



Digitalization and the degradation of parental authority among Generation Z in Kampung Timor, Ambon City

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<i>Keywords:</i> digitalization parental authority Generation Z family relations digital literacy	This study examines the impact of digitalization on changing power relations within families, focusing on the erosion of parental authority among Generation Z in Kampung Timor, Ambon City. The rapid expansion of the internet, social media, and digital technologies has transformed patterns of family interaction while reshaping the values and behaviors of young people. A qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving both parents and children. The findings reveal that digital spaces have shifted sources of authority from parents to external actors, including social media platforms, influencers, and online communities. As a result, parental control has weakened, interpersonal communication has diminished, and traditional parenting practices have become less effective. The digital literacy gap between parents and children further reinforces young people's dominant position in accessing, interpreting, and producing information. These findings highlight the need to adapt parenting practices by strengthening parents' digital literacy, fostering dialogical communication, and reinforcing family values. Such efforts are essential to sustaining parental authority while promoting healthy parent–child relationships in an increasingly digital society.

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Introduction

Rapid social changes driven by modernization, globalization, and the penetration of digital technology have significantly impacted family life as the most fundamental social unit in society. The family, which previously served as the primary space for value transmission, character formation, and the legitimation of parental authority, is now facing serious challenges amid the growing forces of individualism, modern rationality, and popular culture that are closely associated with the lives of Generation Z. In the local context of Kampung Timor, Ambon City, these dynamics not only lead to shifts in normative and cultural family values but also trigger the degradation of parental authority in parent–child relationships. This is reflected in patterns of communication, decision-making processes, and the internalization of values within the family. These conditions make the study of shifts in family values and the dynamics of parental authority in relation to Generation Z an important and relevant issue for sociological inquiry, both to understand social change at the local level and as a reflection of family transformation in the contemporary era.

Social changes triggered by modernization, globalization, and the development of information technology have brought fundamental impacts on the structure and function of the family as a primary social institution. The family, which has traditionally functioned as the main space for the socialization of values, moral formation, and the legitimation of parental authority, is now facing new pressures due to changes in patterns of social and cultural interaction (Giddens, 1991: 64). The process of globalization not only accelerates the flow of information and lifestyles but also drives transformations in values that

affect relationships among family members, including the relationship between parents and children.

From a sociological perspective, these changes can be understood as part of the process of constructing and reconstructing social reality. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966: 79) emphasize that family values and norms are not static; rather, they are formed through ongoing social interactions and can shift alongside changes in the social context. When new values derived from digital media, popular culture, and peer environments become increasingly dominant, family values that have been passed down from generation to generation are likely to experience erosion or redefinition, particularly in societies undergoing social transition.

This phenomenon becomes even more complex when linked to the characteristics of Generation Z, a generation born and raised in the digital era with a very high level of technological connectivity. According to Marc Prensky (2001: 2), Generation Z as “digital natives” possesses different ways of thinking, communicating, and interpreting authority compared to previous generations. As a result, the relationship between parents and children tends to shift from hierarchical patterns toward more egalitarian ones, and in some cases even gives rise to children’s resistance to parental authority (Twenge, 2017: 45).

Changes in relational patterns have a direct impact on the weakening of parental authority within the family. Authority that was once rooted in cultural values, religion, and local traditions is now often challenged by alternative sources of authority such as social media, digital public figures, and peer groups. Anthony Giddens (1992: 184) refers to this condition as part of “reflexive modernity,” in which individuals—including children—become more active in reflecting

upon, negotiating, and even questioning authority that was previously taken for granted. In this context, the degradation of parental authority is not merely the result of individual failure, but rather a structural consequence of broader social change.

In the local context of Kampung Timor, Ambon City, the dynamics of shifting family values and the degradation of parental authority constitute an important issue to be examined in depth. Kampung Timor, as a social space where traditional values, religion, and the influences of global modernity intersect, presents a distinctive social reality. Roland Robertson (1995: 28), through the concept of glocalization, emphasizes that globalization processes always interact with local contexts, producing unique forms of social change. Therefore, this study is relevant for understanding how families in Kampung Timor respond to these changes, while also revealing how parent–child relations among Generation Z are negotiated amid the ongoing transformation of family values.

