

MINING AND THE WELL-BEING OF INDIGENOUS PAPUANS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This systematic literature review examines whether mining activities in Papua have contributed to the welfare of Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua/OAP). Despite Papua's vast mineral wealth including copper, gold, and nickel. The region consistently records the highest poverty rates in Indonesia, presenting a classic resource curse paradox. This study synthesizes evidence from 24 peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and gray literature published between 2015 and 2025, with 75% from the last five years. The review identifies three principal forms of economic benefits generated by mining operations: employment opportunities, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and regional development contributions through taxes and royalties. However, the distribution of these benefits exhibits systematic inequality across three dimensions: between OAP and non-OAP (horizontal), within OAP communities (social fragmentation), and between mining and non-mining areas (spatial). Structural barriers include educational and skills gaps, limited political representation, weak regulatory enforcement, and the absence of binding benefit-sharing mechanisms such as Community Development Agreements (CDAs) found in comparable contexts like Papua New Guinea. The case of PT Gag Nikel in Raja Ampat illustrates how even active CSR programs operate without robust accountability structures, leaving OAP with minimal influence over resource governance. This review concludes that extractive activities in Papua remain inadequately designed to deliver inclusive outcomes for indigenous communities. Policy recommendations include legally mandated benefit-sharing frameworks, preferential employment quotas, and enforceable Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocols.

Keywords: Benefit Distribution, Indigenous People, Mining, Papua, Resource Curse

INTRODUCTION

Natural resources have long been regarded as a vital foundation for economic development, particularly for developing countries rich in minerals and metals. The mining industry has great potential to drive economic growth, boost government revenue, create jobs, and build infrastructure in remote areas. However, in the global reality, regions rich in natural resources often experience social inequality, high levels of poverty, and conflict—a paradox known in the literature as the ‘resource curse’. This phenomenon describes a situation where an abundance of natural resources does not automatically improve the welfare of local communities, particularly when the distribution of economic benefits is weak and resource governance is ineffective (Murillo & Sardon, 2024). This aligns with the findings of Carlesso et al., (2026), who highlight that the impacts of mining are multidimensional and often unfairly distributed, thereby exacerbating the structural vulnerabilities of local communities.

Research by Humphreys & Ann (2018) indicates that in many cases in developing countries, local communities living near mining areas often do not receive a proportional share of the economic benefits generated. This is due to power imbalances between companies, the government, and local communities in the negotiation and distribution of benefits. Papua is one of

the regions in Indonesia richest in natural resources. The province holds vast reserves of copper, gold, nickel, and natural gas (Pamungkas et al., 2022). The mining sector dominates Papua's Regional Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) and makes a significant contribution to national revenue. However, development data reveal a worrying paradox: Papua consistently ranks as the province with the highest poverty rate in Indonesia.

A study by Oktasari & Ananda (2020) found that growth in the mining sector is positively correlated with poverty levels in Papua, whilst development inequalities also have a negative impact on poverty alleviation efforts. In other words, the greater the contribution of the mining sector to the regional economy, the higher the poverty levels experienced by the local community, indicating a strong sign of the 'resource curse' in Papua. Research by Hidayatulloh & Erdős (2022) reinforces these findings by showing that although Papua is rich in natural resources, the indigenous communities of Papua still face complex development challenges, including widespread poverty, limited access to education, and sharp social inequalities between local communities and migrants. This study refers to this situation as the 'intricate injustice of poverty', where natural wealth fails to alter the fate of the communities who own the customary territories.

This phenomenon of inequality is not confined to Papua but is also reflected in other regions with large-scale mining activities. Research by Laia et al. (2025) on nickel mining in Raja Ampat demonstrates that extractive activities can trigger social fragmentation and widen socio-economic disparities at the local level. Eichhorn (2023) reveals that the exploitation of natural resources in Papua often takes place within a broader political-economic framework, where the interests of industry and the state hold dominant influence, whilst the participation of indigenous communities in decision-making processes is severely limited. This situation leads to an unequal distribution of economic benefits and the emergence of various forms of marginalisation against indigenous communities.

