Religious Legitimacy and Extractive Politics: The Disarticulation of Human Security in Indonesia's Mining Concessions

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Abstract:
This study examines how religious legitimacy shapes and reorders human security discourse within policies granting mining concessions to religious organizations in Indonesia. It departs from the growing involvement of religious actors in extractive sectors and the resulting implications for the protection of people, the environment, and affected communities. Using a qualitative approach grounded in critical discourse analysis and the hegemony theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the study analyzes state statements, elite pronouncements from religious organizations, and national media discourse through systematic coding and relational mapping with NVivo. The findings show that religious concepts—most notably *maslahat*—operate as a hegemonic nodal point that binds claims of development, welfare, moral obligation, and nationalism into a single chain of equivalence that stabilizes mining concession policies. Within this configuration, human security is not explicitly rejected; rather, it becomes disarticulated and reduced to technical and procedural concerns through the normalization of ecological risks, livelihood vulnerabilities, and social impacts as routine consequences of development. Furthermore, the involvement of religious organizations marks a transformation of religious roles from moral guardians to extractive actors through a mechanism of antagonism displacement, whereby structural conflicts between the state and citizens shift into internal moral debates within organizations. Theoretically, this study affirms that human security constitutes a contested discursive arena rather than a neutral normative framework. It contributes to extractive politics scholarship by demonstrating how religious authority can function as a hegemonic mechanism that stabilizes extractive development while marginalizing ecological and social protection.
Keywords: Human Security, Mining Concessions, Religious Organizations, Hegemony, Extractive Politics.

Abstrak:
Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana legitimasi religius membentuk dan menata ulang wacana keamanan manusia dalam kebijakan pemberian konsesi pertambangan kepada organisasi keagamaan di Indonesia. Studi ini berangkat dari problem meningkatnya keterlibatan aktor religius dalam sektor ekstraktif dan implikasinya terhadap orientasi perlindungan manusia, lingkungan, dan komunitas terdampak. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis analisis wacana kritis dan teori hegemoni Ernesto Laclau dan Chantal Mouffe, penelitian ini menganalisis

pernyataan negara, elite organisasi keagamaan, serta wacana media nasional melalui proses coding dan pemetaan relasional menggunakan NVivo. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep religius—terutama maslahat—berfungsi sebagai nodal point hegemonik yang mengikat klaim pembangunan, kesejahteraan, kewajiban moral, dan nasionalisme ke dalam satu rantai ekuivalensi yang menstabilkan kebijakan konsesi pertambangan. Dalam konfigurasi ini, keamanan manusia tidak ditolak secara eksplisit, melainkan mengalami disartikulasi: direduksi menjadi isu teknis dan prosedural melalui normalisasi risiko ekologis, kerentanan mata pencaharian, dan dampak sosial sebagai konsekuensi wajar pembangunan. Lebih jauh, keterlibatan organisasi keagamaan menandai transformasi peran religius dari moral guardian menjadi aktor ekstraktif melalui mekanisme antagonism displacement, yakni pemindahan konflik struktural negara–warga ke dalam perdebatan moral internal organisasi. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keamanan manusia merupakan arena diskursif yang diperebutkan, bukan kerangka normatif yang netral. Studi ini menawarkan kontribusi pada kajian politik ekstraktif dengan menunjukkan bagaimana otoritas religius dapat berfungsi sebagai mekanisme hegemonik yang menstabilkan pembangunan ekstraktif sekaligus meminggirkan perlindungan ekologis dan sosial.
Kata Kunci: *Keamanan Manusia, Konsesi Pertambangan, Organisasi Keagamaan, Hegemoni, Politik Ekstraktif.*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the expansion of extractive industries has increased sharply since the 1970s, driven by rising demand for energy minerals, base metals, and industrial raw materials. Over the past five decades, global mining production has increased by more than 75 percent and has caused ecological degradation across an estimated 300,000–800,000 km², making it one of the major contributors to global environmental change (Giljum et al., 2025). Alongside ecological damage, the mining sector has also triggered an escalation of social conflict. The Institute of Development Studies (2025) records at least 36,017 conflict incidents across 4,293 mining sites, while the Environmental Justice Atlas documents more than 4,421 ecological conflicts, with mining as the largest contributor (Cezne & Garcia, 2024; Martinez-Alier, 2021; Temper & Shmelev, 2015). These data indicate that mining is not merely an economic issue but constitutes a serious threat to human security across multiple regions worldwide.

A similar phenomenon—at an even more alarming intensity—has unfolded in Indonesia. The Mining Advocacy Network (JATAM, 2020) reports a sharp increase in mining-related conflicts from 11 cases in 2019 to 45 cases in 2020, affecting an area of approximately 714,692 hectares. These conflicts include environmental pollution, land dispossession, criminalization of residents, mass layoffs, and the involvement of security forces. At the same time, national ecological conditions have continued to deteriorate. WALHI (2023) reports that between 2015 and 2022 Indonesia experienced 3,004 ecological disasters, resulting in 1,755 deaths and disappearances and affecting more than 25 million people. These data reinforce the argument that Indonesia's mining sector operates as one of the most serious threats to human security, particularly in the dimensions of environmental, economic, and community security (Calvão et al., 2021; Gasper, 2005; Gomez et al., 2016).

Rather than responding to these escalating socio-ecological risks by strengthening governance and citizen protection, the state has expanded extractive activities through the issuance of additional mining permits. As of November 2024, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources recorded 4,634 mining licenses covering 9.11 million hectares, dominated by Mining Business Licenses (IUP) spanning 6.52 million hectares. Amid these conditions, the state introduced a new policy through the Special Mining Business License Area (WIUPK) scheme, as regulated under Government Regulation No. 25 of 2024, which allows religious mass organizations to obtain mining concessions without a competitive bidding mechanism. According to data from the Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM), at least six mining blocks have been prepared for civil society organizations, with Nahdlatul Ulama becoming the first recipient of a coal mining concession in 2024 (Puspapertiwi & Dzulfaroh, 2024; Savitri, 2024b).

