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PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: TRACING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF VILLAGE FUNDS IN EASTERN INDONESIA

Juita Ratna Sari Manurung[1*], Jusuf Madubun[1], Muhtar[1]
[1]Universitas Pattimura, Jalan Ir. M. Putuhena, Ambon 97233, Indonesia

[*]Correspondence E-Mail: juitamanurung@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of Village Fund Allocation (ADD) policies in addressing social disparities in Tawiri Village, Teluk Ambon District, as part of participatory development and economic empowerment efforts in Eastern Indonesia. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. The study focuses on four key aspects: (1) improving human capital, (2) ensuring equal access for all community members, (3) optimizing the management and utilization of local resources, and (4) promoting equitable development and job creation. The findings reveal that ADD policy in Tawiri has had a positive impact on human resource development and community access to development programs. Village funds are managed effectively, contributing to more equitable infrastructure distribution and the creation of new employment opportunities. The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of the socio-economic impacts of ADD within a local context in Eastern Indonesia—an area often underrepresented in national academic discourse. The study recommends strengthening village institutional capacity and community participation as sustainable strategies for promoting social justice and advancing locally grounded social science knowledge.

Keywords: *Economic Empowerment, Human Capital, Participatory Development, Social Disparity, Village Fund Allocation*

INTRODUCTION

Social and economic inequality remains a fundamental challenge in the development process in Indonesia, particularly in the eastern regions which have historically experienced marginalization in the distribution of resources and access to public services (Nugraha et al., 2020; Tadjoeddin, 2020). One manifestation of this inequality can be observed in Negeri Tawiri, Teluk Ambon District, where community access to development is not always equitable. People in this area still face limitations in education, basic infrastructure, and economic opportunities. This issue is important to discuss because non-inclusive development has the potential to widen the gap in social and economic disparities, which in turn can hinder national integration and social stability (Haseeb et al., 2020).

The Government of Indonesia, through the Village Fund Allocation (Alokasi Dana Desa or ADD) program, seeks to address this inequality using a fiscal decentralization and community-based development approach. This fund is aimed at supporting participatory development and directly empowering village communities. However, the effectiveness of this program in addressing social disparity has not been extensively studied, especially within the specific context of eastern Indonesia, and particularly from the perspective of implementation quality and the resulting socio-economic impacts.

Previous studies have yielded various findings regarding the implementation of the village fund. Faoziyah & Salim (2020) and Indraningsih et al. (2021) emphasized that ADD has shifted the development paradigm from top-down to bottom-up, although village governance capacity remains a challenge. Meanwhile, research by Handayani & Badrudin (2019), Hendrianto (2019), and Hermawan (2019) highlighted the importance of community participation in ensuring the effectiveness of the ADD program. Another study by Ernawati et al. (2021) revealed that ADD contributes to poverty reduction, although the impact heavily depends on local leadership and monitoring systems.

In a more specific geographic context, studies by Purnamawati et al. (2023), Trianto et al. (2020), and Yudha (2020) on development in eastern Indonesia argue that social structure, local culture, and logistical access influence the effectiveness of development programs, including the village fund. Several studies, such as those conducted by Bait et al. (2019) in East Nusa Tenggara and Bahasoan (2023) in Maluku, also note obstacles in citizen participation and suboptimal fund management.

Furthermore, research by Agusta (2023) and Wahyudi et al. (2020) indicates a gap in the utilization of ADD for human resource development (HRD), which often focuses solely on physical projects. This aligns with findings from Arbain & Ariyani (2019) and Hermawan (2019), which show that village development planning still lacks integration of the community's long-term needs. Research by Daforsa & Handra (2019) and Untayana et al. (2023) even emphasizes that in some areas, village funds tend to be managed administratively rather than as a tool for empowerment.

Although this body of literature provides a comprehensive overview of the ADD policy and its effects, there is still a significant gap in understanding how ADD practically functions in preventing social disparity at the local level, particularly in eastern Indonesian villages that have social-cultural and geographic contexts different from the western regions. Micro-level studies that explore the impact of ADD on access to basic services, human resource improvement, and development equity in specific local contexts such as Negeri Tawiri are still very limited.

