

The Paradox of Social Cohesion and Fragmentation in Local Conflicts in North Maluku during 2022 to 2023

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the paradox of social cohesion and fragmentation in local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022-2023 amid the expansion of extractive industries and socio-economic contestation. The research aims to analyze how community solidarity persisted while social fragmentation simultaneously intensified within local conflict dynamics. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using document analysis and library research methods. Data were collected from academic journals, online news reports, NGO publications, and policy documents related to social conflict and extractive industry activities in North Maluku published during 2022-2023. The findings indicate that social cohesion remained visible through communal solidarity and collective resistance, while fragmentation emerged due to economic inequality, competing interests, and local political influence. The study highlights that local conflicts in North Maluku reflect broader structural and socio-political tensions beyond identity-based disputes

INTRODUCTION

Local conflicts in North Maluku during the 2022–2023 period demonstrated increasingly complex social dynamics amid the acceleration of natural resource-based industrialization, particularly within the nickel mining sector. The expansion of extractive industry investment in Halmahera and surrounding areas significantly contributed to regional economic growth, while simultaneously generating social inequality, conflicts over living spaces, and transformations in local social relations. Data indicated that North Maluku experienced economic growth reaching 20.49% in 2023, largely driven by the mining and nickel processing industries, particularly in Central Halmahera (CELIOS, 2025). However, such economic growth was not consistently followed by equitable social welfare distribution or strengthened social cohesion at the local level. This condition illustrates that extractive industrial expansion has not only produced economic transformation but also intensified social tensions contributing to growing fragmentation within local communities.

The phenomenon of social conflict in North Maluku's mining regions has evolved beyond purely economic disputes and is increasingly associated with social identity, resource distribution, and power relations among communities, the state, and corporations. From the perspective of conflict sociology, rapid economic structural transformation frequently triggers social disorganization, particularly when local communities face pressures on their living spaces and traditional livelihoods. Yusuf and Rustam (2024) argued that mining conflicts in North Maluku were influenced by limited community participation in policy-making processes, unequal distribution of economic benefits, and environmental degradation caused by nickel industrial activities. Meanwhile, a report by Climate Rights International (2024) revealed that communities surrounding the IWIP industrial area continue to experience environmental pollution, loss of access to natural resources, and weak protection of affected community rights. These conditions demonstrate that local conflicts in North Maluku have developed into multidimensional issues involving social, ecological, economic, and political aspects simultaneously.

Studies concerning social conflict and extractive industries have expanded considerably in recent years. Deni and Kristanto (2024) highlighted corrupt practices within the nickel mining industry that contributed to agrarian conflicts, economic inequality, and environmental degradation in North Maluku. Similarly, Muflih et al. (2024) explained that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs implemented by mining companies in Halmahera have not significantly reduced socio-ecological impacts because their implementation remains exclusive and lacks participatory mechanisms. Other studies have further emphasized that the acceleration of nickel downstream industrialization in Indonesia has increased environmental and social pressures on local communities due to the massive expansion of extractive industrial zones (Nasution et al., 2024). Nevertheless, previous studies have predominantly focused on economic impacts, environmental degradation, and mining policies, while the paradoxical dynamics between social cohesion and fragmentation within local conflicts remain insufficiently explored in depth.

This research gap indicates that studies on local conflicts in North Maluku still require a more comprehensive approach to understanding transformations in social relations amid extractive industrial pressures. Previous studies have often positioned communities merely as impacted groups without critically examining how social solidarity persists despite increasing social polarization and conflicts of interest. In reality, indigenous-based social cohesion, local community solidarity, and collective social networks in North Maluku remain relatively strong even as social fragmentation intensifies due to competition over economic access, political interests, and local elite influence. Recent studies have argued that communities affected by extractive industries frequently experience the simultaneous coexistence of social cohesion and fragmentation, as collective identities and local solidarity continue to develop alongside increasing competition over resources and unequal power relations (Matanzima & Loginova, 2024; Hanaček et al., 2024). Such conditions create a social paradox that is highly relevant to be examined through the perspectives of conflict sociology and social cohesion theory. Therefore, this study offers novelty by positioning local conflict in North Maluku not solely as a form of social contestation, but also as an arena for the simultaneous reproduction of solidarity and fragmentation within society.