This policy has attracted widespread criticism for contradicting principles of ecological justice and sustainable environmental governance (Hidayat, 2025). More importantly, the entry of religious organizations as mining actors introduces a new dimension to extractive politics: the emergence of religious narratives as a source of moral legitimacy for mining. Statements from state elites and religious elites increasingly frame mining as a collective obligation, a source of *maslahat*, and a means of redistributing welfare (Ajeng & Zamzoeri, 2024; Bustomi, 2025). Rather than strengthening protection for affected communities, these narratives risk weakening the human security framework in recognizing and addressing the ecological, social, and health risks generated by extractivism.

Scholarship on mining concessions for religious organizations has developed along several major trajectories. First, legal and public policy literature highlights regulatory problems, overlapping authorities, and the weak legal foundations of granting mining licenses to civil society organizations. These studies emphasize policy inconsistencies with natural resource governance principles and the potential for administrative abuse of power

(Astinda et al., 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2022; Nasir et al., 2022; Rifai-Hasan, 2009; Robinson, 2016). While important, this approach tends to remain confined to normative–juridical aspects and does not sufficiently explore the ideological dimensions of the policy. Second, environmental ethics and theology studies interpret the involvement of religious organizations in extractive sectors as a moral paradox between claims of social justice and practices of environmental exploitation. Research in this stream criticizes the normalization of mining through ethical and theological language that risks obscuring ecological destruction (Baylon et al., 2025; Darling, 2025). However, this work remains largely normative-critical and does not analyze how religious discourse operates politically within state–society power relations. Third, political and political economy literature interprets mining concessions for religious organizations as a form of state patronage and clientelism aimed at maintaining political support, with development and economic redistribution serving as legitimizing narratives (Atsari & Wanusmawatie, 2025; Fariduddin & Kusuma, 2024). Although this approach explains political motivations, it does not situate the policy as a site of discursive struggle, particularly with regard to the meaning of human security.

Across these three trajectories, a significant analytical gap remains. Existing studies have not systematically examined how mining concessions for religious organizations function as a discursive arena that marginalizes human security. The literature has yet to explain how religious legitimacy is produced, naturalized, and deployed to stabilize extractivism amid rising socio-ecological vulnerability. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to analyze how the state and religious organizations articulate religious discourse within mining concession policies and how this articulation contributes to the marginalization of human security discourse. Specifically, the study traces the mechanisms through which religious hegemony is constructed within the WIUPK policy framework and examines its implications for how socio-ecological risks are understood and negotiated in Indonesia's mining governance.

This study argues that the marginalization of human security in mining concession policies does not merely result from regulatory weakness but emerges from a hegemonic process within the discursive realm. Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony (1985), the analysis shows how state and religious elites construct chains of equivalence that link mining with *maslahat*, *rezeki*, and *keberkahan*, allowing these concepts to function as nodal points that stabilize the meaning of mining as a moral obligation and a national development project. Within this framework, human security—as developed in the human security paradigm (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007; UNDP, 1994)—is not openly rejected but is positioned as a secondary discourse, disarticulated from ecological and social risks. Accordingly, this study advances the argument that religious legitimacy operates as a hegemonic strategy that normalizes the risks of extractivism and weakens the position of human security as a critical framework in Indonesia's mining governance.

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study is the discourse surrounding mining concession policies for religious organizations as produced and circulated in the public sphere. The analysis focuses on statements by the state, religious organizations, and public actors that frame the policy through moral, religious, and collective-interest language. The study conceptualizes discourse as a political arena in which the meanings of human security, development, and policy legitimacy are negotiated and contested.

This study employs a critical qualitative design using a post-structuralist discourse analysis approach developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985). The study adopts this approach because mining concession policies do not operate solely as administrative or economic instruments; they also function as discursive practices that construct and stabilize meaning through power relations. Laclau–Mouffe discourse analysis enables the study to examine how policy legitimacy is produced through articulation, the hegemonization of meaning, and the marginalization of alternative discourses, particularly human security.

The data consist of 30 national news articles published between 2024 and 2025. The study collects articles from major Indonesian online media outlets—such as Kompas, Tempo, Detik, ANTARA, and Republika—as well as online media affiliated with religious organizations, including NU Online. The study selects these media because they serve as primary sites of policy articulation, where the state, religious organizations, and civil society interact to construct meanings surrounding mining governance.

The study collects data through document analysis using purposive sampling. The selection criteria include relevance to mining concession issues, the involvement of state actors and religious organizations, and the explicit

use of normative and moral narratives. This technique follows the principle of theoretical sampling in qualitative research, which prioritizes discursive richness and depth of meaning over statistical representativeness.

The study conducts data analysis in stages using a combination of critical reading and NVivo software. The first stage involves open coding to identify recurring signifiers with moral, religious, and political salience. The second stage identifies floating signifiers and nodal points based on the relationships among signifiers within the texts. The third stage applies relational mapping using NVivo's project map feature to analyze patterns of equivalence and difference across discourses. The final stage involves interpretive–theoretical analysis using key concepts from Laclau and Mouffe—such as chains of equivalence, antagonism, and hegemony—to explain how religious discourse acquires hegemonic force and marginalizes human security discourse within mining governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Articulating Religious Legitimacy as a Nodal Point in Mining Concession Policy

This article finds that the legitimacy of mining concession policies for religious organizations is not primarily constructed through technocratic arguments—such as governance efficiency, state revenue calculations, or ecological mitigation design—but through discursive work that mobilizes moral–religious language. In this configuration, the state and elite religious organizations produce a regime of common sense in which extractivism appears acceptable, even praiseworthy, as long as actors frame it as a project of *maslahat* for the community (B. Hidayat, 2025), a collective source of livelihood, a generator of blessing (Permana, 2025), and the fulfillment of a constitutional mandate to promote "the welfare of the people" (Patoni, 2024; Tim DetikJatim, 2025). This process matters because it shows that debates over mining do not primarily unfold in the operational domain; instead, they resemble a hegemonic struggle over the normative horizon deemed legitimate in the public sphere.

