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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FUEL OIL (BBM) LIMITATIONS AND THE INCREASE IN ILLEGAL FISHING BY LOCAL FISHERMEN

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### Abstract.

**Background.** The scarcity of fuel oil (BBM) is one of the main factors affecting fishermen's activities in running a fishing business. The fuel crisis impacts the economy and encourages an increase in illegal fishing practices by local fishermen.

**Aims.** This study aims to analyze the relationship between fuel limitations and the increase in illegal fishing activities, the factors that affect them, and mitigation efforts that the government and the authorities can carry out.

**Methods.** This study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and supported by literature studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the problems being researched.

**Result.** The results of the study show that the scarcity of fuel oil (BBM) has a significant impact on fishermen's activities in running a fishery business.

**Conclusion.** Fuel limitations increase operational costs, thereby reducing fishermen's income and hindering the sustainability of the fishery business. In addition, this condition encourages some fishermen to practice illegal fishing as a survival strategy due to increasing economic pressure.

**Implementation.** Some of the factors contributing to the increase in illegal fishing due to the fuel crisis include the high price of subsidized fuel, uneven distribution, and the lack of fuel alternatives that fishermen can access.

**Keywords:** Fuel Limitations, Illegal Fishing, Government Mitigation

## INTRODUCTION

Fishermen are a group of people who live in coastal areas and depend on the sea as a primary source of livelihood. They exploit marine resources and shore-like fish, shrimp, seaweed, shellfish, and other aquatic products. As an archipelagic country, Indonesia has a water area of 3.25 million km<sup>2</sup>, with 2.55 million km<sup>2</sup> of which is an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Meanwhile, the land area is only about 2.01 million km<sup>2</sup>. With a significant sea area, Indonesia has a potential source of marine and fisheries power, making it one of the leading sectors in national development. The fisheries sector contributes to food security and becomes an economic driver by exporting marine products. In 2019, the export value of Indonesia's fishery products reached Rp 73.68 trillion, an increase of 10.1% compared to the previous year. Some primary commodities that become Mainstay exports include shrimp, tuna, squid, octopus, crabs, and seaweed, which are highly demanded in international markets.

Fishery subsidies are a strategic policy supporting Indonesian fishermen optimally utilizing marine resources. Help this aims to ease fishermen's operational burdens until their businesses run more effectively and sustainably. However, implementing fisheries subsidies often causes problems related to inaccurate goals. Many fishermen feel disadvantaged because subsidies are also enjoyed by large-scale fishing companies, especially in energy subsidies, such as for materials and BBM. This creates an economic gap in the fisheries sector and contributes to the overexploitation of marine resources.

The Fishery Port (PP) is a vital infrastructure in the fisheries business system that functions as the center of government activities and fisheries sector operations. By Law Number 45 of 2009, fishing ports include land and water areas with specific boundaries, used to dock and unload fish by fishing vessels. In addition, this port is also equipped with various facilities that support shipping safety and the fishing industry's activities as a whole. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (PERMEN KP) Number 08 of 2012 concerning Fishing Ports, facilities inport fisheries are classified into three functional facilities and supporting facilities. Basic facilities include the main infrastructure that supports port operations, while functional facilities play a role in supporting fisheries activities,

including the provision of fuel oil (BBM) installations. Fuel is an essential component in fisheries operations because it directly affects the continuity of the fish production business, both in terms of going to sea, the distribution of catches, and fish processing on land. The availability of fuel at fishing ports is a crucial factor for fishermen and fishery industry players to ensure the efficiency and sustainability of their businesses. Therefore, effective, fair, and targeted fuel distribution management is needed to support the economic resilience of the fisheries sector and maintain the stability of national fisheries production.