This is where the uniqueness of this study lies. By taking Negeri Tawiri as a case study, this research aims to present another side of ADD implementation—namely how it is translated into real action at the local level and how communities respond to and participate in its management. This approach does not only depict technical effectiveness but also touches on social relations and community dynamics, which are rarely the main focus in similar studies. Implicitly, this study

aims to assert that the utilization of ADD is not merely about budget allocation, but also about social transformation based on participation and empowerment.

The main objective of this research is to analyze how the ADD policy plays a role in preventing social disparity in Negeri Tawiri through improving the quality of human resources, providing equitable access, optimizing the management of local resources, as well as equalizing development and creating employment opportunities. This research not only strengthens the theoretical foundation of participatory development studies, but also offers contextual understanding that can enrich the development of social sciences and humanities, especially those rooted in the local realities of Eastern Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach as developed by Simoni et al. (2019), with the aim of deeply exploring how the implementation of the Village Fund Allocation (ADD) contributes to preventing social disparity in Negeri Tawiri, Teluk Ambon District, Maluku Province. The qualitative approach was chosen not merely for its flexible and open nature, but because it allows researchers to understand the subjective meanings behind policy practices implemented by local actors. In the context of development policy that is nuanced and dynamic, this approach is deemed most appropriate to capture the relationship between structure, agency, and the community's social space.

Negeri Tawiri was selected as the research location based on several rational and empirical considerations. Geographically and socially, this area represents the characteristics of villages in Eastern Indonesia that face dual challenges: limited infrastructure and social inequality. Additionally, Negeri Tawiri is an active village in the use of ADD and has relatively high community participation dynamics, making it a relevant and strategic location to illustrate the interaction between village policy and social change. This location also exhibits interesting social phenomena, such as a spirit of collectivism in development, while simultaneously facing disparities in access to resources and public services.

Informants in this research were selected purposively, based on the consideration of who best understands and directly experiences the planning, implementation, and impacts of ADD in Negeri Tawiri. A total of 12 key informants were interviewed, consisting of village heads and officials (4 people), community and religious leaders (3 people), and beneficiaries and village development actors (5 people). Informant selection was based on the principle of representation in roles and experiences so that the data obtained would not only reflect the perspectives of authoritative parties but also those of ordinary citizens who experience the policy impacts directly. Through this approach, a comprehensive and unbiased understanding of the field realities is expected.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document study. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured

manner to allow the researcher to maintain a question framework while remaining open to the dynamics of conversation. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, was recorded with the informants' consent, and then transcribed verbatim for further analysis. Observations were conducted by directly participating in village activities related to the implementation of ADD, such as village deliberations, physical development projects, and economic activities of the residents. This was important to capture the social context that is not always conveyed in interviews. Documentation was used to complement field data, including village budget realization reports, village government work plans, minutes of meetings, and archives of activities related to ADD.

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, whereby the researcher identified patterns, main themes, and overarching narratives emerging from the data (Lochmiller, 2021). This process was carried out in stages, starting from repeated reading of the data, creating initial codes, to formulating main themes that can address the research questions. This analysis enabled the researcher not only to describe what is happening but also to interpret deeper meanings behind social practices related to the village fund policy. To maintain data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques (Santos et al., 2020). Source triangulation was done by comparing information from informants with different backgrounds and social positions, while method triangulation was conducted by cross-checking interview results with findings from observations and documents. In this way, the researcher could build strong internal validity and minimize interpretive bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Improving the Quality of Human Resources

The national development policy based on Law Number 2 of 1999 concerning Regional Autonomy has brought significant changes in the strategy for developing Human Resources (HR), which is key to the competitiveness of each region in Indonesia. An interview with the Village Secretary, Mr. BU, revealed that although human resources in Tawiri Village are generally evenly distributed, disparities still exist in certain sectors (Alisaha et al., 2022; Kasidi & Yustika, 2022). For instance, in the fisheries sector, most of the community still relies on traditional fishing methods, with little innovation or progress toward modernization. This indicates that HR development in certain sectors is not yet evenly distributed (Hanif Muzaqi et al., 2022).

