

THE PERCEPTION OF THE GMIM DAMAI BELANG ATEP CONGREGATION ABOUT HEALTHY FAMILIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE

Persepsi Jemaat Gmim Damai Belang Atep tentang Keluarga Sehat dalam Konteks Alkitab

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Abstract

This paper explores the meaning of the idea of a healthy family to members of GMIM Damai Belang Atep, as well as how that idea is played out in biblical view, and the things that promote or inhibit it in a Minahasan context. In response to the normative discourses of Christian families in Indonesian theology, this study follows an exploratory qualitative research design with a phenomenological orientation. Semi-structured interviews with a purposely chosen sample of families and special office-bearers were used to collect data, which were analyzed with the help of thematic analysis and contextual theological reflection. The results indicate that congregants identify proper families in terms of relationships and Christ-centered ways. Mutual love and respect, common spiritual disciplines, equal emphasis on spiritual, emotional, and practical needs, and the deliberate impartation of biblical values to children are all related to family health. These beliefs are reflected in everyday activities, family worship, shared prayer, eating together, helping others, and spiritually oriented ways of resolving conflicts, which emphasize calm speaking, controlling oneself, forgiving, and praying. Concurrently, families are experiencing problems such as financial strain, family time, screen addiction, and value system clashes in the external world. The cultural values of Minahasan, most notably mapalus, kinship, and solidarity, are revealed as social capital that can be used to support biblical ideals, although some of the characteristics should be discerned. This paper suggests a contextual model of a healthy family and the necessity of the church to supplement doctrinal teaching with pastoral accompaniment based on families.

Background

The most basic social institution is the family, which plays a key role in determining human moral, spiritual, and social identity (Hutabarat et al., 2024). From the perspective of Christian theology, family is not just a biological set or a social organization, but also a theological space where the values of faith are practiced, conveyed, and tested in the conditions of day-to-day life. Based on the creation stories in Genesis 12, the Scripture introduces the family as part and parcel of God's will

for humanity. The relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and other family relationships are seen as a practical expression of the unity of creation.

Families in modern churches face multidimensional difficulties that are becoming increasingly complex. The dynamics of Christian family life have changed dramatically due to globalization, modernization, individualism, economic rivalry, migration, and digital disruption (Laku & Siga, 2015; Wildan, 2013). Such stressors lead to escalating tension in the home, deteriorating family communication, family worship being washed away, and the church losing its grip as a shaping spiritual institution for families. Therefore, understanding a healthy family from a biblical perspective is becoming more topical to be explored in detail, not only as a moral principle but also as a practical paradigm of a strong, holistic, and integrally related life of the church (Angin and Yeniretnowati, 2021).

Families in the Indonesian context are not isolated, as in rural or semi-rural areas like Minahasa; they exist in a well-woven web of collective culture. Relational patterns in Christian families are influenced by local values, including cooperation with each other, long-term kinship ties, and the impact of traditional values (Harisantoso, 2023; R.S. Sianipar and Sianipar, 2025, 2025; Stevanus and Macarau, 2021). Therefore, a biblical perspective of healthy families cannot be independent of the local context where family members live. An entirely normative approach to theological treatment is typically incomplete without some insight into the internalization and interpretation of theological teachings in the realities of local congregations.

In this regard, the current research explores the reaction of congregants to the notion of a healthy family through the prism of a biblical perspective as a contextual and empirical study (Seprianus, 2024; Syarizka et al., 2021; Tafuli et al., 2025). The decision to concentrate on a local congregation, that is, in this instance, GMIM Damai Belang Atep, makes it possible to delve deeper into the subject of how the members of the church perceive, practice, and struggle to establish a healthy family with a Christian faith foundation. This research also aims to cover the gap in the scholarly literature on family theology based on the local Indonesian context.

In the last two decades, theological and pastoral studies on Christian families have gained much attention. The literature on Christian family studies at the international level states that it is important to have a holistic theological concept of the family, which does not limit itself to emotional and psychological relations but also includes the spiritual, moral, and ecclesiological dimensions of the family (Moxnes, 1997). Several works emphasize the family as a domestic church, a mini-church where faith is primarily passed on (Gea, 2023; Pratama, 2023). This interpretation is informed by the practice of the early church, where the family was considered the initial place of Christian spiritual formation (Situmorang, 2021).

