



NAVIGATING INDONESIA’S BLUE ECONOMY: LESSONS LEARNED FROM LITERATURE

Firma Sulistiyowati¹, Novita Dewi²

¹ Faculty of Economics, Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia, ² Postgraduate Studies Program, Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

Email: firma@usd.ac.id, novitadewi@usd.ac.id

ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the connection between American literature and environmental issues, focusing on greed and pollution. It analyzes Jack London’s *The Sea Wolf* to understand how it can highlight the negative effects of unchecked greed on natural resources. The findings can help Indonesia manage its marine resources. By understanding the dangers of greed and pollution, Indonesia can develop a sustainable approach to its ocean resources. From the perspective of Jesuit ecological justice, which emphasizes the preservation of delicate ecosystems and moral resource management, the exploitation of life in the ocean is abhorrent. The study suggests that literature can inform policy discourse and promote environmental stewardship in the Blue Economy context. The implications include promoting ecological awareness, interdisciplinary research, and leveraging literature for positive social and environmental change.*

Keywords: blue economy, overfishing, ecosystem

1. Introduction

The Blue Economy (BE) concept, which emerged from the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, promotes sustainable ocean resource usage for economic growth and improved livelihoods. The Nawacita plan in Indonesia highlights the role of natural capital, including marine resources, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development. The World Bank estimates that Indonesia’s BE is \$1.34 billion, with earnings from coastal culture, fishing, shipwrecks, marine tourism, coral reefs, seagrass, and mangroves (Anna, 2023). Indonesia may allocate 10% of its marine economic production to ocean governance and health to solve such issues as population increase and tidal flooding. The COVID-19 pandemic has expedited Indonesia’s BE adoption, focusing on sustainable economic growth and maritime resource management (Chapsos & Hamilton, 2019).

Despite the positive outlook for Indonesia’s BE to generate long-term development, it is not without challenges. The challenges include overexploitation, pollution, habitat degradation, and unequal distribution of benefits. Responsible methods, such as reducing bycatch and preventing illicit fishing, are important for sustaining healthy fish populations and conserving marine ecosystems (Mackay, 2020; Gumilar, 2022).

Oceans are usually disregarded in multidisciplinary literary studies about sustainable development, particularly in Indonesia, a country with a diverse marine ecosystem. This article would argue that literature can provide valuable lessons for a sustainable future due to its universal themes like greed and respect for nature, which resonate across cultures and periods. It also allows for indirect exploration of complex sustainability issues through characters, narratives, and settings, and fosters empathy and emotional connection, motivating readers to consider their environmental impacts. Classic works often depict societies that collapsed due

to unsustainable practices, highlighting the importance of learning from past mistakes. One example is *The Old Man and the Sea*. Scholars suggested that the novel provides valuable lessons (e.g., Sabudu, 2020; Li-juan, 2016)). Written in 1952, Ernest Hemingway’s classic novella follows Santiago, an aged Cuban fisherman, who encounters a giant marlin and fights it alone. Despite his skill, the marlin weakens, and Santiago is forced to kill it. However, sharks attack the merlin, leaving only a skeleton. Santiago’s struggle against the marlin symbolizes natural resource exploitations, with sharks representing opportunistic businesses and market manipulation. The stories resemble Indonesia’s large-scale fishing operations that harm small fish farmers. Another example is *Moby Dick*, an iconic American novel that depicts the consequences of industrial expansion and natural resource exploitation, which mirrors Indonesia’s geopolitical challenges. Captain Ahab’s relentless pursuit of the white whale symbolizes the consequences of industrial expansion, highlighting the impacts of whaling on marine ecosystems. One can see that this novel written by Herman Melville in 1851 parallels Indonesia’s geopolitical challenges today. It can be connected to the marine economy through themes of resource depletion and the destructive nature of obsession.

Exploring Indonesia’s BE through the perspective of American novels and Jesuit beliefs provides a new and potentially enlightening research avenue. Sanata Dharma University, the only Jesuit college in Indonesia, aims to uphold Pope Francis’ calls for protecting our common home which involves bringing the whole human family together for sustainable and integral development (Francis, 2015). The Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) emphasize ecological justice, care for creation, and collaboration for the common good. www.jesuit.id. (Booklet UAP Indonesia. 2017. www.jesuit.id). These values can serve as ethical and moral frameworks for navigating the development of Indonesia’s BE responsibly and sustainably. Analyzing American ‘ocean’ novels can reveal sea exploitations in Indonesia’s BE. Such an attempt thus potentially recommends sustainable economic practices in the context of UAP. In this way, this study contributes to contextual literary studies, understanding the sea’s potential and human greediness in American literature. Fictive characters in the stories share real people’s plights whose lives depend on the sea, emphasizing environmental exploitation and greed.

Given the possible similarities of ecological (in)justice in Indonesia’s BE and imagination of oceans and people in American literature, this paper will examine how *The Sea Wolf* by Jack London explores the relationship between humans and nature and the implications thereof. It aims at showing the consequences of exploitation and the need for sustainable economic practices with which Indonesia’s maritime economy can learn.

