



# The Impact of the Oil and Gas Industry on the Socio-Cultural Life of Local Communities in Teluk Bintuni

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## Abstract

This study examines the socio-cultural impacts of the oil and gas industry on indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni, West Papua, with particular focus on the Tangguh LNG Project. Through a qualitative case study approach utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, the research investigates how industrial development affects traditional practices, social structures, and economic patterns among the Sebyar, Sumuri, Irarutu, and Wamesa tribes. The study reveals significant transformations in community dynamics, including a shift from subsistence-based to cash-based economies, weakening of traditional leadership structures, and declining cultural practices. While the oil and gas industry has brought improved infrastructure, employment opportunities, and access to modern services through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, it has simultaneously contributed to cultural erosion, social tensions, and land rights disputes. The research identifies a notable decrease in traditional ceremonies, communal gatherings, and indigenous language usage, particularly among younger generations increasingly drawn to modern lifestyles. Analysis of economic impacts shows a marked transition in livelihood patterns, with traditional hunting and farming activities being replaced by industrial employment and related service sectors. The study also highlights challenges in implementing effective CSR programs, noting limited community participation in planning and execution phases. These findings emphasize the need for more inclusive development approaches that balance economic growth with cultural preservation. The research contributes to the broader understanding of industrialization's impact on indigenous communities and provides recommendations for policy makers, corporate entities, and community leaders to foster more sustainable and culturally sensitive development practices. The study suggests that future success in similar contexts depends on strengthening legal frameworks for indigenous rights protection, improving community participation in decision-making processes, and developing more effective models for cultural preservation alongside industrial development.

**Keywords:** Indigenous communities, oil and gas, socio-cultural impact, cultural preservation, corporate social responsibility

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## 1. Introduction

The oil and gas industry in Teluk Bintuni, West Papua, has become one of the strategic sectors that has made a significant contribution to the national economy. This area is known to have abundant natural gas reserves, especially through the Tangguh LNG Project, which is one of the mainstay projects in Indonesia. The existence of this oil and gas industry not only has an economic impact on a national and regional scale, but also has a major influence on the socio-cultural life of the local community (Reyseliani et al, 2024). This gives rise to various dynamics that are important to study, considering that Teluk Bintuni is home to indigenous communities that are rich in local wisdom and cultural traditions. Indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni consist of various tribes, such as the Sebyar, Sumuri, Irarutu, and Wamesa tribes, who have a way of life that is close to nature and ancestral traditions (Pamungkas & Indriasari, 2021). However, the presence of the oil and gas industry often brings its own challenges, including changes in lifestyle, shifts in cultural values, and social conflicts. These changes are triggered by various factors, such as the influx of migrant workers, urbanization, and the penetration of outside cultures brought by industrial development. On the other hand, there are also positive opportunities, such as increasing access to education, health, and infrastructure facilities that were previously difficult for local communities to reach (Qu et al., 2024).

The industrialization process is often a double-edged sword for indigenous communities. On the one hand, the development of the oil and gas sector in Teluk Bintuni provides economic opportunities, such as employment for local communities and the development of basic infrastructure. On the other hand, indigenous communities are often the most vulnerable groups to negative impacts, such as economic marginalization, loss of customary land, and the

decline in cultural values. This condition is a challenge for all parties, including the government, oil and gas companies, and local communities, to ensure that the existence of industry does not sacrifice the cultural identity of indigenous communities (Farrell et al, 2021).

One important aspect that needs to be considered is the change in the lifestyle of indigenous communities due to the presence of the oil and gas industry. Before the oil and gas project, the lives of indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni were dominated by subsistence practices that depended on natural resources, such as hunting, gathering, and traditional farming. However, industrialization has shifted this pattern to be more dependent on the money economy, where people have started working as industrial laborers or running small businesses related to the activities of oil and gas companies. This shift not only impacts the family economy but also influences social and cultural relations within the community (Krasnoshtanova, 2023; Beausoleil et al., 2021).