Theoretically, this study employs conflict sociology and the concept of social cohesion to explain how social relations within communities undergo transformation due to structural pressures generated by extractive industrial expansion. From the perspective of conflict theory, changes in the distribution of power and resources may produce social inequalities that encourage resistance as well as social polarization within communities. At the same time, the concept of social cohesion explains that communities retain the capacity to build collective solidarity through cultural values, local identities, and community social networks. Contemporary literature further suggests that social cohesion should not be understood merely as the absence of conflict but as the capacity of communities to maintain trust, cooperation, and collective action despite structural tensions arising from rapid socio-economic transformation (Muhammad et al., 2024; Waara, 2025). Accordingly, this study seeks to explain the dialectical relationship between social solidarity and fragmentation in local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022–2023. Furthermore, this research contributes practically to the development of social policy and community-based conflict management, particularly within extractive industrial regions experiencing rapid social transformation.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the paradox of social cohesion and fragmentation in local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022–2023. The research specifically focuses on identifying forms of social cohesion within communities, factors contributing to social fragmentation, and the dynamics of power relations influencing local conflicts amid extractive industrial expansion. This study is expected to contribute to the advancement of conflict sociology studies, particularly concerning transformations in social relations within mining industrial regions, while also serving as a reference for developing more inclusive and socially just development policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Cohesion in the Perspective of Conflict Sociology

The concept of social cohesion has evolved as one of the important approaches in sociological studies to understand society's ability to maintain social solidarity amid structural transformation and social conflict. Social cohesion is not merely interpreted as harmonious relations among groups, but also includes social trust, collective solidarity, a sense of belonging, and the ability of communities to establish cooperation in responding to social and economic pressures. Within the context of local communities in extractive industrial areas, social cohesion often functions as a social mechanism that preserves community stability during periods of rapid social transformation. According to Schiefer and van der Noll (2021), social cohesion is formed through social integration, mutual trust, and community attachment to collective identities that develop within particular social spaces. Similarly, Dragolov et al. (2022) explained that social cohesion is closely associated with society's capacity to sustain solidarity amid increasing economic inequality and social conflict resulting from modern development transformation. The theoretical foundation of social cohesion is also strongly influenced by Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity, which emphasizes that social integration and collective consciousness are essential elements in maintaining social order within society (Durkheim, 1984).

From the perspective of conflict sociology, changes in economic structures resulting from natural resource-based industrialization may trigger social tensions that weaken local social integration. Conflict theory explains that unequal distribution of power and access to resources tends to generate social competition, domination by certain groups, and resistance from marginalized communities. Karl Marx argued that social conflict fundamentally emerges from unequal ownership of economic resources and class domination within capitalist systems (Marx & Engels, 2021). In the context of extractive industries, Ruggiero and South (2022) emphasized that conflicts are not solely driven by economic competition, but are also related to struggles over living spaces, social identity, and legitimacy of authority among local communities, the state, and corporations. Likewise, Sovacool et al. (2023) asserted that the expansion of global mining industries frequently creates resource-based social fragmentation, particularly when economic development is not accompanied by equitable distribution of benefits for affected communities. In North Maluku, these conditions are reflected in the increasing social conflicts within nickel industrial regions that reveal a paradox between community solidarity and social fragmentation among local societies.

Social Fragmentation and Extractive Industries

Social fragmentation refers to a condition in which social relations within society experience division due to conflicts of interest, economic inequality, and rapid structural transformation. In extractive industrial regions, social fragmentation often emerges because of unequal economic access, land disputes, and the emergence of groups that either benefit from or are disadvantaged by

industrial activities. According to Bebbington et al. (2021), extractive industrial expansion in developing countries frequently produces exclusive forms of social transformation that widen social inequality among local communities. Furthermore, Gudynas (2021) explained that industrialization based on natural resource extraction often creates development patterns that encourage economic dependency, marginalization of indigenous communities, and prolonged social conflict. These arguments are closely related to dependency theory, which explains that extractive economic systems tend to place peripheral communities in structurally unequal positions within global capitalist development (Fischer, 2023).

