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Factor Analysis of The Change in Attitude of Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Towards Pt Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL) in Environmental Sustainability*

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Abstract

This research examines the complex relationship regarding environmental sustainability between Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) and PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL). The history of deforestation and community displacement by TPL leads to the engagement of HKBP in social movements, resulting in environmental advocacy. Despite TPL's promise to shift to sustainable practices, TPL resumes deforestation and triggers renewed resistance. Previous studies focus on the impacts of TPL, leaving a gap in understanding the role of HKBP. Through thematic analysis and data triangulation, this research uncovers the environmental irresponsibility of TPL, driven by HKBP's internal and external gains and challenges in promoting sustainability. The insights obtained explain how religious institutions address ecological issues amidst governance dynamics and highlight the need for such understanding in conservation efforts.

Keywords: social movement, environmental sustainability, konfessi HKBP, political intrigue

* This article is a brief summary of some parts of the thesis to fulfill my Master of Arts (MA) degree which is entitled Religion and Corporation: A Study of Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) and its Engagement with PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL) in Environmental Sustainability. This thesis was tested on July 18, 2024 at the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS), Gadjah Mada University.



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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan yang kompleks terkait keberlanjutan lingkungan antara Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) dan PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL). Sejarah deforestasi dan pengusuran masyarakat oleh TPL menyebabkan keterlibatan HKBP dalam gerakan sosial, yang berujung pada advokasi lingkungan. Meskipun TPL telah berjanji untuk beralih ke praktik-praktik yang berkelanjutan, TPL kembali melakukan deforestasi dan memicu perlawanan baru. Penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya berfokus pada dampak dari TPL, sehingga menyisakan kesenjangan dalam memahami peran HKBP. Melalui analisa tematik dan triangulasi data, penelitian ini mengungkap sikap tidak bertanggung jawab terhadap lingkungan yang dilakukan oleh TPL, yang didorong oleh keuntungan dan tantangan internal dan eksternal HKBP dalam mempromosikan keberlanjutan. Wawasan yang diperoleh menjelaskan bagaimana lembaga keagamaan menangani masalah ekologi di tengah dinamika pemerintahan dan menyoroti perlunya pemahaman serius dalam upaya konservasi.

Kata Kunci: gerakan sosial, kelestarian lingkungan, konfesi HKBP, intrik politik

INTRODUCTION

Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) and PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL) have unique historical relationships and influence each other. It began when TPL was established in Porsea, North Sumatra, in 1983 under PT Indorayon Inti Utama (IIU). The factory operated in the papermaking sector and depended on deforestation to obtain raw materials. This led to many ecological disasters, dispossession of community customary land, and human rights discrimination (Manurung et al., 2022; Silaen, 2005; Wicaksono, 2021). After that, local churches, especially HKBP, became very active in social movements with the community to oppose the IIU for many years. HKBP finally introduced a new article as part of its dogma, *Konfessi HKBP 1996* article 5, as a response to the awareness of global environmental degradation, especially since the establishment of IIU. This move had significant results, leading to IIU changing its name to PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL) in 1998. This indicated that the factory would focus more on managing pulp, hoping to reduce its dependency on deforestation. Initially, the factory demonstrated its commitment to change by reducing production, recruiting labor from the community, supporting the development of a local church, and enhancing the welfare of the surrounding community. However, after gaining support, TPL returned to deforestation and the seizure of indigenous peoples' land (Silaen, 2005). It could be argued that TPL did not truly "repent" but instead engaged in various intrigues to garner support and maintain its power, even at the expense of the environment and society.