In addition, the presence of migrant workers from various regions in Indonesia also has a major influence on the lives of the Teluk Bintuni community. Interactions between local communities and immigrants often create complex social dynamics. On the one hand, this interaction can open up opportunities for mutual learning and sharing of culture. However, on the other hand, the entry of immigrants can also trigger social tensions, especially when there is inequality in access to resources and economic opportunities. This can worsen relations between local communities and immigrants, and cause horizontal conflict at the community level (Leonard et al., 2022).

From a cultural perspective, one of the most striking impacts is the threat to the sustainability of local traditions and languages. The oil and gas industry brings with it modernization that is often not in line with the traditional values of indigenous communities (Klepikov & Klepikova, 2023). For example, traditional rituals that are usually carried out to maintain harmony with nature are increasingly rarely carried out because people are more involved in industrial work. In addition, the younger generation tends to be more interested in the modern culture brought by immigrants, so that attention to preserving local traditions is decreasing.

This change is not only felt in everyday life but also in the social structure of society. The presence of the oil and gas industry has changed traditional leadership patterns in several communities. If previously tribal chiefs or traditional figures had a central role in decision-making, now their influence tends to decrease along with the increasing role of local governments and companies in determining the direction of development in the region. This shift poses new challenges in efforts to maintain a balance between modernization and the preservation of traditional values.

However, not all changes brought about by the oil and gas industry are negative. In some cases, oil and gas companies strive to make positive contributions through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. These programs include the construction of infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and health facilities, which can improve the quality of life of local communities. In addition, some companies also involve indigenous communities in job training or small business development, so that they can gain direct economic benefits from the existence of the industry (Duttagupta et al., 2021).

However, the implementation of these programs often faces various challenges, such as the lack of active participation of indigenous communities in the planning and implementation of the program. This means that the benefits of the CSR program are not always felt evenly by all levels of society. Therefore, a more inclusive and community-based approach is needed to ensure that the existence of the oil and gas industry truly provides a sustainable positive impact on the people of Teluk Bintuni.

In this regard, it is important to understand that indigenous peoples in Teluk Bintuni have rights to the land and resources that they have managed for generations. Recognition of these rights is key to creating a harmonious relationship between industry and local communities. In addition, the involvement of indigenous peoples in decision-making, both at the local and national levels, is essential to ensure that industrial development does not ignore their needs and aspirations. This study aims to explore the socio-cultural impacts of the presence of the oil and gas industry in Teluk Bintuni, with a focus on the dynamics of change that occur in the lives of indigenous peoples. Through this approach, it is hoped that a balanced solution can be found between economic development and cultural preservation, so that Teluk Bintuni can be an example of how industrialization can go hand in hand with socio-cultural sustainability.

## 2. Literature Review

The oil and gas industry and its impact on local communities have been a topic of research that has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners in various fields. A study by Okpebenyo et al. (2023) on the "resource curse" shows that although natural resources can provide great economic benefits, they are often a source of inequality and conflict, especially in areas inhabited by indigenous communities. This is relevant to the situation in Teluk Bintuni, where the management of oil and gas resources must consider the welfare of indigenous communities.

Another study by Wirba (2024) highlights the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs in mitigating the negative impacts of industrialization on local communities. In the case of West Papua, several oil and gas companies have implemented CSR programs to support education, health, and local economic development.

However, the effectiveness of these programs is often questioned due to the lack of community participation in the planning and implementation process.

From an anthropological perspective, Qizi (2021) explains how globalization and modernization often threaten the sustainability of local traditions. In Teluk Bintuni, modernization brought by the oil and gas industry can shift customary practices, including religious rituals and social relationship patterns. This is in line with the findings of Huggins et al. (2021), which show that social changes due to industrialization often affect traditional power structures in indigenous communities.

