

Evaluation Implementation of the Paitua Program (Protection Of Elderly People Over 65 Years) in Raja Ampat Regency, Southwest Papua, Indonesia

DESIDERIUS BIR

Student ID: 2023T1052

Department of Social Development, Graduate School of Social Work, The Philippine Women's University, Manila, Philippines

Abstract: Indonesia's most geographically isolated and Indigenous-majority province, Southwest Papua, has responded to rapid population aging with PAITUA (*Perlindungan Hari Tua*), a non-contributory cash transfer for Indigenous Papuans aged 65 years and above. While a provincial-level evaluation of PAITUA has been published, no study has examined its implementation at the regency level through the direct, in-depth accounts of beneficiaries and implementors. This qualitative study assessed the implementation of PAITUA in Raja Ampat Regency, an archipelagic district of Southwest Papua, through the lived experiences of programme actors. Using an interpretivist, qualitative descriptive design, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with ten purposively selected informants, five elderly beneficiaries and five programme implementors representing the regency social affairs office, the regional planning agency, the budget office, the distributing bank, and the provincial PAITUA joint secretariat, until thematic saturation was reached. Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis, informed by the study's implementation-theory and social-development-theory framework. Six themes emerged: accessibility of registration and information; targeting and beneficiary selection; disbursement delays; service quality and frontline interaction; benefit adequacy and changes in wellbeing; and institutional and implementation challenges. Findings show that PAITUA is experienced as administratively simple to register for and delivered through consistently courteous, patient frontline officers, generating strong feelings of dignity and government recognition among beneficiaries. However, implementation is constrained by a single, centrally located bank branch in an archipelagic geography, by the mismatch between district and provincial Special Autonomy budget cycles, by elderly beneficiaries' near-total dependence on family members to operate automated teller machines, and by an unresolved tension between the programme's legally mandated 65-year age threshold and community demand to lower it to 60. The programme nonetheless demonstrated notable institutional resilience, being sustained at the regency level under a new name (ORISUN) after a change in provincial leadership. The study extends Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975) and Edward III's (1980) implementation frameworks by showing that their variables function as independently necessary, rather than substitutable, conditions for implementation success, and offers a qualitatively grounded contribution to Sen's (1999) Capability Approach and to the SMILE Model (Sinuarit et al., 2023) in an archipelagic Papuan setting.

Keywords: social protection; cash transfer; elderly welfare; policy implementation; qualitative research; Indigenous Papuans; Southwest Papua

I. Introduction

1.1 Background

Population aging is among the most pressing socio-demographic challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific region, which is aging faster than any other world region and is home to roughly 630 million people aged 60 years and above, a figure projected to more than double by 2050 (UNESCAP, 2022). Rapid aging compresses the working-age tax base while simultaneously raising the elderly dependency ratio, placing fiscal strain on both state budgets and family households, a pattern especially pronounced in lower-middle-income countries (Mahal & McPake, 2017; Shaik et al., 2024). International normative frameworks, from the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing, have pushed governments toward non-contributory social pensions and cash transfer schemes as core instruments of elderly social protection, with cross-national evidence associating such schemes with improved household food security, expanded healthcare access, and stronger social inclusion of older beneficiaries (Fisher et al., 2017; Devereux et al., 2017).

Indonesia mirrors this regional trajectory. Approximately 11.75 percent of the national population around 32.5 million people, is now aged 60 years and above, a share projected to exceed 20 percent by 2045. National social protection instruments such as the Family Hope Programme (PKH) and the National Health Insurance scheme (JKN) have not been fully optimized for elderly populations in remote and geographically isolated regions. Following the 2021 amendment to Papua's Special Autonomy law, the Provincial Government of Southwest Papua established PAITUA (*Perlindungan Hari Tua*, Protection for the Elderly Over 65 Years), a universal, non-contributory monthly cash transfer of IDR 250,000 for Indigenous Papuans (*Orang Asli Papua*, OAP) aged 65 and above, funded through Special Autonomy allocations and jointly administered by the province and its six constituent districts and cities. Raja Ampat Regency, an archipelagic district in the province, hosted 2,189 PAITUA beneficiaries at the programme's peak and, after PAITUA's provincial mandate concluded in December 2025, independently continued cash assistance to elderly Indigenous Papuans through a locally financed successor initiative, ORISUN (*Orang Raja Ampat Usia Senja*), covering 1,440 beneficiaries in 2026.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite considerable political commitment at both provincial and district levels, community consultations and preliminary observations in Raja Ampat indicated that a number of registered elderly beneficiaries experienced prolonged waiting periods before receiving assistance, that disbursement timing and frequency were inconsistent across sub-districts, and that outreach, complaint-handling, and beneficiary-data updating mechanisms were, at best, unevenly developed. A provincial-level evaluation using Dunn's (1994) six evaluation criteria has previously examined PAITUA across all six districts of Southwest Papua (Bleskadite et al., 2024), but no study has yet examined how the programme is actually experienced, navigated, and interpreted by beneficiaries and implementors at the regency level in an archipelagic setting such as Raja Ampat, where geography, banking infrastructure, and institutional capacity differ substantially from the provincial capital.

