift damages the spiritual and social ties of the community to their environment. In addition, a work culture oriented towards personal gain also promotes individualism and erodes the spirit of mutual cooperation that is characteristic of indigenous

communities. Research by Pusparini et al. (2020) in Sulawesi showed how the modernization brought by mining has changed kinship systems and social values. The weakening of traditional institutions is another consequence, where decision-making is more often dominated by companies and the government, marginalizing the voices of traditional elders. This condition is worsened by the destruction of sacred sites and cultural heritage due to mining activities, which, according to Sari (2021), causes irreparable cultural loss and has a profound psychological impact on indigenous communities.

In addition to the visible social and economic inequalities, mining activities in Raja Ampat also create long-term structural vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect indigenous communities. These vulnerabilities emerge because the community is forced to adapt to an external economic system that is not aligned with their cultural practices or ecological knowledge. The shift from subsistence livelihoods to dependence on the market economy causes long-term uncertainty, especially when mining operations begin to decline or when promises of welfare fail to materialize. Several studies show a similar pattern: Arpin et al. (2022) found that indigenous communities involved in extractive industries often become trapped in a cycle of economic dependency while losing the autonomy that previously supported their daily lives through traditional ecological practices.

In the phenomenon of Raja Ampat, this shift is evident in the reduced bargaining power of the community over land and resources due to the unbalanced relationship between local actors, companies, and the state. In addition, the weakening of traditional governance systems which occurs because of the marginalization of the roles of elders and traditional leadership structures triggers a vacuum in community decision-making mechanisms, leaving many families uncertain about their rights and future prospects. This structural vulnerability not only deepens internal tensions but also reinforces the long-term socio-economic marginalization that is generally produced by mining projects in indigenous territories.

Structural Perspective and Injustice of Benefit Distribution

Recent studies and investigative reports show that the expansion of mining activities in Raja Ampat has accelerated rapidly in recent years until 2025, although the government eventually revoked the mining business permit in June 2025. The relentless mining has created serious pressure on sea-based livelihoods (fisheries, tourism) that are the source of the local indigenous community's economy and collective identity. As a result, access to natural resources, formal job opportunities, and economic compensation often favor external actors,

including large companies and political networks, while long-term benefits for local communities are minimal, and the environmental and social costs are borne by the local population. Handoyo & Rumengan (2022) noted that sedimentation from mining activities in the coastal areas of West Papua accelerates the damage to coral reefs in Raja Ampat, which has been the main source of livelihood for fishermen, thereby deepening their dependence on external aid. From the lens of structural sociology, Pierre Bourdieu's framework, especially the concepts of forms of economic, social, and cultural capital, as well as the concepts of field and habitus, explains how existing inequality is reproduced.

Bourdieu emphasizes that dominant actors can convert economic and symbolic capital into structural power that secures their access to decision-making in local economic and political spaces. In mining, strong companies and bureaucratic networks have economic capital and social capital that allow them to influence policies, spatial planning, and compensation mechanisms, making the distribution of benefits unequal. In the case of mining in Raja Ampat, dominant actors mining companies and bureaucratic elites possess economic capital in the form of large financial capital, social capital in the form of networks with political authorities, and symbolic capital that legitimizes their dominance through the narrative of development. In contrast, indigenous communities have cultural capital in the form of traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable resource management practices, but this capital is rarely recognized or valued in formal negotiation mechanisms. Lewerissa et al. (2023) found that the entry of investment without strong indigenous regulations causes the weakening of local institutions and an increase in internal conflicts, both between families and between villages. This strengthens the argument that the injustice of benefit distribution is not merely an administrative issue but is part of a structure of power relations that benefits dominant actors. Meanwhile, local communities who have limited economic capital, different cultural capital (traditional knowledge, language, customary practices), and a weak position in the political field tend to be "marginalized," receiving low-wage jobs, inadequate compensation, or simply promises of social investment that are never realized. Bourdieu's theory helps to understand why the injustice of benefit distribution is not just a technical problem but also a result of embedded power relations.