The research problem in this study can be formulated as follows: How do shifts in family values occurring in Kampung Timor, Ambon City, influence the weakening (degradation) of parental authority in shaping relationships, communication patterns, and the process of value socialization with Generation Z children amid the influences of modernization, globalization, and the development of digital technology?

Furthermore, the objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the forms and directions of shifts in family values occurring in family life in Kampung Timor, Ambon City, as a result of modernization, globalization, and the development of digital technology among Generation Z.
2. To examine the dynamics and extent of the degradation of parental authority in building relationships and communication patterns with Generation Z children in Kampung Timor, Ambon City, amid ongoing changes in family values.
3. To understand and explain the implications of shifts in family values on the process of value socialization, including how values, norms, and authority are negotiated between parents and Generation Z children within the socio-cultural context of Kampung Timor, Ambon City.

This study employs several theories considered relevant, namely:

1. Reflexive Modernity Theory (Anthony Giddens). According to Anthony Giddens, modern society is characterized by the process of reflexive modernity, a condition in which individuals actively reflect upon, interpret, and even question traditions and authorities that were previously taken for granted (1991: 5–7). In the context of the family, reflexive modernity leads to the weakening of traditional parental authority, as children—including Generation Z—have broad access to alternative sources of knowledge through digital technology and global media. Parent–child relationships are no longer strictly hierarchical but are increasingly negotiative and egalitarian (1992: 184). This theory helps explain how changes in modern social structures influence authority relations within families in Kampung Timor.
2. Social Construction of Reality Theory (Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann). Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann view values, norms, and authority as

products of social construction formed through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 61–83). Family values and parental authority are not natural and fixed entities; rather, they are continuously constructed through social interaction. When the social context changes—due to globalization, digital technology, and generational shifts—the process of value internalization within the family also undergoes transformation. In the context of Kampung Timor, this theory explains how family values and parental authority are redefined through everyday interactions between parents and Generation Z children.

3. Generational Theory (Generation Z). Generational theory explains that each generation is shaped by different historical, social, and technological contexts, resulting in distinct values, ways of thinking, and patterns of relationships. Generation Z, born roughly from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, is known as digital natives—a generation that has been familiar with digital technology since birth (Marc Prensky, 2001: 2). According to Jean M. Twenge (2017: 45–47), Generation Z tends to be more individualistic, more critical of authority, and more reliant on peer networks and digital media than on traditional authority figures such as parents. This theory is relevant for understanding why parent–child relationships in Kampung Timor experience tension and shifts, particularly in patterns of communication and the socialization of family values.

In addition, there are several articles published in international scientific journals that are relevant to the context of this study, namely:

- (a) Islam, A. F., Nurwahidin, N., & Al-Asyhar, T. (2019), *Self-Concept of Generation Z in Parenting and Religiosity of Parents in Urban Society: Qualitative Approach in Dai Family* (Proceedings ICSGS), which essentially states that the formation of Generation Z's self-concept is strongly influenced by the social environment of the digital technology era as well as the role of parents as significant others. Its relevance to this study lies in how families “negotiate” values and authority: parents attempt to instill values (including religious values), while Generation Z lives within a digital social ecology that expands sources of value beyond the family. This helps explain why parental authority may weaken not merely because “parents are less assertive,” but because the arenas shaping children's values have become increasingly plural (family, peers, the internet, and public figures), requiring family authority to be continuously “reconstructed” through communication and the legitimation of values.
- (b) Maulidina, A., & Puspitawati, H. (2021), *Gender Analysis of Family Traditions, Parent-Child Ties, and Happiness in Generation Z during the Covid-19 Pandemic* (Journal of Family Sciences), essentially emphasizes the importance of family traditions and parent–child ties. The finding that family traditions and parent–child relationships have a positive influence on the psychosocial well-being of Generation Z provides a theoretical foundation for this study: when modernization and digitalization shift family traditions (such as shared meals, family worship/rituals, and habit-based social control within the household), the space of parental authority is also affected, as traditions function as a “mechanism for

the transmission of values” and as a bond that sustains relationships. This means that the degradation of authority can be interpreted as an effect of the weakening of family rituals and traditions that once maintained obedience, closeness, and intergenerational bonds.