Research on pastoral care suggests that open communication, the ability to handle conflict, spiritual life, egalitarian husband-wife relationships, and loving parent-child interactions are typical of healthy families (Piper, 2021; Coleman, 2019). Modern pastoral patterns focus on the fact that a healthy family is not characterized by a lack of conflict but by the skills to manage conflict in a constructive and spiritual way. Family theology research has grown to contextual family theology in the Asian context. Research has shown that Asian Christian families tend to exist in a state of tension between traditionalism, modernity, and church education (Yeo, 2019). Family leadership, role allocation, and communication patterns are often influenced by the collective family system, patriarchy, and high levels of local cultural attachment.

In Indonesia, the theme of Christian family is common in pastoral theology literature, but the vast majority are normative in nature, focusing on theological teachings and not empirically interested in congregational experience. Family research in Indonesian church settings mostly emphasizes the role of the church in developing families; however, it does not adequately explain how the community comes to see the concept of a healthy family and apply it to their socioeconomic and cultural conditions.

Therefore, more intensive employment of theological, pastoral, and local cultural strategies is required. Local congregation research has been found to be effective in discovering the unique spiritual and social lives of each Christian society. Despite the comprehensive theological work on the Christian family, there are still several gaps that need to be filled. To begin with, most research on Christian families in Indonesia is normative and doctrinal. What should happen is highlighted in this literature, but it falls short of describing how congregants perceive and practice these ideas. That is, the ideal theology of the family and the reality of Christian families on the ground are separated by a gap (Blegur, 2025; Tafuli et al., 2025,). Second, empirical studies on local congregational contexts, particularly in rural or semi-rural settings, are comparatively limited. However, Christian families in rural settings do not experience the same struggles as those in urban settings, including monetary obstacles, the power of local customary culture, reliance on the extended family system, and lack of pastoral family ministry.

Third, the literature does not combine family theology with intensive qualitative research methods. Family theology can be seen as abstract, whereas family life is concrete and conditioned by emotional experiences, social relations, and cultural interactions. The qualitative method is appropriate for examining the spiritual perceptions and experiences of congregants. Fourth, there are limited contextual models of a healthy family based on the biblical perspective that can be used in churches in Indonesia (Ginting, 2021; Panawar et al., 2025; Purba and Sianipar, 2024; Sianipar, 2020). Existing models are typically imported into the Western context and therefore are not adequately aligned with the collectivistic social and cultural realities of Indonesia (Hadevi and Amin, 2025; Syarizka et al., 2021).

This study fills these gaps by providing an empirical and contextual discussion of how congregants understand a healthy family in the context of GMIM Damai Belang Atep. It seeks to critically examine how GMIM Damai Belang Atep members understand the concept of a healthy family in terms of biblical perspective, the application of biblical values to family life, and the supportive and inhibiting factors that underlie these processes, in a bid to develop a conceptual model of a healthy family that is applicable in the Minahasan culture and ecclesial context.

This study has several theoretical and practical implications. Potentially, it enriches the discussion of family theology based on Indonesian contextuality and adds to the emergence of pastoral theology that is much closer to the actual lives of congregations. In practice, the study can be a source of guidance for churches, especially GMIM, to develop family ministry strategies that are more applicable, including family communication training, family worship, pastoral counseling in the context, and support programs for young families and single parenting. The unique feature of this study is its combination of empirical, contextual, and theological perspectives. This study is based on the actual experience and perceptions of real congregants when it comes to healthy families, unlike former normative studies. It also dwells on a rural congregation, which has its own sociocultural dynamics, hence providing a model of family theology that is not just theological, but also contextual and applicable to churches in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research involves an exploratory qualitative research design with a phenomenological orientation to gain a thorough insight into how GMIM Damai Belang Atep members make sense of what constitutes a healthy family based on biblical aspects and how the values are applied in their daily family activities, encompassing the supporting and inhibiting issues they encounter. The phenomenological approach was selected because it allows the researcher to reveal the life experiences, spiritual perceptions, and constructions of meaning, which are not available to quantitative research methods.

Semi-structured interviews were the main method of data collection because this technique is deemed most appropriate for the free and in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the realities of Christian family life. The research participants were chosen by

purposive sampling and encompassed young families, middle-aged families, older people, and special office-bearers with relevant experience related to family dynamics in the ecclesial and Minahasan cultural setting (Adhimah, 2020; Hasanah et al., 2024; Nurseha et al., 2022).