In the Indonesian context, social conflict in mining regions has intensified alongside the acceleration of nickel downstream industrialization in recent years. Rahman and Setiawan (2023) demonstrated that nickel industrial zones in Eastern Indonesia face serious issues related to agrarian conflict, environmental degradation, and transformations in local employment structures caused by extractive industrial domination. Likewise, Haris and Mulyadi (2024) found that social conflict in mining areas is influenced not only by economic factors, but also by local elite intervention and weak community participation in development policy-making processes. These conditions indicate that social fragmentation in local conflict cannot simply be understood as horizontal conflict, but rather reflects broader structural inequality and power dynamics. This perspective is reinforced by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital, which explains that unequal access to economic, social, and political capital significantly contributes to social exclusion and fragmentation within communities (Bourdieu, 2020; Svendsen & Svendsen, 2023).

Local Conflict, Power Relations, and Structural Inequality

Studies on local conflict in modern societies have increasingly developed through the approaches of political sociology and political ecology, both of which emphasize the importance of power relations in understanding social conflict. Local conflict is not merely viewed as confrontation among community groups, but also as a consequence of unequal relations between the state, corporations, and local communities in the governance of natural resources. According to Martinez-Alier et al. (2023), ecological conflicts in mining regions emerge due to unequal distribution of economic benefits and increasing environmental degradation that threatens the sustainability of local communities. Meanwhile, Temper et al. (2022) emphasized that resource-based conflicts frequently reflect structural injustice because local communities possess weaker bargaining positions compared to states and large corporations. This argument is closely associated with Michel Foucault's perspective on power relations, which explains that power operates through institutional structures, knowledge systems, and social mechanisms that regulate access to resources and social legitimacy (Foucault, 2021; Dean & Villadsen, 2021).

In the case of North Maluku, local conflict dynamics have also been influenced by economic transformation resulting from the expansion of large-scale nickel industries. Fauzi and Hidayat (2024) demonstrated that extractive

industrial growth in Halmahera has transformed social relations through increasing urbanization, competition over economic access, and shifts in local cultural practices. In addition, Lestari et al. (2023) explained that social conflicts in mining regions of Eastern Indonesia are often intensified by weak protection of indigenous rights and limited transparency in natural resource governance. These findings indicate that local conflict in North Maluku is not solely associated with social identity issues, but also reflects structural inequality embedded within extractive-based economic development processes. Therefore, understanding local conflict requires an integrated perspective that simultaneously considers social, political, ecological, and economic dimensions.

Previous Studies and Research Gap

Numerous previous studies have examined the social and ecological impacts of extractive industries in Indonesia; however, most have primarily focused on economic impacts, environmental degradation, and mining policies. Walter et al. (2021) mainly emphasized the relationship between mining industries and ecological destruction in developing countries without comprehensively examining the dynamics of local social cohesion. Meanwhile, Arifin and Nugroho (2022) discussed agrarian conflicts in mining regions of Sulawesi and Maluku, but did not explain how social solidarity persisted amid increasing social polarization within communities. Another study by Kimura (2024) highlighted the impact of nickel industrialization on local economic transformation in Eastern Indonesia, yet did not connect the phenomenon with the paradox of social cohesion and social fragmentation. Most previous studies still positioned communities merely as affected groups without critically examining how local solidarity survives amid industrial pressure, political contestation, and unequal economic access.

Based on these studies, a significant research gap remains, indicating that studies on local conflict in North Maluku have not sufficiently positioned communities as social actors simultaneously experiencing solidarity and fragmentation within conflict situations. Previous studies largely overlooked how community-based social cohesion persists amid conflicts of interest, economic inequality, and extractive industrial domination. Therefore, this study becomes important because it offers a new perspective in understanding local conflict as an arena for the simultaneous reproduction of social solidarity and social fragmentation within society. This research also contributes theoretically to the development of conflict sociology and social cohesion studies, while practically contributing to community-based conflict management within extractive industrial regions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a document analysis design to examine the paradox of social cohesion and fragmentation in local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022–2023. The qualitative approach was selected because the study does not seek to measure statistical causality, but