1.3 Literature Review

Policy implementation theory. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) conceptualize policy implementation as the actions of individual or organizational actors directed toward achieving objectives set by prior policy decisions, conditioned by six interacting variables: policy standards and objectives, resources, inter-organizational communication, the characteristics of implementing agencies, the disposition of implementors, and the broader socio-political environment. Edward III's (1980) implementation model similarly emphasizes communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure as four necessary pillars of effective delivery. Both frameworks have been widely applied to Indonesian social-assistance implementation studies (Ahdiyana & Sukmawati, 2022; Sarjito, 2024). Complementing these process-oriented models, Dunn's (1994) evaluation framework offers six

criteria, effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, equity, responsiveness, and accuracy that have been used specifically to evaluate PAITUA at the provincial level, where the programme was found to perform well on effectiveness and efficiency but less well on adequacy, equity, and accuracy (Bleskadite et al., 2024). Hamdi's (2018) implementation model, validated in the Papuan context through Sinuarit et al.'s (2023) study of the BANGGA Papua programme in Asmat District, identifies resources, target-group participation, policy substance, implementor behaviour, and performance-network interaction as determinants of implementation success, and gave rise to the SMILE Model (Synergy, Modernity, Innovation, Legalistic foundation, Efficiency), a context-specific diagnostic lens for Papuan social-assistance programmes.

More recent scholarship extends this terrain: Howlett et al. (2020) situate implementation within an iterative policy cycle in which upstream design failures, unrealistic eligibility assumptions, inadequate community consultation resurface as downstream implementation problems; Hill and Hupe (2021) foreground multi-level governance dynamics in decentralized systems; and the street-level bureaucracy tradition (Lipsky, 1980; Meyers & Vorsanger, 2003) draws attention to the discretion exercised by frontline distribution officers and village facilitators, who may adapt or reinterpret policy directives in response to local conditions.

Social development theory and normative frameworks. Sen's (1999) Capability Approach evaluates development not by income alone but by the substantive freedoms individuals are able to exercise; cash transfers are understood as instruments for expanding beneficiaries' capability to meet basic needs, participate in social life, and maintain dignity. Nussbaum (2011) extends this into an explicit list of central capabilities, bodily health, affiliation, and control over one's environment among them, several of which bear directly on how an elderly cash-transfer programme should be judged. The WHO's (2002) Active Aging framework challenges constructions of the elderly as passive welfare recipients, instead framing health, participation, and security as three pillars that a well-designed programme should jointly advance. Empowerment theory (Gutierrez, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000) distinguishes individual, organizational, and community levels of empowerment, offering a lens for assessing whether cash assistance merely relieves financial pressure or also catalyses broader agency and collective action among elderly recipients.

Qualitative methodology in programme evaluation. In-depth interviewing is well established as the method of choice for accessing the subjective meanings that beneficiaries and implementors attach to programme experience, in ways structured instruments cannot (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2015). Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) reflexive thematic analysis offers a theoretically flexible and rigorous method for identifying patterns of meaning across such interview data, allowing themes to emerge inductively while remaining interpretable within an a priori implementation-theory framework. Purposive, criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2015), continued to the point of thematic saturation (Guest et al., 2006), is the appropriate sampling logic for such inquiry, prioritizing information-richness over statistical representativeness.

1.4 Research Gap and Objectives

Three gaps motivate this study. First, while Bleskadite et al. (2024) evaluated PAITUA across Southwest Papua Province using a qualitative approach, no regency-specific qualitative assessment exists for Raja Ampat, an archipelagic district whose banking infrastructure, transport geography, and implementation capacity differ markedly from more accessible parts of the province. Second, the SMILE Model (Sinuarit et al., 2023), developed from a different social-assistance programme (BANGGA Papua, targeting young children rather than the elderly) in a different district (Asmat), has not been tested against an elderly cash-transfer programme in an archipelagic setting. Third, the integration of social-development theory, the Capability Approach, Active Aging Theory, and Empowerment Theory, into empirical evaluation of Papuan regional cash-transfer programmes remains largely absent from the literature. This study addresses these gaps by qualitatively assessing PAITUA implementation in Raja Ampat Regency from the perspectives of both elderly beneficiaries and programme implementors.

The specific qualitative research questions are:

For programme implementors:

1. How is the planning of the PAITUA Program aligned with its actual implementation?
2. How is the aid distribution process implemented?
3. What are the policy recommendations to improve the implementation and sustainability of the PAITUA Program?
4. How has the PAITUA Program contributed to social development principles, including empowerment, capability enhancement, and social inclusion?

For programme beneficiaries: 5. What challenges, obstacles, and problems arose during the preparation and distribution of assistance, and what solutions and corrective measures were undertaken? 6. What best practices can be identified in the implementation of the PAITUA Program from the perspective of elderly beneficiaries?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on an implementation-process lens (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Edward III, 1980) to explain *how* PAITUA is delivered, a normative-outcome lens (Sen's Capability Approach, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011; WHO's Active Aging Theory, 2002; Empowerment Theory Gutierrez, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000) to assess *what* the programme achieves for beneficiaries, and a context-specific diagnostic lens, the SMILE Model (Sinuarit et al., 2023), built from a comparable Papuan social-assistance programme, to interpret the findings within their regional institutional setting. Dunn's (1994) evaluation criteria, particularly adequacy, equity, responsiveness, and accuracy are used qualitatively to organize thematic interpretation rather than as quantitative scoring criteria.

II. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-interpretive design, using in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) as the method of data analysis. The design was chosen because assessing the implementation of PAITUA required access to the subjective experiences, perceptions, and interpretive frameworks of elderly beneficiaries and implementors, meanings that cannot be adequately captured through structured, closed-ended instruments (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2015).

2.2 Philosophical Paradigm

The study is grounded in the interpretivist tradition of social inquiry, which holds that social reality including the implementation of a public programme is constructed and made meaningful through the interpretations of social actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schwandt, 2000). Axiologically, the research is committed to the values of social justice, human dignity, and the rights of a historically marginalized Indigenous elderly population, consistent with the normative commitments of the Capability Approach (Sen, 1999) and social development theory (Midgley, 2014).

2.3 Study Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in Raja Ampat Regency, an archipelagic district of Southwest Papua Province. Participants were selected through purposive, criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2015), targeting two informant categories: elderly PAITUA beneficiaries and PAITUA programme implementors. A minimum of five informants per category was set a priori, with data collection continued until no substantially new themes emerged from successive interviews, consistent with the principle of thematic saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Ten informants were ultimately interviewed: five elderly beneficiaries (coded Ben-1 to Ben-5) and five implementors (coded Impl-1 to Impl-5) representing the Raja Ampat Social Affairs Office, the Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPPERIDA), the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency (BPKAD), the distributing bank (Bank

BRI), and the provincial PAITUA Joint Secretariat (Sekretariat Bersama). Table 1 summarizes informant characteristics.

Table 1. Profile of In-Depth Interview Informants

Code	Category	Sex/Age	Role / Location
Ben-1	Beneficiary	Female, 70	Resident, Kampung Bonkawir
Ben-2	Beneficiary	Male, 75	Resident/farmer, Kampung Waisai
Ben-3	Beneficiary	Female, 70	Resident, Kampung Warmasen
Ben-4	Beneficiary	Male, 68	Resident, Sapordanco
Ben-5	Beneficiary	Male, 81	Resident, Waisai Kota
Impl-1	Implementor	Male, 49	Secretary, Raja Ampat Regency Social Affairs Office
Impl-2	Implementor	Male, 52	Head of Socio-Cultural Division, BAPPERIDA Raja Ampat; PAITUA Coordinator
Impl-3	Implementor	Male, 48	Head of Tiplol Mayalibit Sub-district; Head of Budget Control Section, BPKAD Raja Ampat
Impl-4	Implementor	Female, 38	Relationship Manager, Bank BRI Sorong (distributing institution)
Impl-5	Implementor	-	Secretary, BAPPERIDA Southwest Papua Province; Chair, PAITUA Joint Secretariat

Eligibility criteria for beneficiary informants required current residence in Raja Ampat Regency, possession of a valid national identity card, age of 65 years or above, registration on the official PAITUA beneficiary list, and voluntary willingness to participate. Implementor informants were selected to represent the institutional chain of programme administration, from village- and district-level coordination through district budget management to provincial oversight.

2.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDI), guided by an interview protocol developed for two respondent categories. The beneficiary protocol elicited open-ended narratives on registration experience, awareness of the programme, disbursement experience, treatment by distribution officers, use of funds, perceived sufficiency of assistance, and recommendations for improvement. The implementor protocol elicited narratives on programme planning, beneficiary identification and verification, distribution mechanisms, inter-agency coordination, structural challenges, and policy recommendations. Interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and supplemented by a structured review of official PAITUA programme documents (implementation reports, beneficiary registration decrees, distribution monitoring reports, and monitoring and evaluation reports for fiscal years 2023–2025) used to contextualize and cross-check interview content (Bowen, 2009).

2.5 Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis: familiarization through repeated reading, systematic line-by-line coding, clustering of codes into candidate themes, review and refinement of themes against the full data corpus, definition and naming of final themes, and production of an analytic narrative. Coding proceeded inductively at the descriptive level while remaining sensitised, at the interpretive level, to the study's implementation-theory and social-development-theory framework, consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2019) distinction between purely inductive and theoretically

informed thematic analysis. Six themes were finalized, corresponding to the implementation domains established in the study's conceptual framework: accessibility, targeting and selection, timeliness of disbursement, service quality, benefit adequacy and wellbeing, and institutional/implementation challenges.

2.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic-inquiry criteria. *Credibility* was supported through source triangulation across two informant categories occupying structurally different positions in the programme (recipients versus administrators across five institutions) and through documentary cross-checking. *Dependability* and *confirmability* were supported through an explicit audit trail linking every interpretive claim back to a specific, coded informant quotation. *Transferability* is addressed descriptively, through detailed reporting of the study setting, sampling logic, and informant characteristics, allowing readers to judge the applicability of findings to other contexts. The possibility of courtesy bias — a cultural tendency to speak favourably of government officials, particularly toward the village and district authorities who also facilitate one's own registration, is acknowledged as an interpretive caution and is addressed explicitly in the Discussion.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for research involving human subjects, including elderly Indigenous participants. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time, and written informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of anonymised informant codes (Ben-1-5, Impl-1-5) in place of names, and data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

III. Results

Consistent with thematic analysis procedure, each theme below is presented through (a) the main finding, (b) supporting evidence drawn directly from informant narratives, coded to preserve an auditable link between claim and source.