This uncertainty in fuel prices has the potential to create uncertainty in the fisheries business, where the increase in fuel prices can hamper fishermen's operational activities, and even cause some fishery business actors to be unable to go to sea due to increasing operational costs. On the other hand, this policy has an ecological impact. If fishing prices increase, fishermen's fishing intensity is likely to decrease, which could indirectly give fishery resources time to recover and increase fish stocks in the waters. On the other hand, if fuel prices fall, fishermen and fishery business actors get return to optimal operations, but the pressure on fishery resources will increase, potentially leading to overexploitation. In addition to the problem of fuel price fluctuations, there is a debate about who is entitled to receive subsidized diesel fuel in the fisheries sector. Based on Presidential Regulation Number 191 of 2014,

Ships with a size of more than 30 Gross Tonnage (GT) are not allowed to receive subsidized fuel. Thus, large ships with a capacity of more than 30 GT are required to buy fuel at an economic price that does not receive government subsidies. The fuel subsidy restriction for vessels above 30 GT is based on several main reasons. First, there is a leakage of subsidized fuel due to the practice of illegal selling subsidized fuel at non-subsidized prices in the middle of the sea, which is detrimental to the government and small fishermen. Second, small ships with a size of less than 30 GT actually only consume a small part of the total subsidized fuel allocation. Meanwhile, ships above 30 GT actually spend around 60-70% of the total fuel subsidy, so this policy aims to ensure that subsidies are more targeted to small fishermen who are more in need.

The main difficulty faced by fishermen in accessing subsidized fuel is the considerable distance between the fish landing location and refueling facilities such as Fishermen's Fuel Filling Stations (SPBN), Fishermen's Diesel Filling Stations (SPDN), and public petrol stations. This condition causes them to buy fuel at a higher price through intermediaries or retailers, which impacts increasing ship operating costs and reduced profits from catches. To

overcome this problem, fishermen implement various strategies to reduce operational costs and ensure the sustainability of their fishery business. Some of the patterns that fishermen do in obtaining FUEL and balancing operational costs include:

1. Landing fish at the closest location to the fishing ground.
2. Selling fish directly to buyers who want to accept various fish types and qualities.

### **Selling fish in the middle of the sea**

By implementing these strategies, fishermen strive to overcome barriers to access to fuel at everyday prices and ensure the sustainability of their fisheries business despite increasingly complex economic challenges. The limited fuel oil (BBM) subsidy for fishing vessels has a complex impact on fishermen's activities, including increased illegal fishing practices. Illegal fishing can be defined as unlawful fishing practices or violations of applicable rules. More broadly, illegal fishing refers to activities contrary to national laws and international regulations that apply in a watershed. This practice is not only detrimental.

The fisheries sector also contributes to overfishing, threatening marine resource sustainability. Illegal fishing is often associated with two other main aspects: unregulated fishing and unreported fishing. These three terms are interrelated and challenge fisheries authorities in supervising and managing fish resources.

Factors that encourage a person to engage in illegal fishing include economic limitations, lack of knowledge, and pressure from competition from the fishing industry. One of the main factors that causes a person to fall into the practice of illegal fishing is Poverty as a Driving Factor.

Limitations: The economy is the main reason many fishermen engage in illegal fishing. In challenging economic conditions, some fishermen are forced to look for ways to make greater profits, even though they must exceed the law. The inability to buy more modern fishing gear also encourages them to use illegal methods to increase their catch quickly.

The scarcity of fuel oil (BBM) affects fishermen's income and triggers a significant social impact on coastal communities. Based on research conducted by the SMERU Research Institute, fishermen's dependence on middlemen and collectors has increased by more than 30% in the last three years due to limited fuel supply. This shows that Fuel's scarcity not only impacts fisheries operations but also exacerbates economic inequality, where fishermen are increasingly entangled in unprofitable trading systems. In addition, other social impacts are seen in the education sector. Many fishing families are forced to send their children to cheaper

schools, even in some cases, stopping education altogether due to the rising cost of living. The inability of fishermen to go to sea optimally causes their income to decrease drastically, making it increasingly difficult to meet basic needs, including education.

Based on the author's background, the problem is determining the relationship between fuel limitations and an increase in illegal fishing activity, and what factors influence local fishermen to switch to illicit fishing when there is a shortage of materials burning oil (BBM), how the impact of fuel limitations on the economic pressure of fishermen which leads to an increase in illegal fishing acts, as well as what the government and authorities can make mitigation efforts.