- (c) Kusumalestari, R. R., et al. (2023), *Parenting Styles and Digital Literacy: Uncovering Their Relationship* (a study of students/youth in a campus environment), found that the relationship between parenting styles and digital literacy among adolescents and university students (who are close in age to Generation Z) is highly relevant, as digital literacy represents a new arena of authority contestation in urban families. Children are often more technologically proficient than their parents, thereby challenging parental control and authority. This study provides a lens for interpreting the theme: shifts in family values occur when families confront new norms (such as digital privacy, device boundaries, and online self-expression), while parental authority is tested by children’s need for autonomy and by the reality that family rules often lag behind technological change. Thus, the theme of authority degradation can be analyzed as a mismatch between parenting patterns and the realities of digital competence and media culture of Generation Z, rather than merely a typical parent–child conflict.
- (d) Yilmaz, Y., et al. (2025), *Helicopter Parenting and Challenges in Young Adult Social...* (Frontiers in Psychology), focuses on helicopter parenting (excessive parental involvement/control) and its impact on young people’s psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and social relationships. Its relevance to this study is direct: on the one hand,

modern families (often in urban middle-class contexts) tend to increase control in pursuit of security and achievement; on the other hand, excessive control can trigger resistance among Generation Z, reduce their sense of autonomy, and intensify value conflicts. This provides a lens for explaining the “degradation of authority”: authority imposed through intensive control may lead to rejection and emotional distance, turning parent–child relationships into negotiations of power rather than processes of shared value formation. In other words, it is not simply a matter of “less authority,” but rather a shift from traditional authority toward more egalitarian (or even conflictual) bargaining relationships within the family.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on an in-depth understanding of changes in family values and the dynamics of parental authority within the context of parent–child relations among Generation Z in Kampung Timor. This approach is appropriate because the phenomenon under study is closely related to lived experiences, meanings, and social practices in everyday life. Accordingly, the type of research used is a case study, specifically the Kampung Timor community in Ambon City, which is highly plural in terms of language, religion, and ethnic groups. This allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon in a detailed, specific, and contextual manner.

The research location is Kampung Timor, Ambon City, selected because it represents a community with unique cultural values, family structures, and social dynamics, while also experiencing strong interactions with modern cultural influences. Kampung

Timor is a highly heterogeneous settlement in terms of both ethnic and religious composition. Research informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, which can be detailed as follows: parents (aged 35–60 years) representing a generation that upholds traditional family values; Generation Z children (aged 15–25 years) representing a group experiencing shifts in values and modern interaction patterns; community leaders/religious leaders and neighborhood heads (RT) to provide socio-community perspectives on changes in family values; and educators (teachers or youth mentors/leaders) who understand the cultural language and behavior of local youth.

Data collection techniques employed include in-depth interviews, aimed at exploring experiences, views, and perceptions related to: how parents interpret authority, how Generation Z responds to traditional family values, and the factors causing shifts in values and authority. In addition, observation was conducted to examine patterns of family communication, parent–child interactions in household, religious, or community activities, as well as the daily behavior of Generation Z within the Kampung Timor environment.

In addition, the documentation process—such as family records, photographs of family activities, and archives including church/neighborhood (RT) records or other relevant documents—is considered important to collect and examine. The data analysis technique used follows the three analytical flows proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (2014), namely: data reduction, which involves selecting, simplifying, and organizing important data; data display (presentation), conducted through thematic tables, relational matrices, or descriptive narratives; and verification, which entails drawing

conclusions based on emerging patterns, categories, and themes. Furthermore, data validity is ensured through source triangulation, by comparing information from parents, children, community leaders, and documents; technique triangulation, by combining interviews, observations, and documentation; and member checking, by reconfirming findings with informants to enhance data validity.

In this study, the researcher obtained informed consent from all informants, ensured the confidentiality of identities, and upheld cultural sensitivity within the Kampung Timor community. This approach is intended to ensure that the data presented remain objective and rational, without being influenced by feelings of embarrassment or fear related to revealing personal or private matters.