3.1 Accessibility of Registration and Information

All five beneficiary informants reported first learning about PAITUA through local government intermediaries rather than personal initiative or mass media. Ben-1 recalled that *"the sub-district head and village head held a socialization session and told us about the cash assistance from the Raja Ampat Regency government,"* while Ben-3 similarly noted that *"the hamlet head and also my neighbours told me that there was a cash assistance program."* Registration itself was experienced as administratively uncomplicated: Ben-2 described an officer who *"came with a list of names; my name was on it, and the list was from the District Social Affairs Office."* Physical access to the payment point, however, varied considerably. Ben-4, residing in Sapondanco, reported that *"to get to that location is quite far for me, and the motorcycle-taxi fare is expensive,"* whereas Ben-5, who lives near the sub-district office in Waisai Kota, described the journey as *"not too difficult, but my child accompanied me."* Implementors confirmed the structural roots of this variation at a systemic level. Impl-1 explained that in remote communities, *"distribution faces accessibility constraints, sea transportation and weather, high logistics costs, long travel times, and limited availability of safe, enclosed meeting infrastructure,"* while Impl-2 noted that the province's sole designated distributing bank *"is only in the regency capital; it is not yet present in villages or sub-districts."*

3.2 Targeting and Beneficiary Selection

Implementors described a layered, cross-institutional verification process intended to ensure that only Indigenous Papuans aged 65 and above receive assistance, while beneficiaries themselves experienced eligibility determination as something conducted on their behalf by village authorities rather than something they actively navigated. Impl-5 explained that beneficiary data originates from the Population and Civil Registration Office

(Dukcapil): *“our initial data is taken from Dukcapil data, (and) the provincial and district/city Joint Secretariats carry out validation and go directly down to the villages.”* Impl-1 similarly described *“stages of administrative checking and field validation”* beyond the initial list, referencing an integrated *“One PAITUA Data”* mechanism intended to reduce duplication. Ben-3 described a largely passive experience of this process: *“the hamlet head recorded my name, and I heard that the age had to be 65 years or above.”* Notably, Impl-5 also reported community-level pushback against the age criterion itself: *“in the community, they actually welcome (this program), but they ask that we not use the age of 65, because very few reach that age, while many are below it; there is a request that, if possible, the threshold be lowered, or that we use the national regulation, which is 60 years and above.”*

3.3 Disbursement Delays

Both beneficiaries and implementors acknowledged that disbursement delays occur, with implementors linking these delays primarily to the geographically centralized logistics of the single distributing bank and to the administrative timing of the budget cycle. Ben-1 stated directly that *“we have received (the assistance) late from BRI because of the process at the bank and from the government.”* Impl-2 connected timeliness issues to Raja Ampat's status as an archipelagic regency: *“one of the constraints is that we are an archipelagic region... BRI is not yet present in villages or sub-districts. Another constraint is the high cost of fuel from villages or sub-districts to the regency capital.”* Impl-5 pointed to a second, administrative source of delay: *“at that time we did not yet have an interoperability system... so the regional budget (APBD) was set first, and only then did the Special Autonomy Fund Action Plan adjust and get set afterward; so if the region is ready, the plan can be set quickly, but if not, it becomes delayed.”* Impl-3 added a further, procedural layer of friction, recounting a personal family experience: *“the service experienced some difficulty... when we had already gone to the bank, it should have been processed directly, but instead we were told to go back to the Social Affairs Office; we asked for consideration because (the beneficiary) was already elderly.”*

3.4 Service Quality and Frontline Interaction

Beneficiaries consistently described distribution officers, both bank staff and sub-district/village personnel as polite, patient, and helpful, particularly in assisting elderly beneficiaries unfamiliar with ATM and banking procedures. All five beneficiary informants offered spontaneously positive assessments of frontline staff. Ben-3 stated that *“the BRI bank and sub-district officers were very helpful in the process of collecting the savings book and ATM card; their attitude was very good,”* and Ben-4 similarly reported that *“the sub-district and BRI bank officers were very good; they patiently explained how to withdraw money from the ATM.”* Because most beneficiaries could not operate an ATM independently, family assistance emerged as a recurring necessity rather than a complaint: Ben-1 explained that *“I am already elderly, I cannot withdraw money by myself at the ATM, I have to be accompanied by my child,”* a pattern echoed by Ben-2, Ben-4, and Ben-5. On the implementor side, Impl-2 described a supervised, photographically documented handover procedure: *“as soon as they receive the savings book, we take a photograph... we supervise this together with the sub-district Joint Secretariat team.”*