The novelty of this article lies in the approach used, which is from a structural perspective. The structural approach provides an analysis of peripheral dependency and a critique of political economy that highlights how extractive capital extracts value from

rural/coastal areas, centralizes profits in capital centers, and decentralizes ecological costs to marginalized communities. From a policy and practical implications perspective, the structural analysis provides a perspective on: (1) the recognition and strengthening of cultural capital and indigenous rights as capital that must be acknowledged in benefit-sharing negotiations; (2) transparent mechanisms for allocating mining revenues based on community participation, independent audits, and access to information; (3) the establishment of a moratorium or protection of conservation areas if ecological and social impacts cannot be minimized; and (4) redistributive interventions designed to improve the balance of economic and social capital at the local level, a step consistent with Bourdieu's analysis. The unjust distribution of benefits from mining activities leads to layered impacts. Socially, the migration of external labor and changes in the economic structure result in a decrease in social cohesion and the weakening of traditional decision-making mechanisms. Culturally, traditional values and practices are eroded as they are replaced by a money-based, market-oriented economy. This condition also encourages internal fragmentation, where some community members accept involvement with the company as an economic opportunity, while others refuse in order to maintain ecological principles and indigenous rights.

Environmental Degradation and Ecological Vulnerability: Long-Term Implications for Indigenous Livelihoods

Mining in Raja Ampat not only creates social fragmentation but also brings long-term ecological impacts that threaten the sustainability of indigenous livelihoods. Environmental degradation occurs through various processes such as deforestation, sedimentation, water pollution, and damage to coral reefs that constitute the economic lifeline of coastal communities. The resulting ecological vulnerability does not only concern the destruction of the landscape, but also transforms traditional livelihood systems that have supported indigenous societies for hundreds of years. Research by Rumengan & Kamaruddin (2021) shows that sedimentation caused by land clearing by mining companies in West Papua directly affects the increase of seawater turbidity, which leads to a decline in coral reef quality. This condition threatens the sustainability of reef fish populations that are the main economic source and identity of indigenous Papuan communities. Similar impacts are seen in a study by Handoyo & Rumengan (2022) which found that sedimentation from mining activities in the Waigeo and Gag regions accelerates the destruction of Raja Ampat's marine ecosystem,

resulting in reduced fishing yields and forcing some communities to rely on food supplies from outside the island.

This environmental degradation directly affects traditional livelihood systems. Indigenous communities who have long depended on the sea, sago gardens, forests, and hunting practices now face reduced access to and availability of natural resources. Research by Kapisa et al. (2020) explains that forest ecosystem damage in Papua due to extractive industrial activities has caused a decline in the availability of local food sources, particularly sago plants which are culturally and economically significant for indigenous communities. Thus, forest destruction also disrupts the water cycle and causes seasonal flooding, worsening community vulnerability to climate change. The mining phenomenon in Raja Ampat is a significant threat to marine ecosystems. Raja Ampat is known as one of the regions with the highest marine biodiversity in the world, and mining activities in the Gag area and surrounding islands create ecological pressures that exceed environmental carrying capacity. Damaged coral reefs require decades to recover, while the coastal community’s economy depends on these damaged resources every day. A study by Sari & Takidir (2023) highlights that coral reef damage caused by industrial activities in West Papua has led to a decline in fishermen’s income by 30–50% over the past five years. Ecological vulnerability also deepens indigenous communities’ dependence on external markets. The loss of local natural resources raises food prices, while communities must spend more to meet their daily needs. This condition aligns with the findings of Pamungkas & Widodo (2021) which show that environmental degradation due to mining in Eastern Indonesia creates a new pattern of economic dependency, namely communities losing subsistence resources and being pushed to depend on low-wage jobs from the extractive industry itself.

In addition, environmental degradation affects social and psychological resilience. Land, forests, and the sea are not only economic resources but also spiritual spaces and identity for indigenous Papuan communities. The loss of ecological space means the loss of cultural space. Research by Sari (2021) explains that ecological damage to sacred indigenous areas causes collective trauma and weakens the community’s spiritual ties with their ancestors and customary land. Thus, environmental degradation due to mining in Raja Ampat not only damages physical ecosystems but also worsens the ecological vulnerability of indigenous communities in a multidimensional way. Ecosystem destruction threatens the sustainability of local economies, damages cultural identities, and deepens structural inequalities between

communities and industrial actors. Therefore, ecological problems must be understood as an integral part of the structural injustices faced by indigenous communities in Raja Ampat.

Post-Mining Scenarios as Efforts for Social Recovery and Sustainable Local Transformation

After the government revoked the mining business permit in Raja Ampat in mid-2025, major questions emerged regarding the future of the communities and ecosystems that had been affected by extractive activities for nearly a decade. The post-mining phase is not merely about stopping industrial operations, but involves ecological restoration, social reconciliation, and economic transformation that must be arranged holistically. Various literature shows that post-mining areas often experience long-term socio-ecological instability if there is no strategic and well-planned intervention. Ecological recovery becomes the most urgent aspect for Raja Ampat. Land degradation, sedimentation, and coral reef damage require rehabilitation efforts based on scientific knowledge and local ecological knowledge. Research by Rumengen & Handoyo (2022) reveals that coral reef restoration in the West Papua region requires a multilevel approach, ranging from replanting heat-resistant corals to controlling human activities in vulnerable zones. Meanwhile, a study by Purnomo et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of vegetation restoration and soil conservation in former mining areas to reduce landslides and improve water quality.

