



Agrarian Conflict Dynamics and Their Implications for Natural Resource Governance in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Agrarian conflict remains a critical challenge in natural resource governance in Indonesia, particularly due to overlapping land ownership, unequal control over natural resources, and weak legal certainty. These conditions create persistent challenges for achieving effective, sustainable, and equitable natural resource governance. This study aimed to analyze the dynamics of agrarian conflict and its impacts on natural resource governance in Indonesia. The study employed a normative juridical approach by examining relevant legislation, legal theories, and scientific literature concerning agrarian conflict, natural resource governance, and social and environmental impacts. The analysis was conducted through a qualitative examination of legal norms and relevant scholarly literature to identify patterns of conflict and their implications for natural resource management. The findings showed that agrarian conflicts significantly contributed to social instability, environmental degradation, and disruptions to the effectiveness of natural resource governance. The analysis also indicated that overlapping land claims, unequal resource control, and inadequate legal certainty were key factors sustaining agrarian conflicts. The study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between agrarian conflict and natural resource governance from a legal perspective. Strengthening regulations, implementing justice-oriented conflict resolution mechanisms, and increasing meaningful community participation are essential for promoting natural resource governance that is sustainable, equitable, and responsive to affected communities.

1. Introduction

Natural resources constitute a fundamental pillar of Indonesia's national development because their utilization supports economic growth, community livelihoods, and environmental sustainability. Effective natural resource governance therefore requires an appropriate balance between economic interests, social justice, environmental protection, and legal certainty. Globally, competition over land and natural resources has increasingly become a governance challenge because resource exploitation may generate unequal distribution of benefits, environmental degradation, and disputes among states, corporations, and local communities. In Indonesia, these challenges are particularly significant because natural resource management involves diverse legal, institutional, economic, and customary interests. Recent studies

indicate that overlapping land claims, fragmented regulations, weak institutional coordination, and limited community representation continue to create vulnerabilities in natural resource governance and contribute to persistent land-related disputes (Karso, 2025; Sagita & Budi, 2024).

Agrarian conflict in Indonesia is generally associated with competing claims over land and natural resources among local communities, government institutions, and private corporations. Such conflicts may arise from overlapping land ownership, unclear territorial boundaries, unequal control of land, and policies that inadequately recognize local and customary rights. Recent research on land tenure conflicts demonstrates that disputes between corporations and communities are closely connected to uncertainty concerning land rights and the interpretation and implementation of

agrarian regulations (Hariri et al., 2022). Similarly, studies of land tenure conflicts during the post-reform period indicate that institutional and legal responses have not fully resolved conflicts in forest areas, particularly where questions of legal certainty, licensing, and justice remain unresolved (Handayani et al., 2022). These conditions demonstrate that agrarian conflict is not merely a dispute over physical land but also reflects broader struggles concerning access, authority, recognition, and the distribution of natural resources.

The consequences of agrarian conflict extend beyond disputes between competing land claimants. Unresolved conflicts can generate social instability, disrupt community livelihoods, undermine investment certainty, and contribute to environmental degradation. In the Indonesian context, natural resource governance is also complicated by the vulnerability of indigenous and local communities whose customary territories may overlap with state or corporate claims. Karso (2025) demonstrates that overlapping land claims, fragmented regulations, and limited representation in decision-making contribute to persistent uncertainty concerning customary territories and weaken protection within natural resource governance. At the same time, recent research on Indonesian land conflicts shows that conflict resolution requires stronger public engagement, collaboration, and institutional mechanisms capable of addressing competing interests rather than relying solely on formal legal procedures (Thetanaya & Thetanaya, 2021; Nindyatmoko et al., 2022).

Theoretically, agrarian conflict can be examined through several complementary perspectives. First, Marx's conflict theory explains conflict as a consequence of unequal control over productive resources between dominant and subordinate social groups (Marx, 1867). In the agrarian context, this perspective is relevant for understanding unequal land control between large corporations and local communities. Second, Dahrendorf's conflict theory emphasizes that social conflict emerges from differences in interests and the unequal distribution of authority within social structures (Dahrendorf, 1959). Agrarian conflict in Indonesia can therefore be understood as a form of structural contestation between communities, the state, and capital owners that possess different

levels of authority over natural resource management.