Although various studies have addressed the social impacts of mining in Papua, a research gap remains, as most existing studies focus primarily on environmental issues, macro-level policies, or conflicts in general. Research specifically examining the distribution of economic benefits from mining activities to the Indigenous Papuan People (OAP) at the local level, as well as their experiences and perceptions of this distribution process, remains relatively limited. Furthermore, there are few studies that systematically synthesise existing evidence regarding the effectiveness of mining benefit-sharing mechanisms for the OAP.

This systematic literature review aims to answer four main research questions: (1) What form do the economic benefits generated by mining activities in Papua take? (2) What is the pattern of distribution of these economic benefits amongst the Indigenous Papuan People? (3) What factors influence whether the distribution of economic benefits from mining amongst the Indigenous Papuan People is equitable or not? (4) What are the perceptions of the Indigenous Papuan community regarding the fairness of the distribution of mining economic benefits?

The novelty of this research lies in its systematic synthesis approach, which integrates evidence from various scattered sources, as well as the use of theoretical frameworks of distributive justice, the resource curse, and inclusive development to analyse the distribution patterns of mining benefits in Papua. Thus, this review is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of political economy studies of natural resources, as well as provide concrete policy recommendations for improving mining governance in the Papua region.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is a systematic literature review (SLR) that follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol. The application of the PRISMA protocol in this study refers to the recommendations of Eguny & Boakye-Danquah (2024), which emphasise the importance of strict reporting standards in systematic literature reviews, particularly to ensure the transparency and reproducibility of findings.

The literature search was conducted in the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases, as well as on the Garuda portal (garuda.kemdikbud.go.id) to access Indonesian-language literature. The keywords used included the following combinations: ('Papua' OR 'West Papua' OR 'Raja Ampat') AND ('mining' OR "extraction" OR 'pertambangan') AND ('indigenous' OR 'Orang Asli Papua' OR 'OAP' OR 'indigenous communities') AND ('benefit distribution' OR 'economic impact' OR 'welfare' OR 'CSR' OR 'corporate social responsibility' OR "poverty" OR 'inequality'). The search also included grey literature in the form of reports from non-governmental organisations (such as Walhi, Greenpeace Indonesia, EcoNusa) as well as government reports relevant to the topic. The selection process was carried out in three stages, namely:

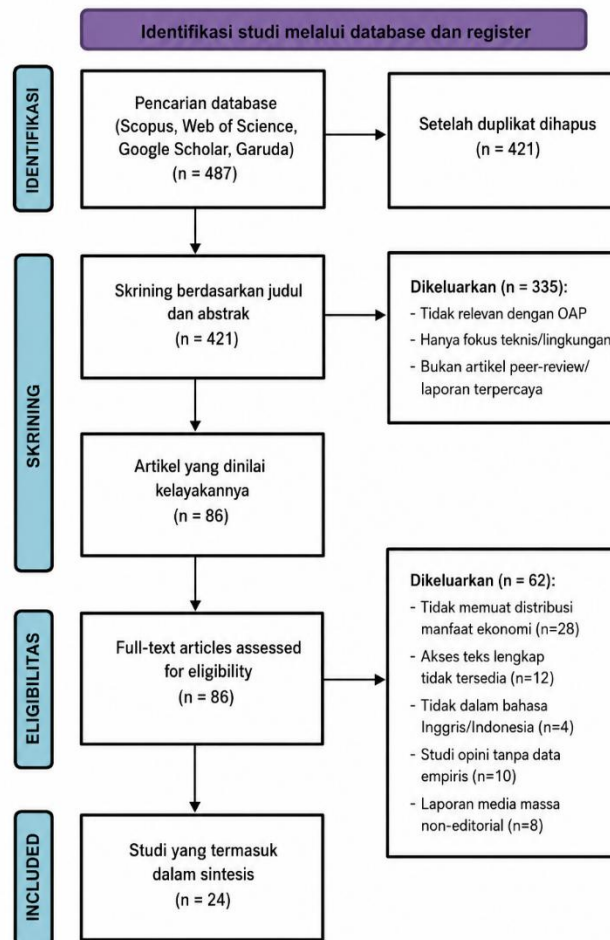


Figure 1. Flowchart of a prism

Source: Author's archives

The literature included in this review must meet the following inclusion criteria: (1) published between 2015 and 2025 (the last ten years, with at least 75% of the studies published in the last five years as of 2025/2026 to meet JEAP standards), (2) address the topic of mining and local communities/Indigenous Papuans, (3) contain empirical data or conceptual analysis regarding the distribution of economic benefits, (4) be available in Indonesian or English, (5) be peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, or official reports from reputable institutions. Exclusion criteria include: (1) opinion pieces without empirical data, (2) studies focusing solely on technical aspects of mining without socio-economic dimensions, (3) mass media reports that have not undergone a rigorous editorial process (used only as supporting data).

PRISMA Diagram Notes (following the format of Bastian et al.):

1. Of the 487 records found in the database, duplicates were removed, leaving 421.
2. Screening of titles and abstracts excluded 335 articles due to irrelevance, focus solely on technical/environmental aspects, or not being peer-reviewed articles/reliable reports, leaving 86.
3. The eligibility assessment excluded 62 articles, with the following breakdown: 28 did not discuss the distribution of economic benefits, 12 did not have full-text availability, 4 were not in English or Indonesian, 10 were opinions without empirical data, and 8 were non-editorial mass media reports. A total of 24 articles were analysed in this systematic literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Literature Analysed

Based on the 24 pieces of literature analysed, 18 articles (75%) were peer-reviewed scientific journal articles published within the last five years (2020–2025), in accordance with JEAP standards which require a minimum of 75% of references to be from scientific journals or research proceedings published within the last 5–10 years. Five articles were policy reports or research findings from non-governmental organisations, and one article was a book chapter. Geographically, 12 studies focused on Papua (Indonesia), five studies on a comparative region in the Pacific (Papua New Guinea), and seven studies discussed mining and indigenous peoples' issues in a comparative or theoretical manner. The majority of the studies employed a qualitative approach (17 studies), whilst the remainder used a quantitative approach (4 studies) or mixed-methods (3 studies).

Table 1. Distribution of Literature by Research Focus

Study Focus	Number	Percentage
Papua (Indonesia)	12	50%
Pacific Comparison (PNG and Others)	5	21%
Comparative/Theoretical Studies	7	29%
Total	24	100%

Source: Authors' analysis based on the reviewed literature.

The characteristics of this literature, which is dominated by qualitative studies, are consistent with the findings of Eguny & Boakye-Danquah (2024), who noted that 61% of studies on the socio-economic impacts of mining in Africa also employ a qualitative approach, indicating a global methodological trend in research on the extractive sector. However, (Egunyu & Boakye-Danquah, 2024) also criticise the fact that indigenous peoples are often not included as participants in such studies—a finding relevant to the context of Papua, where the representation of OAPs in research remains limited.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Studies Analyzed (n = 24)

No.	Author(s)	Method	Geographic Focus	Main Keywords	Key Findings on Benefit Distribution for Indigenous Papuans (OAP)
1	Pamungkas et al. (2022)	Qualitative (in-depth interviews)	Papua, Indonesia	Marginalization, depopulation, meaning of development	Indigenous Papuans experience marginalization in development processes; mining benefits do not