Results and Discussion

Through the process of observation and in-depth interviews, this study has identified several noteworthy findings that will be discussed as follows:

The shift in family value orientation from collectivism to individualism due to digitalization

In the context of the study, this shift in family value orientation is reflected in the transition from collectivist patterns—emphasizing togetherness, obedience to parents, and prioritizing family interests over individual interests—toward individualism, which places greater emphasis on freedom of choice, personal autonomy, and children’s self-expression. Collective values that once served as a strong foundation of family relations in Kampung Timor are gradually experiencing degradation alongside the development of digitalization,

modernization, and formal education, all of which shape Generation Z's perspectives on life and social relationships.

As expressed by a parent informant: *"Ana-ana sekarang seng sama katong dolo lai...dong zn pusing-pusing deng orang tatua pung nasehat lai..."* As a result, the value orientation adopted by children is no longer fully aligned with the values transmitted by parents, leading to a weakening of parental authority as the guardian of family values and making parent-child relationships increasingly negotiative in nature. This shift indicates that the family is no longer the sole source of value legitimacy, but must compete with new values emerging from outside the domestic sphere, which ultimately affects communication patterns, levels of compliance, and the structure of power within families in Kampung Timor.

Digitalization weakens the process of value internalization within the family

In the study, this is reflected in the weakening of the process of value internalization within the family, as seen in the declining role of the family as the primary space for shaping children's values, norms, and behavioral patterns. In Kampung Timor, the family, which previously functioned as the primary agent of socialization, now has to share this role with external environments such as schools, peer groups, and especially digital media, all of which intensively shape the ways Generation Z thinks and behaves. Values instilled by parents—such as obedience, collective responsibility, and respect for authority—are no longer fully internalized; instead, they are often filtered, negotiated, or even rejected by children.

This condition leads to a weakening of parental authority in defining what is considered right, appropriate, and important within family life, as Generation Z children

have multiple alternative sources for constructing their social meanings. Parent informants who were generally interviewed stated that: *"Katong zn bisa kaya dolo lai, untuk nasehat anak-anak di meja makan, ada doa bersama setiap hari..."* *sakarang ni karena Hp dong punya waktu tidur kadang malam jadi siang deng siang jadi malam...apalagi pada hari-hari libur...jadi mau sosialisasi nilai-nilai apalai...karena dong lebe banya dapat nilai dari tiktok, IG dan FB yang dong lebe suka..."* (We can no longer do as we used to in giving advice to our children at the dining table, including having daily prayers together. Nowadays, due to mobile phone use, their sleep schedules are often irregular—night becomes day and day becomes night—especially during holidays. As a result, the process of socializing family values has become increasingly difficult, because children now obtain more of their values and influences from technology, particularly through social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook).

This interview finding shows that the closeness between Generation Z children and their parents is diminishing, even though they still live in the same household. In contrast, children's attention and attachment to their own communities through TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook are far more intense. As a result, parent-child relationships in Kampung Timor are experiencing a degradation from a one-way pattern of value transmission toward more fluid relationships that are prone to conflict and heavily characterized by the negotiation of values.

The transformation of parental authority from a hierarchical to a negotiational pattern

In this study, this shift is evident in the transformation of parental authority from a hierarchical pattern to a negotiational one in parent-child relationships. Previously,

parental authority was exercised in a top-down manner, where family rules and decisions had to be accepted without much questioning. Today, however, Generation Z tends to demand space for dialogue, rational justification, and recognition of their personal autonomy. In Kampung Timor, this change is influenced by increased access to education, exposure to modern values through digital media, and the reflective mindset of children who no longer view authority as absolute.

As a result, parents are more frequently placed in positions where they must negotiate—regarding educational choices, social relationships, technology use, and lifestyle—rather than simply issuing commands, as was common during the time when traditional and baby boomer generations were adolescents and young adults. This transformation indicates that the degradation of parental authority does not signify the complete loss of parental roles, but rather a shift in the form of authority—from one that is structural and normative to one that depends on communication skills, persuasion, and moral legitimacy in everyday interactions with Generation Z children. Conflicts often arise when children are perceived by parents as disobedient, while, conversely, parents are perceived by children as overly authoritarian and unwilling to compromise. As a result, what emerges in practice is a process of negotiation and mutual agreement between both parties in decision-making.