Within the framework developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), this situation operates through a nodal point mechanism: a key signifier that fixes diverse meanings so they appear coherent and stable, even though they remain fragile and contested. In the mapped media corpus, *maslahat* functions as a nodal point that binds heterogeneous claims—development, justice, nationalism, professionalism, redistribution, and religious legitimacy—into a single chain of equivalence that supports the policy. As a result, questions that should remain material—who bears ecological risks, how authorities guarantee citizens' rights, how strict oversight operates, and how accountability works—shift into moral questions: "Does this policy bring *maslahat*?" This shift does not operate neutrally; it organizes the boundaries of what counts as "reasonable" critique and suppresses criticism that demands ecological indicators and human security assessment.

This fixing of meaning becomes evident in how state actors narrate the concession policy. For example, the Ministry of Investment/BKPM emphasizes that the granting of licenses rests on religious organizations' "significant contributions" to national development and progress, which allegedly entitle them to access and manage natural resources (Savitri, 2024a). This narrative does not merely describe; it articulates a connection between "the historical role of religious organizations" and "economic–political rights" to concessions, positioning mining as both a moral reward and a welfare instrument. At this point, nationalist language and welfare discourse do not stand independently; they enter the orbit of *maslahat* as the central anchor, producing the impression that supporting the policy equates to supporting national progress.

More decisively, religious elites themselves reinforce this fixation by supplying religious legitimacy that directly engages the moral imagination of followers. Ulil Abshar Abdalla, for instance, states, *"Halal, not haram at all, nothing is haram,"* while asserting that mining can become "a source of energy and a source of *maslahat* for humanity, the nation, and the state" (Putra, 2024; Sutrisna & Ramadhan, 2024). Within hegemonic logic, such statements operate in two ways. First, they close off delegitimation based on religious law by relocating mining from the realm of the forbidden to the permissible. Second, they expand the chain of equivalence by incorporating "humanity" and the "nation-state" as beneficiaries of *maslahat*, making the policy appear universal and difficult to oppose without being labeled anti-*maslahat*. At this stage, *maslahat* no longer functions merely as justification; it becomes a discursive discipline that filters and constrains critique.
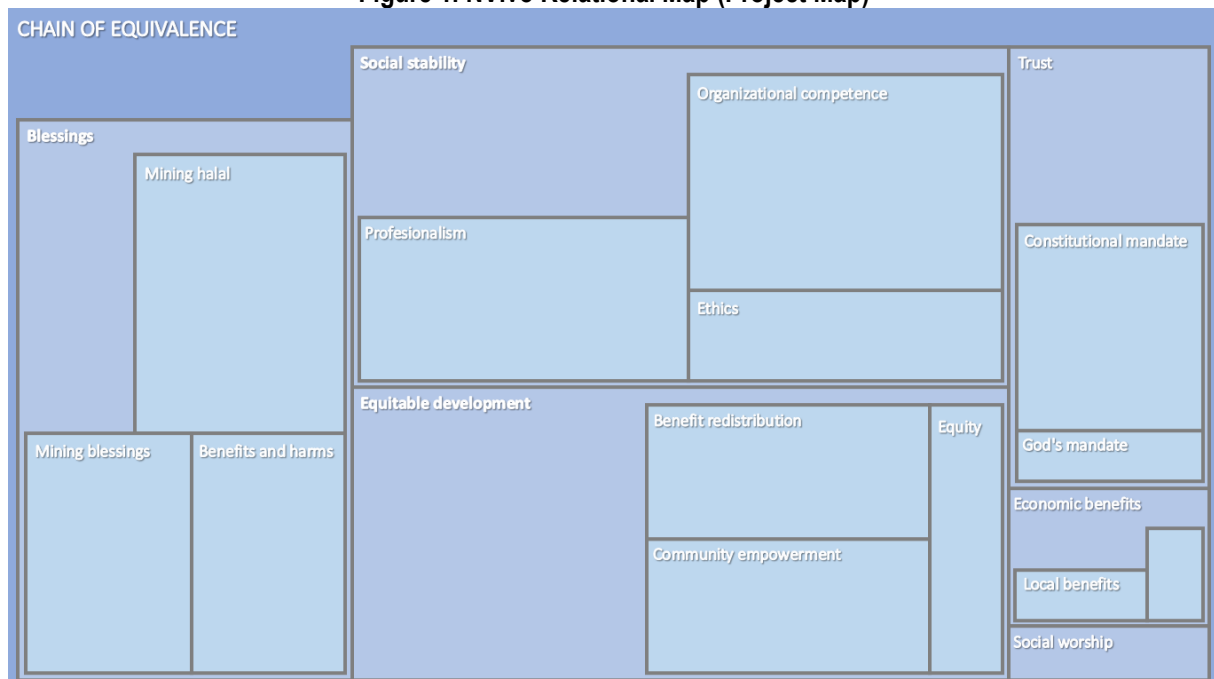
Legitimacy intensification also appears in more populist and emotional rhetoric. PBNU Chair Yahya Cholil Staquf (Gus Yahya) openly admits feeling "tempted" and remarks, "If offered *getuk*, we would accept it, let alone mining—we would take it. Why? Because we need it" (Prabowo, 2024). This statement seems simple, yet discursively it constructs a new moral economy: the community's needs—rooted in structural deprivation—serve as an ethical rationale that transforms mining, commonly associated with ecological conflict, into a realistic and

even dignified solution for the organization. Here, "need" becomes an emotional bridge that recasts extractive policy as a moral act to restore community dignity (Scott, 1977).