Third, from a legal perspective, Soekanto's (1983) law enforcement theory argues that the effectiveness of law is influenced by five factors: legal substance, law enforcement institutions, facilities and infrastructure, society, and legal culture. In agrarian conflicts, weaknesses in any of these factors may reduce the effectiveness of dispute resolution and contribute to prolonged uncertainty. This perspective is consistent with recent findings that legal and institutional responses have not always been sufficient to resolve land tenure conflicts in Indonesia (Handayani et al., 2022). Fourth, Rawls's (1971) theory of justice through the concept of *justice as fairness* emphasizes that the distribution of resources should be fair and should provide benefits, particularly to the least advantaged members of society. This perspective is relevant for evaluating whether natural resource policies adequately protect communities affected by resource allocation and development decisions.

Fifth, the concept of sustainable development introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Persistent agrarian conflict, environmental degradation, and unequal access to natural resources are inconsistent with this principle. In addition, the World Bank (2010) emphasizes transparency, accountability, participation, and effective rule of law as important elements of sound governance. Recent scholarship similarly demonstrates that weak or fragmented governance can reinforce legal uncertainty, social conflict, and environmental vulnerability in Indonesia (Sagita & Budi, 2024; Karso, 2025).

Although previous studies have examined land tenure conflicts, community participation, indigenous rights, and natural resource governance separately, an important gap remains in integrating these dimensions into a single legal-governance analysis of agrarian conflict dynamics and their implications for natural resource governance in Indonesia. Existing research tends to focus on particular conflict cases, specific sectors, or individual dimensions of land rights and environmental governance (Hariri et al., 2022; Handayani et al., 2022; Berenschot & Saraswati,

2024). Consequently, insufficient attention has been given to how the dynamics of agrarian conflict interact with legal certainty, social justice, environmental protection, and governance effectiveness as interconnected dimensions of natural resource management.

Accordingly, the research problem addressed in this study concerns how persistent agrarian conflicts, driven by competing land claims, unequal resource control, and weaknesses in legal and institutional arrangements, affect the effectiveness and sustainability of natural resource governance in Indonesia. This study therefore aims to analyze three interconnected issues: (1) the dynamics and underlying causes of agrarian conflict in Indonesia; (2) the impacts of agrarian conflict on natural resource governance, particularly in relation to social stability, environmental sustainability, and governance effectiveness; and (3) the legal and governance approaches required to resolve agrarian conflicts and support sustainable and equitable natural resource governance.

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating conflict theory, law enforcement theory, justice theory, and sustainable development perspectives into a legal analysis of agrarian conflict and natural resource governance. Practically, the study provides implications for policymakers, law enforcement institutions, corporations, and local communities by emphasizing stronger regulation, justice-oriented conflict resolution, legal certainty, transparency, accountability, and meaningful community participation. The novelty of this study lies in connecting the dynamics of agrarian conflict with the broader effectiveness of natural resource governance rather than treating land disputes solely as isolated legal or social conflicts. This integrated perspective is expected to strengthen the basis for developing natural resource governance that is legally certain, socially just, environmentally sustainable, and responsive to affected communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

2.1.1 Agrarian Conflict Theory

Agrarian conflict refers to contestation among individuals, communities, state institutions, and private actors over access to, control of, ownership of, and authority over land and natural

resources. Such conflicts are not merely legal disputes concerning land titles but may reflect deeper inequalities in the distribution of economic resources and political authority. In this study, agrarian conflict is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon involving legal, social, economic, institutional, and environmental dimensions.

The theoretical foundation of agrarian conflict is primarily derived from Marx's conflict theory. Marx (1867) argued that conflict emerges from unequal control over productive resources and the resulting antagonistic relationship between dominant and subordinate groups. Applied to the agrarian context, this perspective explains how unequal land ownership and control may produce structural tensions between communities and actors possessing greater economic and political resources. The theory is therefore relevant for examining conflicts involving local communities, corporations, and government institutions because differences in resource ownership and bargaining power may shape both the emergence and persistence of agrarian disputes.

Contemporary studies reinforce the relevance of this perspective by demonstrating that land disputes are frequently associated with competing claims, unequal bargaining positions, and uncertainty over land rights. Widiyono and Khan (2023), for example, found that the complexity of Indonesia's land regulations has important implications for legal certainty in land rights acquisition. Their findings indicate that legal uncertainty can create conditions conducive to disputes and conflict. Thus, Marx's structural perspective remains useful when complemented by a legal analysis of how institutional arrangements regulate access to land and natural resources.

2.1.2 Law Enforcement Theory

The second theoretical foundation is Soekanto's law enforcement theory. Soekanto (1983) states that the effectiveness of law enforcement is influenced by five principal factors: legal substance, law enforcement institutions and personnel, facilities and infrastructure, society, and legal culture. These factors demonstrate that the effectiveness of legal rules cannot be assessed solely from the quality of legislation. The implementation of legal norms depends on institutional capacity,

social acceptance, available resources, and the legal culture of the communities involved.