No.	Author(s)	Method	Geographic Focus	Main Keywords	Key Findings on Benefit Distribution for Indigenous Papuans (OAP)
2	Oktasari & Ananda (2020)	Quantitative (panel data)	Papua Province	Inequality, poverty, GRDP	proportionally reach local communities. Growth in the mining sector is positively associated with poverty; fiscal contributions have been ineffective in reducing poverty. Nickel mining activities have triggered community and family divisions; CSR programs remain largely non-participatory. Resource extraction functions as a mechanism of structural racism; Indigenous Papuan participation remains limited. Natural resource wealth has failed to improve Indigenous Papuans' welfare; development outcomes reflect complex forms of injustice. Affirmative policies remain weakly implemented; employment quotas for Indigenous Papuans are inadequately enforced. Limited access to higher education constrains Indigenous Papuans from obtaining employment opportunities in the mining sector.
3	Laia et al. (2025)	Qualitative (case study)	Raja Ampat, Papua	Social fragmentation, structural inequality	
4	Eichhorn (2023)	Critical discourse analysis	West Papua	Resource extraction, racism, political economy	
5	Hidayatulloh et al. (2022)	Qualitative (case study)	Papua, Indonesia	Poverty, injustice, land of gold	
6	Firman (2025)	Policy analysis	Papua Province	Special autonomy, affirmative politics	
7	Bagus et al. (2022)	Qualitative (interviews)	Papua	Education, social mobility	
8	Gusti Ayu et al. (2020)	Mixed methods (survey and FGD)	Several districts in Papua	Human capital quality, people-centered approach	Technical skills among Indigenous Papuans remain limited, leading

No.	Author(s)	Method	Geographic Focus	Main Keywords	Key Findings on Benefit Distribution for Indigenous Papuans (OAP)
9	Dilapanga et al. (2023)	Qualitative (case study)	Mining regions in Indonesia (including Papua)	Local communities, economic benefits	firms to prefer migrant workers. Economic gains are concentrated among companies and central authorities, while local communities receive limited benefits. Land is regarded as “Mother” by
10	Eliza (2018)	Phenomenological study	West Papua	Identity, customary land, special autonomy	Indigenous Papuans; resource exploitation that ignores cultural values undermines Indigenous identity. Rapid transitions from agriculture to
11	Gina et al. (2025)	Qualitative (interviews)	PT Pani Gold Project area	Socioeconomic impacts, livelihood change	mining-related activities have occurred, with insufficient community adaptation support. Significant declines in fish populations have been reported; compensation mechanisms remain poorly structured. Government
12	Walhi (2026)	Investigative report	Gag Island, Raja Ampat	Small-island carrying capacity, environmental degradation	intervention tends to be reactive, reflecting a pattern of performative governance. More than 60,000
13	NRGI (2025)	Policy report	Raja Ampat	Governance, government response	petition signatures oppose mining expansion, indicating strong public resistance. Mining concessions were allegedly
14	Greenpeace Indonesia (2025)	Advocacy report	Raja Ampat	Nickel mining threats, public petition	granted to politically connected elites, raising concerns
15	Tempo (2025)	Investigative journalism	Raja Ampat	Elite concessions, constitutional violations	

No.	Author(s)	Method	Geographic Focus	Main Keywords	Key Findings on Benefit Distribution for Indigenous Papuans (OAP)
16	Sorong Polytechnic Institute (2024)	Survey study	PT Gag Nikel area	Environmental impacts, public health	regarding legal compliance. Communities reported widespread concerns regarding dust, health problems, sedimentation, and coral reef degradation. Resource curse outcomes are more likely when benefit distribution mechanisms are weak and governance quality is poor.
17	Murillo & Sardon (2024)	Theoretical review	Global (comparative)	Commodity booms, state capacity	Political dimensions, particularly weak accountability, are highly relevant to the Papuan context. Significant power asymmetries persist between corporations, governments, and local communities.
18	Ross (2015)	Theoretical review	Global	Resource curse, economic, political, and conflict dimensions	Legally binding community development agreements increased local benefit-sharing to approximately 80%.
19	Humphreys & Ann (2018)	Comparative analysis	Developing countries (including PNG)	Governing extractive industries, power imbalance	Inclusive development requires transforming power relations among the state, market, and civil society.
20	Ok Tedi Mining Limited & Pemerintah PNG (dikutip dalam Laia et al.)	Policy study	Papua New Guinea	Community Mine Continuation Agreements (CMCA)	Inclusive development approaches are effective when supported by strong institutions and
21	Hickey et al. (2015)	Conceptual review	Global	Inclusive development, structural transformation	
22	Hyle et al. (2019)	Comparative study	Nepal and Tanzania	Empowerment of marginalized groups	