Once again, the local church, led by HKBP, mobilized against TPL. Unfortunately, the movement ceased in 2004 (Manurung et al., 2022). Afterward, the HKBP no longer stood with the community against TPL. This shift was primarily due to lacking community support, as some local people had been recruited as TPL workers. Additionally, the government's decisive intervention to protect the factory made it difficult for HKBP to continue its efforts. Several previous studies have discussed the history of the factory from various perspectives. Silaen (2005) presents the history of summarizing various news sources published at the time. This article is one of the references for academic articles that tell the history of the factory's

journey and its relationship with the community (Silaen, 2005). Manalu (2007) focuses on the various efforts and movements made by the community to fight TPL due to human rights violations (Manalu, 2007). Manurung et al. (2021) focused on examining the impact of TPL's presence on the welfare of the surrounding community, and in conclusion, said that the presence of TPL tends to provide much harm to the environment and has no significant impact on the regional economy (Manurung et al., 2022). Tobing (2020) discusses the grabbing of community customary land by TPL, which the State supports (Tobing, 2020). Online news article sources such as Wicaksono (2021) reference a list of problems caused by this factory since its establishment until 2021 (Wicaksono, 2021). KSPPM (*Kelompok Studi Pengembangan dan Prakarsa Masyarakat*) is an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) consistent in fighting TPL and educating the public (KSPPM, 2024). Auriga, one of the online magazines, sharply discussed how the machinations carried out by TPL remained ruling (Auriga, 2023). The list of studies above represents the many discussions about TPL from multiple perspectives and scientific disciplines. Of all the studies addressing TPL, only one has discussed the relationship between local churches, especially HKBP, and TPL regarding environmental sustainability.

In a broader context, this research aims to show how religious organizations have the potential to lead social movements and mitigate the adverse impacts of environmental management factories when they are found to be causing environmental damage. HKBP is a case study of the religious organization that succeeded several times in its efforts against TPL and soon became a religious organization that TPL eventually defeated due to various factors. Therefore, any religious organization that is struggling at present and in the future could learn from the spirit of the HKBP movement in the past to support environmental sustainability and learn from their mistakes that have an impact in present times.

RESEARCH SETTING

This research employed thematic analysis to investigate the relationship between Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) and PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL) concerning environmental sustainability. The study utilized semi-structured interviews with 13 official informants, including HKBP church leaders, elders, academics, community members, TPL Public Relation representative were conducted in both Indonesian and Toba Batak to ensure comprehensive understanding. Fieldwork was carried out between November and December 2023, with site visits to three HKBP in Porsea: HKBP Siruar, HKBP Lumban Huala, and HKBP Hasahatan. Data triangulation was used to validate the information, incorporating primary sources from interviews and secondary sources such as books, research articles, and official websites. This approach facilitated a thorough examination of HKBP's role and perspective on environmental issues influenced by TPL's activities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TPL significantly impacts local communities and the HKBP church through CSR, financial assistance, and church infrastructure. Despite criticism of TPL's environmental impact, support remains strong due to economic dependency. TPL's CSR pledges 1% of net sales to communities, but allocations are often poorly targeted. HKBP faces challenges in raising environmental awareness among its congregation and maintaining independence from industries associated with TPL. Complex political dynamics complicate the church's environmental advocacy. Collaboration with NGOs is needed to strengthen arguments against TPL's environmental impact.

Factors Causing Changes in HKBP's and Community Attitude Towards TPL

Several reasons are identified Based on literature and field research comparisons. *First*, TPL engaged local communities and businesses through partnership programs involving wood supply, transportation, planting, harvesting, cleaning services, and employment (TPLReport3, 2008). Significant local labor recruitment by TPL during its name change from IIU indicated a facade of commitment to change. But, it aimed to solidify community support to bolster its defenses. This recruitment strategy divided the community into pro and anti-TPL factions, influencing the Church's perception as its congregation interacted with neighbors, clan associations, and community groups, shaping their attitudes towards TPL. *Secondly*, the establishment of Gereja Methodist Indonesia (GMI) in 2003 provided an alternative for pro-TPL congregations of HKBP, causing concern within HKBP about congregational attitudes and potentially softening its stance towards TPL to retain members (Silaen, 2005).