This framework is particularly relevant to agrarian conflict because the existence of formal land regulations does not automatically guarantee the resolution of disputes. Where regulations overlap, institutional responsibilities are fragmented, enforcement mechanisms are weak, or affected communities lack access to legal processes, formal legal provisions may fail to provide effective protection. Recent research on Indonesian land law confirms that legal certainty remains a significant concern because of the complexity and potential incongruence of land rights regulations (Widiyono & Khan, 2023; Mahfud & Chin Chin, 2024).

Accordingly, Soekanto's framework allows this study to examine agrarian conflict not only as a consequence of competing claims but also as a manifestation of weaknesses in the implementation and enforcement of legal norms. The theory provides an analytical basis for assessing whether existing legal and institutional arrangements are capable of producing predictable, fair, and effective conflict-resolution outcomes.

2.1.3 Natural Resource Governance Theory

Natural resource governance concerns the institutional processes through which natural resources are regulated, accessed, managed, monitored, and distributed among relevant stakeholders. The World Bank (2010) emphasizes that sound governance requires transparency, accountability, participation, and effective institutional arrangements. These principles are particularly important in natural resource management because decisions concerning land, forests, plantations, and other resources frequently involve competing economic, social, and environmental interests.

In the context of agrarian conflict, natural resource governance can be weakened when decision-making processes lack transparency, affected communities are excluded from meaningful participation, accountability mechanisms are ineffective, or legal enforcement is inconsistent. Consequently, agrarian conflict should be regarded not only as an outcome of governance weaknesses but also as a factor that can further undermine governance effectiveness. This reciprocal relationship provides an important analytical

foundation for understanding the broader implications of agrarian conflict for natural resource management.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

Recent empirical and normative studies demonstrate that agrarian conflict in Indonesia is strongly connected to legal uncertainty, institutional complexity, and difficulties in implementing agrarian reform. Widiyono and Khan (2023) examined legal certainty in the acquisition of land rights under Indonesia's national land law and found that the complexity of land-related regulations has implications for the certainty and protection of land rights. Their study highlights the importance of harmonizing legal provisions and improving regulatory procedures to reduce uncertainty.

Mahfud and Chin Chin (2024) further examined inconsistencies in the definition of land rights within Indonesian agrarian law. Their analysis indicates that differences in the formulation and interpretation of land rights can contribute to legal uncertainty. This finding is important for agrarian conflict research because uncertainty concerning the legal status and scope of land rights may create competing claims among communities, government institutions, and private actors.

From the perspective of conflict resolution, Artaji et al. (2024) examined agrarian conflicts involving plantation land and explored restorative justice as an alternative mechanism for resolving such disputes. Their study highlights the continuing challenges associated with unresolved plantation land rights and suggests that conflict resolution should consider restoration, dialogue, and the interests of affected parties rather than relying exclusively on conventional legal mechanisms.

Alan (2024) similarly examined restorative justice in the resolution of agrarian reform conflicts. The study emphasizes the relevance of restorative approaches in addressing the social dimensions of agrarian disputes and in creating mechanisms that can accommodate the interests of conflicting parties. Meanwhile, Alam et al. (2024), examining a plantation conflict in Cianjur, identified stakeholder collaboration, community empowerment, and institutional coordination as important elements of an effective conflict-resolution strategy.

Taken together, these studies reveal a consistent pattern: agrarian conflicts are closely associated with legal uncertainty, overlapping interests, institutional limitations, and inadequate mechanisms for accommodating affected communities. However, the empirical literature also demonstrates different emphases. Some studies primarily examine the legal certainty of land rights, while others focus on restorative justice or specific conflict-resolution strategies. This fragmentation indicates that the relationship between the dynamics of agrarian conflict and the broader effectiveness of natural resource governance remains insufficiently integrated.

2.3 Identification of the Research Gap

The literature indicates three principal gaps. First, previous studies have frequently examined agrarian conflict through a specific legal or case-based perspective, such as land-right acquisition, plantation disputes, or particular mechanisms of dispute resolution. While these approaches provide important insights, they provide limited explanation of how agrarian conflict affects the broader governance of natural resources.

Second, the existing literature tends to examine legal certainty and conflict resolution as relatively separate issues. Studies concerning land rights emphasize regulatory certainty, whereas studies concerning conflict resolution focus more heavily on mediation, restorative justice, stakeholder collaboration, or community empowerment. There remains a need to connect these dimensions within an integrated legal-governance perspective.