2. The Sea-Wolf: The Danger of Ruthless Exploitation

Numerous studies have been done on *The Sea Wolf* from character analysis, especially that of Wolf Larsen (Badal, 2008; Brophy, 2012), but contextualising the novel with the marine economy is scarce. This article is to show that while *The Sea Wolf* hardly directly offers a blueprint for sustainable maritime management, it provides cautionary tales and prompts reflection through contrasting themes.

The Sea-Wolf presents environmental issues through its portrayal of seal hunting, raising questions about the sustainability of hunting practices and their impact on animal populations. Published in 1904, the novel serves as a precursor to later works highlighting human actions’ impact on the environment. It is a psychological adventure story about Humphrey Van Weyden. He is a refined intellectual who becomes the guest of Wolf Larsen, the brutal captain of a seal-hunting ship, the Ghost. After a ferry accident, Humphrey must adapt to the harsh reality of life at sea and grapple with Wolf Larsen’s philosophy of ruthless individualism and amorality. The story explores themes of survival, nature, and the struggle between civilization and savagery. Humphrey and Maud Brewster face the dangers of the sea and Wolf Larsen’s erratic behavior.

2.1. Balance of Power

When the story opens, Humphrey Van Weyden, the intellectual, and Maud Brewster, a poet are rescued from a shipwreck held captive on Wolf Larsen's ship, the Ghost. Maud, a resilient and independent character, bravely navigates the brutality of Wolf Larsen, maintaining her dignity and intelligence. She represents a civilized and compassionate character, advocating for human life and empathy. Maud's resourcefulness and adaptability are evident in her survival on the ship and even in using her skills to gain power with Wolf Larsen. Wolf and Maud symbolize power balance depicted as "two animals, each wary of the other, yet each recognizing in the other a foeman worthy of respect."

Likewise, the balance of people and nature is evident: The sea was master, and the Ghost was tossed like a chip, emphasizing its ultimate dominance. The ruthless individualism of Wolf Larsen contrasts sharply with a sustainable strategy. Maintaining a healthy ocean for future generations and managing shared maritime resources require cooperation and international agreements.

2.2. Unsustainable Practices

The novel's portrayal of ruthless seal hunting exemplifies the dangers of unchecked exploitation of marine resources. The focus on quantity over long-term survival foreshadows the need for quotas, regulations, and responsible fishing practices in the modern world. Humphrey is concerned about his guest's obsession with hunting seals. London writes:

"Wolf Larsen," said Humphrey, hesitatingly, "isn't it a rather wasteful proceeding to kill all those seals?"

Larsen rejects the idea that the soul is everlasting. He believes that the only purposes of life are survival and pleasure, and has grown to detest and minimize all human life. For him, "life is killing" and he hardly sees the "difference between a man killing a steer and a seal killing a fish."

2.3. Consequences of Neglect

The decline of the seal population due to overhunting foreshadows the potential consequences of neglecting environmental factors in maritime activities. Sustainable management requires considering the impact on the entire ecosystem. In the novel, neglect is also further symbolized by the shipwreck. The Ghost, a ship under Wolf Larsen's care, suffered maltreatment, leading to leaks and a dangerous crack in its mainmast. The crew's hunger resulted from dwindling food supplies, highlighting the dangers of neglect. The story depicts the physical and emotional toll of neglect on the ship and the consequences of ignoring proper maintenance.

2.4. Respect for the Sea

The harsh realities and dangers that passengers of the Ghost face at sea highlight the power and importance of respecting the ocean's natural world. Sustainable practices require acknowledging the limitations and potential dangers of the maritime environment.

Despite his brutality, as a seaman, Wolf Larsen, nonetheless, shows a deep respect for the sea. He sees it amiably with an understanding of the sea's 'mood', violence, and playfulness. Larsen expresses a deep respect for the sea, viewing it with kinship and understanding its moods, tenses, ferocity, and playfulness. Comparably, Humphrey Van Weyden shows us how important resilience is in times of trouble. Indonesia's BE, likewise, must be resilient in facing such issues as ocean acidification and climate change, investing in eco-friendly methods and tools to adjust to a changing ecosystem. It is *The Sea Wolf's* relevance to the ecological praxis in Indonesia that the discussion now turns.

3. Lessons Learned for Indonesia’s Marine W/Health

Climate change threatens the marine ecosystem and economic potential in Indonesia, which has a vast fisheries potential worth IDR 3,000 trillion (Sari & Muslimah, 2020). Sustainable fisheries development should benefit present generations while considering sustainability for future generations. To encourage optimal utilization and exploitation of fisheries resources a model of blue economy-based policy aims to achieve sustainable national marine and fisheries management is required.

A recent study reported in *The Jakarta Post* claims that Indonesia is facing challenges in meeting its fisheries targets, with half of its wild fish stocks overfished and some marine ecosystems left out of the expanding marine protected areas (MPAs), according to a recent study by the World Resources Institute (WRI) Indonesia. The study found that wild-capture fish production has stagnated while aquaculture continues to grow. In 2019, wild-capture fisheries accounted for 7.5 million tonnes, while aquaculture was 16.3 million tonnes. To protect marine biodiversity, the government has continued to expand MPAs, from around 5 million hectares in 2002 to around 23 million hectares in 2019. However, Indonesia faces challenges in meeting its fisheries target study, as 84% of mangroves, 55% of seagrass, and 57% of coral reef ecosystems in 2019 were not included in protected areas. (<https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2022/12/23/overfishing-looms-as-indonesia-struggles-to-meet-fisheries-target-study.html>).

