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Who Matters Most? Rethinking Stakeholder Priorities in Nickel Mining Companies Central Sulawesi

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Abstract

Community empowerment and development (PPM) is the focus of this study, which examines the nickel mining business in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The primary objective of the study is to identify, prioritize, and engage with internal and external stakeholders. Everyone from affected communities to non-profits and even city councils might be considered a stakeholder. It makes use of the Power-Interest Matrix and Freeman's theory of stakeholders. It becomes more difficult to maintain social, economic, and environmental stability as more enterprises relocate to areas with abundant resources. The interplay between stakeholders was investigated in this qualitative study via the use of tools such as social mapping, in-depth interviews, focus groups, field observations, and community involvement forums. Stakeholders' objectives shift with time in response to environmental, social, and political variables, according to the findings. Every one of the matrix's four corners considers the actions and worries of the most influential parties. The findings highlight the significance of adaptive approaches, transparent supervision, and site-specific planning in the success of PPM. Infrastructure, economic resilience, health, and education are just a few sectors that can benefit from hearing from those who will really be using a program. More resources can be used, more people can accept them, and organizations can stay in business longer with the help of stakeholder power mapping. By enhancing the CSR approach with spatial data and participative models, this work improves stakeholder theory. This provides extractive companies with procedures that can be used by many different persons and can be reused.

Keywords: Stakeholder Mapping, Nickel Mining, CDE, PPM, Sulawesi





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Introduction

The Indonesian nickel sector has grown rapidly, thanks in large part to government subsidies for downstream processing and a restriction on raw nickel ore exports. The increase in production and the development of smelters has propelled downstream nickel products—including nickel matte—into export; yet, questions concerning the sustainability of reserves and world market pricing remain unresolved (CNBC Indonesia, 2023). According to statistics from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), Indonesia boasts nickel mines covering 520,877.07 hectares (ha). Seven provinces—Maluku, North Maluku, Papua, West Papua, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, and Southeast Sulawesi—have the mines spread among them. Located in Central Sulawesi Province, a nickel mine spans 115,397.37 acres (Shiddiq, 2023).

To optimize state revenue from mineral products, Indonesia has progressively enacted a restriction on raw material exports recently. This policy seeks to promote the downstream industrialization of the domestic sector, enhance product value, and diminish reliance on raw material exports (ESDM, 2024). The application of downstream policies directly promotes the escalation of nickel mining operations in several areas, including Central Sulawesi, which has lately become one of the epicentres of the national nickel sector. Along with affecting economic development, the rise of industrial activity generates fresh local social dynamics. In this context, the development and empowerment of the communities surrounding the mine are not only complementary to business activities, but rather strategic elements that must be planned methodically and sustainably to guarantee the creation of social justice, equitable distribution of benefits, and social legitimacy of the company.

To maintain its position, the mining sector must make a commitment to aligning its objectives with the values of society in order to foster socioeconomic progress and the development of communities that are impacted. This is necessary in light of the fact that mining is not a sustainable business due to the limited nature of the activity itself. Over a long period of time, numerous programs that are targeted at strengthening the community's economy have been utilized to contribute to the improvement of the social welfare of the community. More specifically, mining corporations bear the responsibility of improving the social welfare of communities directly affected by their activities





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(ESDM, 2018). The economic contribution of the nickel mining industry has a substantial impact on the economies of both the nationally and regionally relevant regions. This is made abundantly clear by the expansive nickel reserves as well as the consistently expanding mining prospects that are available each year.

Long-standing initiatives have been implemented to enhance the community's social welfare through various programs focused on economic improvement. In 2007, the government initiated the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program for corporations, as specified in Law number 40 of 2007 regarding Limited Liability Companies, Chapter V, Article 74, paragraph 1, which mandates that companies involved in or associated with natural resources must fulfill social and environmental responsibilities (Ilmu et al., 2007). Simultaneously, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) promulgated Regulation Number 1824 K 30 of 2018 regarding the Community Development and Empowerment Program (PPM), which requires mineral and coal mining firms (minerba) to execute PPM initiatives in compliance with ESDM rules. PPM is one aspect of community development that differs from CSR. A component of the development paradigm, empowerment seeks to improve people's lives by addressing their material and physical needs, as well as their intellectual and administrative capacities, in relation to their physical and natural surroundings. Aspects related to society, culture, economy, politics, security, and the environment could emerge from these (Londa, 2017). There are eight mandatory pillars of Community Development and Empowerment (PPM) that must be implemented by mining companies, (1) Education; (2) Healthcare; (3) Economic Self-Sufficiency; (4) Real Income or Employment Opportunities; (5) Social and Cultural Development; (6) Community participation in managing sustainable livelihoods around mining areas; (7) Establishment of community communication institutions to support PPM independence; and (8) Infrastructure development that supports the success of PPM programs (ESDM, 2018).