rather to interpret social meanings, conflict narratives, and patterns of social relations emerging within local conflict dynamics. Qualitative research is widely recognized as appropriate for investigating complex social phenomena in their natural and contextual settings, particularly when researchers aim to understand meanings, experiences, and social processes rather than numerical patterns (Tracy, 2020). In this research, document analysis served as the primary design because the data were obtained from written and publicly accessible sources, including academic literature, media publications, institutional reports, and policy documents. The analysis focused exclusively on documents published between January 2022 and December 2023 to ensure consistency with the temporal scope of the study and to capture the most relevant conflict dynamics during the selected period. According to Bowen (2021), document analysis enables researchers to systematically examine existing texts in order to identify patterns, meanings, and empirical insights without requiring direct interaction with participants.

Population and Sampling Strategy

The population of this study consisted of all publicly accessible documents related to local conflict, social cohesion, social fragmentation, extractive industries, nickel mining, and socio-political dynamics in North Maluku during the 2022–2023 period. Since the research focused on textual materials rather than human participants, the unit of analysis comprised documents instead of individuals. The sampling technique applied in this study was purposive sampling, which is categorized as a non-probability sampling technique based on the relevance and appropriateness of documents to the research objectives. The selected documents had to fulfill several inclusion criteria, direct relevance to North Maluku or extractive industry conflicts in Eastern Indonesia, discussion of at least one major concept such as social cohesion, fragmentation, local conflict, structural inequality, or power relations, and accessibility through academic databases, official institutional websites, credible media platforms, or non-governmental organization publications. Documents that were anonymous, unverifiable, irrelevant to the research focus, or lacking empirical context were excluded from the research corpus. Purposive sampling is considered effective in qualitative inquiry because it allows researchers to select information-rich sources capable of providing deep contextual understanding of the studied phenomenon (Campbell et al., 2020). The sampling process continued until the collected documents adequately represented the diversity of conflict narratives, institutional perspectives, and social issues relevant to the research objectives, thereby providing sufficient analytical depth for thematic interpretation.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection technique employed in this study was documentation. The collected materials included academic journal articles, online news reports, institutional publications, government documents, policy reports, and non-governmental organization publications related to social conflict and extractive industries in North Maluku. Documents were identified using several keywords,

including “local conflict in North Maluku,” “social cohesion,” “social fragmentation,” “nickel mining conflict,” “extractive industry in Halmahera,” “IWIP,” “structural inequality,” and “community conflict in mining regions.” Each document underwent a screening process based on title, abstract, publication year, institutional source, thematic relevance, and publisher credibility. To maintain the quality and trustworthiness of the data, the study prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles, official institutional reports, and publications from recognized organizations. According to O’Leary (2021), documentation techniques in qualitative research require systematic searching, selection, extraction, and organization of textual data to ensure meaningful and reliable findings. Following the screening process, the selected documents were catalogued in a document inventory sheet containing bibliographic information, document type, publication source, publication year, key issues, and preliminary analytical notes before being imported into the coding process.

Research Implementation Stages

The implementation of this research was conducted through several systematic stages. First, the researcher formulated the research problem by focusing on the paradoxical relationship between social cohesion and social fragmentation in local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022–2023. Second, the researcher identified relevant theoretical frameworks, including conflict sociology, social cohesion theory, social fragmentation, structural inequality, and power relations. Third, relevant documents were collected using predetermined keywords and inclusion criteria. Fourth, the selected documents were organized into a structured data matrix containing information about the author or institution, publication year, document type, geographical focus, main issue, and relevance to the research questions. Fifth, the researcher conducted repeated readings of the documents to identify recurring narratives, conflict actors, conflict patterns, and forms of social cohesion and fragmentation. During this stage, relevant information was systematically highlighted and grouped according to the preliminary coding categories to facilitate subsequent thematic analysis. Similar patterns identified across different documents were continuously compared to ensure consistency in theme development and interpretation. Finally, the researcher interpreted the findings by connecting empirical evidence with theoretical concepts and previous studies. This systematic procedure is important in qualitative inquiry to ensure analytical consistency and interpretive depth throughout the research process (Silverman, 2022).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by qualitative content analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, categorize, and interpret major themes emerging from the collected documents, including community solidarity, collective resistance, economic inequality, elite intervention, environmental conflict, and unequal power relations. According to Terry et al. (2021), thematic analysis is an effective qualitative analytical method for identifying patterns of meaning within textual data through coding,