3.5 Benefit Adequacy and Changes in Wellbeing

Beneficiaries reported using PAITUA funds primarily for subsistence needs, and both beneficiaries and implementors linked receipt of the benefit to feelings of dignity, government recognition, and reduced economic anxiety, alongside candid acknowledgement that the amount is not always sufficient. Reported uses centred on food and health: Ben-1 used the funds *“to pay for medical treatment and to buy rice for daily meals,”* Ben-2 used them *“to pay for my grandchild's school fees and to buy rice,”* and Ben-3 used them *“to buy rice and also milk for myself.”* Several beneficiaries explicitly paired acknowledgment of insufficiency with expressions of gratitude: Ben-1 stated, *“enough or not enough, but because this is assistance, we are happy because it helps our economy,”* while Ben-3 stated more directly, *“actually it is not enough, but I am happy to receive this assistance.”* Regarding dignity, Ben-3 reflected, *“thank you to the government, it feels good even though I am already old, I am happy to receive this assistance,”* and Ben-5 described feeling *“very happy to receive assistance from the*

government.” Implementors framed these individual experiences within a broader social-development narrative: Impl-1 stated that PAITUA “*not only reduces financial pressure but also gives a sense of security, because recipients know there is support specifically directed at them... (this assistance) has both a protective and a redistributive function,*” while Impl-2 offered concrete examples of fund use beyond subsistence, including grandchildren's school allowances, medical costs, and small income-generating activity “*they open small stalls selling betel nut.*”

3.6 Institutional and Implementation Challenges

Implementors identified four recurring structural challenges: (1) archipelagic geography combined with single-bank distribution infrastructure; (2) Special Autonomy (OTSUS) funding rules and budget-cycle timing; (3) cross-level data synchronization and inter-agency coordination; and (4) political-transition risk to programme continuity, the last of which was substantially mitigated through continuation of the programme at the regency level. Regarding geography and banking infrastructure, Impl-2 characterized Raja Ampat's status as an “archipelagic region” combined with a single BRI presence in the regency capital as “one of the constraints,” a point independently reinforced by Impl-3, who described Raja Ampat's sub-districts as “located on islands with access and geography that are difficult to reach and costly.” Regarding funding constraints, Impl-1 explained that “PAITUA is funded through Special Autonomy funds, which are mandated and prohibited from being used for official travel costs.” Regarding coordination, Impl-1 identified “differing understandings of procedure, delayed inter-agency communication, data desynchronization... and differing institutional capacity across regions,” while both Impl-1 and Impl-2 credited external technical support from Tim SKALA, an Australian-supported governance programme, with strengthening data systems, reporting formats, and cross-level coordination. Impl-2 stated that SKALA support was “very, very helpful... through data governance and program design,” and Impl-5 described the programme as having received “full support... from the leadership level in the province down to the district/city level.” Regarding continuity risk, Impl-3 noted that following a change in provincial leadership, “many people asked, when whether it would be continued or not,” but confirmed that the Regent subsequently continued the programme at the regency level under a new name, ORISUN (*Orang Raja Ampat Usia Senja*). Complaint handling was described as informal and tiered: Impl-1 characterized it as a “complaint logbook” process channelled first through village/sub-district authorities and escalated to the Joint Secretariat when necessary, while Impl-2 described complaints in practice being resolved through direct communication with distant beneficiaries' family members rather than through a standardized formal channel.

IV. Discussion

4.1 Accessibility: Effective Communication Does Not Guarantee Equal Access

The finding that programme information and registration were experienced as accessible, while physical access to the payment point varied substantially by distance and transport cost, is best explained through the *resources and characteristics of implementing agencies* variables in Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975) model, which treats physical and geographic infrastructure as a determinant of implementation success independent of how well policy communication itself is designed. The qualitative evidence supports this reading precisely: policy communication, socialization through sub-district and village heads appears to have functioned effectively, consistent with the *communication* pillar of Edward III's (1980) framework, yet this effectiveness did not translate into equal physical access, because the distribution model depends on a single, centrally located banking service point. This is analytically significant: it suggests that the four pillars of Edward III's model are best understood as *independently necessary* conditions for implementation success rather than *substitutable* ones, strong communication cannot compensate for absent infrastructure, a nuance not always made explicit in applications of Edward III's framework to Indonesian implementation studies. The contrast between Ben-4's account of an expensive, difficult journey and Ben-5's relatively easy one, two beneficiaries with formally identical entitlements, illustrates directly how the Capability Approach's (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011) distinction between formal entitlement and substantive capability plays out at the level of individual beneficiaries within a single programme.

This finding is consistent with Bleskadite et al.'s (2024) provincial-level observation of banking-infrastructure limitations in remote areas, and extends it by specifying the precise mechanism at the regency level: not a communication failure, but a structural consequence of archipelagic geography interacting with single-bank distribution design.