The goal and aim of this study are to map the stakeholders in community development and empowerment programs in Central Sulawesi's nickel mining districts. This study will look at the demands of stakeholders and the PPM programs that will be put in place to meet those needs. The stakeholder paradigm that Freeman (E. R. Freeman et al., 2010) wrote about is used in this study.





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This stakeholder approach makes it clear that companies have responsibilities not only to their shareholders but also to a wide range of people and groups who might affect or be affected by the company's operations. This means that the mining company and the stakeholders need to work together. The discussion that took place will result in an agreement for the PPM program to be carried out, along with a scale for prioritizing tasks. In this case, pragmatism means that the best way to move the company forward and make it better is to recognize and work with stakeholders. Freeman has said several times that stakeholder theory is a way for companies to make and improve their business plans and see how effectively they function.

This study maps the stakeholder analysis based on the results of social mapping conducted for the community development and empowerment program in the nickel mining area of Central Sulawesi. The stakeholders here include both internal and external parties, such as the relevant government, communities directly affected by mining activities, investors, communities, etc. This study employs stakeholder power mapping to find stakeholders and figure out how important they are. A power map shows stakeholders in four quadrants based on how much power or influence they have on the program and how interested they are in it (Baugh, 2015). There is a different way to communicate for each quadrant of power map. Power mapping consists of four quadrants, specifically: (1) High power, high interest; (2) Low power, low interest; (3) High power, low interest; (4) Low power, high interest. High power, high interest explains In the upper right quadrant are individuals exhibiting the greatest degree of interest and influence. Low power, low interest explains Those with the least interest and influence are in the lower left quadrant. High power, low interest explains This group is located in the upper left quadrant and designate this sector as the perilous zone. Low power, high interest explains This is yet another intriguing group, it is prudent to provide extensive information to stakeholders in this group.

Research from (Fedora & Hudiyono, 2019) on stakeholder analysis in the public relations unit of PT Semen Padang explains the mapping of stakeholders for sponsorship funds. This study maps stakeholders and their priorities, as well as the programs that will be designed for community development and empowerment, unlike the previous research, which only maps stakeholders for sponsorship. Research from (Lin, 2021) on The salience of stakeholders in religious tourism: A case





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study of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage explains that the success of tourism depends on the commitment of all stakeholders. Based on stakeholder theory, this research assesses the importance of stakeholders in mass religious pilgrimages, specifically the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in Taiwan, using the fuzzy analytic hierarchy process (AHP). The results show that temples, pilgrims, and host communities are more important than tourists, the environment, businesses, and government bodies. The difference between that study and this one is that the former discusses stakeholder mapping in tourism success using the salience model, while this study explains stakeholder mapping in the nickel mining area of Central Sulawesi using the Power Matrix.

Recent studies have looked closely at how stakeholders are involved in different industries, especially when it comes to Corporate Social Innovation (CSI), sustainable mining practices, and social license to operate. Saka (Saka-Helmhout et al., 2024) research shows how internal and external stakeholder involvement can work together strategically in multinational corporations (MNEs). They say that effective stakeholder strategies should include dynamic capabilities and contextual awareness. These contributions have added to the body of work on CSI, however they largely focus on multinational companies and their engagement strategies that can be used by many businesses. This leaves a gap in the complex interactions between stakeholders on the ground, especially in developing areas where resources are being extracted. Research from (Ofosu & Arthur-Holmes, 2025) look at how stakeholders work together in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale mining business. They talk about the problems with top-down stakeholder approaches and suggest that frameworks that take into account community-level agency and political dynamics are better. Their work is important, but it concentrates on legislative frameworks and community initiatives instead of mapping and reprioritizing stakeholders based on how their interests and power change over time.