No.	Author(s)	Method	Geographic Focus	Main Keywords	Key Findings on Benefit Distribution for Indigenous Papuans (OAP)
23	Wong (2021)	Scientometric review	Global (1993–2020)	Resource curse, Dutch disease, conflict	meaningful participation. Maps the evolution of resource curse scholarship and highlights its relevance to resource-rich but impoverished regions. Dutch disease effects and commodity price volatility contribute to dependency and persistent poverty.
24	Sachs (1995)	Theoretical study	Global (developing countries)	Natural resource abundance, economic growth	

Note: This table summarizes 24 studies included in the review, comprising peer-reviewed journal articles, NGO reports, and policy reports. Of these, 18 studies (75%) were published within the last five years (2020–2025), consistent with JEAP's preference for recent and relevant literature.

Economic Benefits of Mining: Forms and Mechanisms

One of the main forms of economic benefit generated by the mining industry is the creation of formal employment. Several studies indicate that mining companies in Papua provide employment opportunities for local communities, both as operational mine workers and as workers in other supporting sectors. However, these findings reveal a complex pattern. A study by (Pamungkas et al., 2022) shows that indigenous Papuans (OAP) often occupy only low-skilled positions, whilst managerial and technical roles are dominated by migrant workers. This is due to a significant gap in access to education and training between OAP and non-OAP.

A study by Bagus et al. (2022) on the social mobility of OAPs through education reveals that the education system in Papua has not yet been able to provide the skills required by the modern mining industry. The lack of educational infrastructure, the scarcity of qualified teachers, and the low school attendance rates among OAPs are the main factors hindering the enhancement of OAP human resource capacity to access formal employment in the mining sector. An empirical study by (Gusti Ayu Ketut Surtiari, Haning Romdiati, Luh Kitty Katherina, Dwiyantri Kusumaningrum, 2020) on the quality of OAP human resources found that technical skills relevant to the mining industry remain very limited among OAP, leading companies to prefer recruiting workers from outside the region who are considered more ready for work. More broadly, (Carlesso et al., 2026) identified that economic dependence on the mining sector emerged as the most dominant indicator (91.2%) in their global review, meaning that communities around mines are heavily reliant on a single extractive sector—a condition that increases structural vulnerability and exacerbates the impact of commodity price fluctuations.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes are the primary instruments used by mining companies to channel economic benefits to communities surrounding the mine. PT Gag Nikel, as the only active nickel mining company in the Raja Ampat area, runs eight CSR programmes covering education, health, real income or employment, the economy, social issues, the environment, institutional capacity, and infrastructure. In theory, these CSR programmes have the potential to improve community welfare through improved access to basic services and economic capacity building. However, the studies analysed reveal several systemic weaknesses in the implementation of CSR in Papua. Firstly, CSR programmes are often designed in a top-down manner

without meaningful participation from local communities. (Laia et al., 2025) found that although CSR programmes in Raja Ampat cover various aspects, local communities feel they are not sufficiently involved in the planning and evaluation processes. Consequently, CSR programmes often fail to align with the community's actual priorities and needs.