Factors contributing to digitalization and the degradation of parental authority among Generation Z

The findings of this study identified three main factors causing the shift in family values associated with the degradation of parental authority, namely:

The influence of digital technology through social media

The development of digital technology, particularly the use of smartphones and social media, has become a dominant factor influencing parent-child relationships among Generation Z in Kampung Timor. This study found that all Generation Z children in Kampung Timor own smartphones. With broad access to information, children no longer rely on parents as their primary source of knowledge and values. As a result, parental authority in providing advice, rules, and moral control has weakened.

In terms of interaction patterns, face-to-face communication has declined and been replaced by virtual interaction, leading to more distant emotional relationships. Intergenerational dialogue often becomes brief, reactive, and less in-depth. A Generation Z informant stated that: “*Sekarang memang jaman su berubah jadi mau iko orang tatua pnya suseng bisa lai...orang tatupung mau katong mausti selalu di rumah kerja dalam rumah seng boleh talalu fokus par hp...dunia sakarang memang zn bisa bagitu..malah kalau soal nasehat katong cari kata bijak dari internet deng AI jauh lebe bagus dari orang tatua pung nasehat*” (Times have changed, so it is no longer possible for us to simply follow our parents’ wishes. Our parents want us to always stay at home, work, take care of household tasks, and listen to their advice. However, when we need advice, what is available on the internet and through AI is often far better than the advice given by our parents at home).

The shift in values from collectivism to individualism as a result of digitalization

Families in Kampung Timor have long been known for their strong cohesion and solidarity as a unified entity. According

to several informants, this strong sense of togetherness even extended beyond the household, shaping collective solidarity at the neighborhood (RT) level and within the broader Kampung Timor settlement. They recounted that in the past, when a child had a conflict with someone from another village or residential area, the issue often became a collective concern. As a result, Kampung Timor was widely recognized as a neighborhood where youth frequently engaged in group conflicts with youths from other areas.

Therefore, a key factor is the shift in family value orientation from collectivistic patterns—which emphasize togetherness, obedience, and hierarchy—toward individualistic values that highlight freedom, personal choice, and self-expression. In the context of Kampung Timor, this transformation has made Generation Z children more willing to question parental decisions and negotiate family rules. Consequently, interaction patterns within the family have shifted from hierarchical relationships to more egalitarian ones, though often less structured, leading to tensions, differences of opinion, and a weakening of adherence to family norms.

The decline in the intensity of value socialization within the family due to digitalization

The third factor is the decreasing intensity of the value socialization process within the family as a result of parents' busyness, economic pressures, and changes in the rhythm of urban life. Parents have increasingly limited time to build deep communication, provide role models, and supervise their children. As a consequence, Generation Z children tend to form their values and identities more through environments outside the family, such as peer groups and digital media.

In this situation, patterns of family interaction become more functional and pragmatic, with communication focusing more on practical needs rather than value formation. As a result, parental authority becomes increasingly weakened, both symbolically and practically. Data from interviews with parent informants indicate that: *"Ya memang katong mau bilang apa, karena pekerjaan dan sebagainya katong seng punya banyak waktu dengan ana-ana di rumah, sebaliknya dong juga begitu...ada-ada saja ana-ana skarang pung kesibukan nii, kadang kesibukan yang seng masuk akal eee"* (It must be acknowledged that, due to work demands and various other commitments, we as parents do not have much time to spend with our children at home. On the other hand, the children also have many activities of their own. Nowadays, they always seem busy with various things, and at times these activities even appear unreasonable or difficult for parents to understand).

