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UNAUTHORIZED MINING EXPLORATION AND COMMUNITY WELFARE IN HUAMUAL DISTRICT, WEST SERAM REGENCY

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Abstract
Unlicensed mining activities (PETI) in Huamual District, Western Seram Regency, Maluku Province, have become one of the primary sources of livelihood for local communities. Mining exploration, despite being a traditional community activity and being government-recognized, enables mining locations to create jobs, thereby increasing income and strengthening socioeconomic welfare. The research method employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore the community's direct experience of the existence of unpermitted mines. The results of the study show that mining without PETI has a positive impact on the community, including reducing the unemployment rate, improving the community's economy, and developing small businesses and empowering local communities. On the other hand, unlicensed mining activities also harm the community and cause environmental damage, including landslides, deforestation, and floods. The community will accept its own risks due to unlicensed mining activities. The community still maintains customary land if there are companies that want to enter. The community lacks the capital of knowledge and does not want any requirements. These findings indicate that people prefer to work in mining areas without permission, aiming to improve community welfare, but are not permitted to manage mining products at the mine site.

Kata Kunci:
Eksplorasi Tambang;
Kesejahteraan Masyarakat;
Kecamatan Huamual

Abstrak
Aktivitas pertambangan tanpa izin (PETI) di Kecamatan Huamual Kabupaten Seram Bagian Barat Provinsi Maluku telah menjadi salah satu sumber utama penghidupan masyarakat lokal. Eksplorasi tambang meskipun masyarakat beraktivitas secara tradisional dan legalitas formal dari pemerintah, lokasi pertambangan mampu menciptakan lapangan pekerjaan bagi masyarakat untuk meningkatkan pendapatan serta memperkuat kesejahteraan sosial ekonomi. Metode penilitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan cara fenomenologis untuk mengalami pengalaman langsung oleh masyarakat terhadap keberada tambang tanpa izin. Hasil penilitian bahwa tambang tanpa PETI memberikan dampak postif dan Negatif. Pada dampak postif bagi masyarakat merupakan salah satu penurunan angka pengangguran, peningkatkan ekonomi masyarakat, dan berkembang usaha kecil dan pemberdayaan masyakat lokal. Sedangkan di sisi lain, aktivitas tambang tanpa izin juga memberikan dampak negatif bagi masyarakat akan menimbulkan kerusakan lingkungan diantarnya longsor,

penggundulan hutan, dan banjir. Masyarakat akan menerima risiko sendiri di karena aktivitas tambang tanpa izin. Masyarakat masih mempertahankan tanah adat apabila ada perusahaan yang mau masuk. Di karena masyarakat masih tidak memilik modal pengetahuan dan masyarakat tidak mau adanya persyaratan. Temuan ini menunjukan masyarakat lebih suka berkerja pada daerah pertambangan tanpa izin untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat dan tidak boleh mengelola hasil tambang pada lokasi tambang.

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INTRODUCTION

The community utilizes mining exploration as a means to support the economy and meet its economic needs. This is explained by Adnyano & Bagaskoro (2020), who stated that mining exploration activities are community activities that serve as qualifications for creating jobs for economic growth. Therefore, mining exploration is a series of activities carried out by various individuals or groups to improve the economic sector of the community and other institutions (Apriyanto & Harini, 2013). This context explains how mining exploration efforts can be utilized as an opportunity for the community to address socioeconomic welfare and employment needs.

In this case, mining exploration creates alternative employment opportunities through management that is utilized optimally in community life. Mining is utilized as an opportunity to improve the community's economy (Abubakar et al., 2024), just as mining exploration activities create jobs for community livelihoods (Murty & Yuningsih, 2017). Through its role, mining contributes to the community's economic fulfillment and creates jobs.

While mining exploration activities have a significant impact on the economy, they also require attention due to their inherent difficulties and complexities. Gumelar & Khairina (2021) explains this view, explaining that mining exploration presents quite complex problems, and these conditions emphasize licensing, which is then a key concern for various individuals and groups in carrying out the mining process. In this case, mining without permits will have a significant impact on the environment, causing significant damage, including landslides and turning seawater brown (Paruki & Ahmad, 2022). Therefore, it is important to consider the aspects that occur in mining activities, bringing problems into practice, and ensuring that the mining process does not conflict with or cause ongoing damage to community life (Agussalim et al., 2023).