4.2 Targeting: Procedural Fairness and Coverage Accuracy as Distinct Concerns

The layered verification architecture described by implementors cross-checking Dukcapil population data against village-level validation, represents a genuine safeguard against misallocation and reflects Edward III's (1980) *bureaucratic structure* pillar. Yet this study's qualitative data can neither confirm nor disconfirm whether eligible elderly individuals are, in practice, excluded from the beneficiary list, since none of the five beneficiary informants raised this issue spontaneously and the interview protocol did not probe it explicitly, a scope limitation of the instrument rather than evidence that exclusion does not occur, and one that future qualitative inquiry should directly address. What the data do reveal, and what has not previously been documented in provincial-level evaluation, is a second and conceptually distinct targeting concern: community-level resistance to the programme's legally mandated 65-year age threshold, reported by a provincial implementor as a collective request to lower the threshold to 60. Read through Dunn's (1994) *responsiveness* criterion, this finding indicates a gap between programme design, anchored in Special Autonomy regulatory definitions of elderly status and the normative expectations of the community regarding who should be considered elderly, given local life expectancy and health conditions. It is important to note that this finding derives from one implementor's (Impl-5) perception of community sentiment rather than being voiced directly by the beneficiary informants in this study, a difference in evidentiary source that should not be elided when this finding is used to justify policy recommendations. Read through the SMILE Model (Sinuarit et al., 2023), this tension also offers an early indication of a limitation in the model's *Legalistic* dimension: the formal legality of a programme criterion does not automatically confer social legitimacy among its intended recipients.

4.3 Timeliness: A Structural, Not a Dispositional, Problem

Disbursement delays confirmed by both beneficiaries and implementors are best explained not as a failure of implementor disposition but as the interaction of two structural factors: limited banking infrastructure in an archipelagic region, and the desynchronization between district (APBD) and provincial Special Autonomy (RAP OTSUS) budget cycles. The latter factor relates specifically to the *inter-organizational communication* variable in Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975) model, which emphasizes that multi-level policy implementation is especially vulnerable to coordination failure when information systems across levels of government are not integrated a mechanism Impl-5 confirmed directly. Impl-3's account adds a further, previously undocumented layer: delay also originates from micro-level procedural rigidity at the service point itself an elderly beneficiary being redirected back and forth between the bank and the Social Affairs Office a dimension not captured by macro-level budget-cycle explanations alone. Read through Dunn's (1994) framework, PAITUA's principal timeliness challenge in Raja Ampat is better characterized as an *efficiency* problem (the ratio of administrative process to disbursement output) than an *effectiveness* failure, a pattern consistent with Bleskadite et al.'s (2024) provincial-level finding regarding bank-based distribution efficiency.

4.4 Service Quality: Strong Interpersonal Disposition, Unresolved Structural Dependency

The strongly and consistently positive characterization of frontline officers across all five beneficiary informants is best explained through the *disposition of implementors* variable common to both Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) and Edward III (1980). At the same time, this finding sits in productive tension with the WHO's (2002) Active Aging Theory, which frames the elderly as active agents rather than passive recipients: the near-universal reliance of beneficiaries on family members to operate ATMs indicates that high-quality interpersonal service functions as a *compensation* for elderly beneficiaries' limited digital/banking literacy rather than a resolution of the underlying dependency. Notably, the implementor data show that this compensation is institutionally structured rather than incidental, the photographically documented, supervised handover procedure

described by Impl-2 indicates that elderly dependency on family assistance has been anticipated through an alternative oversight mechanism rather than left as an unrecognized accountability gap. This is best described as a strategy of *supervised compensation* rather than *capacity-building* toward independence, a distinction with different policy implications: the former protects short-term accountability, while the latter would be required if the programme's goals also include promoting elderly beneficiaries' agency, consistent with Active Aging Theory's normative aspirations and with Bleskadite et al.'s (2024) parallel observation regarding elderly financial literacy challenges at the provincial level.

4.5 Benefit Adequacy and Capability Expansion

Beneficiaries' reported use of PAITUA funds for food, healthcare, and grandchildren's education maps directly onto the Capability Approach's (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011) conception of basic capability expansion the ability to meet nutritional needs, access healthcare, and contribute to extended family wellbeing. The recurring expressions of gratitude and dignity in beneficiary narratives further suggest that PAITUA functions not merely as an economic transfer but as a form of social recognition that strengthens non-material capabilities, consistent with Nussbaum's (2011) emphasis on dignity as a core functional capability. A linguistically consistent pattern across several informants, pairing acknowledgment of nominal insufficiency ("not enough, but...") with strong expressed satisfaction suggests that beneficiaries actively hold *material adequacy* and *dignity/gratitude* as partially separable evaluative dimensions, a nuance more accessible to open-ended interviewing than to closed-response instruments. This pattern echoes Bleskadite et al.'s (2024) provincial finding that PAITUA's transfer value is perceived as adequate for basic food needs but insufficient for more complex needs such as healthcare. A methodological caution is warranted here: because informants were drawn exclusively from the population of active beneficiaries, this pattern of "grateful despite insufficiency" may partly reflect social reciprocity norms or an unstated concern that critical evaluation could affect continued receipt of assistance, rather than being solely an unmediated expression of capability expansion; this should be read as a plausible interpretation rather than a fully settled one. From an Empowerment Theory perspective (Gutierrez, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000), the evidence most strongly supports *individual-level* empowerment, reduced financial dependence on family and the emergence of small income-generating activity while data on *organizational or community-level* empowerment, such as the formation of collective elderly beneficiary groups, were not found, and this limitation should not be overstated as evidence of empowerment's absence so much as an unexplored dimension of this dataset.