categorization, and interpretive theme development. The analysis process in this study involved several stages, namely document familiarization, initial coding, categorization of codes into themes, theme review, thematic interpretation, and analytical narrative writing. In addition, qualitative content analysis was used to examine how social conflict, cohesion, and fragmentation were represented across different forms of documents. Open coding was first conducted to identify meaningful statements related to social cohesion, fragmentation, conflict actors, and power relations. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader analytical categories, which were then refined into overarching themes through an iterative comparison process. The resulting themes were continuously reviewed against the original documents to ensure that the interpretations accurately reflected the empirical evidence. To support data management and coding organization, the researcher utilized Microsoft Excel for document mapping and NVivo software for coding and thematic categorization.

Trustworthiness and Research Validity

The validity and trustworthiness of this study were maintained through source triangulation, document credibility assessment, and audit trail procedures. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from academic journals, media reports, institutional publications, policy documents, and non-governmental organization reports. Document credibility assessment involved examining authorship, publication source, institutional affiliation, publication year, and thematic relevance of each document. Furthermore, an audit trail was maintained by documenting the processes of document selection, coding decisions, thematic construction, and interpretation procedures. In qualitative research, trustworthiness can be strengthened through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, particularly when researchers provide transparent explanations regarding data sources, analytical procedures, and interpretive logic (Nowell & Albrecht, 2024). To enhance credibility, inconsistencies identified across different document sources were carefully re-examined through cross-document comparison until coherent interpretations were achieved. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining detailed records of coding decisions and analytical revisions throughout the research process, enabling transparency and methodological consistency. Therefore, this methodological design was developed to ensure that the study could be replicated by other researchers using similar keywords, inclusion criteria, and analytical procedures.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Persistence of Social Cohesion amid Local Conflict Dynamics

The findings of this study indicate that social cohesion in North Maluku during 2022–2023 remained relatively strong despite the increasing intensity of local conflicts surrounding extractive industrial expansion. Based on the analysis of academic articles, online media reports, institutional publications, and policy documents, community solidarity was reflected through collective resistance, customary-based social relations, mutual cooperation practices, and communal

responses toward external pressures caused by mining industrialization. Several documents revealed that communities in Halmahera continued to preserve traditional social networks and collective identities as mechanisms for maintaining social stability during socio-economic transformation. Reports from civil society organizations and local media also demonstrated that communities affected by mining expansion frequently organized collective actions to defend environmental rights and local living spaces. These findings suggest that social cohesion functioned not only as a cultural value, but also as a social strategy for maintaining collective resilience in the midst of structural pressures emerging from industrial expansion.

Thematic analysis further revealed that social cohesion in North Maluku was strongly associated with collective identities rooted in customary values and local community networks. This finding aligns with the argument proposed by Delhey et al. (2023), who emphasized that social cohesion in conflict-prone societies often emerges through shared identities, collective belonging, and communal trust. Similar findings were also reported by Wibisono and Sulaiman (2022), who found that social solidarity within Eastern Indonesian communities frequently serves as a protective mechanism against external economic and political pressures. However, this study differs from previous research because it demonstrates that social cohesion in North Maluku did not eliminate conflict entirely, but rather coexisted simultaneously with increasing social fragmentation. This paradoxical condition constitutes one of the major findings of the present study and represents an important contribution to the development of conflict sociology in extractive industrial regions.

The findings also indicate that social cohesion was reinforced through collective resistance against environmental degradation and unequal resource distribution. Several analyzed documents described how local communities collectively opposed environmental pollution, loss of access to traditional livelihoods, and the expansion of industrial zones into customary territories during 2022–2023. In this context, social solidarity became increasingly visible when communities faced external threats that were perceived as threatening collective survival. According to Putnam and Garrett (2020), community solidarity tends to strengthen when societies experience shared social risks and structural pressures. This finding is also consistent with the study conducted by Yusriadi et al. (2024), which highlighted that communal solidarity in resource-rich regions often intensifies when communities perceive economic inequality and environmental injustice. Therefore, this study demonstrates that social cohesion in North Maluku functioned both as a cultural mechanism and as a form of collective social resistance.