What we can learn from *The Sea Wolf* is the significance of managing marine resources responsibly and the risks associated with unrestrained exploitation. This can be a lesson for Indonesia’s BE, which aims to balance financial gain and ecological health by enacting stronger laws to stop overfishing and environmental degradation. This novel also explores the power struggles between an oppressive authority and the marginalized. As such, it aligns with the need for Indonesia’s BE to put first the welfare of the coastal communities, i.e., local fish farmers. Pope Francis speaks of global injustice in his encyclical letter *Laudato si’*. The Holy See highlights the severe impacts of climate change on developing countries, particularly the poor and marginalized, who rely on nature reserves and ecosystem stability for their livelihoods, such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (2015).

Jack London’s novel underscores the importance of balance in a balanced world. Indonesia can learn from this by promoting cooperation with neighboring countries, ensuring fair regulations, and developing a robust marine economy strategy that prioritizes sustainability and community resilience.

4. Conclusion

This paper has shown that *The Sea Wolf* is a novel that highlights the dangers of unchecked marine resource exploitation, emphasizing the need for quotas, regulations, and responsible fishing practices. It also emphasizes the importance of respecting the ocean’s natural world and the need for collaboration and international agreements for managing shared resources. The novel also highlights the consequences of neglecting environmental factors in maritime activities, such as the decline of the seal population due to overhunting, emphasizing the need for sustainable management that considers the entire ecosystem. Here, Jack London’s novel serves as a cautionary tale for the modern world, emphasizing the need for responsible fishing practices and quotas. This study, therefore, aligns with the UAP’s focus on social justice in that it creates Indonesia’s BE that benefits all, not just a select few (Priority #2). The Jesuit principle emphasizes the importance of caring for the natural world. The Jesuit mission of reconciliation with Creation and the promotion of ecological justice (Priority #3) is consistent with this study’s goal of navigating Indonesia’s BE through a critical reading of American literature.

References

- (2021). Rencana Induk Penelitian USD 2021-2025. Yogyakarta: LPPM USD.
- Anna, Z. (2023). Unlocking Indonesia's potential through a blue economy. *Tempo.co.*, June, 7, 2023. <https://en.tempo.co/read/1734406/unlocking-indonesias-potential-through-a-blue-economy>
- A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil. (2022). Overfishing looms as Indonesia struggles to meet fisheries target: Study. *The Jakarta Post. Sat, December 24. 2022.* <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2022/12/23/overfishing-looms-as-indonesia-struggles-to-meet-fisheries-target-study.html>.
- Badal, A. (2008). *The Embodiment of Masculinity in Jack London's The Sea-Wolf* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of English).
- Booklet UAP Indonesia. 2017. www.jesuit.id.
- Brophy, M. (2012). A Body of Work: Imperial Labor and the Writing of American Manhood in London's *The Sea-Wolf*. In *Critical Approaches to American Working-Class Literature* (pp. 177-203). Routledge.
- Chapsos, I., & Hamilton, S. (2019). Illegal fishing and fisheries crime as a transnational organized crime in Indonesia. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 22(3), 255-273. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12117-018-9329-8>
- Danielsson, M. B. (2020). The Animal in the Mirror: Zoomorphism and Anthropomorphism in Life of Pi. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1444366/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Francis, P. (2015). *Laudato Si' Paus Fransiskus: Tentang Perawatan Rumah Bersama*. Jakarta: Penerbit Obor.
- Gumilar, H. R. (2022). Illegal Fishing in Indonesia and the Role of International Maritime Law on Illegal Fishing Action. *Indonesian Journal of Environmental Law and Sustainable Development*.
- Li-juan, L. (2016). Man's interaction with himself in the old man and the sea with the view of existentialism. *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 6(7), 785-789. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c3ed/d0d80f998e1d296e3f9f8b7868433d0a22ba.pdf>
- London, Jack. (1904). *The Sea Wolf*. Alice Books.
- Mackay, M., Hardesty, B. D., & Wilcox, C. (2020). The intersection between illegal fishing, crimes at sea, and social well-being. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 7, 589000. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2020.589000/full>
- Putra, M. N. A. K., & Asri, M. F. (2023). Juridical Review of Blue Economy in Indonesia. *Jurnal Kajian Pembaruan Hukum*, 3(1), 123-156. <https://jurnal.unej.ac.id/index.php/jkph/article/view/37211>
- Sabudu, D. (2020). The Reflection of Loyalty in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea*. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, 21(1), 24-32. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2870/645e3251971d514ace82b472221722fcc07a.pdf>
- Sari, D. A. A., & Muslimah, S. (2020). Blue economy policy for sustainable fisheries in Indonesia. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* (Vol. 423, No. 1, p. 012051). IOP Publishing. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1755-1315/423/1/012051/meta>