Thirdly, TPL's annual reports began highlighting CSR commitments, including assisting in renovating and constructing local churches such as HKBP Siruar, HKBP Parmaksian, and HKBP Tobasa (TPLReport1, 2009). These initiatives influenced other churches to seek similar assistance, gradually reducing critical attitudes towards TPL within the Church. *Fourth*, minimal impact from the democratic system was observed due to decisive government intervention favoring TPL (SamosirSIB, 2023; Wicaksono, 2024). HKBP's realization of the government as a formidable opponent shifted its focus away from futile protests and opposition towards TPL, acknowledging the company's protected status as a government partner despite the advent of democratic reforms.

Recent events, such as flooding in four villages in Baktiraja (Marbun Tonga Dolok, Marbun Toruan, Siunong-unong Julu, and Simamora), have sparked considerable controversy over the cause. KSPPM claims that TPL's deforestation activities in its operational areas are to blame for the flooding (KSPPM, 2023), which contradicts TPL's claim that the heavy rainfall that hit various areas was to blame (TPLKajian, 2023). In particular, TPL's operations in the Tele Sector, which deforested 916 hectares of protected forest in 2023, are involved in losing water catchment areas and flooding in Baktiraja (Wicaksono, 2024). This deforestation reportedly generated US\$72.6 million in profits for TPL (Zahra, 2024),

casting doubt on TPL's assumption that natural factors caused the floods.

Similarly, the flooding in Simangulampe Village has drawn attention to TPL's environmental management practices. Landslides caused by deforestation on the Simangulampe hillside reportedly exacerbated the loss of groundwater recharge areas (KSPPM, 2023), although TPL refrained from commenting much on this incident, unlike its response to the Baktiraja flood (TPLBantuan, 2023). Diverse responses from government officials further complicate the issue. Some officials criticized illegal logging and the impunity of perpetrators (Iswanto, 2023; Tumanggor, 2023), while others attributed the flooding to natural weather patterns, suggesting a complex political landscape potentially favorable to TPL (HarianSIB, 2023). Based on the information gathered from various local community informants, including those around TPL, their views on TPL remain unchanged even after the Simangulampe flood (V-SocietyL, 2023; V-SocietyO, 2023; V-SocietyR, 2023). They expressed skepticism towards attributing the flood directly to TPL's operations in the Tele sector, citing unclear and unverified news. Despite ecological disasters linked to TPL, the community maintains support, awaiting more apparent government statements before forming definitive opinions.

Regarding local church attitudes towards TPL, interviews with HKBP pastors and district representatives revealed different perspectives. Some pastors expressed gratitude and support for TPL, citing the company's historical assistance to congregations, although they avoided discussing TPL's role in the recent environmental disaster due to the uncertainty of the news (HKBPMinisterS, 2023; HKBPMinisterT, 2023). Meanwhile, other pastors who no longer receive TPL assistance expressed a more critical view, recognizing TPL's shortcomings in supporting the community despite its past contributions (HKBPMinisterH, 2023). The church's hesitation to confront TPL directly could be due to the church's dependence on TPL for employment of congregants and indirect financial support, despite concerns over environmental impacts. In addition, the church's limited understanding of environmental sustainability complicates its ability to advocate effectively against TPL's actions (HKBPDistrict, 2023; HKBPMinisterS, 2023). In summary, while TPL's operations continue to impact local communities and the environment, responses from government officials and churches highlight the complex interplay between economic interests, community dependency, and environmental concerns.

CSR and its Intrigue

Thomas Piketty (2014) proposed the Patrimonial Capitalism Theory (PCT) to prove the returns to the company are greater than the economic contribution to society, known as $r > g$ (T. Piketty, 2014). In a company as large as TPL, there are very complicated calculations regarding the company's income, expenses, profits, and losses. However, this study focused on discussing the 1% allocation of funding given to the community from net sales. This was promised by TPL as written in Akta 05 in 2017 (TPLAkta3, 2017). However, is it true that TPL distributed the 1% amount? The following is Annual Report and Financial Report information from TPL's official website (TPLAnnual1, 2018; TPLKeuangan1, 2017).