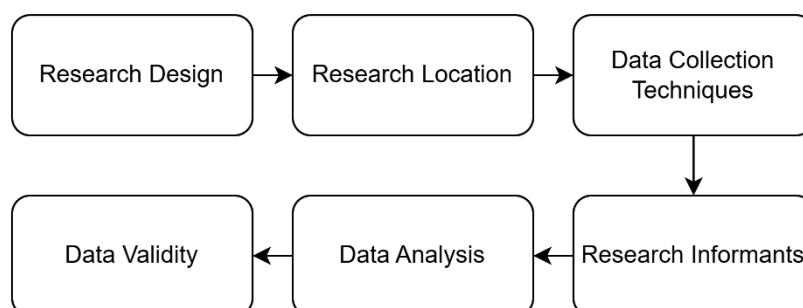
In the context of West Papua, research by Al-Mansoori & Hamdan (2023) provides insight into the dynamics of the relationship between indigenous communities and the government in managing natural resources. Al-Mansoori and Hamdan emphasize the importance of recognizing the customary rights of indigenous communities as a first step in creating harmony between industrialization and preserving local culture. In addition, a study by David et al. (2023) shows that land conflicts are often a major issue in the development of the oil and gas industry in Papua, including in Teluk Bintuni.

Previous studies have also shown the importance of involving indigenous communities in the decision-making process. For example, a study by Fraser (2021) highlights how a participatory approach can help reduce conflict and improve social sustainability. This is relevant to be applied in Teluk Bintuni, where indigenous communities have an important role in maintaining the balance between economic development and environmental preservation.

### 3. Methods

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media on voter participation in the 2024 General Election in Indonesia. To achieve this goal, this study uses a mixed methods approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods (Dawadi et al., 2021). This approach was chosen because it can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena that occur, both in terms of numerical measurements and in-depth insights into voter attitudes and behavior. The following is a detailed explanation of the methodology used in this study.

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen because of its ability to provide a deep understanding of complex phenomena, especially regarding the interaction between the oil and gas industry and indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni. The stages in this study can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Research Flow

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen because it is able to provide a deep understanding of complex phenomena, especially the interaction between the oil and gas industry and indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni. Case studies allow for a more detailed exploration of the socio-cultural dynamics in a particular location, which is relevant to the context of Teluk Bintuni as an area rich in oil and gas resources and has cultural diversity. With this design, the study can explore the positive and negative impacts felt by local communities due to the presence of the oil and gas industry.

#### 3.2. Research Location

The research location is centered on several villages around the Tangguh LNG Project operational area in Teluk Bintuni, West Papua. The selection of locations was carried out purposively based on the level of involvement of indigenous communities in oil and gas industry activities and the level of socio-cultural changes that are visible. This area is home to indigenous communities, such as the Sebyar, Sumuri, Irarutu, and Wamesa tribes, who have a close relationship with their land and culture. The presence of oil and gas industry projects in this area provides a relevant context for examining its impact on the social and cultural life patterns of indigenous communities.

### 3.3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through three main methods, namely in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document review. In-depth interviews were conducted with indigenous leaders, local communities, local governments, and representatives of oil and gas companies to explore their views on the impact of the oil and gas industry on people's lives. These interviews helped understand the perspectives of the various parties involved, including conflict dynamics, changes in cultural values, and the role of companies in mitigating negative impacts.

Participatory observation was carried out by being directly involved in daily community activities, such as traditional events, economic activities, and social interactions. This observation provided direct insight into the changes that occurred in community life patterns due to the presence of the oil and gas industry. In addition, the document review involved analysis of company reports, government policies, and scientific literature related to the oil and gas industry and indigenous communities in West Papua. This technique helps provide a broader context and supports field data.

### 3.4. Research Informants

Research informants were selected purposively to ensure that the data obtained is relevant to the research objectives. Informants consisted of various groups, such as traditional figures and tribal chiefs who have deep insight into local cultural dynamics; local workers involved in oil and gas projects to understand the direct impact on local labor; local government representatives who have a role in regulating relations between the community and industry; and company representatives responsible for the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. The selection of informants with diverse backgrounds aims to obtain a comprehensive picture of the impact of the oil and gas industry.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using a thematic approach. The analysis process begins with data reduction, namely simplifying and selecting data that is relevant to the focus of the research. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of narratives, tables, or diagrams to facilitate interpretation and identification of key patterns. The final stage is drawing conclusions, where the main themes that emerge from the data are linked to the theoretical framework and research objectives. This thematic approach allows researchers to describe socio-cultural dynamics in detail and in depth.