Secondly, CSR distribution mechanisms tend to favour specific community groups, reinforcing existing social fragmentation. A study by (Laia et al., 2025) shows that the presence of nickel mining in Raja Ampat has led to the division of communities and even families at the local level. The extractive industry disrupts the social order by benefiting certain community members whilst excluding others. This situation makes it difficult to uphold claims of compliance with the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

These findings on social fragmentation are consistent with (Carlesso et al., 2026), who reported that loss of livelihoods emerged as the most frequent social indicator (91.2%) in the global literature, followed by inequality (84.2%) and conflict (82.5%). These three indicators accurately reflect the dynamics occurring in Papua, where the presence of mines not only shifts the economic structure but also deepens internal social tensions. On a macro scale, the mining industry makes a significant contribution to regional revenue through taxes, royalties and profit-sharing. In theory, these funds should be allocated to infrastructure development and public services that benefit the entire community, including the OAP. However, a study by (Oktasari & Ananda, 2020) reveals a disconnect between the mining sector's contribution to the GRDP and poverty levels in Papua. The results of their panel data analysis show that the growth rate of the mining sector actually had a positive impact on poverty levels in Papua Province during the period 2010–2018. In other words, an increase in the mining sector's contribution to the regional economy was not accompanied by a reduction in poverty levels; in fact, the opposite tended to be the case.

A study by (Dilapanga et al., 2023) on communities living near mining areas in Indonesia found that the economic benefits of the extractive industry are often reaped primarily by companies or the central government, whilst local communities derive only limited benefits. Weak governance and a lack of transparency in the management of royalty funds are the main factors leading to the failure to allocate resources for the benefit of local communities. Similar criticism was also expressed in a Tempo pamphlet (2025), which stated that the granting of nickel mining concessions in Raja Ampat violated the constitution and amounted to concessions for the ruling party's elite and government-backed conglomerates.

Distribution of Benefits: Patterns and Inequalities

The most striking dimension of inequality is the disparity in access to economic benefits between the indigenous Papuan population and migrants. Several studies consistently show that migrants have easier access to job opportunities, business contracts, and CSR programmes compared to the indigenous Papuan population. (Pamungkas et al., 2022) found that development processes in Papua, including those originating from the mining sector, often fail to fully take into account the cultural values and social systems of indigenous communities. This results in the indigenous Papuan population experiencing various forms of marginalisation and exclusion within the development process.

Firman's (2025) research on Papua's special autonomy reveals that although affirmative policies have been designed to protect and empower indigenous Papuans, their implementation on the ground remains far from expectations. Affirmative policies such as employment quotas and special funding allocations have not yet been translated into operational mechanisms that can be legally enforced. Consequently, the economic benefits of mining flow more frequently out of Papua than towards improving the welfare of the indigenous population.

Extractive activities often disrupt the livelihood systems of indigenous communities and create new inequalities within the local socio-economic structure (Gilberthope, 2014). This phenomenon is reflected in the Papuan context, where mining activities trigger social fragmentation within the OAP community itself. Laia et al. (2025) documented that mining activities

in Raja Ampat have caused community divisions and even rifts within families. The presence of the extractive industry disrupts the social order by benefiting some community members whilst excluding others. This creates a new patron-client dynamic in which certain individuals or groups with better access to companies or the government act as intermediaries in the distribution of benefits, whilst other community members are marginalised.

This phenomenon of social fragmentation is problematic because it not only creates economic inequality but also undermines social capital—the networks of trust and cooperation that have long formed the foundation of indigenous communities' communal life. A study by Gina et al. (2025) on the socio-economic impacts of mining on surrounding communities also identified sudden changes in traditional livelihood structures, which are often not matched by adequate adaptive capacity. Communities that previously relied on agriculture or fisheries have shifted to the mining sector or other related jobs. However, sudden economic dependence on a single sector leaves communities vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and corporate policies.

Spatial inequality is reflected in the imbalance in development between areas serving as mining hubs and other regions, as well as between coastal areas (where many OAP communities reside) and mining operation sites, which are typically located in the interior or on small islands. Research by (Walhi, 2026) criticises government policy for still permitting PT Gag Nickel to operate on Gag Island, despite the fact that small islands have limited environmental carrying capacity and low resilience. Local communities report a drastic decline in fish populations; the coastal ecosystems that have long been their source of livelihood have been transformed into loading docks for nickel ore.

The question that arises is: if this environmental damage has a direct impact on the livelihoods of OAPs, how much compensation do they receive? Available data indicates that this spatial inequality is exacerbated by the absence of structured and transparent compensation mechanisms.

