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MORE THAN MERE VICTIMS: A PORTRAIT OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND RESILIENCE AMONG MINANGKABAU CHILDREN DURING THE PRRI ERA (1958-1961)

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ABSTRAK

For a long time, historical writing (historiography) regarding the PRRI in West Sumatra (1958-1961) has focused more on the political affairs of prominent figures and military movements. As a result, the experiences of ordinary people, particularly children, have often been forgotten from historical records. This article attempts to fill that gap by highlighting the everyday life history of Minangkabau children during the conflict period. This study utilizes the oral history method to unearth the memories of survivors who spent their childhood during that era. The findings indicate that children were not merely passive, helpless victims. Instead, they responded to the crisis through five everyday experiences: (1) adapting when school and the tradition of reciting the Quran at the surau (prayer house) were halted, (2) navigating play spaces that were strictly monitored by the military, (3) taking over economic driving roles by working hard in the rice fields and farms, (4) shifting parenting patterns and the dynamics of matrilineal families amidst the conflict, and (5) recording traumatic memories resulting from airstrikes. In conclusion, the PRRI upheaval indirectly forced these children into "premature adulthood." Children inevitably had to alter their roles for the sake of family survival, a bitter experience that ultimately left a legacy of collective trauma in the social history of the Minangkabau people.

I. INTRODUCTION

Regional upheaval is a conflict that occurs within a territory to fight for specific interests, one of which relates to economic policy (Lorenza dkk., 2024, p. 1061), such as the PRRI upheaval. The upheaval of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) which erupted in 1958 represents one of the most crucial yet tragic events in the narrative of post-independence Indonesian history ("Siapa Menabur Angin", 1989, p. 10) The eruption of the PRRI (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) war in 1958 and its conclusion in 1961, (Afdayeni & Febriani, 2023, p. 33-34) was backgrounded by the disharmonious relationship between the central government in Jakarta and regional leaders, particularly in the West Sumatra region (Kahin, 2005, p. 328-330). Regional structural disappointment was triggered by a sharp imbalance in economic development, where regions felt they did not receive a fair and proportional allocation of development funds from the central government ("Dasar-Dasar Kesatuan", 1997, p. 6). In addition to economic issues, the centralization of power and concerns over the rampant influence of the communist party (PKI) at the national level prompted regional military officers, such as Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Husein who led the Banteng Council, to take a decisive step by demanding broader regional autonomy (Maulida, 2018, p. 175-176).

The climax of this political tension was the declaration of the PRRI on February 15, 1958, in Padang (Taher, 2010, p. 32). The PRRI was declared at 22:00 WIB (Western Indonesian Time) with Sjafruddin Prawiranegara as prime minister (Aryasahab, 2023, p. 41). Because there was no response from the central government, Ahmad Husein ultimately proclaimed the PRRI (Syaputra, 2025, p. 5-6). Mainstream historical narratives, both those produced during the Old Order and New Order eras, often frame this event in black-and-white terms solely as an act of separatism or an unconstitutional regional rebellion that had to be completely crushed (Kahin, 2005, p. 320). Due to this, the government assumed that the people of West Sumatra wanted to secede from the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), which was further backed by foreign intervention, such as America through the CIA, causing this protest to be deemed a rebellion (Dayani *et al.*, 2025, p. 442).

Consequently, this was fiercely opposed by the government (*Arsip Konstituante Tahun 1956-1960 No. 119*, see also *Rakyat Padang/Pariaman berdiri dibelakang dewan banteng*, January 5, 1957. P. 2), as well as community associations or organizations, the Banu Hampu student movement, the Tanah Datar Alim Ulama Jihad Body, etc., (*Tindakan Dewan Banteng Hasrat Rakyat Semesta*, Padang, Wednesday, January 9, 1957). However, in the collective memory of the people of West Sumatra, this event is actually interpreted differently, namely as a form of patriotic correction, criticism, and protest against the central government's injustice, rather than an intention to separate themselves from the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Budiman &

Jufri, 2026, p. 508). Responding to the declaration, the central government under the control of President Sukarno dispatched a massive-scale military operation whose primary codename was known as Operation August 17 under the command of Colonel Ahmad Yani ("Catatan Lima Puluh", 1997, p. 4). The arrival of the central government troops (APRI) immediately triggered an open civil war that shattered the societal fabric of civil life (Afdayeni, 2022, p. 141)