An interview with the Chairman of the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes), Mr. WM, offered a similar perspective. He noted that inequality in HR development in Tawiri Village is linked to the community's limited understanding of how to improve the quality of their human resources. As a result, non-native residents or newcomers to Tawiri often lead HR development initiatives. From these interviews, it can be concluded that although efforts have been made to improve the quality of human resources in Tawiri Village, disparities remain a challenge that must be addressed. The Tawiri Village government faces obstacles in HR development due to limited

financial resources. Additionally, it is difficult to encourage active participation from the local community in improving HR quality. In some cases, these initiatives appear to be dominated by people from outside Tawiri Village. Further efforts and appropriate support from various stakeholders may be needed to ensure HR development in Tawiri is truly equitable and beneficial to the entire community.

To address this disparity, the Tawiri Village government should consider several strategic steps. First, greater efforts must be made to raise community awareness and understanding of the importance of HR development. Relevant educational campaigns and training programs can help equip local residents with the knowledge and skills they need to play an active role in the process (Hutapia & Almanuar, 2020; Seran et al., 2023).

Additionally, better budget allocation should be considered to support HR development programs across various sectors, including fisheries. The government can seek additional resources, including assistance from the central government or donor agencies, to fund projects that will enhance HR quality in an equitable manner. More efficient and effective use of village funds could also be key in overcoming budgetary constraints.

Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize active community participation in HR development processes. The Tawiri Village government can involve residents in the planning and implementation of development programs, so that they feel a sense of responsibility for improving their own HR quality. Finally, collaboration with external parties—including the central government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector—can support equitable HR development efforts in Tawiri. Such partnerships can bring additional resources, knowledge, and valuable experience to help achieve these goals.

Providing Equal Access to All Community Members

Access is a crucial factor in ensuring that the public has the ability to seek out and benefit from government services. It serves as the gateway through which people can enjoy the facilities and programs provided by the government to enhance their welfare (Fadhli & Fahimah, 2021; Kusmunawati & Syafruddin, 2023). In the context of Tawiri Village, ensuring equal access for all members of the community is a top priority. An interview with the Village Secretary, Mr. BU, showed that the Tawiri Village government has taken steps to provide access to the community, such as offering training facilities and fishing equipment assistance through relevant agencies. The government also provides administrative support by helping fishermen's groups prepare proposals to obtain such aid.

Additionally, government efforts in the field of education include ensuring equitable access. Mr. WM, the Chairman of BUMDes, emphasized the importance of educational access, noting that the Tawiri Village government has provided it through institutions like SMP LKMD and TK Mulawarman Tawiri. This reflects the government's commitment to providing equal educational access to all community members, regardless of background or social status (Noviyanti et al., 2022).

However, the interviews also revealed that despite these efforts, challenges remain in achieving fully equitable access in Tawiri Village. This may be due to various factors, including limited resources and a lack of public understanding. Therefore, the Tawiri Village government must continue working to improve existing access and raise community awareness of the benefits of equal access for all. In doing so, Tawiri can ensure that all residents can access and benefit from the available facilities and programs, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable community.

The Tawiri Village government must remain committed to addressing the ongoing challenges in achieving equal access for all its residents. Access encompasses various aspects of life, from education to healthcare, training, and support for key economic sectors. First and foremost, investments in infrastructure development must be enhanced to support equitable access. This includes building road networks that are easily accessible to all communities, thus facilitating mobility and access to various services. Additionally, educational and healthcare infrastructure should be improved to ensure that all community members can easily access quality education and adequate healthcare services.