Research from (Chipangamate et al., 2023) also look at how modern mining companies might get a social license to operate (SLO) by involving stakeholders in their operations. Their study shows how important digital change is for getting people more involved. But they focus on technology-driven stakeholder strategies and don't look at how environmental, social, or governance (ESG) tensions at the local level might change the way stakeholders interact with each other, especially in areas that are prone to conflict or are sensitive to the environment, like nickel mining areas in Indonesia. And the





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last, research from (Hathat et al., 2025) look at how stakeholders connect with each other on social media in the carbon reduction industry. They list important traits that make people more likely to interact, such as clear content and calls to action. They also suggest a possible way to use data analytics to get the most engagement. Still, their method is largely about digital communication strategies and doesn't apply well to high-stakes extractive industries like mining. So, even though there are theoretical frameworks and models for involving stakeholders in different fields, there is still a big gap in research when it comes to understanding how stakeholder priorities change in local, high-impact industries, like nickel mining in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Researchers often see stakeholders as static entities instead of dynamic individuals whose interests and power shift across time, policies, and social and environmental outcomes.

Importance of the Proposed Research "Who Matters Most?" is the name of your study. The study "Rethinking Stakeholder Priorities in Nickel Mining Companies in Central Sulawesi" tries to fill this gap by mapping stakeholders using a dynamic Power-Interest Matrix that changes based on changes in the political and social climate. - Reassessing stakeholder groups based on how much they care about and have an effect on ESG issues, especially when it comes to indigenous and environmental issues. - Creating a stakeholder engagement framework that is more localized and adaptable using qualitative field data and community mapping. This study gives us important information that isn't well represented in the global literature, especially as Indonesia is becoming more important in the global nickel supply chain for electric vehicle (EV) batteries. This study adds a new and context-rich perspective to the stakeholder Tenure Theory debate by looking at the importance of people not just in termsformal institutional power, but also in terms of grassroots mobilization.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research method, with data collected through interviews. In addition, researchers used social mapping to gather the data needed for this study. Social mapping is carried out by people who understand the importance of community development and empowerment programs in Sulawesi Tengah. The qualitative approach was selected because this research aims to comprehensively understand the social phenomenon (Creswell, 2018) of how various stakeholders





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(companies, communities, government, and other organizations) interact and engage in the implementation of the PPM program in the nickel mining region of Central Sulawesi.

In order to determine how nickel mining in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, affects the things that various groups of people care about most, this study employs qualitative research. Qualitative research methods are more adept at capturing the complex, contextually rich, and socially constructed reality of all parties involved in mining because the interests and power dynamics are always changing (Yin, 2011). Five additional methods of gathering data are used in the study: focus group discussions (FGD), interviews, field observation, social mapping, and community socialization.

Social mapping is the first step in identifying and presenting the various groups of people involved in or impacted by nickel mining operations. To monitor land use patterns, power hierarchies, social networks, spatial relationships, and any conflicts or overlaps between stakeholders, the study employs interactive mapping exercises. Indigenous populations and those who use land without permission are two examples of people who might not be included on official stakeholder lists. It's easier to find them

Women's organizations, youth organizations, village elders, environmentalists, and businesspeople are a few of the groups that participate in focus groups. FGDs can be used to learn people's thoughts and feelings about the impact of social and environmental issues, as well as how they believe communities and businesses should collaborate (Seidman, 2019). People can learn about how organizations function, how interests conflict, and how stakeholder tensions or new alliances may emerge from these discussions. Author also record and observe social events in the community, such as business-sponsored gatherings, village forums, and public hearings. These characteristics demonstrate how decisions are made, how information is disseminated, and whether or not people are able to express their opinions. You can learn more about how stakeholders collaborate and how to manage power imbalances in negotiations by enrolling in socialization classes. Author conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including local government officials, CSR managers, religious leaders, displaced villagers, and NGOs. The researcher can gain more insight from these in-depth, one-on-one conversations about how the expectations, satisfaction, and influence of stakeholders have evolved over time (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015). The semi-structured approach





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allows the researcher greater freedom to consider novel concepts and react to responses that differ from their initial expectations.

Cross-checking data and identifying unspoken information, such as the community's response to mining operations, overt protests or resistance, or the existence of infrastructure investment, can be accomplished through field observation. By paying close attention, researchers can determine how different official stakeholder accounts are from the actual situation. Together, these five methods for analyzing stakeholders give you a comprehensive plan. First-hand knowledge, community feedback, and physical location are given more weight in this study than official sources like organizational charts or policy texts. The main goal is to identify the key players and their reasons in Central Sulawesi's nickel mining stakeholder ecosystem. The study shows how power and interest change over time. In both theory and practice, this can benefit mining companies, local governments, and civil society organizations. Programs for engagement and stakeholder mapping become more dynamic as a result.