The escalation of the military conflict not only destroyed physical infrastructure such as bridges, roads, and government buildings, but also radically shook and devastated the social order of civil society in the *nagari* (villages) that became the arenas for guerrilla warfare. The PRRI upheaval brought profound, multidimensional impacts for the people of West Sumatra. In the context of Indonesian historical writing (historiography), the literature on the PRRI has thus far been highly rich and detailed in dissecting the event, yet unfortunately remains deeply biased toward the perspectives of the military elite and prominent political figures. The works of prominent historians such as Audrey Kahin (1999) in *Rebellion to Integration: West Sumatra and the Indonesian Polity*, Gusti Asnan (2007) who highlights matters of regionalism and regional autonomy, alongside the works of other historians, have thoroughly examined the dynamics of the PRRI ranging from the roots of central-regional imbalance and ideological debates to the tactical analysis of military operation maneuvers.

Although these literatures provide a very strong historical foundation, this macro-structural viewpoint that focuses too heavily on the political elite and the course of warfare leaves behind a very distinct knowledge gap and methodological weakness: Indonesian historiography has lost the track record and authentic picture of what was actually experienced by people at the lowest level (grassroots). More specifically, vulnerable groups such as children are almost entirely absent from the pages of history. In many historical records of conflict and warfare in Indonesia, children are frequently reduced to mere numbers complementing suffering, mute, voiceless entities deemed to have no role whatsoever other than as passive victims of adult political selfishness.

This article is presented to fill that historiographical gap while simultaneously challenging traditional narratives by offering a new school of thought through the approach of everyday life history (*Alltagsgeschichte*) and history from below, which began developing at the beginning of World War II when Georges Lefebvre wrote about the French Revolution of 1789 (Salleh, 1992, p.1). This approach distinguishes this paper from the works of previous researchers because it shifts the locus of analysis from the meeting rooms of military councils to the domestic and everyday spaces of civil society in rural areas. The arrival of the central government troops and the retreat of the PRRI soldiers into the forests clearly altered the face of everyday life in the *nagari* (vilages) of West Sumatra drastically (Budiman & Hardi, 2023, p. 1273).

Childhood routines that were usually spent playing, studying at the folk school (*sekolah rakyat*), and reciting the Quran at the *surau* were abruptly snatched away by the thud of bullets, the imposition of curfews, and the militarization of civil spaces. The primary novelty offered in this

study is the historical reconstruction effort that positions children not merely as passive objects of suffering, but as historical subjects who possess agency (Hidayat, 2022). This study does not focus on the romanticization of suffering or merely describing the sadness of children during the period of displacement. Instead, it critically highlights the adaptability and resilience of Minangkabau children in facing changes in the social structure resulting from the absence of adult male figures within the matrilineal family due to the war (Nuryanti, 2011).

This article aims to analyze the forms of adaptation and the roles of children amidst the socio-economic crisis in West Sumatra. Under the pressure of APRI military patrols, the trauma of gunfire, and the very real threat of starvation due to the central government's economic blockade policy, Minangkabau children did not merely become victims of the conflict, but also actively adapted to wartime conditions. Children adapted to these extreme circumstances by working in the rice fields and farms on the fringes of the forest, thereby transcending their psychological and physical age limits. They took over the role of sustaining the family economy when their fathers and *mamak* (maternal uncles) went to wage guerrilla warfare or hide. This study examines the everyday experiences of children, such as disrupted education, loss of playing spaces, shifting economic roles, and the emergence of traumatic memories resulting from the armed conflict. Through this analysis, this study is expected to contribute new insights regarding the concept of "premature adulthood" within the dynamic social history of the PRRI conflict.

II. METHODS

This study utilizes the critical historical method which relies on an oral history approach. The oral history approach was chosen because the everyday experiences of vulnerable groups, particularly children, are very rarely documented in official government archives or military operation reports (Darban, 1997, p. 1). Through this method, the research attempts to reconstruct a history from below by providing a vocal space for survivors who up to this point have been marginalized from the mainstream historiography concerning the PRRI Upheaval (Sokoll, 2001, p. 1). Kuntowijoyo (2013, p. 69-70) explains that historical research consists of five stages: topic selection, heuristics (source collection), verification (source criticism), interpretation (historian's analysis), and historiography (historical writing).