These findings gain further significance when read alongside the literature on religious legitimacy and the environment. Many studies show that religion can support pro-environmental action through stewardship ethics, *khilāfah*, and balance principles (*mīzān*), which encourage ecological responsibility and sustainable collective action (Ball, 2025; Harper, 2011; Hearn et al., 2024). However, the same literature also documents ambivalence: religion can weaken ecological concern when actors frame it through dominion narratives, just-world beliefs, or end-world beliefs that normalize environmental damage (Preston & Baimel, 2021; Wojcik, 2023). In the context of mining concessions, the issue does not involve the absence of religious language; rather, it involves a functional inversion of religious language. Vocabulary that typically points toward earth-care ethics shifts to stabilize extractivism. In other words, the policy does not oppose religion; it rides on religion's moral authority to lower the political–ecological costs of legitimacy.

Here, the concepts of floating signifier and empty signifier help clarify the depth of this mechanism. NVivo project mapping shows that terms such as blessing, justice, economic benefit, trust (*amanah*), and equitable development appear as "floating" signifiers—contested and used across camps—yet unified through hegemonic articulation with *maslahat* as the center. When actors deploy *maslahat* to bridge heterogeneous claims without operational definitions, impact indicators, or accountability mechanisms, it moves from floating toward an empty signifier: not entirely empty, but sufficiently indeterminate to allow powerful actors to fill it without opening substantive debate (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). This finding parallels Smith and Pulver's (2009) argument on ethics-based environmentalism: moral legitimacy without procedural change and performance indicators easily becomes rhetorically powerful yet weakly transformational, especially when it confronts entrenched political–economic structures.

Figure 1. NVivo Relational Map (Project Map)

Based on the NVivo mapping, *maslahat* (*keberkahan*) occupies a central position that connects religious signifiers (*halal*, *anugerah*, *amanah*) with policy signifiers (equitable development, economic benefits, justice). These relations form a network that shows how moral–religious legitimacy channels claims of welfare and nationalism while simultaneously obscuring questions about ecological costs. At the same time, signifiers such as environmental damage, political security, and procedural justice remain absent, indicating that human security issues fail to become the center of hegemonic articulation.

Table 1. Key Signifiers in the Religious Legitimation of Mining Concessions

Religious/ Normative Signifier	Actor	Media Statement Context	Legitimation Function
Maslahat	Religious organization elites & state actors	Mining framed as "*maslahat* for the community/humanity/nation"	Functions as a nodal point that unifies heterogeneous claims and closes off impact-based critique
Halal	Ulil Abshar Abdalla	"Halal, not haram at all …"	Neutralizes potential religious delegitimation; relocates mining into a morally legitimate domain
Amanah	State and religious organization actors	Mining framed as a welfare/constitutional mandate	Frames the policy as an ethical obligation rather than a political–economic choice
Keberkahan / rezeki	Religious organization elites	Mining framed as a livelihood source for the community/organization	Transforms extraction into a moral economy: community needs become justification
Contribution of religious organizations to the nation	BKPM/Ministry of Investment	"significant contribution … to national development and progress"	Links religious organizations and the state; confers an aura of "service" deserving access to concessions
Community needs	Gus Yahya (PBNU)	"If offered *getuk*, we would accept it, let alone mining …"	Affective–populist legitimation; shifts ecological critique into an issue of "empathy for poverty"

Accordingly, the legitimacy of mining concession policy does not operate primarily through technocratic rationality but through moral–religious hegemony that produces semantic stability for extractivism. *Maslahat* functions as a nodal point that binds religious and policy signifiers into a chain of equivalence, allowing mining to appear as a welfare project that is "morally legitimate" even before undergoing ecological scrutiny. In this situation, religious language does not automatically align with pro-environmental or anti-environmental positions; instead, it becomes a contested arena that can orient actors toward stewardship ethics—or, as demonstrated here, stabilize the normalization of ecological risk and narrow the horizon of human security (Ball, 2025; Preston & Baimel, 2021; Smith & Pulver, 2009; Wojcik, 2023).

Disarticulation of Human Security in Extractive Development Discourse
The article further shows that human security never appears as something that actors must openly "reject" within the discourse of mining concessions for religious organizations. Instead, the discourse systematically relocates human security to a peripheral position: it receives brief mention, becomes disguised as procedural promises, or gets reduced to technical matters of governance. Within the media corpus and elite statements, ecological, social, and communal threats—which, in the UNDP (1994) framework, constitute the core of human security—do not appear as structural risks inherent to extractivism. Rather, actors frame them as managerial variables that moral commitment, legal compliance, and proper mining techniques can "minimize." At this point, human security functions as a floating signifier: it hovers as a term that all parties seemingly accept but never fix into substantive demands capable of disrupting the logic of extractive development (Des, 2013; Owen, 2013).

This disarticulation becomes evident through repeated diction choices such as "responsible," "professional," *amanah*, "transparent," "accountable," and "environmentally friendly." These formulas imply that social and environmental impacts do not constitute an ontological problem of mining itself but rather an ethical problem of how actors implement it. Gus Yahya, for example, frames "moral responsibility toward the environment and the public good" as the basis for the decision to "go ahead first," while emphasizing commitments to "transparent and professional" management so that economic benefits can be "delivered" through NU's networks down to the grassroots (Puspapertiwi & Dzulfaroh, 2024). In this construction, environmental and community safety does not appear as a boundary to extraction but as an attribute attached to the managing subject—as if the core issue lies

not in mining itself but in who manages it and how *amanah* they act. A similar pattern appears in statements by Gus Fahrur of PBNU, who emphasizes "good mining practice"—efficiency, safety, reclamation, waste management, environmentally friendly technology, and community involvement—thereby rhetorically shifting the discussion from "whether mining threatens life" to "how mining can be managed properly" (Tim DetikJatim, 2025). In other words, the discourse does not eliminate human security; it repackages it as a compliance checklist.