At the same time, social recovery must be prioritized. Mining activities have created polarization between pro-mining and anti-mining groups, so the post-mining phase requires a process of community reconciliation. A study by Kawer et al. (2023) shows that internal conflicts within indigenous Papuan communities due to extractive investments can be restored through customary dialogue, strengthening the role of customary institutions, and revitalizing cultural practices such as village deliberation and collective rituals. Such approaches not only strengthen social structures but also restore trust among community members who were previously divided. Economically, post-mining challenges demand the formation of new livelihood models that do not depend on extractive industries. Raja Ampat has great potential to transform toward a sustainable economy, particularly through the sectors of ecotourism, sustainable fisheries, and the blue economy. Research by Saleh & Alamsyah (2022) shows that ecotourism-based economies in conservation areas of West Papua have proven capable of significantly increasing local community income without damaging ecosystems. Meanwhile, Giyanto et al. (2020) assert that community-based marine management increases fish stocks

and fishermen's income within 3–5 years. The concept of just transition—an equitable transition for communities affected by extractive industries—also needs to be implemented. Just transition emphasizes that changes in economic structure must ensure access to new skills training, social protection, and institutional support for vulnerable groups. A study by Bennett et al. (2022) in Pacific coastal regions shows that just transition involving indigenous communities in economic planning can prevent new marginalization and foster collective ownership over development directions.

In addition, local capacity needs to be strengthened through environmental education, economic diversification training, and revitalization of indigenous knowledge on resource management. Customary institutions, churches, environmental NGOs, and universities in Papua and Maluku have strategic roles in community assistance. A study by Laksono & Kafiar (2023) asserts that multi-actor collaboration in empowering indigenous communities results in significant improvement in socio-ecological resilience. In the long-term perspective, the post-mining phase must be understood not as a closure stage, but as the beginning of structural transformation. Ecological restoration, social reconciliation, and sustainable economic development must be integrated into regional government policies and adat village development strategies. With a comprehensive approach, Raja Ampat can move toward a future that is more just, sustainable, and aligned with the customary values passed down through generations.

Media, Public Narratives, and Information Contestation in the Raja Ampat Mining Conflict

In the dynamics of mining in Raja Ampat, the media becomes a crucial arena where various actors construct, negotiate, and contest the truth. Narratives about the economic benefits of mining, environmental impacts, and the position of indigenous communities never appear neutral but always go through processes of selection, framing, and interpretation according to power interests. Therefore, the media is not merely an information transmitter but a political instrument that influences social fragmentation and the direction of transformation at the local level. Contemporary research shows that mining issues in Indonesia are not only shaped by state policy and industrial activities, but also by discursive battles in the public sphere. A study by Ardhian & Adiputra (2021) reveals that mining companies often construct corporate narratives that emphasize economic development, job creation, and contributions to village infrastructure. This narrative is designed to create a positive image while reducing

public attention to ecological damage and social conflicts occurring on the ground. In the context of Raja Ampat, narrative contestation occurs very intensely. Local governments, investors, indigenous communities, environmental NGOs, and local journalists are involved in producing competing discourses. A study by Sari & Kawer (2022) shows that issues of coral reef destruction and loss of customary land are often voiced more by independent journalists' networks and indigenous communities, while mainstream media tends to highlight development narratives that support investment. This imbalance of representation contributes to polarization of local perspectives between groups that accept the narrative of "economic progress" and those that reject it because they see threats to indigenous living spaces.

Information contestation is also influenced by power relations. Haryanto's (2023) research on disinformation in resource conflicts in Eastern Indonesia finds that companies often use information management strategies: controlling journalists' access to operational areas, providing single press releases, or funding CSR programs that can soften corporate image. Conversely, indigenous voices are often marginalized due to limited access to major media and low digital literacy capacity. As a result, narratives of ecological damage are often considered "exaggerated" or "overblown", even though field evidence shows otherwise. In addition, the development of social media expands the arena of information contestation. In Raja Ampat, platforms such as Facebook and TikTok have become spaces for young people to disseminate documentation of environmental damage, sedimentation, and land conflicts. Research by Rumalean (2022) shows that amateur videos showing changes in seawater color and the loss of coral reefs have a significant impact on public pressure on regional governments. Social media becomes a source of visual evidence that is difficult to refute, while also generating digital solidarity from national and international communities.