Description	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Net Sales	USD 123.865.000	USD 121.223.000	USD 104.058.000	USD 126.023.000	USD 146.859.000	USD 175.277.000
Community Development Costs	USD 1.208.000	USD 1.190.000	USD 1.018.000	USD 1.210.000	USD 1.428.000	USD 1.703.000
Proportion of Community Development Expense (1% of Net Sales)	USD 1.238.650	USD 1.212.230	USD 1.040.580	USD 1.260.230	USD 1.468.590	USD 1.752.770
Less Difference	USD 30.650	USD 22.230	USD 22.580	USD 50.230	USD 40.590	USD 49.770
Total Difference Less	USD 216.050 or if converted to Rupiah at an exchange rate of IDR 15,000/USD, the total becomes Rp 3.240.750.000					

Looking at the data above, we can conclude that TPL did not allocate 1% of its net sales to the community per the agreement in Akta 05. Even the 1% value is too little compared to the tens of per cent of profits it gets. Unfortunately, many people do not know this lie. Thus, PCT is proven where the company's return on capital (*r*) is greater than the contribution to the community (*g*). PCT is also argued that companies' CSR allocations are often mistargeted, resulting in inequalities (T. Piketty, 2014). Several articles mentioned the inequality of TPL's management of several local communities. The Regent of North Tapanuli claims to have never received CSR funds since 2016-2018. This was conveyed by the Head of the Economic Section, Fajar Gultom (TPLCsr1, 2021; TPLCsr2, 2021). This incident was also experienced in the Sosor Ladang area, Toba Regency, where many people felt disappointed with the uncertainty of TPL CSR funds (TPLCsr3, 2016). Until 2019, the community has been waiting for clarification on TPL's CSR funds, which have not arrived (TPLCsr4, 2019).

Meanwhile, several other areas were seen getting special attention from TPL at the same time. For example, TPL provides a large amount of CSR to help community programs such as children's education, clean water, and repairing roads (TPLCsr5, 2017). CSR TPL also made various approaches to the people of Toba Samosir Regency by inviting the community to work together (TPLCsr6, 2019). TPL CSR provides hundreds of trash cans for the community of Ajibata sub-district, Toba Samosir Regency (TPLCsr7, 2017). TPL also sent 14 farmer groups to West Java to learn how to increase agricultural productivity. The farmer groups came from the Tampahan, Balige, Laguboti, Silaen and Sigumpar areas (TPLCsr8, 2021). Looking at the various news above, TPL's CSR is unequal and unfair, which can cause inequality in the community. In this case, CSR is indirectly linked to the political interests of a region.

TPL Greenwashing

When we enter the Porsea area, where TPL operates, we can feel a powerful stench before leaving the area. The odor comes from the waste disposed of by the TPL plant. The

stench is disturbing even though informants stated that the smell of TPL waste has decreased (HumasTPL, 2023). However, at certain hours such as 05.00-06.00 in the morning and evening, the odor is much more pungent because the waste is discharged into the river and mixed with factory smoke.

TPL has long been a significant waste problem with severe impacts on the environment and health of the local community (Dirgantara, 2021; KSPPM, 2021; Susilo, 2021; Utami, 2021). Its waste affects the surrounding air and water quality, and results in a range of health problems including upper respiratory infections (Syaharni, 2022), although TPL claims to use sustainable technology (TPLAnnual2, 2019; TPLAnnual4, 2021; TPLAnnual5, 2022). In addition, TPL has been accused of greenwashing by claiming various sustainability initiatives with no real impact on responsible waste management. In Batam, although there are several paper and pulp mills with similar production capacity to TPL, there have been no complaints like in Porsea (Aris, 2020; Bedianto, 2023). The mills in Batam are claimed to use efficient and environmentally friendly management with advanced technology, in contrast to the conditions in Porsea.