## **METHOD**

The research method applied in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth and holistic picture of the phenomenon being studied and to explore the meaning, perception, and factors that affect the problems raised in the research. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with various related parties, including fishermen, policymakers, and other parties related to the issues being studied. This interview aims to obtain primary data rich in direct information from the experiences and perspectives of the respondents. In addition, this research is supported by literature studies involving various sources such as scientific journals, research reports, government regulations, and related literature. This literature review provides a theoretical and contextual framework to strengthen the analysis and ensure the research has a strong academic foundation. With this combination of methods, it is hoped that the research can produce comprehensive findings and provide broader insights into the problems being studied, both in terms of empirical facts and theoretical perspectives.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Obstacles to Access to Subsidized Diesel for Fishermen in Indonesia**

For a long time, fishermen in Indonesia have faced various challenges in accessing subsidized diesel intended to support their offshore operations. The current increase in fuel oil (BBM) prices has further worsened the situation, making it even more difficult for fishermen to obtain diesel at an affordable price. Some factors are obstacles to the distribution and access of subsidized diesel, ranging from inaccurate data on the number of fishermen and

diesel needs in an area, to the problem of rising fuel prices that burden operational costs. Fuel oil, especially diesel, is a significant component in seagoing activities, so limited access to subsidized fuel directly impacts fishermen's productivity and welfare. Currently, the need for diesel for fishermen is met through Fishermen's Fuel Filling Stations (SPBN), which are spread across various strategic points to facilitate access. However, reality shows that the number of available SPBNs is still far from enough to meet the demand. In addition, according to several parties, including Budi, Pertamina does not have valid and detailed data regarding the number of fishermen, the boat fleet, and the volume of diesel needed in each region. The lack of accuracy of this data results in the supply of diesel subsidies often being lower than the actual need, so fishermen must look for other alternatives that are generally much more expensive. The inaccuracy in the distribution of subsidized fuel not only hinders fishermen's operations but also has the potential to reduce their catches and worsen their economic situation.

Requirements for Diesel Fuel Subsidy Recipients for Small Fishermen Based on Presidential Regulation Number 191 of 2014 concerning the Supply, Distribution, and Retail Selling Price of Fuel Oil, several requirements have been set for small fishermen who are entitled to receive Fuel Oil (BBM) subsidies, especially Certain Types of Fuel Oil (JBT) diesel for the fisheries sector. Two main groups can get this diesel fuel subsidy, namely:

**Fishermen who use fishing boats with a maximum weight of 30 Gross Tonnage (GT)**

Fishermen entitled to this subsidy must use Indonesian-flagged fishing boats with a maximum size of 30 GT. In addition, the ship must be officially registered with the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) and in the Provincial, Regency, or City Regional Apparatus Work Unit (SKPD) in charge of fisheries. To ensure the validity of the data, each fisherman must go through a verification process and obtain a letter of recommendation from the Fisheries Port or the Head of the local Fisheries SKPD, under the authority of each region.

**Small-scale fish farmer (waterwheel)**

In addition to capturing fishermen, small-scale fish farmers who use waterwheels in their businesses are also entitled to diesel fuel subsidies. However, they must go through a verification process and obtain a letter of recommendation from Regency/City SKPD in charge of fisheries.

In Indonesia, fishermen can be categorized into two main types: traditional and modern. Modern fishermen generally have more significant capital and utilize advanced

technology in the fishing process. The greater use of capital allows them to access more significant amounts of fuel, use high-power engines to power the vessel, and operate more efficient and intensive fishing gear. This directly affects their cruising power at sea, allowing them to catch larger numbers of fish and reach wider waters. On the other hand, traditional fishermen tend to rely on simpler fishing methods with limited business capital. They generally use more environmentally friendly fishing equipment and an organizational system that is less complex than that of modern fishermen. Therefore, price fluctuations and limited fuel availability in coastal areas significantly affect economic conditions. This instability often makes it difficult for traditional fishermen to go to sea regularly, ultimately impacting their well-being and the sustainability of small-scale fisheries. Fuel scarcity is a factor that causes local fishermen to engage in illegal fishing. Fuel scarcity (fuel oil) can encourage local fishermen to engage in unlawful fishing because it increases the operational costs of vessels, which makes fishing in legal waters uneconomical, so they look for other ways to survive.