Here, the logic of difference operates by separating ecological and social risks from the meaning of "development" and positioning them as ancillary matters that procedures can manage. Statements by Gus Ulil across various forums make this strategy particularly clear. He does not deny the environment as *maslahat* but immediately adds that protecting the environment "too extremely" also creates "negative impacts" because prohibiting mining altogether appears "unfair" (Kamarullah & Gatra, 2025). This sentence performs a crucial discursive operation: actors no longer understand ecological damage as a threat to community security and future livelihoods but as a policy "dilemma" requiring mediation—and such mediation ultimately secures the continuation of extraction. Even when Gus Ulil states that "mining is good; what is not good is bad mining," he separates mining as an economic activity from its socio-ecological consequences and locates damage not in extractivism's structure but in technical deviations ("bad mining") (Ulya & Carina, 2025). This move exemplifies classic disarticulation: actors narrow threats that require structural analysis into management problems (Homolar, 2015).

The media corpus also shows how state actors and elites produce minimization framing through implicit expressions. In Tempo's report on the political motives behind granting concessions, the article acknowledges environmental risks and governance conflicts but frames them as matters of oversight and political will—specifically, whether the president will "reprimand" religious organizations if they fail to restore damaged areas (B. Hidayat, 2025). This framing narrows the problem to the government's courage to supervise rather than recognizing that mining itself generates ecological and communal vulnerabilities. Moreover, Tempo's narrative on internal PBNU elite conflicts—"mining unites, mining also divides"—shows that threats to community security can take very proximate forms: not only environmental destruction but also erosion of internal social cohesion and crises of public leadership (Priadi, 2024). Yet many elite statements treat this communal dimension as an "internal matter" that actors can "resolve," rather than as evidence that extractivism produces social instability. Here, community security appears briefly as noise and then quickly loses relevance for policy legitimacy.

By contrast, BBC Indonesia presents counter-discursive voices from activists and affected residents who return human security to the center of the debate: unreclaimed mining pits, potential loss of water sources, damage to protected forests and recharge areas, and predictions of escalating conflict between residents and religious organization elites (Ajeng & Zamzoeri, 2024). The cited JATAM data—thousands of unreclaimed pits and recorded fatalities—shift the discussion from the morality of good intentions to the realities of everyday life security (Jaringan Advokasi Tambang, 2021). Precisely because these accounts foreground lived vulnerability, dominant actors often treat them as "criticism," "socio-political dynamics," or "extreme positions," which allows policymakers to isolate them from "development" as the main narrative. This treatment confirms that actors handle human security not as a determining principle but as a peripheral voice addressed through strategies of difference: they acknowledge its existence without allowing it to alter policy direction.

When mapped onto UNDP's four human security dimensions—environmental, economic, community, and health security—the disarticulation operates in a relatively consistent pattern. First, actors reduce environmental security to reclamation, technology, and AMDAL compliance rather than framing it as a threat to the sustainability of living spaces and ecological systems. Second, they frame economic security as the primary justification through claims of "revenue," "self-reliance," "welfare," "foreign exchange," "teacher salaries," and "pesantren," thereby positioning the economy as the singular development horizon that legitimizes other risks. Third, community security appears mainly as a discourse of benefit distribution ("delivering benefits to villages"), while actors rarely present social conflict, inequality, and local power relations in mining areas as inherent dangers of extractive industries. Fourth, health security remains almost entirely absent; the discourse does not frame it as an issue of pollution, water quality, or community disease—even though this dimension represents the most concrete arena where "everyday" human security threats operate (Hobson et al., 2014). This absence is not accidental: it signals that development discourse treats health risks as external to "development" and therefore manageable through technical procedures, if actors mention them at all.

Table 2. Comparison of Discourses: Actors, Development Narratives, and the Position of Human Security

Actor	Dominant development discourse	Position of human security (as produced)
PBNU elites (Gus Yahya, Gus Ulil, Gus Fahrur)	*Maslahat*, redistribution, organizational revenue, economic self-reliance of the *umat*	Acknowledged as "moral responsibility/*amanah*," reduced to governance (good mining), not framed as a structural threat
Muhammadiyah elites (Haedar, Mu'ti)	Justice and social welfare; economic *da'wah*; *khalifah* managing nature as a divine endowment	Inserted as "balance" and "minimal damage" plus monitoring; remains subordinate to economic-development goals
State actors/investment and ESDM officials (policy narratives)	Affirmation, WIUPK priority for welfare, equalized access	Human security becomes a "manageable risk" through legality and procedures; it does not function as a primary parameter
Critical media/activists (BBC: JATAM, Trenggalek residents; environmental accounts)	Rejects the naturalization of extraction; highlights water impacts, conflicts, and mining pits	Restores human security as a central issue (environment–community–health), but often frames it as "criticism/extreme"

Accordingly, the central argument of this finding is that human security undergoes disarticulation not through outright rejection but through reduction. The discourse relocates it from the realm of structural threats to the realm of technical–procedural issues, from questions of life sustainability to questions of "good governance," and from lived vulnerability to the rhetoric of "policy dilemmas." This operation allows extractivism to remain stable as a development project, while human security persists as a floating term—normatively acknowledged yet never endowed with hegemonic power to constrain, let alone challenge, the basic logic of extraction (Des, 2013; Homolar, 2015; Kaldor, 2024; Owen, 2013). In this configuration, extractive development does not require complex technocratic justification; it suffices to mobilize the language of responsibility, *amanah*, and professionalism to position damage and risk as matters that actors can "minimize," rather than as threats that demand a change in policy direction.