### 3.6. Data Validity

To ensure validity and reliability, this study applies data triangulation through collecting information from various sources, such as local informants, official documents, and direct observation results. In addition, method triangulation is carried out by combining interviews, observations, and document reviews. Researchers also validate the results of interviews with informants to ensure that the interpretation of the data is in accordance with their experiences. This approach aims to increase the credibility of research findings and ensure that the results obtained can be scientifically accounted for.

## 4. Result and Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant socio-cultural impacts of the oil and gas industry in Teluk Bintuni, West Papua. The presence of the Tangguh LNG Project has caused various changes in the socio-cultural dynamics of the community, which have affected the economic, social, and cultural practices of the indigenous community. The following section provides an in-depth exploration of the main findings and discusses the implications of these changes.

### 4.1. Economic Impacts and Livelihood Changes

The development of the oil and gas industry in Teluk Bintuni has clearly brought economic opportunities for indigenous communities. The most striking change is the shift from a subsistence economy to a cash-based economy. Many indigenous people, especially from the Sebyar, Sumuri, Irarutu, and Wamesa tribes, have found employment opportunities in the oil and gas industry, either directly as laborers or indirectly through small businesses related to industrial activities. However, this shift to an industrial economy is not without challenges. Table 1 shows the changes in livelihood sources before and after the oil and gas project began.

**Table 1:** Changes in Livelihood Sources in Teluk Bintuni

Livelihood	Before Oil and Gas Industry	After Oil and Gas Industry
Hunting and Fishing	High	Decreased
Traditional Agriculture	High	Decreased
Livelihood	Before Oil and Gas Industry	After Oil and Gas Industry
Industrial Employment (Oil & Gas)	None	Increased
Small Business (supporting industry)	None	Increased
Services (education, health)	Limited	After Oil and Gas Industry

Table 1 shows significant changes in the livelihoods of the people in Teluk Bintuni after the oil and gas industry began. Before the presence of the industry, the main livelihoods of the indigenous people were hunting, fishing, and traditional agriculture, which contributed greatly to their economic life. However, after the arrival of the oil and gas industry, there was a clear shift towards a cash-based economy. Income from hunting and fishing, as well as traditional agriculture, decreased, while employment in the oil and gas industry and small businesses that support the industry increased rapidly.

The oil and gas industry provides direct employment opportunities for the community, both as workers in the field and in activities related to the industry sector, such as the provision of goods and services. In addition, service sectors, such as education and health, which were previously limited, are now increasing along with the development of the industry.

These changes have had a major impact on the social and economic dynamics of Teluk Bintuni, especially in terms of the adoption of an industrial economic model and changes in the lifestyle of the local community. However, this shift also presents challenges, such as greater dependence on industry and the potential loss of traditional skills that have long been an important part of the community's identity.

## 4.2. Social and Cultural Changes

The influx of migrant workers from various regions in Indonesia has introduced new social dynamics to the local community. Interactions between indigenous peoples and migrants bring cultural exchanges, but also tensions arising from inequalities in access to employment opportunities and the distribution of resources. These tensions are particularly evident in the way different groups access the benefits and share in the economic development of the region.

The presence of migrant workers has led to changes in social relations, with some indigenous groups expressing concerns about the erosion of local customs and values. This is particularly evident among the younger generation who are increasingly attracted to the modern lifestyles often promoted by migrants from urban areas.

Traditional leadership systems that once played an important role in decision-making are now weakening as local governments and companies play an increasingly important role. Table 2 illustrates the changes in power structures in these communities, with the influence of traditional leaders declining compared to the increasing authority of government and industry representatives.

**Table 2:** Changing Leadership Influence in Teluk Bintuni

Leadership Influence	Before Oil and Gas Industry	After Oil and Gas Industry
Traditional Leaders (Tribal Chiefs)	High	Decreased
Local Government	Limited	Increased
Oil & Gas Companies	None	Increased

The results in Table 2 show significant changes in the leadership structure in Teluk Bintuni after the start of the oil and gas industry. Before the industry developed, the influence of traditional leaders, such as tribal chiefs, was very dominant in decision-making and the social life of the community. They have a central role in regulating relations between residents and maintaining customary values that have existed for centuries.