The problems arising from mining exploration cannot be considered trivial, but rather

present ongoing risks, as explained by Anwar (2016). The community expects unauthorized mining to be a livelihood that provides prosperity, but in reality, it is unaware that it will bring risks to the mining area. Therefore, one of the important roles highlighted is for the government to take part in handling the mining sector that is taking place in the community. Therefore, not only does it provide positive impacts, but it can also bring disasters to the community in the mining area (Indarwati, 2020). Furthermore, the government's takeover of the mining sector from the community will lead to conflict. Therefore, the community does not trust the government to establish companies in mining areas, which they fear is a lack of transparency and corruption in the mining sector (Nugroho et al., 2019).

Because communities in unlicensed mining areas lack the necessary equipment, facilities, knowledge, and capital, and also face limitations within the mining area, they are unwilling to allow companies to enter their mining areas (Junaidi, 2022). Therefore, the limitations of the community are one of the factors that influence the situation and conditions that lead to activities in unlicensed mining areas (Astuti et al., 2017). Therefore, unlicensed mining activities have both positive and negative socioeconomic impacts. However, in mining activities, most people choose between working with official permits from companies or the government or working in unlicensed mining areas. However, communities are more likely to engage in unlicensed mining activities due to a lack of capital and knowledge.

According to Salim in Novila & Puansah (2024), Indonesia's natural resources are categorized as abundant, including gold, silver, oil, natural gas, coal, and copper, all of which are controlled by the state. This means that the authority to create, manage, and oversee mines rests with the state-regulated mining system, which aims to improve the community's prosperity. Therefore, mining is no secret to the public or society. This aligns with Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4 of 2009, which clearly regulates the implementation of mining, given its context and its potential benefits to the community.

Furthermore, Rumadan (2021) stated that mining permits benefit companies more than the community because the benefits received are minimal. In other words, mining does not necessarily have a positive impact on the community. Therefore, PETI (Mining Illegal Mining) exploration in an area can actually provide welfare for the community, including economic development, community development, and increased awareness. Therefore, people will engage in more activities at PETI sites due to the many factors that support community life. This opinion aligns with Nandang Sudrajat's view, which asserts that small-scale illegal mining, in the form of artisanal mining, contributes to community welfare.

The positive impacts of mining areas are clearly evident, providing economic growth

that stimulates community welfare. Behind this, the presence of mining plays a significant role and contributes. This situation attracts both immigrants and local communities to work. The presence of mining opens up employment opportunities for both locals and immigrants, even with the use of simple tools, such as crowbars, sacks, chisels, and other tools (Astuti et al., 2017). Farming and fishing were the occupations that the community engaged in before the presence of mining. However, since mining exploration began, the community has been forced to switch to mining to meet their needs (Efendi et al., 2023). In this context, illegal mining activities (PETI) at least involve the community in increasing their income. Therefore, one factor supporting these mining activities is the shift from fishing and farming to working as fishermen, for example, the possibility of natural resource-rich areas. The community takes advantage of this opportunity to work. In addition, there is an aspect of a lack of supervision carried out by the government in terms of work ability selection (Raharjo & Kurniawan, 2025).

Maluku is considered a province with abundant natural resource reserves, including in the Huamual District, West Seram Regency. Local communities at mining sites employ traditional methods, working in groups of two to three to extract natural resources. The work is divided into tasks, including digging ponds, pulling ropes, and panning for excavated materials mixed with soil. Community mining exploration is considered small-scale but poses significant challenges. The Huamual community faces limitations, and regulatory constraints contribute to the situation and conditions, leading to community activities (PETI), accidents, and safety risks.

Considering several previous studies discussing mining management, one such study by Launuru (2020) focused on the Social, Economic, and Cultural Impacts. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The qualitative method employed was data analysis. This study aimed to explore the conditions and lives of communities living in mining areas. The results indicate that the social, economic, and cultural impacts of mining activities have a positive side, namely, a decrease in unemployment.

Meanwhile, the negative side includes environmental damage in the form of floods and landslides in mining areas. Meanwhile, mining exploration related to minerals and coal requires permits as a legal basis based on recommendations from laws and regulations because it falls under the authority of the state to manage and strictly supervise them. This step is necessary to curb the surge in illegal mining, including in Huamual. Although the presence of illegal mining can reduce unemployment, the risks to the community, such as

landslides and legal violations, will leave people struggling with their own lives.