Transformation of the Role of Religious Organizations: From Moral Guardians to Extractive Actors

The transformation of the role of religious organizations in mining concessions marks a structural shift that goes beyond a mere change in economic orientation or institutional strategy. This finding shows that the involvement of religious mass organizations in extractive projects represents a political repositioning of religious roles within the arena of natural resource conflicts. Organizations that historically functioned as moral guardians, advocates for victims, and critics of structural injustice have moved into a different position. For example, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) previously supported mining-affected communities indirectly through policies and religious positions that emphasized *maslahat*, such as the 2015 stance rejecting environmentally destructive exploitation, which effectively defended victims, as well as through institutions like Lakpesdam that examined the jurisprudence of renewable energy (Firtiyani, 2024). Today, however, these organizations operate as part of the extractive power configuration itself (Amaliyah, 2025). This shift does not occur through an explicit rejection of social justice values or victim protection, but through a mechanism of antagonism displacement: structural conflicts between the state–corporations and mining-affected citizens shift, neutralize, and blur through narratives of *umat* interests, economic self-reliance, and religious *amanah* (Fuchs, 2004). In this process, religion does not lose its moral role; instead, it reorients its function from an instrument of critique into a medium that stabilizes extractive hegemony.

Theoretically, this finding operates through two interrelated mechanisms. First, antagonism displacement works by relocating the locus of conflict from structural state–citizen relations into intra-organizational and intra-community spaces. The primary antagonism that should confront extractive projects with the security of citizens' lives no longer appears as a public conflict demanding political resolution. Instead, it transforms into internal debates over *maslahat*, governance, and the good intentions of managers. Second, this shift consolidates the transformation of religious organizations from critical actors into new hegemonic subjects that actively produce, rationalize, and stabilize the extractive regime rather than disrupt it. In the language of discursive hegemony, religious organizations no longer stand outside the field of development power; they become part of the chain of equivalence that sustains the logic of extraction (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Empirical data reveal sharp discursive tensions between historical records of victim advocacy and decisions to accept mining concessions. On the one hand, NU and Muhammadiyah possess long histories of involvement in assisting communities affected by agrarian conflicts, environmental destruction, and criminalization, as seen in mining cases in Wadas, Trenggalek, Rembang, and East Kalimantan (Al-Fatih, 2025; Kurniawan, 2022). In these contexts, religious organizations often acted as voices of ecological and social justice and served as moral references for community resistance. On the other hand, this normative position confronts decisions to accept mining concessions legitimized as a state *amanah* and a pathway to *maslahat*. Statements by organizational elites emphasizing commitments to "halal management," "good mining practice," and "moral responsibility" operate in direct tension with their historical positions as critics of the extractive industry (Puspapertiwi & Dzulfaroh, 2024). Rather than resolving this contradiction through deep ethical reflection, elites suspend it discursively: they do not deny structural critiques of mining, but they reduce them to technical management issues that actors believe they can solve from within.

Within the antagonism displacement framework, conflicts between affected citizens and the state no longer emerge as the primary antagonism requiring political articulation. Instead, tensions shift into internal debates between elites and grassroots members, between senior religious figures and structural administrators, or between groups that "agree" and those deemed to "not yet understand *maslahat*" (Tim DetikJatim, 2025). As a result, structural antagonism loses political visibility and yields to internal moral conflicts that do not disrupt the foundations of extractive projects. This shift aligns with understandings of antagonism as a relational domain that discourse can engineer: actors do not erase antagonism, but they relocate it into arenas that actors can manage more easily and that pose fewer threats to power stability (Lynam & Miller, 2019).

This transformation also becomes clear through changes in actors' positions within power relations before and after concessions. Before concessions, religious organizations functioned as mediators in conflicts, providers of moral legitimacy for citizen resistance, and pressure actors against the state and corporations through the language of ethics, human rights, and ecological justice (Hidayat, 2022; Suara Muhammadiyah, 2020). After concessions, their positions shift toward becoming state policy partners in resource management, producers of religious legitimacy for extraction, and guardians of political and social stability around mining projects. This change does not eliminate moral language; instead, it repurposes it. Religiosity persists, but it reorients from a critical device into an instrument of hegemonic stabilization. In this context, religious organizations no longer operate as external forces that disrupt development logic; they become integral components of extractive legitimation mechanisms.

The most striking feature of this transformation is the absence of mining victims' voices from the dominant discourse produced by organizational elites and the state. In official statements, mainstream media coverage, and policy forums, mining-affected citizens almost always appear implicitly—as beneficiaries, welfare recipients, or groups that actors will "involve"—but rarely as speaking subjects (Lumbanrau, 2021). This absence does not occur by accident; it results from the depoliticization of conflict through religiosity (Bustomi, 2025). By framing mining as a project for the *umat* and asserting that benefits will return to communities, discourse reduces structural conflict to internal management issues and good intentions. In this context, religiosity does not protect victims; it operates as a mechanism of conflict deferral that postpones questions about ecological damage, health, and livelihoods until after projects proceed.

This pattern aligns with displacement literature emphasizing that displacement and enforced mobility rarely constitute purely "technical events." Instead, they result from power configurations that determine who may stay, who must leave, and who bears ecological and social risks (Gilmartin, 2022; Lunstrum & Bose, 2022). In extractive contexts, conflicts that fundamentally pit the state and corporations against affected citizens often relocate into moral–administrative issues—"communication," "socialization," "compensation," or "procedure." As a result, slow violence, such as land loss, water source destruction, and health vulnerabilities, fails to appear as political injustice and instead appears as a "manageable cost." Displacement literature also shows that relocation and spatial uncertainty generate layered landscapes of violence: actors do not only lose material assets, but they also experience disrupted social relations, repeated threats, and embodied vulnerabilities, particularly among marginalized groups, through stress, unequal access, and care burdens (Koning, 2019; Koning et al., 2025). When dominant discourse excludes victims' voices, what disappears is not merely "testimony," but the epistemic capacity to recognize impacts as structural violence rather than governance problems.