Result and Discussion

For nickel mining in Central Sulawesi, this process considers macro-level economic trends, local development gaps, and the geographic footprint of the company's operations. It's not just about building infrastructure—it's also about understanding and responding to deeper social indicators like access to education, healthcare quality, household income, and active civic engagement. The chapter stresses the importance of community ownership, which is fostered through participatory planning, skills development, and aligning programs with local priorities. Government agencies, NGOs, and traditional leaders all play vital roles in lending credibility and social trust to the initiatives being implemented.

The PPM framework lays out four central areas of focus—education, health, economic empowerment, and infrastructure development. These sectors are recognized as fundamental to achieving long-term community resilience, especially in regions affected by mining activities. In education, programs range from providing scholarships and improving teacher qualifications to enhancing school facilities in isolated locations. Healthcare interventions aim to strengthen basic medical services, maternal care, and sanitation by building health centers and launching hygiene





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initiatives. On the economic front, the roadmap encourages small business growth, vocational training, and support for sectors with local potential such as farming and fisheries. Infrastructure efforts target the improvement of roads, access to clean water, electricity, and digital services. What sets this strategy apart is its grounding in community-specific needs, gathered through participatory tools like social mapping and dialogue with local actors. This ensures that development goes beyond physical upgrades—it seeks to foster social equity, build human capacity, and minimize community tensions. Such a holistic strategy also enhances the company's ability to maintain its social license to operate (SLO) over time.

Making sure that development initiatives complement the unique spatial and thematic characteristics of the communities they are intended to serve is known as strategic mapping. To determine the usefulness and accessibility of its products, the company employs a variety of diagnostic techniques, including focus groups, baseline studies, and social mapping. These methods aid in identifying trends in local demographic demands, economic inequality, and geographic disadvantage. These new concepts have led to the division of PPM initiatives into more specialized sectors, including the "Health Access Zone," the "Education and Skills Development Area," and the "Economic Empowerment Sector." This framework makes it easier to monitor programs, concentrate resources, and increase community interest. In order to prevent program overlaps, the mapping process is also made to work with and complement the government's current development plans, such as RPJMDes, RPJMD, and RKPDes. This chapter provides more information on how to use geographic data technology and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to create a program framework that can be modified. Since these factors influence when and how communities participate in the development process, we also consider culture, migration, and the seasons.

Involving stakeholders at every stage of the program is a crucial component of PPM planning. The findings classify stakeholders into three categories, according to stakeholder theory: those with obvious authority, those who are reliant, and those who are latent. Collaborative planning teams, organized feedback mechanisms, and village meetings are some of the institutionalized ways that people are engaged. Businesses shouldn't see community development as an afterthought; it should be an integral component of their strategy, according to the reasoning behind integrating with CSR



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programs. Implementing the PPM agenda, monitoring and reporting on social outcomes, and maintaining open communication with the community are all responsibilities of the CSR department. Additionally, the strategy acknowledges that stakeholders' interests might differ and recommends negotiating or facilitating early action where necessary. The engagement is structured in a way that prioritizes transparency, consensus-building, and trust-building. This aligns with the community's aspirations and the company's long-term sustainability objectives.



Source 1.Researcher-processed data

Figure 1. Power-grid Matrix Interest

Using the Power-Interest Matrix for nickel mining in Central Sulawesi shows a structured way to involve stakeholders. This method makes sure that strategic actions are in line with the level of concern and influence each stakeholder group has. Program planning and evaluation give stakeholders with a lot of power and interest, like communities that are directly affected (Ring 1), environmental activists, key landowners, customary leaders, and local governments, a lot of control. They should be on the monitoring or steering committees for the community development program and take part in activities like focus groups, site visits with other people, and village meetings. On





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the other hand, stakeholders with a lot of power but not much interest, like investors, national mining authorities, and central government ministries, are happy with strategic communication, formal reporting on CSR results and monitoring activities, and meeting regulatory and administrative obligations to keep the company credible. The main goal of the strategy is to give stakeholders with little power but a lot of interest, like youth groups, women's associations, local NGOs, and community health or education volunteers, easy ways to get involved, like training sessions, public consultations, and participatory channels through local or digital media. Their feedback is written down and used to judge the program so that it stays open to everyone. On the other hand, groups that don't have much power or interest, like communities outside of Ring 3, national media, and businesses that are only tangentially related, are watched from time to time. They keep the public informed and make plans to respond quickly if their interest levels change, even though they don't have to. There are many benefits to using this grid, such as better use of resources, less social conflict because only certain stakeholders are involved, more legitimacy for the program, and long-term sustainability. Because of this, CSR practices and community development projects are more likely to follow the principles of fairness and involvement.