Next, research conducted by Ubwarin & Leatemia (2020) examines the imposition of criminal sanctions in the case of cinnabar mining in Maluku. This article uses a normative juridical approach, discussing the legal aspects and concepts regarding the determination of criminal penalties and criminal acts. It also utilizes legal sources, including primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. The results indicate that the imposition of criminal penalties for illegal miners is still relatively low, less than half the maximum penalty stipulated, which is 10 years in prison. This is regrettable considering that the law on mineral and coal mining aims not only to enforce the law but also to protect the environment, and the exploration of illegal cinnabar mines can have long-lasting impacts. However, in reality, many illegal acts still occur in Indonesia, the handling of which is sharp at the bottom but blunt at the top. Legal violations committed by the community are more responsive, and enforcement is swift to impose the heaviest sanctions compared to elites, officials, and other upper-middle-class groups.

This research was also presented by Lalenda (2025), discussing the Impact of Nickel Mining Activities on the Socioeconomic Conditions of the Community of North Morowali Regency (Case of PT. Gumbuster Nickel Industri). The method used in this study was a qualitative approach, incorporating interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that PT. Gunbuster Nickel Industri has a positive impact in the form of increasing community income, absorbing labor, and strengthening the economic structure. However, there are also negative impacts, conflicts between workers, conflicts between companies, and environmental degradation. While the Unlicensed Mining is located in Huamual District, the community does not want the company to enter because there are several factors, including: 1. The company that enters causes greater environmental damage than the community uses traditionally, 2. The requirements made by the company will burden the local community. There is a fear that the company will bring social conflict. Looking at the two studies above, neither has explored the relationship between illegal mining exploration and community welfare. Furthermore, there are relatively few previous studies using the same research method as the one I will employ. Therefore, I am interested in addressing the aforementioned topic as a new study.

METHOD

To facilitate the continuity of this research, the author used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to examine the natural context through social interactions that develop within the community. Furthermore, this study employed descriptive analysis

methods to analyze the research data (Moleong, 2018). This research aims to understand the phenomenon of illegal mining, which contributes to the welfare of the surrounding community despite still relying on traditional mining techniques. To guide the research, the author used several stages: informant selection, data collection, interpretation, and description. Informant Selection, This was done through a selection process with relevant parties involved in the phenomenon of the mining workers' community, including residents, immigrants, and traders. In this research, 1-4 informants were selected. Data collection was conducted through interviews and observations. Interviews focused on social interactions, mining activities, and environmental conditions. Primary data were obtained from interviews and observations, while secondary data came from literature, news reports, and other relevant documents. Interpretation, The data obtained were analyzed and interpreted. usethematic approach. Study these interview results and identify the main themes about Mining at Huamual. Data Description, The description of the analyzed data is then presented in narrative form, providing a detailed account of the findings in the field: each interview quote and observation. Fieldwork was carried out in detail regarding activites about Unauthorized Mining Exploration and Community Welfare.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Huamual District is an area in West Seram Regency, Maluku Province, rich in natural resources, particularly mining. Every individual in the community desperately needs work, and mining provides opportunities for them to earn income to meet their daily needs. This activity is not only crucial for improving individual well-being but also plays a significant role in the family and community as a whole. Mining is not just a way to earn money; it is also linked to socioeconomic well-being, community development, and the environment, particularly in areas involved in illegal mining activities.

The Impact of Illegal Mining

1. Socioeconomic Welfare

The social welfare of illegal mining can be understood as an effort to develop ideas, strategies, and techniques to improve community welfare. Bellinda (2024) states that social welfare is also defined as a science that studies and develops a framework of thought and methodology that aims to improve the quality of life of the community through managing life needs and maximizing opportunities. As social beings, humans cannot live alone. From birth to death, we always need support from others, not only from family but also from our surroundings. Therefore, we need to support each other through cooperation and mutual assistance. In ongoing social interactions, there is a reciprocal relationship between

immigrants and local communities in mining areas, which will provide opportunities for the community to improve social welfare (Suciadi et al., 2020). This is also one of the most important steps that helps improve social welfare in the midst of or for the life of society.

Mining activities not only contribute to social welfare but also to the fulfillment and development of the community's economic well-being. A closer look reveals that mining activities can boost the overall supply of goods and services, as this request also affects the economy. This means that if identified systematically and structured using economics, the demand for goods and services thatsignificantcontribute influence to local communities to provide the necessary equipment and materials (Novila & Puansah, 2024). In this way, the community, which consists of both household mining workers and business owners, can both experience and enjoy the economic well-being resulting from the decisions and continuity of illegal mining.