In addition, TPL was also highlighted for greenwashing (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020), by claiming the use of sustainable technologies without providing supporting evidence or confirming significant environmental impacts (TPLTeknologi1, 2019; TPLTeknologi2, 2020). This creates a misleading picture of their green practices, while the reality of negative impacts on the environment and local communities remains pronounced (TPLMasyarakat1, 2023). Greenwashing distracts attention from environmentally damaging practices by highlighting less significant sustainability initiatives (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). TPL provides a lot of assistance to victims of natural disasters (TPLBantuan, 2023; TPLBantuan2, 2023). Evidenced by the lack of data supporting TPL's sustainability initiatives in Simangulampe, other than providing social assistance that has no significant impact on nature conservation (TPLBantuan, 2023).

TPL utilizes CSR initiatives to showcase its dedication to social and environmental well-being. However, when CSR is employed as a greenwashing tactic, companies often neglect environmental concerns without implementing substantial measures. Despite TPL's assertion of employing sustainable technologies, evidence indicates persistent issues with air and water pollution caused by its pulp mill waste. This underscores how CSR claims and greenwashing practices fail to genuinely address responsible waste management. The waste continues to pose severe health and environmental challenges for local communities, reflecting concerns raised by stakeholders. Moreover, presenting CSR initiatives as part of greenwashing exaggerates the perceived value and impact of TPL's 1% CSR commitment, misleading society about its actual environmental contributions.

Supporting and Protecting TPL's Image

TPL built a retaining wall for the Ajibata HKBP. This was appreciated by the congregation leader, emphasized that TPL's attention to the church was very good. He added that TPL helped build the church where he used to serve, namely at HKBP Habinsaran in 2010 (TPLBantuHKBP1, 2017). HKBP Siruar received assistance from TPL several times, where TPL built roads and retained walls around the Church. They appreciated TPL for paying attention to them so that they became more comfortable in church and worship (TPLBantuHKBP2, 2019). This church is the closest to TPL and was the first to receive assistance since the transition of HKBP's attitude towards TPL, precisely in 2007 (TPLReport1, 2009).

Chairman of the HKBP Resort Marom Development Executive was grateful to TPL for providing assistance and attention to his church by helping to repair the roof frame and ceiling so that the congregation is more comfortable in worship (TPLBantuHKBP3, 2019). To successfully construct the HKBP Tiberias Church in Lumban Bulbul Village, Balige District, TPL handed over 100 sacks of cement (TPLBantuHKBP4, 2021). TPL also helped the HKBP Sipituhuta Church located in Sipituhuta village, Pollung sub-district, Humbang Hasundutan district by providing cement assistance for church construction (TPLBantuHKBP5, 2022). HKBP Hutagalung Sector, which has 170 congregations, also received material assistance to build a church consistory room worth 100 million rupiah from TPL (TPLBantuHKBP6, 2021). HKBP Maranatha Silamosik receives roof construction assistance from TPL (TPLBantuHKBP7, 2017).

HKBP Simarigung Church in Doloksanggul sub-district has also received Church renovation assistance (TPLBantuHKBP8, 2021). The HKBP Aek Nauli Church in Aek Nauli village was recorded as having received 300 sacks of cement from TPL (TPLBantuHKBP9, 2018). HKBP Simallopuk Dairi received Christmas assistance from TPL around 100 sacks of cement (TPLBantuHKBP10, 2018). As a form of commitment to grow and develop with the community, TPL handed over 190 sacks of cement to the HKBP Baniara Church in Partungko Naginjang Village, Harian Subdistrict, Samosir Regency (TPLBantuHKBP11, 2021). Likewise with HKBP Gunung Pariama which received support for hundreds of cement materials, ceramics and church roof ceilings from TPL (TPLBantuHKBP12, 2019). HKBP Pondok Buluh Resort Tiga Dolok supports TPL's mutual cooperation and church painting program (TPLBantuHKBP13, 2021). Actually there are still many churches besides HKBP that receive assistance from TPL. Without intending to discredit other years, TPL was more likely to help the HKBP in 2021. What happened in 2021? It turns out that there were a lot of demonstrations against TPL throughout the year. Some of the recorded demonstrations are as follows.