Third, relatively limited attention has been given to the reciprocal relationship between agrarian conflict and natural resource governance. Conflict may emerge because governance arrangements are weak, but prolonged conflict may simultaneously reduce institutional effectiveness, undermine social stability, and complicate sustainable resource management. This study addresses this gap by integrating conflict theory, law enforcement theory, and natural resource governance theory to examine agrarian conflict as both a manifestation and a consequence of governance challenges.

2.4 Development of the Conceptual Framework

This study does not employ a quantitative conceptual framework involving measurable

independent and dependent variables because it uses a normative juridical research design. Therefore, a conventional variable-based framework and statistical causal model are not appropriate.

Instead, the study employs an analytical framework consisting of three interconnected dimensions. The first dimension concerns the dynamics of agrarian conflict, including unequal resource control, competing land claims, legal uncertainty, and differences in authority among relevant actors. The second dimension concerns the implications for natural resource governance, particularly social stability, environmental sustainability, legal certainty, institutional effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and community participation. The third dimension concerns conflict-resolution approaches, including regulatory strengthening, justice-oriented dispute resolution, institutional coordination, and meaningful community participation.

The relationship among these dimensions is analytical rather than statistically causal. Agrarian conflict is examined as a phenomenon shaped by structural inequality and weaknesses in legal and institutional arrangements; its consequences are then analyzed in relation to the effectiveness of natural resource governance; finally, legal and governance mechanisms are assessed as possible approaches to achieving more sustainable and equitable resource management.

2.5 Research Propositions

Because this study uses a normative juridical approach rather than a quantitative design, it does not formulate statistical hypotheses. Similarly, a formal hypothesis-testing procedure is not employed. Instead, the study uses analytical propositions to guide the examination of legal norms and scholarly literature.

Proposition 1: Agrarian conflicts in Indonesia are shaped not only by competing claims over land but also by structural inequalities, legal uncertainty, and unequal distribution of authority and natural resources.

Proposition 2: Persistent agrarian conflicts can weaken natural resource governance by contributing to social instability, environmental pressures, reduced institutional effectiveness, and uncertainty concerning resource management.

Proposition 3: Strengthening legal certainty, justice-oriented conflict-resolution mechanisms, institutional coordination, and meaningful community participation can contribute to more sustainable and equitable natural resource governance.

These propositions are analytical guides rather than statistically testable hypotheses. They are used to organize the normative examination of legal rules, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings concerning agrarian conflict and natural resource governance in Indonesia.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a normative juridical research design using statutory and conceptual approaches. The normative juridical approach was selected because the study focused on examining legal norms, legal principles, theoretical perspectives, and scholarly literature relevant to agrarian conflict and natural resource governance in Indonesia. The statutory approach was used to examine relevant laws and regulations governing land, agrarian relations, and natural resource management, while the conceptual approach was used to analyze the concepts and theories underlying agrarian conflict, law enforcement, justice, and natural resource governance.

3.2 Research Context and Setting

The research was conducted within the legal and natural resource governance context of Indonesia. Indonesia was selected because agrarian conflicts involving communities, government institutions, and private actors remain closely associated with land ownership, resource control, legal certainty, and natural resource management. The Indonesian context provides an appropriate setting for examining the relationship between agrarian conflict dynamics and the effectiveness of natural resource governance from a legal perspective.

3.3 Population and Sample / Research Participants

This normative juridical study did not involve a human population, research participants, or statistical sampling. Therefore, population and sample determination were not applicable. Instead,

the study selected relevant legal and scholarly materials based on their substantive relevance to agrarian conflict, land rights, law enforcement, and natural resource governance in Indonesia.

3.4 Data Sources and Data Collection

The study relied exclusively on secondary data obtained through a literature review. The data consisted of relevant laws and regulations, legal doctrines, legal theories, scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other relevant academic literature. Data were collected through systematic library research by identifying, reviewing, and selecting legal and scholarly materials relevant to the research questions. Particular attention was given to sources discussing agrarian conflict, land tenure, legal certainty, law enforcement, justice, community participation, and natural resource governance.