Another important finding concerns the role of local actors and community organizations in sustaining social cohesion amid local conflict escalation. Several institutional reports indicated that customary leaders, youth groups, and local civil society organizations played significant roles in mediating tensions and maintaining social communication among affected communities. These actors contributed to strengthening communal solidarity by facilitating collective discussions, environmental advocacy, and social mobilization during conflict

situations. This finding supports the perspective of community resilience theory, which argues that local social institutions play essential roles in preserving social integration during periods of crisis and structural transformation (Aldrich & Meyer, 2021). Nevertheless, unlike previous studies that portrayed local communities primarily as passive victims of industrial expansion, this study highlights the active role of communities in reproducing social cohesion amid socio-political contestation.

Intensification of Social Fragmentation and Structural Inequality

Despite the persistence of social cohesion, the findings also demonstrate a simultaneous increase in social fragmentation within local conflict dynamics in North Maluku during 2022–2023. The analyzed documents revealed that social fragmentation emerged through divisions among local communities regarding industrial expansion, unequal economic access, land disputes, and competing political interests. Some groups perceived mining industries as opportunities for economic improvement and employment, while others viewed industrial expansion as a threat to environmental sustainability and traditional livelihoods. This divergence of interests generated social polarization among communities living within and surrounding mining regions. Several reports also documented disputes concerning land ownership, compensation distribution, and access to economic benefits generated by extractive industries.

These findings support the argument proposed by Bridge and Bradshaw (2022), who emphasized that extractive industrial expansion frequently produces unequal socio-economic transformation that intensifies social fragmentation in local communities. Similar findings were identified by Kurniawan and Hamdi (2023), who observed that industrial development in Eastern Indonesia often creates divisions between groups benefiting economically from industrialization and those experiencing environmental and social marginalization. However, the present study extends previous findings by showing that fragmentation in North Maluku was not merely economic in nature, but also involved political contestation, elite intervention, and struggles over social legitimacy within local communities. Therefore, social fragmentation in North Maluku should be understood as a multidimensional process shaped by economic, political, ecological, and social inequalities simultaneously.

The thematic analysis also revealed that structural inequality significantly contributed to the intensification of local conflicts during 2022–2023. Several policy documents and institutional reports demonstrated that economic growth generated by nickel industrialization was not equally distributed among local communities. Although North Maluku experienced substantial economic growth due to extractive industrial expansion, many affected communities continued to face limited access to employment opportunities, environmental insecurity, and declining traditional livelihoods. This finding is consistent with the concept of structural inequality proposed by Therborn (2020), which explains that unequal distribution of resources and opportunities frequently reproduces social exclusion and conflict within developing societies. In addition, research conducted by Pratama and Nurhidayati (2024) found that mining

industrialization in Eastern Indonesia often benefits corporations and political elites more significantly than local communities directly affected by industrial expansion.

Another significant finding concerns the role of local elites and political actors in shaping fragmentation within local conflict dynamics. Several documents indicated that elite intervention contributed to the polarization of community groups through political mobilization, economic patronage, and unequal influence over local decision-making processes. In some cases, local elites were identified as intermediaries between corporations and communities, thereby strengthening unequal power relations within conflict situations. According to Hickey and du Toit (2021), elite domination within resource-based development frequently reinforces structural inequalities and weakens inclusive community participation. This finding differs from previous studies that primarily emphasized economic causes of mining conflicts, because the present research demonstrates that local fragmentation was also shaped by political competition and struggles over social influence at the community level.