No	Demonstrators	News Summary
1	Indigenous community in Medan (TPLDemo1, 2021).	The protesters considered that the existence of the TPL company caused environmental and ecosystem damage around Lake Toba.

2	Community group Alliance to Close TPL Toba Regency (TPLDemo2, 2021)	They held a demonstration in the front of the Toba Regent's office to voice the damage caused by TPL's actions but received unfavorable feedback from the government because they were considered to have triggered the spread of Covid-19 (TPLDemo2, 2021)
3	Movement Alliance to Close TPL demo in front of TPL office (TPLDemo3, 2021)	Demonstrators found that 22,000 HA of forest area in the Tele Landscape had been destroyed due to TPL's faulty operational system.
4	Natumingka community demonstration (TPLDemo4, 2021)	The community demanded TPL's accountability for the destruction of nature and the grabbing of customary land in Natumingka. During this demonstration there were physical clashes that left several people injured.
5	Movement to Close TPL demonstrates at Luhut's office (TPLDemo5, 2021)	Demonstrators assessed that for 30 years, TPL has had no positive impact on them other than worsening environmental and air conditions.
6	Siantar student and youth demonstrations (TPLDemo6, 2021)	The purpose of this demonstration was to protest the violent actions of TPL employees against the Natumingka community and for TPL's illegal actions to seize customary land (TPLDemo6, 2021)
7	There are 50 residents who are victims of TPL criminalization violence (TPLDemo8, 2021)	This clash was triggered by TPL planting eucalyptus on the customary land of the Natumingka community.
8	Demonstration of the Close TPL movement at the Humbahas Regent's office and DPRD (TPLDemo9, 2021)	The demonstration was triggered by the environmental destruction of 167,912 hectares in Tano Batak.
9	1700 kilometer walk (TPLDemo10, 2021)	This journey was carried out by 11 North Sumatra residents from Toba Samosir to the State Palace as far as 1700 km for 44 days with the aim that the President closes TPL because it has destroyed the environment, especially around Lake Toba.

In 2021, some of the largest demonstrations since 1986 were organized, notable for their broad participation across areas affected by TPL's repressive actions against local communities. Interestingly, in this year, there was a significant shift in TPL's behavior towards local churches, including HKBP, where they increased their assistance and support compared to previous years, where such support was minimal. It can be assumed that TPL's aim in assisting many local churches is to improve their image and increase support for them in the face of the many demonstrations and community resistance throughout 2021.

Internal Challenge for HKBP: Maximizing Awareness

Increasing the Intensity of Dialogue with the Biblical Text: Theological Distribution Factor Analysis

There are several obstacles experienced by the HKBP that make its awareness and concern for environmental sustainability lacking. An HKBP ecology scholar highlighted significant challenges in distributing ecological knowledge from the center to local

congregations (HKBP Academic, 2023). These challenges stem from the HKBP's adherence to Lutheran World Federation (LWF) regulations, which prioritize Sunday liturgical themes over environmental stewardship in adapting Bible verses (Aritonang, 2008). Despite the HKBP's extensive publication efforts such as the *Almanak HKBP* ecological topics are not emphasized, thus hindering environmental education within the Church (Almanak HKBP, 2023). This gap in environmental theology reflects a wider problem across LWF member churches, where nature conservation lacks systemic emphasis in theological teachings (Bratton, 2018; Epafra, 2024).

This analysis highlights the absence of environmental or environmental theology in HKBP teachings. Environmental theology emphasizes the sacredness of nature and the role of humans as stewards of God's creation, a responsibility that the Church usually communicates to its congregation. The lack of environmental theology in HKBP teachings is rooted in the lack of dissemination of ecology-related Bible verses by HKBP Headquarters. This, in turn, is due to the inadequate distribution of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), of which the HKBP is a member. The shortcomings in the distribution of the LWF point to a broader problem across member churches, indicating a lack of systemic emphasis on environmental stewardship within the LWF. Essentially, this suggests that the LWF may not prioritize nature conservation, as evidenced by its failure to incorporate biblical teachings on nature into the daily teachings of its congregations. This poses a significant analytical challenge for the HKBP, given its internal relationship with the LWF.