### **The impact of fuel scarcity**

Changes in subsidized fuel prices have a significant impact on the economic welfare of fishermen. This is due to the role of fuel as one of the main components in their daily activities, especially in sea operations to make a living. Subsidized fuel price increase results in fishermen's increasing operational costs, which ultimately impacts the decline in their income. On the other hand, if subsidized fuel prices decrease, the lower cost burden can increase revenue for fisherman and improve their economic conditions. Facing this dynamic, appropriate and sustainable policies are needed to reduce the negative impact of fluctuations in subsidized fuel prices on fishermen.

The scarcity of fuel oil (BBM) has a wide impact on the community's economy. One of the main effects of this scarcity is the increase in transportation costs, which then has an impact on the increase in the prices of various basic necessities. When the distribution of goods is disrupted due to high fuel costs, prices in the market tend to soar, adding to the economic burden, especially for low-income people who are highly dependent on the price stability of basic necessities. In addition, the limited supply of fuel also has a significant impact on people's productivity, especially in sectors that rely heavily on fuel oil, such as agriculture, fisheries, and small industries. For example, farmers who use pumping machines to irrigate their rice fields or fishermen who need fuel to operate their boats will experience obstacles in the production process. If the fuel supply is insufficient, fish harvest and catch are reduced, ultimately leading to decreased income for small and medium business actors. The broader

impact of this condition is the slowdown in economic turnover at the local level. When the production and distribution of goods experience constraints, people's purchasing power weakens, which can lead to economic stagnation. Therefore, fuel scarcity is not only a problem of energy availability, but can also have implications for financial stability and overall community welfare.

### **Forms of illegal fishing due to the limitation of diesel fuel for fishermen:**

#### **Overfishing**

Overfishing has a severe impact on the balance of marine ecosystems. One of the main consequences is a drastic population decline. Fish and other aquatic organisms disrupt the balance of the ecosystem as a whole. If exploitation continues without regard to the natural regeneration capacity of the fish, some species may become rare or even extinct. This is because fishermen often catch fish in quantities that exceed the population's ability to recover naturally. From an economic perspective, overfishing also hurts the fishermen themselves. The reduced number of fish in the sea causes the catch to decrease, directly impacting their income. In addition, the declining availability of fish in the market can trigger price instability, making fishermen's economic conditions even more uncertain. In the long run, reliance on overfishing practices without proper management efforts can endanger their livelihoods in hoods and threaten the sustainability of the fisheries sector. It was done to cover losses due to fuel limitations.

#### **Protected fishing**

Protecting fish species prohibited from being caught and endangered is crucial in preserving marine resources. This effort is critical to maintain the balance of aquatic ecosystems, and fishery resources can be used sustainably for future generations. If these species continue to be exploited without control, then not only are marine ecosystems disturbed, but Also, the sustainability of fishermen's livelihoods and the fisheries sector as a whole must be part of the collective consciousness, where all parties—both the government, environmental organizations, and fishing communities—work together to maintain sustainability marine ecosystems. Thus, fishery resources can remain sustainable and provide long-term benefits for human welfare and environmental balance. Local fishermen catch prohibited species because they have a high selling value.

#### **Fish theft (illegal transshipment)**

Illegal Transshipment is an organized crime that involves cross-border criminal

networks. This practice involves moving fish cargo from fishing vessels to foreign vessels that act as collectors or transporters without reporting the catch to the competent authorities. These illegal activities usually take place in a country's waters. They are directly directed abroad to obtain maximum profits while avoiding costs or regulations that can cause the perpetrator loss.

Transshipment occurs when two ships meet in the middle of the ocean to exchange cargo, supplies, or personnel, usually far from the port of origin. In the context of fisheries, illegal transshipment allows fishing vessels to move their catch at sea without returning to the port, so they can continue operating in the fishing area. This practice not only helps to save fuel costs in fleets but also speeds up the distribution of products to the market more efficiently.

### **Use of illegal fishing gear**

Illegal fishing is an activity that exploits fishery resources carried out without official permission or in ways that violate established regulations. This practice includes using hazardous fishing tools or materials, such as explosives, poisons, or environmentally unfriendly nets, which can damage marine ecosystems and threaten the sustainability of fish populations. In addition, this activity also often occurs outside of permitted areas or paths, as well as at prohibited times, such as the spawning season, which should be used for fish population recovery. Economic constraints and fierce competition in fisheries can encourage fishermen to look for more "efficient" methods, even though they are illegal.