At this point, the concept of antagonism displacement clarifies how conflict relations shift and neutralize simultaneously. In personality psychology, "antagonism" refers to a domain associated with competitiveness,

distrust, and hostility that shapes how actors perceive, frame, and direct conflict (Lynam & Miller, 2019; Widiger & Oltmanns, 2019). Although this concept originates at the individual level, it functions heuristically to explain its political effects at the collective level. Structural conflicts that should produce clear boundaries between rulers and citizens relocate into safer intra-community frictions, such as internal moral debates over who acts most *amanah* or who best understands *maslahat*. As a result, primary antagonism against the extractive regime loses visibility and disruptive force. At the same time, displacement in its socio-political sense intensifies this effect: marginalization of affected citizens, repeated vulnerabilities, and social order disruptions make it easier to reframe conflict as compliance and order rather than struggles over living space (Koning, 2019; Lunstrum & Bose, 2022). Thus, antagonism displacement does not remain a discursive strategy alone; it becomes a mechanism of religious–extractive hegemonic consolidation. Religion functions as a device that diverts the locus of conflict from state–citizen relations toward internal morality, stabilizing extraction while delaying or even erasing victims' articulation as political subjects.

By applying the concept of antagonism displacement, this study shows that the transformation of religious organizations' roles does not constitute a pragmatic adaptation to economic opportunities alone. It represents a political repositioning with direct consequences for conflict configurations. The primary antagonism—between extractive projects and the security of citizens' lives—moves to the margins, while remaining conflicts become internal and manageable without disrupting state–organization relations. In this situation, religious organizations function as hegemonic buffers: they dampen resistance, pacify grassroots bases, and provide moral justification for policies that "potentially cause harm." Religiosity, rather than strengthening victim protection, operates as a depoliticizing mechanism that renders extraction an inevitability that actors can "purify" ethically.

Accordingly, the central argument of this finding is that the involvement of religious organizations in mining concessions marks a fundamental shift in religious roles—from moral guardians and victim advocates to extractive actors that sustain development hegemony. Through antagonism displacement, actors do not erase state–citizen conflicts; they divert and neutralize them through the language of *umat* interests and religious *amanah*. As a result, religiosity no longer functions as an instrument of human security protection; it becomes a tool for conflict depoliticization within contemporary extractive regimes, a transformation that places the ethical integrity of religious organizations at stake amid recurring ecological and social crises (Gilmartin, 2022; Lunstrum & Bose, 2022; Lynam & Miller, 2019).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that mining concession policies for religious organizations in Indonesia cannot be understood merely as economic measures, technical regulations, or even short-term political strategies. The findings reveal a deeper discursive configuration in which religious legitimacy functions as the central point of policy articulation (a nodal point), human security undergoes systematic disarticulation, and religious organizations experience a transformation of roles from moral guardians into extractive actors. These three findings form a mutually reinforcing hegemonic process: religious language stabilizes extractivism, ecological and social risks become marginalized through procedural rationalization, and structural state–citizen conflicts shift into the internal moral domain of organizations. Accordingly, mining concession policy concerns not only what the state does, but also how meanings of development, justice, and religious responsibility are produced and naturalized in the public sphere.

Why does this configuration emerge? The explanation lies in the functional relationship among the legitimacy crisis of extractive development, the moral authority of religion, and the state's need for political stability. In post-reform Indonesia, extractivism faces increasing resistance due to the accumulation of ecological impacts, agrarian conflicts, and the delegitimation of the state's ability to protect citizens' living security. In this context, technocratic language—such as environmental impact assessments, reclamation, and legal compliance—no longer suffices to pacify resistance. Legitimacy must extend into a deeper normative domain. Religious language operates strategically at this point: concepts such as *maslahat*, *amanah*, *keberkahan*, and *kehalalan* provide a moral horizon capable of unifying heterogeneous claims into a single narrative of common sense. Through the nodal point mechanism (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), material questions about risk and inequality shift into ethical questions about good intentions and collective benefit. In other words, discourse reconstructs structural conflict as a moral issue that appears solvable without altering policy direction.

This process also explains why human security never faces explicit rejection, but instead becomes reduced and marginalized. Human security appears as a normatively accepted term, yet it never becomes fixed as a policy-limiting parameter. Discourse repackages it into governance promises, professional commitments, and technical

procedures—an operation consistent with the logic of difference, in which ecological, health, and communal risks separate from the core meaning of development. In this way, extractivism continues without confronting claims of living security as structural threats. This disarticulation does not result from communicative failure; it represents hegemonic success: development appears "moral" even when discourse fails to elaborate its material impacts seriously.

Furthermore, this study shows that the normalization of extractivism cannot remain stable without repositioning religious actors themselves. Religious organizations that historically functioned as moral guardians and victim advocates undergo role transformation through antagonism displacement. The primary conflict between the state or corporations and affected citizens no longer appears as public antagonism, but instead shifts into internal organizational and community arenas as debates over *maslahat*, *amanah*, and managerial ethics. As a result, discourse does not eliminate structural antagonism; it relocates it into politically safer and more controllable arenas. In this process, religious organizations operate as hegemonic buffers that stabilize extractive policy while dampening moral-based resistance.