The data collection stage (heuristics) was focused on in-depth interviews. To unearth childhood memories that had been buried for more than six decades, the researcher interviewed eight survivors residing in the Pasaman region of West Sumatra. The selection of informants was conducted purposively based on the primary criteria that they had directly experienced the period of the PRRI upheaval (1958–1961) during childhood or adolescence, and still possessed reasonably clear memories regarding the everyday events of that time. In addition to oral sources, data collection was also supported by a search of other secondary and primary sources, such as contemporary historical literature and newspaper archives.

Given that this study heavily relies on oral sources originating from the informants' memories, the researcher conducted rigorous source criticism to minimize memory distortion, chronological errors, and subjectivity in the narration of events. The researcher performed source criticism through two stages: external criticism and internal criticism. External criticism was conducted by tracing the identity, age, social background, and position of the informants within society, as well as their direct involvement in the events under study. Through this stage, the researcher assessed the informants' status as actors, eyewitnesses, or parties who obtained information from others. Additionally, the researcher considered the interview conditions, the timing of data collection, and the consistency of information across interviews.

Meanwhile, the researcher conducted internal criticism by examining the content of the statements provided by the informants. The researcher compared responses across different informants to assess the consistency of the chronology, the nature of the events, the terminology used, and the depiction of social conditions during that period. This process was carried out through memory triangulation. Specifically, by comparing testimonies among informants to find corroborating information. Whenever discrepancies in statements were identified, the researcher traced the causes, such as differences in social position, personal experience, age at the time of the event, and the cognitive limits of the informants' memories.

In addition to comparing oral sources, the researcher also performed verification using contemporary written sources. The researcher cross-referenced the informants' statements with archives, newspapers, government reports, *nagari* administrative documents, and literature related to the social conditions of the Minangkabau community during the PRRI period. This comparison was conducted to verify the chronological accuracy of events, security conditions, societal activities, and social changes during the conflict. Through this process, the researcher did not rely on oral sources in isolation, but rather positioned them alongside written sources to ensure that the resulting historical interpretation possesses stronger validity.

At the interpretation stage, the verified oral data was then juxtaposed and analyzed using the analytical lens of everyday life history (*Alltagsgeschichte*). The subjective memories of the informants were contextualized with the macro-events recorded in literature and newspapers, such as the enforcement of military curfews, the central government's economic blockade, and airstrikes in the West Sumatra region. The final stage is historiography, in which all the findings are assembled into an analytical historical narrative that systematically highlights the agency, adaptation, and suffering of Minangkabau children in confronting the reality of the crisis.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the primary findings of the oral history research regarding children's experiences during the PRRI upheaval, which are then analyzed in-depth using the approach of everyday life history (*history from below* or *Alltagsgeschichte*). The historical data gathered from the survivors' testimonies forms the basis of the analysis to assert the novelty of this paper, that children amidst the vortex of armed conflict are not merely passive, weak, and mute victims. On the contrary, children are historical subjects who possess resilience and a strong sense of agency, forced by a repressive crisis structure to undergo a phase of premature adulthood. This discussion is divided into several major sub-topics that represent the transformation of the living, social, economic, and psychological spaces of Minangkabau children during the crisis (1958–1961).

The Disruption of Education and the Paralysis of Activities in the *Surau*

The upheaval of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI), which took place in West Sumatra between 1958 and 1961, brought a profound impact on the social and political conditions of society. The conflict between the central government and the PRRI faction caused the security situation to become highly unstable, filling the daily lives of the *nagari* communities with a sense of hyper-vigilance due to the tight surveillance imposed by the central government's military apparatus. These conditions transformed local social relations, which were previously relatively open, making them more guarded and fraught with suspicion. Furthermore, this conflict also disrupted the economic sphere, particularly the circulation of currency after the money issued by the PRRI was withdrawn and replaced once again with Rupiah by the central government. This situation generated widespread economic uncertainty among the population. In the political realm, the collapse of the PRRI altered the national and regional political landscape, especially after the central government dissolved the Masyumi Party. This condition opened a wider space for the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to expand its political influence during the Sukarno administration, while simultaneously weakening the position of Islamic political groups and non-communist nationalists in West Sumatra (Arief Rahman Hakim dan Melia Afdayeni, 2025, p 149-152).