### **Mitigation efforts that the government can carry out**

Subsidized Fuel Oil (BBM) is a right given by the state to the underprivileged, including small-scale fishermen who depend on it for their livelihood in the capture fisheries sector. Fuel plays a vital role in increasing the productivity of fishery businesses, especially in marine fishing operations. Fuel use in fishing businesses reaches around 70% of the total operational cost, making it a crucial production component for the sustainability of fishermen's livelihoods. The availability of adequate fuel, both in quantity and at an affordable price, is the main factor that allows fishermen to go to sea optimally. Suppose the fuel supply is insufficient or the price is too high. In that case, fishermen will find it challenging to carry out fishing activities, which can ultimately hinder the growth of the fisheries sector and threaten their welfare. Director General of Capture Fisheries of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and

Fisheries, Muhammad Zaini, responded to complaints about the scarcity of diesel fuel experienced by fishermen in various regions in Indonesia. As a concrete step, his party is trying to coordinate with Pertamina to encourage adding fuel filling stations for fishermen. "Implementation in the field will be highly dependent on Pertamina's policy, because we do not have direct access or complete control over the amount of fuel that can be distributed to fishermen. However, we are committed to continuing to establish communication and coordination with Pertamina to provide convenience for fishermen. At the very least, this effort aims to minimize the risk of fuel scarcity that can hinder their seagoing activities. More targeted, direct social assistance programs have an essential role in improving the welfare of small-scale fishers. In addition to providing subsidies that suit their needs, this program can also simplify the administrative process which is often an obstacle in accessing various forms of assistance, including fuel subsidies, One effective way is to digitize the distribution of subsidized fuel in distributing this assistance is to utilize the KUSUKA Card (Marine and Fisheries Business Actor Card) issued by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), The use of the KUSUKA Card also provides benefits in terms of supervision. With a more controlled system, the Downstream Oil and Gas Regulatory Agency (BPH Migas) can more easily monitor the realization of subsidized fuel use and calculate the real needs of the fisheries sector. With this mechanism, it is hoped that fuel distribution can be more transparent, on target, and minimize abuses that often occur in distributing subsidies for fishermen. SPBU is a government initiative to facilitate access to fuel for fishermen throughout Indonesia. Until now, as many as 415 petrol stations have been built in various shore regions. Based on data from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the distribution of Certain Types of Diesel Fuel (JBT) at SPBUN 68.76103 Balikpapan to November 2024 will reach 895 kiloliters or 91.42 percent of the total quota of 979 kiloliters. This shows that the government's efforts to meet the energy needs of fishermen continue to run according to the target For the government, the acceleration of the construction of SPBUN is expected to have a positive impact on the welfare of fishermen while increasing national energy security according to the direction of the President of the Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto in Asta Cita, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) Bahlil Lahadalia said that he would accelerate the construction permit for the construction of the Fishermen's Public Fuel Filling Station (SPBUN) for the sake of The Welfare of the fishermen throughout the country's coast, "After going to the refinery, today I also visited the location of the Fishermen's Petrol Station to ensure the availability of fuel for fishermen ahead of

Christmas and New Year. And I am delighted to see the condition of the people here," said Bahlil after reviewing the Refinery Unit V Balikpapan.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the scarcity of fuel oil (BBM) has a considerable impact on the activities of fishermen in running their fishery business. The limited supply of fuel not only increases operational costs significantly, but also has a direct effect on the decline in fishermen's income. As a result, many fishermen have difficulty maintaining the sustainability of their fishing ventures, which can threaten their well-being and the sustainability of marine ecosystems. In addition, high economic pressure due to rising fuel costs has prompted some fishermen to look for alternatives that are less regulated, including illegal fishing practices. This action is often seen as a way out for those struggling to maintain their livelihoods amid increasingly stressful economic conditions. Some of the main factors that aggravate the increase in illegal fishing cases due to the fuel crisis include the increasing price of subsidized fuel, uneven distribution to coastal areas, and the lack of availability of alternative fuels that fishermen can use. Without a proper solution, the fuel crisis not only impacts the fishermen's economy but can also contribute to the uncontrolled exploitation of marine resources, ultimately harming aquatic ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of the fisheries sector.

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