In this process, it is crucial to consider the capabilities, efforts, and desires of each individual or entity involved. Furthermore, the economy is a crucial aspect of a region. This is because the economy itself is an indicator of community well-being, both in terms of individual economics and overall regional development. The presence of a mine in an area can significantly impact the economy of the surrounding community. For example, a copper mine operating in Huamual District, despite being unlicensed, provides a significant source of income for the local community.

To measure the socioeconomic well-being of a region, the basis for determining this is whether or not an individual or family has experienced the impacts of mining exploration. Mining helps boost income, providing a relatively normal daily income and offering direct involvement and participation in groups that benefit the wider community. Therefore, mining in Huamual District has an advantage in the copper mining sector, which operates without permits. However, it has a significant impact on the community, both individually and collectively, particularly in socioeconomic aspects. Evidence shows that before the mine's presence, residents predominantly relied directly on fishing and farming for their primary income. This phenomenon gradually shifted after the mine's operation, with many people flocking to new jobs as traditional miners while actively engaging in expanding their experience in micro, small, and medium enterprises (Suciadi et al., 2020).

As conveyed by Mr. Alfian, a newcomer to the mining area, He said:

> *"Thank God, the presence of the mine in Huamual District, West Seram Regency, has brought me joy. Besides providing for my daily needs, I have also found that I can cooperate with other people whom I initially did not know, until they became close*

friends during my travels. With the existence of the mine, I was able to find a new family who works together in the search for copper."

The results of the interview above show that illegal mining exploration has had a positive impact on social welfare in Huamual District, West Seram Regency. For newcomers, this mine not only provides employment opportunities that enable them to earn a living, but also allows them to build partnerships with the local community. Through this interaction, they can also strengthen social relationships and create emotional networks between fellow workers who are considered like family.

Meanwhile, what was conveyed by Mr. Anca as a miner (Information provided by an informant who asked the same thing) was that:

"Mining Without Boxes brings benefits to me and the underprivileged community. The mine's existence can bring happiness to my family's life by allowing us to buy what we want and enabling our children to attend school. College "Before the mine existed, we were still thinking about sending our children to school due to economic factors."

Interviews regarding economic well-being revealed that illegal mining can positively contribute to the economic well-being of communities in the Huamual District, West Seram Regency. The presence of illegal mining has improved the community's financial situation, enabling them to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, it has created opportunities for children's education and increased their income. Additionally, it has improved the lives of communities around mining sites. Previously, they considered education costs and daily necessities a burden. However, with the presence of the mine, they have the motivation to work hard to send their children to universities in Indonesia. They must compete with communities whose incomes are said to be sufficient to cover living expenses and education.

2. Community Development from Illegal Mining

Community development is a movement that aims to improve the quality of life as a whole through community participation to fulfill the required standard of living, as realized by the community, as the most important thing that needs to be realized. In the context of illegal mining areas (PETI), community development focuses on improving family conditions sustainably and encouraging community independence. Through mining activities, communities can sell a variety of food and beverages to meet their daily needs. Mining areas strive to develop sustainable and active family conditions based on the principles of justice and mutual respect for workers (Cahyantini et al., 2021). Development, according to Sulistiyani in Cahyantini et al. (2021), is seen as etymologically derived from the root word, namely, power, which is interpreted as strength or ability. Furthermore, the context of community development can also be interpreted as a process aimed at empowerment or the

process of providing power (strength/ability) to those who are not yet empowered. With the existence of mining, communities have the power and ability to be independent in their daily work.

In the management of illegal mining (PETI), the community plays a crucial role as a supporting factor in developing efforts to create a community economy. In mining areas, the community has small business opportunities in unlicensed mining locations. The impact of own (PETI) can be seen through the increase in community income. This indicates that increasing community income can stimulate the economy in Huamual District, West Seram Regency, in general (Azwari & Rajab, 2021). Participation communities exist at mining locations to facilitate public sales. Sahudi said that community participation is influenced by the willingness, ability, and opportunity to work.

Rifai said this as a seller in the mining area.