4.6 Institutional Challenges and Programmatic Resilience

The four institutional challenges identified by implementors archipelagic banking infrastructure, Special Autonomy funding rules, cross-level coordination, and political-transition risk, collectively depict an implementation environment shaped more by structural and institutional constraints than by beneficiary-level resistance or misunderstanding. The consistency of these accounts across five independently interviewed implementors spanning district social affairs, planning, sub-district administration, the distributing bank, and the provincial coordinating secretariat strengthens the credibility of this theme through source triangulation. The continuation of the programme as ORISUN following a change in provincial leadership is a particularly consequential finding, extending Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975) and Edward III's (1980) attention to *disposition* to the level of local political will as a factor that can outlast uncertainty at higher levels of government, a contribution not available to Bleskadite et al. (2024), whose evaluation preceded this leadership transition. This should, however, be read cautiously: continuity following one leadership transition does not establish that local political commitment will persist through future transitions, and this finding argues for, rather than against, the formal legal institutionalization of elderly social protection in Raja Ampat, so that programme continuity does not depend indefinitely on the discretion of any single incumbent administration.

4.7 Theoretical Contributions

Taken together, the findings extend Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975) model by showing that, in an archipelagic Papuan setting, "resources" must be understood to include physical-geographic infrastructure, sea

transport and inter-island distance, as a determinant equal in importance to the budgetary and human resources emphasized in the model's original formulation, and by showing that its variables function as independently necessary rather than mutually substitutable conditions for implementation success. The findings offer partial confirmation of Edward III's (1980) framework: the *disposition* and *communication* pillars are strongly supported, while the *bureaucratic structure* pillar receives more mixed support, given the unresolved question of exclusion accuracy. Consistent with the provincial-level pattern identified by Bleskadite et al. (2024), this study confirms strong performance on Dunn's (1994) effectiveness and efficiency-adjacent criteria alongside weaker performance on adequacy, while contributing a novel insight regarding responsiveness, the age-threshold tension, not previously documented at the provincial level. The study confirms the Capability Approach's basic premise while contributing the more specific insight that material adequacy and dignity may operate as separable evaluative dimensions for elderly beneficiaries of cash transfers. It identifies a genuine limitation in the applicability of Active Aging Theory at the level of fund-withdrawal mechanisms, even as it finds strong support for the theory at the level of interpersonal service quality. It offers partial confirmation of Empowerment Theory, bounded to the individual level. Finally, it extends the SMILE Model's (Sinuarit et al., 2023) contextual validity from a child- and family-targeted programme in a different Papuan district to an elderly-targeted programme in an archipelagic regency, while refining its *Legalistic* dimension to distinguish formal legality from social legitimacy.

The most integrative insight to emerge from this qualitative assessment is that structural implementation shortfalls, in timeliness, physical accessibility, and coverage accuracy, did not straightforwardly translate into diminished normative outcomes such as beneficiaries' sense of capability, dignity, or satisfaction, so long as the relational quality of implementation (implementor disposition, interpersonal service quality) remained strong. This suggests that process-based implementation theory and outcome-based normative theory should not be treated as two measures of success that necessarily move in the same direction, but as two distinct evaluative layers that can diverge within the same programme, an insight with direct relevance for how social protection programmes in geographically and socio-culturally challenging settings such as Papua ought to be evaluated.

4.8 Practical and Policy Implications

The findings point toward several concrete, evidence-grounded lines of action. Physical accessibility constraints suggest a need to diversify distribution points beyond the single bank branch in the regency capital, for example through expanded *agen BRILink*-style banking-agent partnerships in more distant sub-districts and villages. The dual targeting concern suggests two distinct lines of response: additional field-verification mechanisms specifically designed to detect potential exclusion errors, and formal further consultation, rather than immediate policy change regarding the community-level age-threshold request, given that this finding currently rests on a single implementor's account of community sentiment. Timeliness challenges call for two parallel interventions operating at different scales: harmonization of district and provincial budget-cycle planning at the structural level, and simplification of service-point referral procedures at the operational level. Given elderly beneficiaries' consistent dependence on family assistance for ATM transactions, targeted digital/banking literacy training or alternative withdrawal mechanisms not fully reliant on independent ATM operation merit consideration. Finally, given demonstrated but leadership-contingent continuity, formal legal instruments a regional regulation explicitly institutionalizing elderly social protection in Raja Ampat would reduce dependence on the discretion of any single administration, whether at the district or provincial level.

4.9 Limitations

Several limitations bound the interpretation of these findings. First, the qualitative sample, while meeting the minimum threshold set for the study and reaching thematic saturation within the categories interviewed, remains a small, purposively selected group not intended for statistical generalization. Second, all five beneficiary informants resided in areas relatively close to Waisai Kota, the regency capital; the experiences of elderly beneficiaries in Raja Ampat's more remote sub-districts, who are likely to face more acute geographic and infrastructural barriers than those captured here, are not represented in this dataset, and findings should

accordingly be read as a conservative, rather than an upper-bound, estimate of implementation challenges across the regency as a whole. Third, the interview protocol for beneficiaries did not explicitly probe awareness of potential exclusion of other eligible elderly persons, leaving this specific targeting question unaddressed by the qualitative data collected. Fourth, because both beneficiary and implementor informants were drawn from populations already invested in the programme's continuation (as active recipients or as its administrators), findings regarding gratitude, adequacy, and disposition should be read with appropriate caution regarding possible courtesy or social-desirability bias, which the study's single-source qualitative design cannot fully rule out. Fifth, the study captures a single point in time and cannot speak to whether the described institutional resilience (continuation as ORISUN) will persist through subsequent leadership transitions.