Factors Contributing to Inequalities in Benefit Distribution

One of the most significant factors perpetuating the unequal distribution of benefits is institutional weakness in the governance of natural resources. Research on Papua New Guinea conducted by Ok Tedi Mining Limited and the PNG government highlights the importance of legal instruments such as Community Mine Continuation Agreements (CMCA), which incorporate compensation and development packages for communities living near mines. In West Papua, there is no comparable and binding legal mechanism such as the CDA (Community Development Agreement) as a standard in the benefit distribution toolkit. Consequently, mining companies in Papua have considerable freedom to determine the form and extent of their contributions to the community themselves.

The second factor is the weakness of oversight and law enforcement. The granting of mining permits in Raja Ampat, which contravenes Article 35(k) of Law No. 27 of 2007 on the Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands—which explicitly prohibits mining activities on small islands—demonstrates just how weak law enforcement is in this sector. A study by NRGi (2025) notes that the government's response to public protests over mining in Raja Ampat has been reactive rather than proactive, driven by public outrage rather than a systematic oversight system. The government moves to quell protests by revoking problematic permits, only to reinstate them once public attention wanes—a pattern referred to as 'performative governance'.

The literature consistently identifies gaps in human resource capacity as a key factor hindering OAPs' access to the economic benefits of mining. A study by (Gusti Ayu Ketut Surtiari, Haning Romdiati, Luh Kitty Katherina, DwiYanti Kusumaningrum, 2020) on the quality of OAP human resources indicates that limitations in formal and vocational education render OAP less competitive in a labour market requiring technical skills. The same census also indicates that literacy rates among OAPs still lag behind the national average, whilst access to vocational training relevant to the mining industry remains severely limited.

Research by Bagus et al. (2022) reinforces these findings by demonstrating that education and social mobility for OAPs are closely interlinked. They found that although access to basic education has improved, the quality of education remains low, and there is a significant gap in access to higher education and skills training. Consequently, even when CSR programmes include job training, OAP participation is often hindered by low levels of basic education, which render them ineligible for such training.

From a political economy perspective, the management of extractive industries is inseparable from power relations between the state, companies, and local communities (Humphreys & Ann, 2018). A third crucial factor is the imbalance in power relations between OAP communities, companies, and the government. An analysis by Eichhorn (2023) on resource extraction as a tool of racism in West Papua demonstrates that the exploitation of natural resources occurs within a broader political-economic framework where the interests of industry and the state hold significant influence, whilst the participation of indigenous communities in decision-making processes remains severely limited. This study reveals how rhetoric and structural discrimination work to perpetuate the expropriation of value from Papua.

This phenomenon is reflected in the mining permit process in Raja Ampat, which is strongly suspected of being a concession for the ruling party's elite and government-backed conglomerates. Tempo (2025) even reported that Bahlil Lahadalia, who at the time served as Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, revoked the licences of four mining companies but instead revived the licence of one company and issued a new licence to another company in his capacity as a relevant official prior to his appointment. Although these allegations require further verification, this scenario is highly likely to occur if public accountability does not function properly. At the local level, a study by Eliza (2018) shows that the land and natural resources of Papua hold profound significance for the Indigenous Papuan People (OAP), not only as an economic resource but also as an integral part of their cultural identity and the sustainability of their way of life. However, in practice, these cultural interests are often overlooked due to the unequal power relations between the politically disorganised OAP communities and companies possessing substantial legal and economic resources.

Community Perceptions of Fairness in Benefit Distribution

A synthesis of research examining the perceptions of the OAP community regarding mining activities reveals a complex and often contradictory picture. Several studies report that the OAP community is not uniformly opposed to mining. In some areas, there are OAP groups that support mining due to the potential for employment and economic benefits, whilst other groups oppose it due to concerns about environmental and social impacts.