3.5 Measurement of Variables and Research Instruments

Because this study used a normative juridical approach, it did not employ measurable variables, statistical scales, questionnaires, or standardized quantitative research instruments. The primary analytical units were legal norms, legal principles, theoretical concepts, and findings from relevant scholarly literature. A structured literature-review framework was used to organize the materials according to the main analytical dimensions of the study: agrarian conflict dynamics, the impacts of agrarian conflict on natural resource governance, and legal and governance mechanisms for conflict resolution.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected materials were analyzed using qualitative normative analysis. The analysis involved identifying, interpreting, comparing, and synthesizing relevant legal norms and scholarly arguments. The statutory materials were examined to determine the legal framework governing agrarian relations and natural resource management, while the conceptual analysis was used to interpret the phenomenon through conflict theory, law enforcement theory, justice theory, and natural resource governance theory. The findings from legal materials and scientific literature were subsequently synthesized to identify patterns of agrarian conflict,

their implications for natural resource governance, and appropriate approaches to conflict resolution.

3.7 Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

As a normative juridical study, conventional statistical validity and reliability tests were not applicable. The trustworthiness of the analysis was strengthened through source triangulation, namely by comparing findings across legislation, legal theories, scholarly books, and peer-reviewed journal articles. The analysis also maintained consistency between the research questions, theoretical framework, legal materials, and analytical conclusions. Relevant sources were critically evaluated based on their authority, relevance, recency, and substantive contribution to the research topic.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study did not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, or personally identifiable information. Consequently, informed consent, participant confidentiality, and personal data protection procedures were not applicable. Ethical considerations focused primarily on academic integrity, including accurate representation of legal and scholarly sources, appropriate citation, avoidance of plagiarism, and faithful interpretation of the materials analyzed.

3.9 Research Procedure

The research was conducted through several sequential stages. First, the research problem concerning agrarian conflict and natural resource governance in Indonesia was identified and formulated. Second, relevant legal regulations, theories, and scholarly literature were identified and collected. Third, the selected materials were classified according to their relevance to agrarian conflict dynamics, legal enforcement, natural resource governance, and conflict resolution. Fourth, the materials were analyzed using statutory and conceptual approaches. Fifth, the findings were compared and synthesized to identify the relationship between agrarian conflict and natural resource governance. Finally, conclusions were formulated concerning the dynamics and impacts of

agrarian conflict and the legal and governance measures required to support sustainable and equitable natural resource governance.

3.10 Methodological Limitations

The normative juridical design has several limitations. First, because the study relies on secondary legal and scholarly materials, it does not directly capture the lived experiences and perceptions of communities, government officials, corporations, or other actors involved in agrarian conflicts. Second, the study does not employ quantitative measurements that could statistically estimate the magnitude or causal effects of agrarian conflict on natural resource governance. Third, the analysis is primarily focused on the Indonesian legal and governance context, which may limit the direct generalizability of the findings to countries with different legal and institutional systems. Future research may complement the normative findings with empirical approaches, including field studies, interviews, surveys, or comparative research, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of agrarian conflict and natural resource governance.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Results

4.1.1 Units of Analysis and Descriptive Overview

The units of analysis in this study consisted of three interconnected areas corresponding to the research questions: (1) the dynamics and underlying causes of agrarian conflict in Indonesia; (2) the impacts of agrarian conflict on natural resource governance; and (3) legal and governance approaches for resolving agrarian conflicts and supporting sustainable natural resource governance. The materials analyzed comprised relevant legislation, legal theories, scholarly books, and scientific literature concerning agrarian conflict, land rights, law enforcement, justice, and natural resource governance.

Because this study employed a normative juridical design, demographic characteristics, sample size, means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were not applicable. Instead, the analyzed materials were classified according to their substantive relevance to the three research questions.

Table 1. Units of Analysis and Analytical Focus

Research Question	Unit of Analysis	Analytical Focus
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How do agrarian conflicts develop in Indonesia?	Agrarian conflict dynamics	Land claims, resource control, legal uncertainty, overlapping interests, and authority
What are the impacts of agrarian conflict on natural resource governance?	Governance implications	Social stability, economic certainty, environmental sustainability, institutional effectiveness, and legal certainty
How can agrarian conflicts be resolved?	Legal governance and responses	Regulatory strengthening, law enforcement, agrarian reform, mediation, participation, and accountability

Source: Processed by the authors

Table 1 shows that the analysis was organized around the three research questions rather than around statistical variables. This structure enabled the study to examine agrarian conflict as a legal, social, institutional, and governance phenomenon.

4.1.2 Data Quality and Preliminary Analysis

The quality of the analyzed materials was assessed based on their legal authority, relevance to the research questions, scholarly credibility, and substantive consistency. Legal materials were examined according to their relevance to land rights, agrarian relations, and natural resource governance, while scholarly literature was assessed according to its relevance to the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the study.