V. Conclusion

This qualitative assessment of the PAITUA cash-transfer programme in Raja Ampat Regency shows an implementation pattern that is systematically differentiated rather than uniformly successful or unsuccessful: strong on the relational and human dimensions of service delivery, communication, frontline disposition, and beneficiary-reported dignity and satisfaction but constrained by structural-geographic and administrative factors, single-point banking infrastructure in an archipelagic setting, misaligned budget cycles across levels of government, elderly beneficiaries' dependence on family members for digital transactions, and an unresolved tension between the programme's legal age threshold and community expectations. The programme's continuation at the regency level under a new name following a provincial leadership transition demonstrates meaningful institutional resilience, though one not yet tested across multiple transitions. These findings extend implementation theory by showing that its constituent variables function as independently necessary rather than mutually compensating conditions, and contribute a qualitatively grounded, context-specific understanding of how social protection for Indigenous elderly populations is experienced in one of Indonesia's most geographically and institutionally distinctive regions. Future research should extend data collection across Raja Ampat's more remote sub-districts, develop interview protocols that explicitly probe beneficiary awareness of potential exclusion errors, and pursue longitudinal qualitative inquiry into the programme's continuity through future leadership transitions.

References

- [1.] Ahdiyana, M., & Sukmawati, A. D. (2022). Policy communication in the implementation of the Keluarga Sasaran Jaminan Perlindungan Sosial program in the City of Yogyakarta. *Informasi*, 52(1), 141–168.
- [2.] Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Doubleday.
- [3.] Bleskadite, N. A., Pramono, S., & Pramudiana, I. D. (2024). Evaluation of the Elderly Protection Program (PAITUA) for improving elderly welfare in Southwest Papua Province. *NAAFI: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa*, 1(4), 26–34.
- [4.] Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.
- [5.] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- [6.] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597.
- [7.] Devereux, S., Masset, E., Sabates-Wheeler, R., Samson, M., Rivas, A., & te Lintelo, D. (2017). The targeting effectiveness of social transfers. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 9(2), 162–211.
- [8.] Dunn, W. N. (1994). *Public policy analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- [9.] Edward, G. C., III. (1980). *Implementing public policy*. Congressional Quarterly Press.
- [10.] Fisher, E., Attah, R., Barca, V., O'Brien, C., Brook, S., Holland, J., Kardan, A., Pavanello, S., & Pozarny, P. (2017). The livelihood impacts of cash transfers in Sub-Saharan Africa: Beneficiary perspectives from six countries. *World Development*, 99, 299–319.

- [11.] Gutierrez, L. M. (1995). Understanding the empowerment process: Does consciousness make a difference? *Social Work Research*, 19(4), 229–237.
- [12.] Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
- [13.] Hamdi, M. (2018). *Ilmu pemerintahan: Kajian dari berbagai dimensi dan perspektif*. Ghalia Indonesia.
- [14.] Hill, M., & Hupe, P. (2021). *Implementing public policy: An introduction to the study of operational governance* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [15.] Howlett, M., Ramesh, M., & Perl, A. (2020). *Studying public policy: Principles and processes* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- [16.] Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [17.] Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- [18.] Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- [19.] Mahal, A., & McPake, B. (2017). Health systems for aging societies in Asia and the Pacific. *Health Systems & Reform*, 3(3), 149–153.
- [20.] Meyers, M. K., & Vorsanger, S. (2003). Street-level bureaucrats and the implementation of public policy. In B. G. Peters & J. Pierre (Eds.), *Handbook of public administration* (pp. 245–256). SAGE Publications.
- [21.] Midgley, J. (2014). *Social development: Theory and practice*. SAGE Publications.
- [22.] Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press.
- [23.] Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [24.] Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 189–213). SAGE Publications.
- [25.] Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- [26.] Shaik, M. R., Goh, S. K., Wong, K. N., & Law, C. H. (2024). Does population aging coexist with income inequality in the long run? Evidence from selected Asia-Pacific countries. *Economic Systems*, 48(1), 101149.
- [27.] Sinuarit, H. F., Hamdi, M., Syafri, W., & Achmad, M. (2023). Implementasi kebijakan BANGGA Papua (Bangun Generasi dan Keluarga Papua Sejahtera) di Kabupaten Asmat Provinsi Papua. *IBLAM Law Review*, 3(1), 10–28.
- [28.] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (2022). *Asia and the Pacific SDG progress report 2022*. UNESCAP.
- [29.] Van Meter, D. S., & Van Horn, C. E. (1975). The policy implementation process: A conceptual framework. *Administration & Society*, 6(4), 445–488.
- [30.] World Health Organization. (2002). *Active ageing: A policy framework*. World Health Organization.
- [31.] Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment theory. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 43–63). Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.