Face-to-face interviews of flexible length were conducted to enable the participants to provide detailed explanations of their perceptions of an ideal family. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and were supplemented with field notes to record any nonverbal peculiarities. The interview questions were formulated as open-ended to allow the participants to talk freely regarding their biblical knowledge, family behavior, spiritual empowerment source, and the struggles they go through to establish a healthy family. This method provided players with space to attest to their experiences in the most natural way, producing abundant and detailed information. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, which consisted of thoroughly rereading all the interview transcripts, coding emergent units of meaning, and then classifying the codes into key themes concerning the research objectives.

These themes were then examined through theological reflection with the help of a contextual hermeneutical approach to relate the empirical understanding of participants to applicable biblical principles. This was then applied to develop a conceptualized model of a healthy family that would be suitable for the social and cultural setting of the GMIM Damai Belang Atepe congregation. Internal triangulation (member checking—returning central findings to various participants) and peer debriefing with fellow researchers were used to guarantee data credibility and ensure that the researcher did not misinterpret the original meaning of the participants' experiences. Each step of the research was recorded in an organized manner so that the findings of the research could be explained academically and theologically.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In this section, the authors present the primary empirical findings of the research through thematic analysis of 17 semi-structured interviews with GMIM Damai Belang Atepe members. In accordance with the research objectives, the findings are grouped into three broad areas: (1) what congregants mean by having a healthy family in the Bible; (2) how biblical values can be applied in the day-to-day experiences of the family; and (3) facilitating and non-facilitating factors in the achievement of a healthy Christian family in the Minahasan setting.

1. What congregants understand a Healthy Family to be in Biblical Terms.

1.1 Christ-centered, loving, and harmonious relationships.

In the interviews, the participants always described a healthy family theologically and relationally, but not necessarily structurally or materially. It explained a healthy family as one that lives in love, is harmonious, fears God, and puts God at the center of life. Some of the informants stressed that the state of the economy or the number of children in the family is not the main predictor of health; rather, it is whether the family lives in love and whether the family lives in God. One of the informants clearly extended the concept of family to include something that is not necessarily related by blood, as he said that family was wherever people could love, protect, and call home to each other. From this perspective, a healthy family is a relational area in which the grace of God is tangibly realized in love, care, and reciprocity.

1.2 Multidimensional balance: spiritual, emotional, relational, and practical balance

The respondents often mentioned the concept of a healthy family that must be balanced in terms of various aspects that are closely connected to one another. They mentioned the following: Spiritual: common religion, prayer, worship, and "fear of God; Emotional: respect, patience, self-control, and emotional support; Relational: harmony with husband and wife, pleasant parent-child relationships, and effective communication; Practical: healthy and efficient money management, focus on well-being, and quality time. Some of the informants used the term balance between the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. The ability to communicate freely, tell the truth, and support

one another were mentioned several times as key features of a healthy family. Discipline, particularly in raising children, was also included as a part and parcel of health, with some of the respondents citing biblical proverbs concerning correction and duties of parents.

1.3 Biblical and ecclesial background of the concept of a healthy family

Scripture and church teachings were the most common sources of information on healthy family life offered by the participants. Other parts of the Bible, such as Joshua 24:15 ("As for me and my household, we shall serve the Lord"), were recurrently used to frame their beliefs regarding God-based families, sharing of love and respect, family worship, and responsibilities of parents. Along with biblical texts, sermons, family services, catechesis, and pastoral visits, congregants identified them as significant sources of influence on their opinions. Their definitions of a healthy family in most instances reiterated expressions commonly employed in preaching and church instruction, including the domestic church and families that serve the Lord and bring up their children in the fear of God.

2. People as Biblical Values in Family Life

2.1 Essential Christian practices: prayer, scripture, and family worship

Most respondents indicated that their families maintained regular spiritual activities, especially daily or nightly prayer, Bible reading, and family worship. Family worship is often conducted in the evening, just before going to sleep, or at certain times agreed upon amicably by family members. These occasions were marked as the chances to express gratitude, exchange daily experiences, request the guidance of God, and enhance solidarity. In families where work schedules restricted time together, the participants talked about attempts to continue to have some type of joint prayer or devotional life, and at times adjusted the schedule to the shift work or schooling of children. Family worship is not only considered a ritual requirement but also an important way of passing biblical values and defining the spiritual identity of children.