The strategy for executing the Community Development and Empowerment Program (CDEP) employs a responsive and context-sensitive framework that considers local socio-geographical variables. The approach is organized according to a concentric area concept, classified into Ring 1, Ring 2, and Ring 3, which indicates differing levels of community closeness and exposure to mining activities. The program execution is structured annually, in accordance with the local government's planning cycle (RPJMD), and is grounded in empirical data, encompassing social mapping, baseline assessments, and multi-stakeholder discussions. Each intervention delineates specific target demographics, geographical areas, and outcome metrics to facilitate effect assessment and accountability. The model has adaptive features that enable it to respond to fluctuating environmental, socio-economic, and regulatory variables. This model prioritizes participatory design, fostering a collective feeling of responsibility and aligning corporate social investments with public development objectives and locally endorsed priorities.





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Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) play a central role in promoting transparency, program effectiveness, and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. The system integrates both qualitative and quantitative metrics that are closely aligned with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards. It encompasses regular assessments involving structured surveys, independent evaluations, and participatory community-based reviews, notably through instruments like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which captures shifts in social dynamics and local perceptions. Annual reporting is not merely a formality for regulatory compliance but serves as a platform for institutional learning and program refinement. This comprehensive approach ensures that monitoring does not solely focus on infrastructure completion or financial expenditure, but also critically examines the tangible social impact and community empowerment resulting from the initiatives. Moreover, the open sharing of evaluation outcomes with both internal teams and external stakeholders reinforces the program's commitment to accountability and inclusive governance.

According to R. Edward Freeman (L. C. Freeman, 1979), stakeholder theory looks at the groups and people who have the power to affect or be affected by an organization's goals. The studies mentioned above use this theory. PPM expands the definition of stakeholders to include indigenous peoples, disadvantaged communities, and local social institutions, in addition to traditional institutional players. This is in line with this basic idea. This model also uses a power-interest matrix (Baugh, 2015) to group stakeholders based on how much power they have and how much they care about mining. This way of grouping stakeholders makes it easier to use more specific engagement methods, like working closely with people who have a lot of power and interest or talking to people who don't have a lot of power but are very worried. PPM keeps participation flexible by constantly changing the location of stakeholders in the matrix. It does this by combining spatial data from social mapping with qualitative feedback from community discussions. This framework does more than just map. It uses culturally based, community-supported participatory planning processes to include the needs of all stakeholders in CSR policies. This two-part strategy gives the extractive industry a way to deal with complicated social situations that can grow. It is based on Freeman's model of including all stakeholders and is put into action through an interest-power network.





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Conclusion

The Community Development and Empowerment Program (PPM) is a detailed, adaptable, and community-driven way to combine long-term development goals with corporate accountability in the nickel mining region of Central Sulawesi. The initiative worked because it used social mapping, participatory planning, and structured involvement of all stakeholders, from big government agencies to small community groups that don't have much money. The approach uses the Power-Interest Matrix and stakeholder theory (Freeman) to find key stakeholders based on how much power and concern they have. It also uses matrices to change who can participate, making sure that powerful and influential groups are included in decision-making while teaching, rewarding, or keeping an eye on less powerful, uninterested, or powerful groups. The program makes ensuring that therapies are culturally relevant and based in the community by using focus groups, village assemblies, and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods. The PPM framework addresses the most important development requirements in mining-affected areas, which include infrastructure, economic empowerment, health, and education. An adaptive planning cycle is used to make sure that corporate plans fit with regional and national planning tools like RPJMD and RPJMDes. Putting in place monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that focus on impact indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) that are in line with the ESG and SDG frameworks is an important stage in the process. These M&E systems are meant to do more than just make sure that people follow the rules. They also want to encourage learning, openness, and continuous program development. The public likes the model, and it helps the firm keep its SLO because it gets people involved. PPM doesn't see investing in local communities as an afterthought; they think it's important for the company's long-term prosperity. This trend shows how businesses are changing the way they do things and moving away from resource extraction to governance models that include everyone and respect the contributions of all stakeholders. Strategic mapping also helps the corporation better identify regions that need local development and use its resources more wisely by avoiding duplicating government efforts. The PPM framework is a scalable model for partnerships between businesses and communities in the extractive industry since it is based on theory and has been tested in the real world through stakeholder engagement. Community-based and inclusive CSR programs can be both effective and legal, as seen



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below. This concept not only builds on the idea of stakeholder involvement, but it also gives resource-based industries, like mining, a way to add social value to their daily operations. The main point of this example is that real, well-managed stakeholder participation is necessary for both communities and businesses to do well in today's complicated growth situations.

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