Furthermore, in the literature review, the author also relates this study to five relevant research findings, thereby making the results and discussion more accurate and comprehensive. The relevant research findings are as follows:

Sonia Livingstone & Alicia Blum-Ross (2020): "Parenting for a Digital Future: How Hopes and Fears about Technology Shape Children's Lives." This study finds that digitalization transforms parenting patterns from direct control into processes of negotiation and mediation between parents and children. This is relevant to the present study as it demonstrates that digitalization weakens traditional parental authority, in line with the phenomenon of authority degradation observed in Kampung Timor.

Danah boyd (2014): "It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens." This study shows that Generation Z adolescents construct their identities and social relationships through digital media that often lie beyond parental control. Therefore, its relevance to this study lies in explaining how digital spaces expand children's autonomy, contributing to the decline of parental authority in local contexts such as Kampung Timor, Ambon City.

Valerie Steeves (2014): "Young Canadians in a Wired World." This research demonstrates that children are more digitally competent than their parents, resulting in an authority gap based on technological knowledge. This is also relevant to the present study, as it supports the argument that the degradation of parental authority is driven by disparities in digital literacy between generations.

The Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia and UNICEF Indonesia (2014/2020): "Study on the Behavior of Children and Adolescents in Using the Internet in Indonesia." This study, conducted twice in Indonesia (in 2014 and 2020), shows that the high intensity of internet use among children is often not accompanied by effective parental supervision. Therefore, this finding is considered relevant to our study, as it directly reflects empirical conditions in Indonesia, including in Kampung Timor, Ambon City, where digitalization has the potential to weaken parental control.

Jean M. Twenge (2017): "iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are

Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy." The findings of this study indicate that Generation Z is highly dependent on digital technology, which alters patterns of family interaction and communication with parents. This is relevant to our study as it reinforces the argument that changes in family relationships due to digitalization can shift parental authority in children's lives.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that digitalization has significantly transformed power relations within the family by reshaping the values, roles, and interactions between parents and Generation Z children in Kampung Timor, Ambon City. The findings indicate a shift from hierarchical family structures toward more egalitarian and dialogical relationships, providing Generation Z with greater opportunities to express opinions and participate in decision-making. Rather than disappearing entirely, parental authority has undergone a process of symbolic erosion, particularly in matters related to education, social relationships, and lifestyle choices, where authority is increasingly negotiated through communication, emotional closeness, and mutual understanding.

The study further reveals that digital media, modernity, and globalization have become dominant forces in shaping the values and identities of Generation Z. Continuous exposure to social media, online communities, and popular culture has strengthened young people's capacity to critically evaluate traditional family norms while simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of conventional parental authority. As a result, the family can no longer be understood as a fixed hierarchical institution

but as a dynamic social construction in which values, roles, and authority are continuously negotiated between inherited cultural traditions and emerging digital values. These transformations also influence parenting practices and family social control, requiring parents to move beyond dominance-based approaches toward more adaptive, participatory, and context-sensitive forms of guidance.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that parents adopt more adaptive and communicative parenting practices by emphasizing dialogue, emotional support, and value-based role modeling rather than relying solely on authoritarian forms of authority. Community leaders, religious organizations, and educational institutions should also strengthen their support for families through digital literacy programs, family education initiatives, and efforts to reinforce ethical intergenerational relationships. Such collaborative efforts are essential to bridge the widening value gap between older generations and Generation Z within the socio-cultural context of Kampung Timor. Finally, future research is encouraged to examine similar issues through comparative studies across different regions or by employing longitudinal and ethnographic approaches to provide a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics of family values and parental authority in the context of continuing digital transformation and modernity.

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Declaration of Ownership

We, the research team, hereby declare truthfully that the manuscript published in the DTCS is our original work, produced after the completion of the research. It does not contain any elements of plagiarism and has not been previously published, either in part or in full, in any journal or other media. All sources used have been properly cited and listed in the references in accordance with academic writing standards.

Conflict of Interest

We, the researchers, hereby declare that this research was conducted without any conflict of interest, whether financial or non-financial, that could influence the objectivity, integrity, and independence of the research process or the publication of this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study has received ethical approval from the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Universitas Pattimura, Ambon. The research team ensured that all research processes were conducted in accordance with ethical principles, including obtaining informed consent from participants (key informants), maintaining data confidentiality, and respecting the rights and privacy of participants throughout the research.

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