Conventional statistical tests of normality, multicollinearity, reliability, and model fit were not conducted because the study did not employ quantitative variables, survey instruments, or statistical modeling. Instead, the consistency of the analysis was strengthened through comparison among legislation, theoretical perspectives, and findings from relevant scholarly literature.

4.1.3 Main Analytical Results

The normative and conceptual analysis produced three principal findings. First, agrarian

conflicts in Indonesia were characterized by complex and multidimensional causes. The dominant factors identified were overlapping land claims and permits, uncertainty concerning land ownership and boundaries, unequal control over natural resources, weaknesses in land administration, and differences in authority among communities, government institutions, and private corporations. Second, agrarian conflicts affected natural resource governance across social, economic, environmental, and institutional dimensions. Prolonged conflicts were associated with social instability, uncertainty in resource utilization, environmental pressures, and reduced effectiveness of governance institutions. The analysis further identified transparency, accountability, legal certainty, institutional coordination, and community participation as critical governance dimensions affected by persistent conflict. Third, effective conflict resolution required an integrated approach combining regulatory reform, effective law enforcement, agrarian reform, justice-oriented mechanisms, mediation and negotiation, and meaningful community participation. Conflict resolution was therefore identified as inseparable from broader improvements in natural resource governance.

Table 2. Main Findings of the Normative Analysis

Analytical Dimension	Principal Finding	Governance Implication
Agrarian conflict dynamics	Conflicts were driven by competing land claims, unequal resource control, legal uncertainty, overlapping permits, and institutional weaknesses	Stronger land administration and legal certainty are required
Social impacts	Prolonged conflicts generated social tensions and instability	Conflict-resolution mechanisms should protect affected communities
Economic impacts	Land and resource uncertainty increased risks and disrupted resource utilization	Transparent and predictable regulatory arrangements are needed
Environmental impacts	Weak coordination and supervision could contribute to uncontrolled resource exploitation	Environmental safeguards must be integrated into conflict resolution
Institutional impacts	Fragmented authority and weak enforcement reduced governance effectiveness	Institutional coordination and accountability should be strengthened

Conflict resolution	Legal, institutional, participatory, and non-litigation approaches are required	Resolution should address both immediate disputes and structural causes
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Source: Processed by the authors

Table 2 demonstrates that the effects of agrarian conflict extend beyond individual land disputes. The findings indicate that conflict influences the broader effectiveness of natural resource governance and therefore requires responses that address both legal disputes and underlying governance conditions.

4.1.4 Key Findings by Research Question

The first research question concerned the dynamics of agrarian conflict in Indonesia. The analysis found that agrarian conflicts were predominantly multidimensional, involving legal, economic, social, institutional, and political factors. Conflicts were not limited to disagreements over ownership but also involved competing claims to authority, access, and control over natural resources.

The second research question concerned the impact of agrarian conflict on natural resource governance. The analysis found that persistent conflict affected social stability, economic certainty, environmental protection, and institutional effectiveness. The findings also indicated that weaknesses in transparency, accountability, legal certainty, and community participation were closely associated with difficulties in resolving conflicts and managing natural resources effectively.

The third research question concerned conflict-resolution approaches. The analysis identified five principal responses: (1) strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks; (2) improving law enforcement and institutional coordination; (3) implementing agrarian reform and recognizing legitimate community rights; (4) strengthening mediation and other non-litigation mechanisms; and (5) increasing meaningful community participation in natural resource decision-making.

4.1.5 Visual Presentation of Results

The research findings are presented through Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 summarizes the units of analysis and their relationship to the research questions, while Table 2 presents the main findings and their implications for natural resource governance.

4.2 Research Discussion

4.2.1 Interpretation of the Key Findings

The first major finding demonstrates that agrarian conflict in Indonesia is fundamentally multidimensional. The conflict is generated not only by competing claims over land but also by unequal access to resources and authority. This finding supports Marx's (1867) conflict theory because unequal control over productive resources creates structural conditions for contestation. It also supports Dahrendorf's (1959) argument that differences in authority and interests within social structures can generate persistent conflict.

The finding is particularly relevant to contemporary Indonesian natural resource governance. Niko and Sangkhamanee (2026) argue that natural resource governance in Indonesia can marginalize Indigenous communities when resource liberalization and state-centered approaches fail to adequately recognize collective land rights and customary governance. Similarly, a recent comparative study of customary land rights struggles in Indonesia shows that formal recognition has not necessarily translated into effective realization of customary rights and that political and institutional conditions continue to shape the outcomes of land-rights struggles (2026).