Ibadah Padang (Worship in the Field) as Part of the Sacred Place: Awareness Factor Analysis

Ibadah Padang, a form of outdoor worship practiced by HKBP, often serves as a recreational and ceremonial activity rather than a means to deepen congregation awareness of nature (HKBP1, 2023; HKBP2, 2023; HKBP3, 2022; HKBP4, 2022; HKBP5, 2014; HKBP6, 2022). Despite its potential to connect with God's creation and serve as a sacred space outside church buildings, *Ibadah Padang* is not integrated into HKBP's official liturgical practices outlined in the *Almanak HKBP* (Almanak HKBP, 2023). This omission reflects HKBP's broader challenge in recognizing nature as a sacred dimension and cultivating congregation awareness accordingly.

An understanding of *Ibadah Padang* is essential to analyze the factor of the Church's awareness of nature. HKBP's lack of understanding of nature as part of the sacred place has resulted in a lack of attention to *Ibadah Padang* as part of its liturgy. The lack of attention to *Ibadah Padang* results in a lack of attention in establishing field worship as an official and routine part of worship that is listed in the *Almanak HKBP*. The absence of *Ibadah Padang* as an official worship influenced the congregation's view that *Ibadah Padang* is just a formality and recreation held by their church. In the end, congregational awareness will not grow when the church does not try to grow its awareness. Moreover, this cycle will continue back to the beginning.

Eksternal Challenge: Recognizing Potential and Position

The Role of HKBP Pusat: Factor Analysis of Church Leader Engagement

HKBP Pusat, located in Pearaja, Tarutung, and the center of HKBP worldwide, has financial challenges to support the construction and renovation of local church buildings (HKBP Pembangunan1, 2024; HKBP Pembangunan2, 2021; HKBP Pembangunan4, 2023; HKBP Pembangunan5, 2022). This lack of support often relies on TPL's CSR initiatives to meet the needs of its congregations, including congregants employed by the company (HKBP MinisterH, 2023; HKBP MinisterS, 2023; HKBP MinisterT, 2023). This dependency raises questions about HKBP Pusat's responsibility. HKBP Pusat has hesitated to confront TPL directly despite TPL's commitment to environmental destruction. This reluctance has led to a cycle where local HKBP congregations depend on external support, reducing the proactive role of HKBP Pusat in meeting their needs.

In addition, HKBP congregations working at TPL complicate decision-making for the church, highlighting the broader dilemma of its involvement in secular labor issues versus its primary mission of ecological stewardship and prophetic advocacy against environmental damage caused by companies like TPL which often rely on TPL's CSR initiatives to meet church needs, including for congregants employed by the company. HKBP Pusat has hesitated to confront TPL directly despite its commitment to made environmental destruction. This reluctance has led to a cycle where local HKBP congregations depend on external support, reducing the proactive role of HKBP Pusat in meeting their needs. Furthermore, HKBP members working at TPL complicate decision-making for the church, highlighting the broader dilemma of its involvement in secular labor issues versus its primary mission of ecological stewardship and prophetic advocacy against environmental damage caused by companies like TPL.

Conveying the Prophetic Voice to the Government: Factor Analysis of Power Relations

The HKBP has collaborated with the government on ecological issues, advocating for environmental preservation around Lake Toba and supporting reforestation initiatives (HKBP dan Pemerintah1, 2021; HKBP dan Pemerintah3, 2023; HKBP dan Pemerintah4, 2023). However, despite these efforts, the HKBP has restrained itself from pressing the government to take decisive action against TPL for engaging in environmental degradation. This restraint highlights the HKBP's cautious approach due to the perceived harmonious relationship between the government and TPLs.