Next, educational programs and information campaigns need to be strengthened to raise public awareness of the importance of equal access for all citizens. The community must understand that equitable access not only positively affects their own quality of life but also the overall development of Tawiri Village. Through effective education and communication, this awareness can be increased. The government must also ensure that the community is empowered to actively participate in decision-making processes related to access development. Residents should feel responsible for planning and implementing programs that affect their access. This could involve participatory approaches in developing local projects and involving citizens in relevant decision-making processes.

Collaboration with external parties such as non-governmental organizations and the central government can also help strengthen efforts to achieve equitable access. Additional support in the form of financial, technical, or knowledge-based resources can accelerate progress and provide solutions to potential challenges. Lastly, it is important to have strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure progress in achieving equitable access. Data collected from monitoring efforts can help the government identify areas in need of improvement and take appropriate action (Andrianto, 2019; Rafsanjani, 2023).

By taking these steps, Tawiri Village will be able to ensure that all its residents have equal opportunities to access and benefit from the various facilities and services provided by the government. This will not only promote greater social justice but also boost the potential for development and sustainable growth in the area. By addressing disparities in access, Tawiri will be better prepared to compete positively with other regions in Indonesia and provide greater well-being for all its people.

The Tawiri Village government has made various efforts to ensure that all community members can have equal access to the available facilities. These efforts include ensuring the availability of necessary facilities and making them affordable for all social groups. This includes

building supportive infrastructure, such as roads that ease access to essential services like education, healthcare, and training. Moreover, the government ensures that training programs and available aid can be accessed by all residents, regardless of their social status or background.

Furthermore, Tawiri Village's efforts to ensure equal access have broader and more positive impacts. When all residents have equal opportunities to access government-provided facilities and services, it can lead to a range of benefits, including improved quality of life, enhanced well-being, and better economic growth in the region. It is important to recognize that social inequality can hinder economic growth and sustainable development. When parts of the population lack equal access to education, training, employment, or healthcare services, their potential to contribute to community and economic development is limited (Suhartono & Mustofa, 2019). However, by ensuring equal access, every individual has a fair chance to develop their potential, contribute to society, and create positive change. Moreover, the Tawiri Village government's efforts to create access equality reflect the principles of democracy, human rights, and social justice—cornerstones of building an inclusive and civilized society.

Optimizing the Management and Utilization of Human Resources

Efforts to create high performance within an organization or work environment require several key factors, one of which is improving work quality that aligns with the potential of available human resources in each field of work. In this context, it is crucial for an organization or company to maximize the utilization of individual potential. This includes identifying and developing the skills, talents, and knowledge possessed by each worker.

By enhancing the competence and expertise of existing human resources, organizations can achieve their goals more efficiently and effectively. This improvement also positively impacts individual motivation, as individuals feel valued and have opportunities to grow in their careers. Increased motivation, in turn, creates a more positive work environment, where every team member is driven to contribute maximally according to their area of work and responsibilities.

A concrete example of this is when community members or workers are given opportunities to work in roles that match their skills and abilities. For instance, if someone has expertise in information technology, assigning them to work that utilizes that skill set will yield better results than placing them in an unrelated role. This not only supports individual growth but also enhances the overall performance of the organization or project.

An interview with the Village Secretary, Mr. BU, revealed the wise approach practiced by the community of Negeri Tawiri in utilizing their available human resources. According to him, this approach focuses on leveraging the individual skills possessed by community members. In practice, this means that each person in Negeri Tawiri tends to apply their respective skills and expertise in every task or job they undertake.

For example, in the fisheries sector, fishermen in Negeri Tawiri tend to use their mastered skills when catching fish. They might use nets or other tools appropriate to their expertise. This approach reflects a deep understanding of the importance of maximizing each individual's

potential within the community. In this context, it can be said that the people of Negeri Tawiri possess a strong awareness of the importance of effectively utilizing their human resources. They understand that each individual has different potential, and by utilizing each person's skills and expertise, they can better meet community needs.

This approach also demonstrates the community's ability to look beyond mere physical resources. They value the qualitative aspects of human resources, such as skills, knowledge, and experience, as essential elements in development and growth. Thus, they prioritize the use of their human resources in alignment with their needs.