The second major finding concerns the systemic consequences of agrarian conflict for natural resource governance. The analysis indicates that prolonged conflict weakens social stability, economic certainty, environmental protection, and institutional effectiveness. This finding is consistent with Galtung's (1969) concept of structural violence, in which institutional arrangements can reproduce disadvantage and conflict even in the absence of direct physical violence. It also reinforces the World Bank's (2010) governance perspective, which emphasizes transparency, accountability, participation, and effective rule of law as essential elements of sound resource governance.

Recent evidence further supports this interpretation. Research on Indonesia's forestry governance in 2026 found that fragmented authority, insufficient institutional capacity, and

unclear accountability can produce delayed enforcement, prolonged conflict resolution, and livelihood uncertainty among forest-dependent communities. This suggests that governance effectiveness cannot be improved merely through institutional restructuring if authority, capacity, and accountability remain poorly aligned.

Environmental consequences are also important. The findings indicate that unresolved conflict can weaken control over natural resource exploitation and undermine sustainability. This is consistent with the sustainable development perspective of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), which emphasizes the need to balance economic development, social welfare, and environmental protection. Natural resource governance that fails to reconcile these dimensions risks reproducing both social conflict and environmental degradation.

4.2.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

a. Agrarian Conflict as a Governance Problem

The findings extend the understanding of agrarian conflict by demonstrating that it should be treated simultaneously as a legal dispute and a natural resource governance problem. A narrow legal approach may focus on ownership, permits, or administrative decisions, while a broader governance approach considers how these legal arrangements interact with institutional authority, participation, accountability, and social legitimacy.

This interpretation is supported by McCarthy et al. (2022), who found that competing land-reform rationalities in Indonesia can produce complex governance effects, including stronger state control, changing property relations, reduced legal pluralism, and continued contestation over land. Their findings demonstrate that formalization and reform do not automatically eliminate conflict because legal and institutional interventions may themselves reshape power relations and generate new forms of contestation.

A similar pattern is evident in recent research on Indonesian oil-palm areas. A 2026 study found that agrarian conflicts were associated with concrete governance practices, including exclusion from land acquisition processes, elite-centered consent, unclear boundary demarcation, and legal dysfunctionality. Importantly, the study suggests that conflict is not necessarily inevitable but can be

reduced through improved governance practices and meaningful consent.

These findings reinforce Soekanto's (1983) law enforcement theory. The effectiveness of legal rules depends not only on the legal substance but also on law enforcement institutions, facilities, society, and legal culture. Consequently, resolving agrarian conflict requires simultaneous improvements across these dimensions rather than merely introducing additional regulations.

b. Approaches to Justice-Oriented Conflict Resolution

The third research finding indicates that sustainable conflict resolution requires a combination of legal, institutional, and participatory mechanisms. This finding is consistent with Rawls's (1971) theory of justice, particularly the principle that social and economic arrangements should be structured fairly and should provide appropriate consideration to disadvantaged groups.

In practical terms, agrarian reform should therefore address not only the redistribution of land but also recognition, participation, and protection of communities whose livelihoods depend on natural resources. Conflict-resolution mechanisms should provide affected communities with meaningful opportunities to express their interests and participate in determining outcomes.

The evidence also suggests that mediation and negotiation can complement formal legal mechanisms. However, these mechanisms should not be viewed as substitutes for legal reform. Where bargaining power is highly unequal, mediation without institutional safeguards may reproduce existing inequalities. Accordingly, non-litigation mechanisms should be supported by legal certainty, procedural fairness, institutional accountability, and adequate community representation.

The findings also correspond with recent evidence concerning customary land governance. Contemporary research indicates that state recognition of customary rights can remain problematic when recognition is based on institutional arrangements that do not adequately accommodate Indigenous understandings of land and governance. Thus, effective resolution requires not only recognizing rights formally but also ensuring that recognition can be implemented

meaningfully within local institutional and social contexts.

4.2.3 Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating conflict theory, law enforcement theory, justice theory, and natural resource governance into a single analytical perspective. Marx's (1867) theory explains the structural dimension of unequal resource control; Dahrendorf (1959) explains the role of authority and competing interests; Galtung (1969) clarifies how structural conditions may produce broader social harm; Soekanto (1983) explains the institutional conditions of effective law enforcement; Rawls (1971) provides a normative basis for evaluating fairness; and the World Bank (2010) and World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) provide governance and sustainability perspectives.