A survey conducted by the Sorong Polytechnic Institute in 2024, funded by PT Gag Nikel itself, revealed widespread public complaints regarding dust, health issues, sedimentation and coral damage. These findings contrast with the government's claim that the impacts are minimal. Over 60,000 people have signed a Greenpeace petition opposing mining in Raja Ampat, indicating that public resistance is not a marginal phenomenon but reflects significant collective concern.

The study by Pamungkas et al. (2022) on "The Meaning of Development for Indigenous Papuans" found that Indigenous Papuan communities have a different understanding of development compared to the government or companies. For Indigenous Papuans, development does not merely mean economic growth or the construction of physical infrastructure, but also encompasses recognition of customary land rights, environmental protection, and participation in decision-making processes. When development is measured solely by conventional economic indicators, the perspectives of indigenous communities are often overlooked.

Eliza (2018) emphasises that the identity of the Indigenous Papuan People is closely tied to customary land. Land is not merely an economic commodity but a "Mother" that sustains life. The exploitation of natural resources without considering this cultural significance is perceived as a form of symbolic violence that wounds their collective identity. This perspective is important because it

demonstrates that the unfair distribution of economic benefits is not merely a matter of material inequality, but also a matter of respect for human dignity and fundamental rights.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review addresses the question of whether mining improves the welfare of the Indigenous Papuan People, with findings that are complex but tend to point to a disappointing conclusion: to date, the distribution of economic benefits from mining activities in Papua remains highly unequal and has not improved the welfare of the Indigenous Papuan People equitably.

Although mining activities generate three main forms of economic benefit—formal employment opportunities, CSR programmes and social development, and fiscal contributions to regional development—the distribution of these benefits is uneven. This inequality manifests in three dimensions: between Indigenous Papuans and migrants (horizontal), within Indigenous Papuan communities themselves (social fragmentation), and between mining areas and other regions (spatial). The main factors causing this inequality include institutional weaknesses and poor law enforcement, the limited capacity of the indigenous population's human resources, and the imbalance of power relations within the political economy of natural resources. Most concerning is that a study by Oktasari, Ananda, & Sasongko (2020) shows that the growth rate of the mining sector is positively correlated with poverty levels, whilst findings by various NGOs and investigative journalists indicate that mining concessions are granted in a discriminatory manner, benefiting a small political and economic elite. The case of PT Gag Nikel, which was permitted to continue operating despite violating the Small Islands Act and despite its own internal study identifying negative impacts on the environment and public health, highlights distortions in the governance of natural resources in Papua.

The most significant finding of this review is the identification of critical gaps in the policy framework: the absence of binding legal mechanisms such as Community Development Agreements (CDAs) found in Papua New Guinea and other countries with advanced extractive industries. In the absence of a clear framework with independent monitoring and clear sanctions, the bargaining power of OAP communities is virtually non-existent and corporate accountability is practically non-functional.

Based on the above findings, several policy recommendations can be formulated:

Firstly, the central and regional governments need to seriously revise and enforce the legal framework governing the distribution of mining benefits. Article 35(k) of Law No. 27 of 2007, which prohibits mining on small islands, must be enforced without exception; or, if exceptions are permitted, clear, proportionate and publicly monitorable compensation mechanisms must be established.

Secondly, mining companies operating in Papua must be required to sign legally binding Community Development Agreements (CDAs). CDAs must include an integrated compensation package, participatory community development programmes, independent monitoring mechanisms, and clear sanctions for non-compliance. Models from Papua New Guinea, such as the CMCA for the Ok Tedi mine which delivers up to an 80% increase in benefits, can be adapted to the Papuan context.

Thirdly, more operational and enforceable affirmative action policies are needed to improve OAP access to employment in the mining sector. This includes legally binding employment quotas, scholarship and vocational training programmes specifically targeted at OAP, as well as incentives for companies that prioritise the recruitment and promotion of OAP.

Fourthly, an independent and accessible community grievance mechanism must be established to enable OAP communities to report various forms of violations, ranging from environmental damage to workplace discrimination, without fear of intimidation. Currently, such mechanisms are very weak or non-existent.

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