However, social media also creates new challenges in the form of polarization and the spread of hoaxes. According to a study by Lemongga & Tirta (2021), natural resource conflicts in Indonesia are often intensified by unverified information, especially when political actors exploit indigenous identity sentiment to gain support. In the case of Raja Ampat, excessive framing of "indigenous sovereignty" or "cultural betrayal" once triggered tensions between clans, especially when media content framed certain parties as the ones responsible for allowing mining companies to enter.

At the community level, information contestation directly affects social fragmentation. Groups more connected to district governments or companies tend to consume development

narratives, while fishing groups, indigenous youth, and women who experience ecological impacts firsthand trust more in resistance and environmental recovery narratives. A study by Kafiar & Yatipai (2023) confirms that differences in information sources are a significant factor in shaping internal conflict in Papuan communities regarding mining issues. On the other hand, the media also plays an important role in shaping the agenda for the post-mining transformation. After the mining permits were revoked in 2025, narratives emerging in the media began to shift toward ecological restoration, strengthening the blue economy, and revitalizing indigenous values. Investigative reports by local journalists and publications by environmental NGOs became catalysts for changes in local government policy. A study by Wambrauw (2024) shows that reporting on coral reef restoration practices and the success of ecotourism in indigenous villages has become an inspiration for other communities to adopt similar strategies.

Thus, media in the context of the Raja Ampat mining issue is not only an information transmitter but a political arena that determines who has the power to define the truth. Narrative contestation in the public sphere shapes perceptions, influences local political decisions, triggers or reduces conflict, and ultimately determines the direction of social transformation in the post-mining society. Therefore, media literacy, the involvement of independent journalists, and inclusive public participation spaces become essential requirements for social recovery processes and sustainable development in indigenous Papuan territories.

Media as an Arena of Discourse Production and Power

In many cases of natural resource conflicts in Indonesia, the media plays a role as an arena of meaning contestation. Every actor—mining companies, local governments, Indigenous communities, environmental activists, and researchers attempts to construct particular narratives that function as justification for their actions. Research by Ardhian & Adiputra (2021) shows that mining companies in Indonesia often build a corporate narrative that emphasizes economic contribution, village infrastructure development, and employment opportunities for local communities. This narrative is not merely informative, but a form of strategic communication designed to reduce community resistance. In Raja Ampat, companies employ development-oriented language that highlights modernization and progress. For instance, road construction and scholarship provision are presented as evidence of concern for Indigenous communities. However, companies tend to downplay the facts of coral reef

destruction, sedimentation, and the loss of customary land. Such development narratives indirectly shift public attention away from broader ecological and social impacts.

Conversely, environmental media and independent journalists construct counter-narratives that emphasize ecological degradation, Indigenous marginalization, and violations of community rights. The study by Sari & Kawer (2022) asserts that Papuan journalists tend to be more critical in highlighting issues related to extractive industries compared to mainstream media. They emphasize that mining activities in Gag and Waigeo cause damage to community livelihood systems and threaten the sustainability of marine resources. In this context, the media functions as a means of legitimization—both legitimization of industry continuity and legitimization of Indigenous community resistance.

CONCLUSION

Mining activities in Raja Ampat have triggered community fragmentation and significant local social change. From the perspective of structural inequality, this phenomenon occurs because of the uneven distribution of economic benefits, where profits are more enjoyed by outsiders while local communities receive limited benefits. This condition widens socioeconomic gaps, weakens social cohesion, and shifts local cultural values. This inequality causes social dysfunction, triggers potential conflicts, and threatens the sustainability of indigenous communities. To prevent the deepening of this injustice, mining policies are needed that prioritize distributive justice, local community participation, and the protection of indigenous rights so that the social transformation that occurs is inclusive and strengthens community unity. Furthermore, the long-term implications of mining reveal that social fragmentation is not merely a short-lived tension, but part of a broader structural crisis that disrupts traditional governance systems and erodes intergenerational knowledge. The weakening of indigenous institutions, combined with the dominance of external economic interests, positions local communities in a vulnerable state where their cultural autonomy and ecological stewardship are increasingly undermined. Therefore, sustainable post-mining recovery must include not only ecological restoration, but also the revitalization of indigenous leadership, strengthening of local economies, and reinforcement of collective identity. Only through these integrative efforts can Raja Ampat move toward a socially just and culturally grounded transformation.

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