Local Conflict Beyond Identity-Based Disputes

The findings of this study further indicate that local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022–2023 cannot be understood solely as identity-based disputes. Although social identity remained an important element within local conflict narratives, the analyzed documents demonstrated that most conflicts were deeply connected to broader socio-economic and structural issues, particularly extractive industrial expansion, environmental degradation, unequal resource distribution, and struggles over local authority. This finding challenges simplistic interpretations that reduce local conflict merely to ethnic or communal tensions. Several reports showed that conflicts surrounding mining areas often involved disputes over land rights, environmental protection, economic exclusion, and community participation in development processes rather than purely cultural antagonism.

This finding supports the perspective of political ecology, which argues that environmental and resource-based conflicts are fundamentally shaped by unequal power relations and access to natural resources (Robbins, 2020). Similarly, Li (2021) explained that extractive development in resource-rich regions frequently transforms local conflict into a contestation over economic survival, environmental rights, and social legitimacy. In the context of North Maluku, the study found that identity-based narratives were often intertwined with structural inequalities and industrial expansion, creating more complex forms of local conflict. This differs from earlier studies that tended to separate identity conflict from economic conflict, whereas the present research demonstrates that both dimensions are interconnected within local socio-political dynamics.

The analysis also revealed that environmental degradation became one of the central issues contributing to local conflict escalation during 2022–2023. Several NGO reports and policy publications documented concerns regarding water pollution, deforestation, declining fishing areas, and reduced agricultural

productivity surrounding industrial zones in Halmahera. Communities directly affected by these environmental changes frequently perceived industrial expansion as threatening both their economic survival and social identity. According to Schlosberg and Collins (2021), environmental conflict often develops when communities experience unequal exposure to ecological risks and limited participation in environmental governance. This finding is consistent with research by Mahmud and Anwar (2023), who found that environmental degradation in mining regions of Eastern Indonesia contributed significantly to the intensification of local social conflict and community distrust toward industrial actors.

A further important finding of this study is the identification of a dialectical relationship between social cohesion and fragmentation within local conflict situations. Rather than functioning as mutually exclusive conditions, cohesion and fragmentation developed simultaneously within North Maluku's local communities during 2022–2023. In some cases, conflict strengthened collective solidarity among affected communities, while in other contexts it intensified polarization and social division. This finding represents the primary novelty of the study because previous research generally examined cohesion and fragmentation as separate phenomena. By contrast, this study demonstrates that local conflict in extractive industrial regions may simultaneously reproduce communal solidarity and social fragmentation depending on the socio-political context and power relations involved. Consequently, the findings contribute to the development of conflict sociology by offering a more integrated understanding of local conflict dynamics within resource-based industrial societies.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022–2023 reflected a paradoxical relationship between social cohesion and social fragmentation amid the expansion of extractive industries and increasing socio-economic contestation. The findings demonstrate that community solidarity remained visible through collective resistance, customary-based social relations, and communal cooperation in responding to environmental and social pressures. However, social fragmentation simultaneously intensified due to unequal economic distribution, political interests, elite intervention, and unequal access to natural resources. The study also reveals that local conflicts in North Maluku cannot be understood solely as identity-based disputes, but must be viewed as multidimensional conflicts shaped by structural inequality, environmental degradation, and unequal power relations among communities, corporations, and the state. Therefore, the study contributes theoretically to the development of conflict sociology and social cohesion studies by demonstrating that cohesion and fragmentation may coexist simultaneously within local conflict situations in extractive industrial regions.

Practically, the findings suggest the importance of strengthening participatory governance, inclusive conflict management, environmental protection, and equitable resource distribution in extractive industrial areas.

Local governments and industrial actors should prioritize community participation, transparency, and social inclusion in development planning and resource governance to reduce social polarization and prevent prolonged conflict escalation. Community-based approaches involving customary institutions, civil society organizations, and local stakeholders are also necessary to strengthen social cohesion and sustainable conflict resolution in North Maluku.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. First, the research relied on document analysis and publicly accessible sources without direct field observation or in-depth interviews with affected communities. Second, the study focused specifically on local conflicts in North Maluku during 2022–2023, limiting broader comparative analysis across different regions and periods. Future studies are recommended to employ mixed methods or field-based qualitative approaches involving local communities, customary leaders, government actors, and industrial stakeholders to obtain deeper empirical insights regarding the long-term socio-political impacts of extractive industrial expansion on community relations and conflict transformation.

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