However, after the arrival of the oil and gas industry, the influence of traditional leaders began to decline. This occurred along with the increasing role of local governments and oil and gas companies in social and economic

affairs. Local governments now have greater influence, especially in terms of natural resource management, development policies, and their role in mediating social issues arising from industrial growth.

Meanwhile, oil and gas companies that previously did not have a significant role in the community leadership structure now have increasing influence. These companies not only play a role in providing employment, but also participate in decision-making related to resource allocation and regional development. This leads to changes in the leadership system that is increasingly dependent on external actors, while the role of traditional leaders is increasingly marginalized. These changes reflect complex social dynamics, in which traditional and modern values interact and sometimes conflict, creating new challenges in maintaining the cultural identity and independence of local communities.

### 4.3. Cultural preservation and threats to customary practices

One of the main concerns expressed by indigenous peoples is the threat to their traditions and cultural practices. Traditional rituals, such as ceremonies honoring the land and natural resources, are being performed less frequently as community members become more involved in industrial work.

Interviews with traditional leaders revealed that the younger generation is increasingly less interested in maintaining these traditions due to the lure of modern culture and economic pressures from the oil and gas industry. These changes have led to a decline in cultural practices such as traditional feasts, dances, and the use of language that are integral to their cultural identity. Changes in the frequency of cultural practices can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Frequency of Cultural Practices in Teluk Bintuni

Cultural Practice	Before Oil and Gas Industry	After Oil and Gas Industry
Traditional Ceremonies	Frequent	Rarely conducted
Communal Feasts	Common	Decreased
Traditional Dances	Regular	Infrequent
Language Usage (Indigenous)	Dominant	Declining

Table 3 shows a significant decrease in the frequency of traditional cultural practices in Teluk Bintuni after the start of the oil and gas industry. Before the industry, various cultural practices such as traditional ceremonies, communal feasts, traditional dances, and the use of native languages were an important part of the community's social life. Traditional ceremonies were held regularly, communal feasts were a common activity, traditional dances were often performed, and the use of native languages dominated daily conversations.

However, after the development of the oil and gas industry, there was a major change in the pattern of implementation of these cultural practices. Traditional ceremonies that were previously held routinely are now rarely held, while communal feasts that used to be a social tradition have decreased in frequency. Traditional dances that used to be part of important celebrations are also now only performed occasionally. The use of native languages, which used to be the dominant language in social interactions, is now decreasing, replaced by Indonesian or even foreign languages used in industrial environments.

These changes reflect the impact of modernization and industrialization on the lives of indigenous communities. Many community members, especially the younger generation, are more focused on working in the industrial sector and tend to adopt a modern lifestyle that leads to neglect of their traditions and cultural values. This indicates a threat to the sustainability of traditional cultural practices that have been their identity for centuries.

### 4.4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Community Engagement

Oil and gas companies operating in Teluk Bintuni have implemented various CSR programs aimed at improving the quality of life of the local community. These programs have made a positive contribution to the development of infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and health facilities. Table 4 summarizes the main CSR initiatives and their impacts on the local community.

**Table 4:** CSR Initiatives and Their Impacts in Teluk Bintuni

CSR Initiative	Focus Area	Impact on Local Communities
Infrastructure Development	Roads, schools, healthcare	Improved access to services
Local Economic Empowerment Programs	Small business, training	Increased job opportunities
Education and Health Programs	Scholarships, healthcare	Better access to education and health
Environmental Preservation Projects	Land conservation	Increased awareness

Table 4 shows the various CSR initiatives implemented by oil and gas companies in Teluk Bintuni and their impacts on the local community. These companies have focused on several key areas, including infrastructure development, local economic empowerment, education and health programs, and environmental conservation.

Infrastructure development initiatives, such as the construction of roads, schools, and health facilities, have had significant positive impacts by improving community access to these essential services. With better infrastructure, communities now have easier access to education, health services, and better mobility between regions.

Local economic empowerment programs that include small business training and development have also opened up new employment opportunities for the local community. Through these programs, many individuals have gained new skills that have enabled them to run small businesses or obtain employment in other sectors related to the oil and gas industry.