From a comparative perspective, these findings intersect with and extend three major strands of literature on mining concessions for religious organizations. First, in line with legal and public policy studies, this research acknowledges regulatory problems, legal inconsistencies, and potential administrative abuse (Astinda et al., 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2022; Nasir et al., 2022). However, unlike juridical approaches that stop at normative validity, this study shows that moral-religious legitimacy patches regulatory weaknesses, allowing policy stability despite contested legal foundations. Second, this research resonates with environmental ethics and theology studies that highlight the moral paradox of religion in extractivism (Baylon et al., 2025; Darling, 2025), but it advances the discussion by showing how ethical language operates politically as a hegemonic mechanism rather than merely as a normative contradiction. Third, the findings reinforce political economy analyses of state patronage and clientelism (Atsari & Wanusmawatie, 2025; Fariduddin & Kusuma, 2024), while adding a largely overlooked dimension: this policy constitutes a discursive battleground in which human security becomes actively negotiated and marginalized through religious articulation.

The primary novelty of this study lies in integrating discursive hegemony analysis with the concepts of human security and antagonism displacement. The study demonstrates that human security does not simply suffer neglect; discourse actively produces it as a peripheral signifier that does not disrupt development logic. At the same time, the transformation of religious organizations' roles cannot be understood solely as economic pragmatism or political opportunism, but as an ideological repositioning that reshapes conflict structures and citizen protection.

A historical interpretation of these findings shows that relations between religion and natural resources in Indonesia have always existed in tension between stewardship ethics and exploitative logics (Akhda et al., 2019; Bagir et al., 2025). Religious traditions provide flexible moral vocabularies: they can support stewardship and victim advocacy, but they can also normalize human domination over nature (Sahabuddin & Hildayanti, 2023; Wijsen et al., 2023). Socially, these findings show how religious language functions as a technology of cohesion and stabilization, but at significant cost: the disappearance of victim visibility and the normalization of ecological risk as the "price of development" (Sadat Rafiei & Asadi Anar, 2025). Ideologically, religious legitimacy operates as a depoliticizing mechanism that transforms material conflict into internal moral dilemmas, closing space for alternative articulations grounded in human security and ecological justice (Rubin, 2025).

Reflection on the functions and dysfunctions of these findings highlights the ambivalence of religion's role in development. Its positive function lies in providing moral frameworks that mobilize solidarity, redistribution, and economic participation. Its primary dysfunction, however, proves far more serious: when religious language stabilizes extractivism, it contributes to the normalization of ecological damage, the obscuring of structural violence, and the weakening of victims' positions as political subjects. Over time, this dysfunction risks eroding the moral credibility of religious organizations themselves, as the gap between ethical claims and lived experience continues to widen (Koehrsen & Burchardt, 2024; Wuthnow, 2022).

Based on this reflection, action plans should aim to correct dysfunctions without denying religion's moral potential. First, concession policy should require the integration of human security indicators—environmental, health, economic, and community—as substantive conditions rather than procedural promises, supported by independent evaluation mechanisms that involve affected communities. Second, religious organizations should restore their critical functions through clear institutional separation between moral-advocacy roles and economic interests, ensuring that conflicts of interest do not silence victims' voices. Third, public deliberation spaces should

expand so that religious discourse does not remain monopolized by elites, but opens to alternative interpretations that place living security at the center of religious ethics. Through these measures, the goal is not to reject religion's role in development, but to restore religion as a source of ethical critique capable of constraining—rather than stabilizing—development practices that threaten human security.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores a central lesson: mining concession policies for religious organizations do not derive their primary legitimacy from technocratic rationality or governance efficiency, but from discursive work that mobilizes religious moral authority to stabilize extractivism. The findings reveal a consistent and interconnected pattern. First, religious legitimacy—especially through the concepts of *maslahat*, *amanah*, *keberkahan*, and *kehalalan*—functions as a nodal point that fixes diverse and heterogeneous claims within a single horizon of policy common sense. Second, human security does not face explicit rejection; instead, it undergoes systematic disarticulation as discourse reduces it to procedural promises and technical matters, thereby stripping it of normative force as a limit on extractive development. Third, religious organizations experience a transformation of roles from moral guardians and victim advocates into extractive actors that help sustain development hegemony through antagonism displacement, which relocates structural state–citizen conflict into the internal moral domain of organizations. Within this configuration, ecological and social conflicts do not disappear; discourse neutralizes and defers them through the language of communal interest and religious trust.

The study's primary scholarly contribution lies in developing an analytical framework that coherently connects discursive hegemony, human security, and the transformation of religious actors' roles. First, the study extends Laclau–Mouffe's theory of hegemony by empirically demonstrating how religious legitimacy operates as a nodal point in public policy, rather than merely as post hoc normative justification. Second, by conceptualizing human security as a floating signifier subject to disarticulation, the study contributes to human security scholarship by showing how discourse can produce the concept as peripheral—morally acknowledged yet politically disempowered. Third, through the concept of antagonism displacement, the study offers a new understanding of the transformation of religious organizations in extractivist contexts: not as simple economic pragmatism or political patronage, but as an ideological repositioning that reshapes conflict structures and power relations. In this way, the study bridges religious studies, political economy, and human security, and demonstrates that religious language constitutes a contested discursive arena that determines whether the protection of lived security is strengthened or obscured.

The study's limitations primarily concern data scope and methodological approach. The analysis focuses on national media corpora and elite statements, and therefore does not directly capture the *lived experience* of mining-affected communities or grassroots dynamics within religious organizations through in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation. In addition, the study emphasizes discursive analysis and does not quantitatively assess the policy's effects on concrete human security indicators such as health, livelihoods, and community relations. Future research can strengthen and extend these findings through mixed designs: (1) political-ecological ethnography in concession areas to restore victims' voices as analytical subjects, (2) cross-national or cross-tradition comparative studies to test the generalizability of religious legitimation mechanisms, and (3) empirical measurement of human security to assess gaps between claims of *maslahat* and the material impacts of policy. Through these steps, future research can deepen understanding of how religion operates—not only as a source of ethics, but also as a political force—within contemporary ecological and social crises.

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