2.2 Everyday relational habits

Along with formal spiritual practices, informants outlined a sequence of daily practices by which they attempt to embrace healthy family values, such as dining communally, usually in the evening, and relating anecdotes of each one on the daily occurrences; making time to talk and have a heart-to-heart talk when trouble occurs; assisting each other in domestic chores; and leisure joint time (that is, watching television, talking on the veranda, and other simple activities with the family). These mundane routines were seen as tangible manifestations of love, respect, and unity, and as essential to ensure a feeling of safety and inclusion in the family home.

2.3 Preventing conflict using communication, restraints, and praying.

Participants who were questioned about their reactions towards conflict always pointed out calm communication, listening, and prayer. Many described a trend of letting feelings settle, then breaking the silence to talk, spending time as a family to talk over issues, listening to other points of view, and finding a solution without accusing each other. Reconciliation often encompassed joint prayer. Some informants stated that joint prayer following a fight is one of the ways to soothe emotions, promote forgiveness, and refocus the family on God. The control of anger and wise use of words was a principle that was encouraged, and a readiness to apologize and to take part in self-analysis.

2.4 Christian values in upbringing

Regarding raising children, the respondents stated that they purposely imparted and modeled certain values in the Bible, such as fear of the Lord, honesty, love, humility, responsibility, respect towards parents and other people, and diligence. Proverbs 22:6 and other wisdom books are frequently cited as guidelines for raising children. Parents explained that they practiced a blend of love and punishment, but they emphasized that discipline was needed to mold character; however, it should be done carefully and with love. Children were taught to pray, read Scripture, go to church, and honor authority, as it was considered a process of equipping them to become mature Christians in society.

2.5 Biblical role models of family life

Participants when asked to name biblical role models named Jesus as the ultimate role model, and the families of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus, Noah, the families of David and Hannah and Samuel. These characters were appreciated because of their obedience to God, resistance to adverse situations, support for each other in the family, and faithfulness in carrying out divine callings. Families used these stories to be inspired to stay strong through tough times, believing in the promises of God and enhancing solidarity in the family.

3. Finding Support and Inhibiting Factors in Realizing a Healthy Christian Family

3.1 Perceived role of the church

Participants tended to confirm that the church is significant in their interpretation and practice of healthy family life. They mentioned preaching, Bible studies, catechetical teaching, services to families, couples, and parents, and pastoral visits as important resources. Some of the informants clearly indicated that church teaching has enabled them to change their attitudes, communication, and focus on family worship. Meanwhile, some respondents believed that church support was not as high as it could be. They also complained that they wanted more formal and ongoing programs, especially for young families, parents of adolescent teenagers, and those experiencing financial or relationship crises. Some of these initiatives include family retreats, couple parenting seminars, couple communication workshops, and home visitation seminars aimed at family specific issues.

3.2 Family health internal support

Some of the factors that assist families in maintaining spiritual and relational health were identified by them as follows: regular family prayer and worship; candid, sincere, and deferential conversations; mutual help to survive financial, emotional, and social challenges; the same case of parents and spouses; and support and camaraderie of the wider church communion. These supports were found to be interdependent. Indicatively, the desire to pray in groups with parents as an example tends to enable children to work together in worship, whereas the feeling of belongingness in the church community tends to enhance family strength in the presence of external stress.

3.3 Critical issues: time, technology, economics and environment

Participants were asked to list up to five challenges in the realization of a healthy family and answered four factors the most. Business and work pressures lessen the time to share meals, talk, and worship; technology and social media, especially smartphones, can break communication as every individual is engrossed in his/her phone; economic forces, such as fluctuating income and financial requirements, lead to stress and at times to conflict; and the impact of the social environment and peer influence, particularly among children and youth, may instill values that may be considered to be different from Christian teachings. Despite these challenges, most families reported trying to control gadget use, safeguard time to do their activities together, and make sense of economic and social pressure through faith.

3.4 Minahasan cultural values: Tension and support

The participants admitted that Minahasan culture significantly influences family life. Values such as *mapalus* (cooperation with others), high extended kinship, solidarity, and ethos of *baku-baku bae*, *baku-baku sayang* (mutual reconciliation and mutual love) were regarded as very helpful in the Christian conception of the family. Such cultural aspects contribute to mutual assistance, a feeling of shared responsibility, and close family relationships among households. Nevertheless, certain cultural trends were viewed as potentially dangerous to evaluate them according to biblical values. The mentioned characteristics included stubbornness, excess pride (*gengsi*), firm patriarchal demands, and some traditional religious customs that can be incompatible with exclusive faith in Christ. Families noted that they needed to selectively pass on cultural values, keeping those that reinforce love and solidarity and critically revising those that inhibit humility, forgiveness, or spiritual development.