In addition, education and health programs that include scholarships and better access to health services have also provided significant benefits in improving the quality of life of the community. With better access to education and health services, communities can improve their well-being in the long term.

Finally, environmental conservation projects that focus on land conservation have raised community awareness of the importance of preserving their environment, even in the context of a rapidly growing industry. This shows that oil and gas companies are not only focused on economic profits but also strive to make a positive contribution to social and environmental sustainability in the region.

#### **4.5. Land Rights and Resource Conflicts**

Land rights issues have been a long-standing source of tension between indigenous communities and oil and gas companies. Many indigenous groups in Teluk Bintuni have traditional land rights that are not always recognized by the formal legal system. This has led to disputes over land ownership and resource allocation.

The research findings also show that land conflicts have intensified since the establishment of the oil and gas industry, especially with the influx of migrant workers and the expansion of industrial activities. Indigenous leaders expressed concerns that their customary lands were being increasingly displaced without adequate consultation or compensation.

#### **4.6. Recommendations for Sustainable Development**

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the government, oil and gas companies, and indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni work together in the decision-making process to ensure that the benefits of development are felt equitably by all parties. The involvement of indigenous communities in project planning and implementation is essential to maintaining cultural values while supporting economic growth. In addition, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs need to be strengthened by actively involving local communities so that benefits are more relevant to their needs and distributed fairly.

Cultural preservation efforts should also be a priority, including through support for the revitalization of languages, traditional ceremonies, and other cultural practices to prevent cultural erosion due to modernization. In addition, legal recognition of customary land rights must be immediately realized to prevent conflicts related to land use and ensure that industrial development takes place while respecting the territorial claims of indigenous peoples. These steps are needed to create development that is inclusive, sustainable, and in line with the needs and socio-cultural identity of the indigenous peoples of Teluk Bintuni.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study has examined the complex socio-cultural impacts of the oil and gas industry on indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni, West Papua, particularly focusing on the Tangguh LNG Project. The research reveals several significant findings that contribute to our understanding of industrialization's effects on indigenous communities.

First, the study demonstrates a fundamental shift in the economic structure of indigenous communities, transitioning from a subsistence-based economy to a cash-based industrial economy. While this transition has created new employment opportunities and improved access to modern amenities, it has also led to the erosion of traditional economic practices and increased dependency on industrial activities.

Second, the research highlights significant changes in social dynamics and power structures within indigenous communities. Traditional leadership systems have been notably weakened, with authority increasingly shifting toward government officials and corporate entities. This transformation has profound implications for community decision-making processes and cultural preservation.

Third, the findings indicate a concerning decline in cultural practices and traditional customs among indigenous communities in Teluk Bintuni. The frequency of traditional ceremonies, communal feasts, and the use of indigenous languages has decreased significantly, particularly among younger generations who are increasingly attracted to modern lifestyles.

Fourth, while Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs have contributed to infrastructure development and community welfare, their implementation often lacks meaningful community participation, leading to suboptimal outcomes and uneven distribution of benefits.

These findings have important implications for policy and practice. To ensure sustainable development that respects indigenous rights and cultural preservation:

- a. There is a critical need for more inclusive decision-making processes that actively involve indigenous communities in planning and implementing development projects.
- b. Legal frameworks must be strengthened to protect indigenous land rights and ensure fair compensation for resource exploitation.
- c. Cultural preservation initiatives should be integrated into development programs, with particular emphasis on engaging younger generations.
- d. CSR programs should be redesigned with greater community input to ensure they address local needs effectively.

Future research should focus on developing more effective models for balancing industrial development with cultural preservation, particularly in regions with significant indigenous populations. Additionally, longitudinal studies would be valuable in tracking the long-term impacts of industrial development on indigenous communities' social structures and cultural practices.

This study's limitations include its focus on a specific geographical area and time period. Future research could benefit from comparative studies across different regions and industrial contexts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. The findings contribute to the broader academic discourse on indigenous rights, sustainable development, and corporate responsibility in resource-rich regions. They underscore the importance of developing more nuanced approaches to industrial development that can accommodate both economic growth and cultural preservation.

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