The integration of these perspectives demonstrates that agrarian conflict cannot be adequately understood through a single theoretical lens. The study therefore extends the literature by positioning agrarian conflict as an interconnected problem of resource distribution, legal enforcement, social justice, institutional governance, and sustainability.

4.2.4 Practical and Policy Implications

The findings have several practical and policy implications. First, policymakers should strengthen the harmonization of land and natural resource regulations to reduce overlapping claims and improve legal certainty. Second, land administration and licensing systems should be strengthened through transparent procedures, accurate boundary determination, and effective coordination among relevant institutions.

Third, communities, particularly Indigenous and local communities affected by natural resource projects, should receive meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making. Participation should occur before major decisions concerning land acquisition, licensing, and resource exploitation are finalized.

Fourth, conflict resolution should combine formal legal mechanisms with mediation, negotiation, and other participatory mechanisms. Such mechanisms should be supported by procedural safeguards to ensure that differences in

bargaining power do not undermine substantive justice. Finally, natural resource governance should integrate social, economic, and environmental considerations so that conflict resolution contributes not only to the settlement of existing disputes but also to the prevention of future conflicts.

4.2.5 Integration with the Research Gap

The findings directly address the research gap identified in the literature review. Previous research has often examined land rights, agrarian disputes, customary rights, or conflict-resolution mechanisms separately. This study integrates these dimensions by examining the dynamics of agrarian conflict, its consequences for natural resource governance, and the institutional and legal approaches required for sustainable resolution.

The study therefore moves beyond viewing agrarian conflict as an isolated dispute between land claimants. Instead, it demonstrates that conflict is embedded within broader governance structures involving resource distribution, legal certainty, institutional authority, community participation, and environmental sustainability. This integrated perspective represents the principal contribution of the study.

4.2.6 Acknowledgement of Study Limitations

The interpretation of the findings should be considered in light of the scope of the normative juridical analysis. Because the study primarily examined legal materials and scholarly literature, the findings provide an analytical understanding of agrarian conflict rather than direct measurement of the experiences of affected communities or the magnitude of particular conflicts. The study also does not empirically compare individual conflict cases across regions or sectors. Consequently, the findings should be understood as a conceptual and legal synthesis of agrarian conflict and natural resource governance in Indonesia. Future empirical research can complement this analysis through comparative case studies, interviews with affected communities and institutions, and field-based assessments of conflict-resolution outcomes.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The study concludes that agrarian conflict in Indonesia is a complex and multidimensional

problem that significantly affects natural resource governance. The conflicts are driven not only by unequal land control but also by weak regulations, overlapping institutional authority, limited legal certainty, insufficient recognition of Indigenous rights, and development policies that have not fully reflected social justice. The impacts extend beyond social tensions and horizontal conflicts to economic and environmental consequences, including investment constraints and uncontrolled resource exploitation. Therefore, resolving agrarian conflicts is essential for establishing transparent, accountable, equitable, and sustainable natural resource governance.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

The study contributes theoretically by integrating perspectives on conflict, law enforcement, justice, and natural resource governance to explain agrarian conflict as more than a dispute over land ownership. The findings demonstrate that agrarian conflict is closely related to resource inequality, institutional authority, legal certainty, social justice, and governance effectiveness. This integrated perspective strengthens the understanding of agrarian conflict as a multidimensional legal and governance problem.

5.3 Practical and Policy Implications

The findings imply that the government should implement comprehensive measures to reduce agrarian conflict and improve natural resource governance. Agrarian reform through land redistribution and recognition of Indigenous rights should be prioritized. Regulations and law enforcement should be strengthened consistently and independently to provide legal certainty and deterrence against violations. Inter-agency coordination should also be improved to prevent overlapping authority in natural resource management. In addition, public participation should be expanded through information transparency and meaningful involvement in policymaking. These measures are expected to reduce agrarian conflicts and promote more equitable, effective, and sustainable natural resource governance.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on the Indonesian context and examines agrarian conflict primarily from legal and governance perspectives. Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the diverse experiences of communities, government institutions, and private actors involved in specific agrarian conflicts. The findings should therefore be

interpreted within the Indonesian legal and institutional context.

5.5 Directions for Future Research

Future research should complement the normative findings with empirical studies involving affected communities, government institutions, Indigenous groups, and private-sector actors. Comparative studies across regions and natural resource sectors could also provide deeper insights into variations in conflict dynamics and resolution mechanisms. Further research may employ qualitative case studies, interviews, or mixed-method approaches to examine the effectiveness of agrarian reform, mediation, public participation, and natural resource governance reforms in reducing agrarian conflicts.

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