3.5 Evaluation of church sponsorship and expectations

When asked whether the church has done enough to assist families, the answers were both appreciative and wary. Most were appreciative of current programs and pastoral care but also provided specific anticipations of future development. Lastly, the participants expressed their hopes that Christian families, both within their own congregation and more generally, would continue to be faithful to the Lord, lead a life of love and unity, become good role models in society, and be able to bring up another generation, one that fears God and can withstand the current challenges in Minahasa and Indonesia.

Discussion

The results of the research prove that the construction of the image of a healthy family by the congregants of GMIM Damai Belang Atep is developed on clear theological and relational grounds, and it is also a negotiation of the real pressure of the modern socio-economic life and the strong impact of the Minahasan culture on the participants. According to the research objectives, the empirical themes are interpreted in this discussion using the biblical and contextual theological perspective, using available literature on the topic of Christian families, and developing a conceptual model of a healthy family that is theologically sound and locally familiar.

1. Healthy Family Construction of the Relational Theological Type.

First, the manner in which the participants identify a healthy family goes a long way to affirming that, practically, Christian families in this context are constructed as a relational and theological community, as opposed to being a biological or legal unit. A healthy family is defined as one that is living in love, harmony, or fear of God and putting God at the center. This is similar to theological approaches that consider the family as the domestic church, one of the crucial places where faith is practiced and passed on (Moxnes, 1997; Gea, 2023; Pratama, 2023). The focus on Christ-centeredness, loving each other, and spiritual orientation demonstrates that congregants subconsciously borrow such notions, although they do not necessarily use the technical terms of the domestic church.

Imperatively, this relational theological definition is in contrast to entirely practical or structural perspectives of the family that quantify health in terms of economic availability, social rank, or hazards of nuclear arrangements. Participants reiterated that material adequacy or even family wholeness are not the final qualifiers, but what is important is that the family lives in love, respect, and dependence on God. This is consistent with wider theological assertions that social form is not the defining feature of Christian identity but rather a sharing in the life of Christ and the community of faith.

This theological clarity is enhanced by the observation that one of the informants is categorical in defining family, by emphasizing that family may be found anywhere as long as love, protection, and acceptance are exercised. This reflects the New Testament's propensity to make blood ties relative and to redefine the family as discipleship and mutual belonging in Christ (cf. Mark 3:31-35). This adaptive and inclusive perception can also be seen in the Minahasan context, which demonstrates the real situation of extended kin ties, where the wider notion of responsibility and care is extended beyond the nuclear family.

2. Family as Domestic Church: Parenting, Conflict, and Spiritual Practices.

The second significant group of findings is the manifestation of biblical values in daily family activities. The fact that common prayer, family worship, Bible reading, and meals together prove that families in GMIM Damai Belang Atep do not just profess their beliefs in Christian values in an abstract way but practice rites and rituals. This is in line with prior studies on pastoral care that found open communication, conflict management, spiritual life, and loving relations between parents and children to be characteristic of healthy families (Piper, 2021; Coleman, 2019).

The manner in which the family functions as a central place of spiritual formation is demonstrated by the descriptions of participants of family worship, which is normally performed in

the evening or at a predetermined time. These practices are accurately defined in the literature on Christian family studies as the active embodiment of the so-called domestic church (Situmorang, 2021). Prayer, as well as Scripture reading, is a way not only of individual piety, but also of relation, of relating the family to each other in common dependence on God. The fact that even busy families find ingenious methods of preserving some kind of common piety indicates the effectiveness with which the theological belief that spirituality is the key to family wellness is internalized.

Other patterns of conflict resolution have been reported in this research, which further substantiate the idea that biblical values are being contextualized in tangible relational behavior. The participants mentioned peaceful communication, listening and praying, self-control when dealing with anger, and readiness to apologize. These convictions echo the New Testament teachings to speak the truth in love, be sluggish to anger, and forgive as the Lord forgave thee. They also represent the contemporary pastoral wisdom that a healthy family is not one that lacks conflict but one that is capable of doing it constructively and spiritually (Piper, 2021; Coleman, 2019). Contextually, it is important that families within a rural Minahasan congregation have incorporated these ideals into highly definite relational tactics, including cooling down first, sitting together, and praying after a quarrel.