Drawing from the *Konfessi HKBP 1951* article 8, the church positions itself as a critical voice to the government, emphasizing obedience to God above blind obedience to state directives (HKBP, 2010). This prophetic stance aims to hold the government accountable when its actions go against environmental justice and stewardship principles. Luetz's (2018) ecological education framework supports HKBP critique to uphold environmental values (Luetz et al., 2018). The dynamic power relations between HKBP, the government, and

TPL demonstrate a complex interaction where government support for environmental conservation and economic interests with TPL complicate HKBP advocacy efforts. This scenario challenges HKBP to effectively navigate its role as a prophetic voice amidst competing interests, illustrating a triangular relationship that is difficult to harmonize.

Understanding the Political Intrigue of Ecology: Factor Analysis of Politic

The challenge arises if the government refuses to cooperate or misleads HKBP by claiming TPL's operations are safe despite ecological concerns. Bruno Latour (2004) critiques how politics often separates nature from human influence to justify exploitation (Latour, 2004). For instance, TPL attributed a flood to heavy rainfall in Humbang Hasundutan Regency in 2023, despite data showing higher rainfall in 2020 with minimal impact (BMKG, 2020; BPSHumbaHas, 2021; TPLKajian, 2023). Deforestation worsened by TPL exacerbated the 2023 flood (Wicaksono, 2024), yet government action remains inadequate (HarianSIB, 2023). Despite HKBP's limited environmental expertise, its prophetic role demands consistent advocacy rooted in God's teachings, even if government response is dismissive. Luetz et al (2018) advocates integrating ecological education into church teachings (Luetz et al., 2018). Collaboration with environmental NGOs, which are long critical of TPL, offers additional expertise. HKBP's reluctance to engage with these NGOs hinders its ability to confront TPL and assert its prophetic voice on ecological issues.

By looking at the potential resources available, several NGOs are active in the environmental field, especially those confronted with TPL for years. Some of the NGOs working in the environmental field and involved in resistance to TPL operations for years and even decades are the Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN) Tano Batak, which is active in defending traditional land and stopping forest destruction by TPL (Simanjuntak & Ambarita, 2022), *Kelompok Studi dan Pengembangan Prakarsa Masyarakat* (KSPPM), which actively accompanies indigenous peoples and provides educational studies related to the impact of TPL operations (Sihotang, 2022), Rainforest Action Network (RAN) highlighting the activities of the Royal Golden Eagle group, which TPL is a part of (RAN, 2024), Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), an international organization that supports indigenous peoples, including those adversely affected by TPL's operations (FPP, 2020) and *Serikat Buruh Perkebunan Indonesia* (SERBUNDO) which is more supportive of the rights of workers and indigenous peoples affected by TPL operations.

Unfortunately, the HKBP has not appeared to have collaborated with anti-TPL NGOs until now. This lack of collaboration has resulted in the HKBP's lack of understanding of the intrigue of ecological politics. This lack of understanding has resulted in the HKBP not having the courage to confront TPL. This fear has resulted in HKBP being unable to speak its prophetic voice on the ecological problems caused by TPL. So, the cycle repeats itself, and HKBP feels no need to collaborate with anti-TPL NGOs because HKBP itself cannot raise its prophetic voice.

CONCLUSION

This research attempts to investigate the history of the journey and struggle of the religious organization HKBP in standing up for environmental sustainability and community rights against the operational actions of the TPL plant that have harmed many parties. This struggle is a research gap that has so far not been revealed by any researcher, and therefore, it is necessary to reveal the history of HKBP's struggle to empower the community for a better environment in the past. The exciting thing is the changing dynamics of HKBP's attitude towards TPL, which is getting closer. This change in attitude is a valuable lesson for religious organizations that are struggling to advocate for environmental rights for a better future. This finding also confirms that religious organizations have good power if they are maintained and not distorted by the interests of political intervention.

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