> *"Illegal Mining (PETI) brings prosperity to the community because it can develop the community through a community empowerment economy based on independence and wisdom. The concept of community development is based on the ability, independence, and skills of its members. People who are creative and innovative with their work have a unique function. Communities in mining areas have seen the benefits of mining since 2014, which have improved their economy."*

Interviews with informants revealed that communities in the illegal mining area have viewed this activity as a way to improve their economy since 2014. They have already benefited from the mining activity. PETI is not merely an illegal mining activity, but also a significant driver for improving the community's daily economy. Illegal mining brings prosperity to the community, enabling them to develop their potential in economic management. For example, the results of their fishing can be processed into smoked fish, which is then sold around the mining area. Furthermore, they are also creative in utilizing used bottles to make ice water containers combined with natural dyes. This provides an opportunity for them to sell ice in the mining area as an additional source of income.

In this way, communities not only gain independence but also skills that support community empowerment efforts. This initiative reflects the passion and creativity within them to improve their quality of life independently (Suryadi et al., 2020), Community development is a process that helps communities identify and solve the problems they face, while increasing their ability to overcome challenges and strengthening the capacity of the community.

Impact on the Community Environment

Copper mining activities are community activities at copper mining locations. Copper is a non-renewable natural resource. Unfortunately, this activity can cause damage to the ecosystem. This damage results in the ecosystem losing its ability to perform important functions, among them land protection, water management, air regulation, and various other functions that support environmental sustainability. Illegal mining or artisanal mining often brings disaster to the surrounding environment.

In general, the environmental impacts of mining activities include a decline in environmental quality, characterized by environmental pollution and land degradation. One practice carried out by miners is deforestation of forests to open up mining areas, including the excavation of ponds. Many excavated ponds that are left unfilled create unstable soil conditions. This increases the risk of natural disasters, such as landslides, which can endanger communities surrounding the mine (Efendi et al., 2023). The environment in mining areas without permits is a concern for the community regarding mining activities. Individuals or groups own mining activities in West Seram Regency. The community needs to understand the conditions of mining activities, which is crucial in understanding the impact of natural resources on ecosystems and the environment.

With a deeper understanding of environmental impacts, steps can be taken to maintain ecosystem sustainability and the well-being of communities at mining sites (Tunggala et al., 2024). Soil erosion increases the risk of flooding and landslides, damages agricultural land, and reduces soil fertility, all of which threaten environmental sustainability. Furthermore, indigenous communities in Huamual District, West Seram Regency, support mining exploration, which leads to the release of natural products that become mercury (Radio DMS, 2025). Therefore, it is important to note that government efforts have a complex and multidimensional impact on local communities around mining areas. Although the closure of the mine operating without permission can reduce the risk of pollution and work accidents, these rare events also have significant socioeconomic consequences, particularly in relation to the loss of livelihoods for communities that depend on miners as workers.

In addition, this information was delivered by Mr. Taslimin on March 25, 2025:

> *Of course, this land is owned by someone or is customary land. If I want to work in a mining area, I have to ask permission from the landowner. That is where the landowner states, in writing or verbally, that outsiders are allowed to work in the mining area but are not allowed to cause any disturbances, work the same as the landowner. From an economic perspective, it can bring prosperity to me and the community. We have a way to manage, but there are still manual methods for using*

machines to find copper. If we still use manual methods, it will not be as damaging to the ecosystem because it does not use hazardous materials.

The results of the interview above indicate that communities in working mining areas require a written or oral permit from the landowner. In addition, the ownerland will convey to workers that they should not make a commotion, so that they can work with local communities to fulfill their economic needs. Therefore, mining exploration without a permit brings welfare for the community. Therefore, community activities in mining still use traditional methods for copper. Meanwhile, mining that uses traditional methods does not have any adverse effects on the marine ecosystem, but it does damage customary land.

CONCLUSION

Illegal mining exploration (PETI) in the Huamual District, West Seram Regency, Maluku Province, has become a source of economic livelihood for local communities and migrants. Furthermore, communities in mining areas, which initially relied on fishermen and farmers for their livelihoods, have shifted to mining due to the presence of illegal mining, engaging in business activities within the mining area. Despite illegal mining activities, communities use traditional methods to improve socioeconomic well-being and community development. Therefore, mining provides employment opportunities, increases community income, and improves access to education and other basic needs.

Furthermore, mining will encourage community-based economic development, such as small businesses (food, beverage, and handicraft sales) that grow around mining sites, demonstrating community independence and innovation. However, unauthorized mining activities can have both positive and negative impacts on the community. Furthermore, communities are reluctant to allow companies to operate in mining areas due to concerns over transparency and corruption.

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