The participants reported a similar pattern of integration in their parenting practices. To instill in their children a fear of God, to live an honest life, to respect others, and to work hard, parents consciously rely on passages like Proverbs 22:6. The fact that love is integrated with discipline, and that the character needs to be molded by means of correction as much as encouragement, indicates a biblically based pedagogy that is not unconcerned with the reality of living in a fast-paced culture and technology and how the child needs to be raised therein.

A combination of these patterns leads to the assumption that, at least on the level of intention and a great number of everyday practices, the families under consideration can already be seen as a reflection of a biblically oriented pastorally healthy family model. They are not doing it in some idealized and conflict-free environment but under the influence of economic pressure, technological disruption, and changing expectations.

3. Minahasan: Contextual Family Theology in a Collectivist Set-Up

One of the major contributions of this research is the demonstration of how the Minahasan understanding of the family fuses and negotiates the theological conceptions of the family. The prominent appearance of *mapalus* (mutual cooperation), long-term kinship, mutual reconciliation, and mutual love ethos show that GMIM Damai Belang Atep Christian families do not exist in an empty cultural vacuum. Instead, they live in a thick web of local values that might or might not facilitate biblical ideals.

The strengths of Minahasan culture, such as solidarity, mutual assistance, and strong kinship, obviously support the idea of the family as a friendly and supportive community. These values ensure that sharing burdens and helping each other during economic hardship and treating relatives and neighbors as members of the extended family become natural in families. In this regard, Minahasan collectivism offers fertile ground for a contextual family theology that stresses collectiveness, collective accountability, and a sense of community that is comfortable with biblical metaphors of the body of Christ and the household of God.

Simultaneously, the fact that the participants recognize such problematic cultural patterns as *gengsi* (status-driven pride), stubbornness, strict patriarchy, and syncretistic practices demonstrates the tension that is found within contextual family theology in Asia, where traditional values, modernity, and church teaching tend to conflict (Yeo, 2019). For example, the demands of patriarchy can contradict biblical inspirations of shared submissiveness and equitable regard amidst the husband and wife, and over-focus on social face can prevent open conversation and discloseness inside the family.

The manner in which the participants discuss the notion of filtering culture, of accepting that which is in line with the gospel and doubting that which is in line with the gospel, shows that an implicit

contextual hermeneutic is in operation. This reinforces the fact in the background of this research that normative theology is not enough, but what is needed is an empirically based explanation of how local congregations in reality negotiate the contact point between Scripture and culture. The current results indicate that congregants do not passively receive the two traditions and modernity, but as agents who strive to bring their cultures into association with biblical beliefs in their tangible family practices.

4. The Local Church: Accompaniment or Normativity

The empirical evidence also informed me of the part the church plays in shaping healthy families. On the one hand, the respondents are categorical on the fact that preaching, teaching, family services, and pastoral care play a role in their ability to contemplate the concept of a healthy family. This affirms that the normative theological discourse of the church does reach the grassroots and offers a rough outline of how family life should be.

Conversely, the consistent requests of the participants for more detailed and continuous programs, especially for young families, parents with adolescent children, and families with acute economic or relational issues, discourage the use of merely declarative or dogmatic approaches. Although sermons and general pastoral visits have their value, they are not always adequate to confront the complex and context-specific issues the family faces in a rural or semi-rural Minahasan environment.

In this case, the study directly responds to the research gap found in the literature: most of the discussion on the subject of Christian families in Indonesia is still normative and doctrinal, with little empirical research on the experience of the congregation (Blegur, 2025; Tafuli et al., 2025). This study demonstrates where church instruction is already productive and where further context-specific pastoral methods are necessary by hearing specific family stories. The proposals made by participants—family retreats, parenting seminars, communication workshops, structured mentoring, and more deliberate home visitation—indicate a shift in pastoral theology toward a less prescriptive approach (what families ought to be) to a more engaged one (how the church is with families in their real struggles).

This has great implications for GMIM and other churches like it. This implies that family ministry plans should not merely export generic models of family counselling and programs used in Western cultures (Ginting, 2021; Panawar et al., 2025; Purba and Sianipar, 2024) but must be developed in partnership with local congregational cultural, economic, and ecclesial realities. As in the example of applying *mapalus* ethos to family ministry (e.g., mutual support groups of parents and shared childcare programs), the available cultural capital might be used to strengthen Christian family formation.