In a broader context, this approach can serve as a good example for many communities in how to wisely utilize their human resources. It highlights the importance of respecting the diversity of individual skills and expertise in achieving common goals. Effective human resource management is a key factor in ensuring the continuity and progress of an organization or community. One effective way to achieve this is through job training that aims to maintain, enhance, and inspire skilled and motivated human resources, making them reliable assets for the organization.

The interview with Mr. BU also illustrated how the government of Negeri Tawiri has actively worked to optimize human resource management in the area. He noted that one of the ways the government of Negeri Tawiri contributes is by facilitating job training, especially for the youth in the region. They are supported to attend vocational training programs in fields such as mechanics and electronics. The goal of these trainings is to equip the youth of Negeri Tawiri with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue jobs in their respective fields.

Through such training, the youth are given opportunities to develop their competencies, which in turn increases their potential in the job market. They can apply what they have learned in their daily lives, including in their work and responsibilities. Thus, this kind of job training not only benefits individuals but also contributes to the growth and development of the community as a whole.

The interview with Mr. BU sheds light on the wise approach taken by the people of Negeri Tawiri in utilizing available human resources. He emphasized that the community applies wisdom in utilizing their human capital, based on the skills possessed by individuals within the community. This approach enables them to implement human resources according to the needs they face, creating a balance that aligns with their goals and requirements.

A concrete example can be seen in fishing activities. Fishermen in Negeri Tawiri wisely utilize their mastered skills, using appropriate fishing tools such as nets or other equipment based on their expertise. This approach reflects a deep understanding that each individual has different potential and skills, and by leveraging those skills, they can be more effective in achieving their goals.

More broadly, the findings from the interview suggest that the people of Negeri Tawiri value the wealth of skills possessed by their members. They understand the importance of utilizing the potential that exists within their community and view skills as assets to overcome

various challenges. This approach also creates opportunities for individuals to actively contribute and feel valued, fostering a positive atmosphere within the community.

In addition, the local government of Negeri Tawiri also plays an active role in optimizing human resource management. One of their efforts is to provide training facilities for the youth, particularly in mechanics and electronics. This reflects the government's awareness of the importance of investing in the development of young human capital. Through such training, these youths gain the knowledge and skills necessary to work in fields they have studied. Later, they can apply what they have learned in their daily work. Thus, such training not only enhances individual competence but also boosts the competitiveness and productivity of the workforce in Negeri Tawiri.

Social Capital and Participation as Pillars of ADD Sustainability

In the implementation of the Village Fund Allocation (Alokasi Dana Desa/ADD) in Negeri Tawiri, social capital has proven to be a solid foundation for sustainable development. In this context, social capital includes elements such as trust among citizens, norms of mutual cooperation (gotong royong), and social networks formed through relationships between individuals and local institutions. Community participation in all stages of ADD management—from village development planning meetings (musrenbangdes), to project implementation, to the evaluation phase—demonstrates involvement that goes beyond mere formal attendance. Participation in Tawiri is not symbolic or procedural, but substantive, where residents express their aspirations, monitor budget implementation, and actively participate in physical development projects, such as building roads or clean water facilities. This reflects a sense of collective ownership of village development programs, in line with the concept of social embeddedness, where economic and development actions are inseparable from the surrounding social relations (Suaedi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, interviews with community leaders and members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD) reveal that trust in village officials in Negeri Tawiri is quite high, largely due to budget transparency and community involvement in open forums. Residents feel like they are part of the change, not merely beneficiaries. This supports the argument of Barrutia & Echebarria (2022) and Saz-Gil et al. (2021) that strong social capital increases the likelihood of successful local governance by strengthening horizontal networks that encourage voluntary cooperation.

As an illustration, field data shows that ADD-funded cash-for-work programs involving more than 40 residents each year have become a vehicle for social consolidation and the reinforcement of solidarity. In the 2023 fiscal year, for example, during a neighborhood road construction project, residents not only worked but also took turns providing food and equipment, demonstrating the continued vitality of gotong royong dynamics.