5. Towards a Contextual Model of Healthy Family

The combination of theological, sociological, and cultural themes in the given study allows for the development of a biblically based and context-sensitive conceptual model of a healthy family. According to the data, it can be said that a healthy family in GMIM Damai Belang Atep can be viewed as: An integrated community of Christ that practices love, mutual support, and responsibility in their daily lives; builds faith in community practices and develops spirituality; handles conflict in a constructive and prayerful way; nurtures children with biblical values; and critically uses Minahasan cultural resources to help and not harm their family lives. This model incorporates three dimensions: Theological-spiritual aspect: God-oriented orientation, family worship, prayer, scripture, and calling to live as a home church. Relational-emotional dimension: open communication, respect for each other, forgiveness, constructive conflict management, and loving parenting. Contextual-cultural aspect: Adaptation and aggressive change of Minahasan values (*mapalus*, kinship solidarity, communal ethos) according to biblical values, and the opposition to the cultural trends, which stand in the way of humility, honesty, or faith. This hybrid approach fills the gaps in the literature: it is not only less abstract because it describes family theology in the context of the lived experiences and interpretations of congregants, but also an empirically informed model of pastoral practice explicitly

informed by the local socio-cultural context instead of assuming that Western, individualistic norms are universal.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Being qualitative and phenomenological research, with a single congregation being studied, the findings are context-specific and cannot be statistically generalized. The voices you are listening to belong to 17 informants who are already more or less active in church life, and families that are more marginal, crisis-stricken, or disengaged can tell you something different. However, the richness and uniformity of the themes developed by participants indicate that the trends obtained can be highly representative of larger processes in the same GMIM congregations and Minahasan context. Further studies might develop this study by incorporating several congregations (urban and rural), generational groups (youth, young adults, and older adults), or using mixed-methods designs to trace the prevalence of the main practices and issues among a larger sample. Furthermore, longitudinal research might be needed on the transformation of family practices and cultural perceptions over time as the economy undergoes change along with digitalization and changing church ministries.

Overall, this study has shown that families within GMIM Damai Belang Atep have a biblically informed and deeply cultural concept of what constitutes a healthy family. They also actively practice Christian values in their everyday lives despite major pressures and uncertainty. The role of pastoral theology is not to force a foreign model but to identify, validate, and even develop these new forms into an entirely formed and contextually based family theology capable of directing churches across Minahasa and Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate how the people of GMIM Damai Belang Atep interpret and apply the idea of a healthy family from a biblical standpoint, and which variables aid or impede the process in a Minahasan setting. The results confirm that congregants define family health in theological terms: a healthy family is Christ-centered, lives in mutual love and respect, practises common spiritual disciplines, and aims at realizing the will of God in daily life instead of just meeting the ideals of structures and material well-being. Empirically, the research indicates that core biblical values are manifested in daily activities such as family worship, collective prayers, shared meals, mutual assistance, and intentional attempts to solve conflict through peaceful communication, self-control, forgiveness, and prayer. The combination of love and discipline is intentionally passed on to children by parents with the help of Scripture through the transmission of faith and character to their children through church teaching and pastoral care. Concurrently, families face demands such as financial insecurity, time demands, technological distraction, and social dynamism.

One of the most important contributions of this research is its contextual analysis of the interactions between Minahasan cultural values and Christian family theology. Mapalus, extended kinship, and solidarity are elements of the biblical principles of mutual care and shared responsibility, whereas excessive pride, stubbornness, and the inability to change the patriarchal system should be critically evaluated through the lens of the gospel. Therefore, this study resulted in a comprehensive model of a healthy family that incorporates theological, spiritual, relational, emotional, and cultural aspects.

Thus, this study fills the gap between the normative teachings of the Christian family and the reality of congregations. Listening to accounts of a community church demonstrates how the concept of the family as a domestic church is understood, realized, and sometimes challenged in their daily acts of worship, communication, and mutual care. This is an empirically based view that gives family theology a chance to be expressed not as an ideal but as a dynamic process influenced by faith, culture, and social change. In practice, the results suggest that the church is tasked with leaving behind normative teaching of and shifting to more long-term and family oriented accompaniment. Congregants report an obvious demand to have organized programmes that are sensitive to local realities, parenting support, intergenerational relationships, and communication.

This theological study contributes to family theology in Indonesia by basing it on the experience of a local congregation. This work can be expanded in future research to compare across regions and generations or use a mixed method so that contextual models of healthy Christian families can be further refined for the benefit of the broader church.

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