Table 1 Contribution of Social Capital to the Success of ADD Programs in Negeri Tawiri

Aspect of Social Capital	Manifestation in Negeri Tawiri	Impact on ADD Management
Trust	High trust in the village head and officials	Speeds up decision-making and program implementation
Social Norms	Mutual cooperation in development projects	Reduces transaction costs and strengthens collaboration
Social Networks	Relationships between farmers' groups, fishermen, and youth organizations	Eases coordination and job distribution

Sources: Research analysis results, 2023

This social capital not only enhances the effectiveness of programs but also functions as a shock absorber when facing external pressures or challenges to the village system. However, the implementation of ADD in Negeri Tawiri also encounters various structural and adaptive challenges. One major issue is the limited capacity of village officials in financial management and standardized participatory planning. Despite high participatory spirit, not all activities are based on sufficient data or performance-based evaluations. Additionally, the digital divide hinders online ADD administration, especially when application-based reporting systems are mandated by the central government. Conflicts of interest also occasionally arise in local procurement processes involving village elites.

Nonetheless, the social resilience of Negeri Tawiri's community deserves appreciation. They demonstrate a high level of adaptability through local innovations, such as using traditional forums to resolve conflicts and mediate development issues. Village officials are also gradually improving their capacity through online training and technical assistance from village facilitators. This reinforces Atterton & Thompson's (2020) argument that local resilience does not always rely on external interventions but also on a community's ability to adapt and strategically utilize its resources.

Strengthening Village Institutional Capacity as a Pillar of Empowerment Program Sustainability

One of the crucial aspects in ensuring the sustained positive impact of the Village Fund Allocation (ADD) in Tawiri Village is the strengthening of local institutional capacity. Both formal institutions—such as the village government and the Village Consultative Body (BPD)—and informal ones, including traditional councils and community-based organizations, play a strategic role in coordinating the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development programs.

Field observations and interviews with village officials indicate a gradual improvement in managerial and administrative capacities, supported by professional mentoring and online training programs. However, several challenges remain, particularly concerning the standardization of participatory planning, the use of digital tools for financial reporting, and maintaining consistent public accountability.

Institutional capacity building is not merely technical; it also involves enhancing leadership quality, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and cultivating openness to community

input. In this regard, engaging youth and marginalized groups in decision-making processes is essential to broaden the participatory base and strengthen the social legitimacy of village institutions.

Theoretically, successful participatory development hinges on the presence of resilient and adaptive local institutions (Noviyanti et al., 2022). In practice, institutions in Tawiri that are capable of mediating between citizens' interests, state regulations, and local dynamics have proven more effective in implementing ADD programs in an inclusive and equitable manner. Therefore, long-term investment in institutional capacity building should be prioritized in future village development policy designs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions presented, it can be concluded that the Village Fund Allocation (ADD) policy in Negeri Tawiri has played a strategic role in mitigating social disparities through participatory development mechanisms and community-based economic empowerment. Enhancements in human resource quality, more equitable access to resources, optimal management of local potentials, and the creation of new employment opportunities constitute tangible indicators of a paradigmatic shift toward a more inclusive and equitable model of rural development. The experience of Negeri Tawiri demonstrates that development rooted in active community participation and reinforced by social capital—such as trust and mutual cooperation—can generate a model of village governance that is adaptive, transparent, and sustainable. The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of the socio-economic dynamics of ADD implementation within the localized context of Eastern Indonesia—an area that has long been marginalized in national academic discourse. By uncovering the social dimensions embedded in rural development practices, this research affirms that ADD functions not merely as a fiscal instrument, but also as a vehicle for reconstructing social relations and institutionalizing citizen participation in governance. Therefore, strengthening institutional capacity at the village level and expanding spaces for meaningful community engagement emerge as key policy recommendations to ensure the sustainability and replicability of similar success stories in other regions with comparable socio-cultural characteristics.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing,

without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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