The unstable socio-political conditions during the PRRI conflict not only affected the economic life and social relations of the community, but also had a profound impact on the fields of education and religious activities within Minangkabau society. The erratic security situation led to the disruption of both formal and non-formal educational processes, including the teaching and learning activities in the *surau*, which had previously served as the center for religious education and social character-building for the *nagari* community.

The PRRI event left a profound social and psychological impact on the people of West Sumatra, both during the conflict and after it ended (Ronidin, Sudibyo, & Indrastuti, 2024, p. 455). The initial psychological and social shock that stripped children of their childhood during the PRRI era was the cessation of teaching and learning activities at school. The military invasion of the APRI (*Angkatan Perang Republik Indonesia* / Administration of the War of the Republic of Indonesia) into the *nagari* areas rendered many *Sekolah Rakyat* (SR / People's School) buildings unable to operate as they normally would. Under martial law conditions, public facilities such as schools became the first infrastructure to lose normal functionality. Several school buildings were destroyed due to direct armed clashes between APRI troops and PRRI guerrillas (Harahap, 2020, p. x).

This paralysis was caused not only by the loss of physical space, but also by the absence of teaching staff. Many teachers who taught in the *nagari* chose to withdraw, entering the forests to join the PRRI forces (Wirdam, 2010, p. iii) driven by regional solidarity, or fled to other more remote villages to safeguard their lives from accusations of treason, interrogation, and torture by the central government's military (Kahin, 1999). Given that the *nagari* was besieged by highly intensive military patrols, the formal education of children was completely paralyzed. This is recorded with utmost clarity in the memory of Nurseha, one of the survivors who was a child at the time. She recounted how the atmosphere of her village transformed (Nurseha, komunikasi personal, 22 Juli 2025)

"Sekolah ndak bajalan doh, pasa sunyi, nak gadih jo paja ketek ndak ado nan barani kalua rumah, sado urang cameh sajo." (Schools were not operating, the market was quiet, no young girls or children dared to leave their homes, and everyone was gripped by anxiety).

The loss of this school routine severed children's access to modern knowledge and social interaction with their peers. Culturally, however, the most essential loss that radically changed the traditions of Minangkabau society was the cessation of activities in the *surau* (Fajri & Mahmud, 2021, p. 90-94). Within the structure of the matrilineal Minangkabau custom, which is anchored in the principle of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*, the *surau* holds a central and irreplaceable position for young boys (Arifan, Ibrahim, & Melay, 2015, p. 3). The *surau* was not merely a physical place for ritual prayer; rather, it was a cultural and educational institution where boys slept at night, separated from the domestic sphere of their mothers' homes, to study religious knowledge, practice *silek* (martial arts), recite the Quran, and socialize. This process forged their character, independence, and courage before they eventually entered the *merantau* (migration) phase of life (Imadudin, Zubir, & Ernatip, 2002, p. 53), a migratory activity that increased significantly following the PRRI upheaval (Ro9). Ultimately, the *surau* during that era served a multitude of purposes, utilized for a wide array of activities by the Minangkabau community (Yola, Amri, & Thania, 2024, p. 4).

The fear that their children would be arrested, violently interrogated, or even hit by stray bullets during nighttime raids prompted parents (particularly mothers or *bundo kanduang*) to take preventive measures by forbidding their children from going to the *surau*. This is evident from the interview the researcher conducted with Nuraya (personal communication, August 13, 2025), who prohibited children from leaving the house or studying the Quran at the *surau*, advising that Quranic recitation could instead be done at home: “maso itu, anak-anak acok dirumah, kok pai mangaji untuak samantaro ndk buliah kalua rumah acok-acok, takuik nagari ko ndk aman (At that time, children were frequently kept at home; as for going to recite the Quran at the *surau*, they were temporarily forbidden from leaving the house too often, out of fear that the *nagari* was unsafe)

This is precisely where the agency and adaptive capacity of the local community became highly prominent. As a form of quiet resistance to ensure that the transmission of religious education was not entirely severed and that children's morality remained safeguarded, Quranic learning activities were ultimately pulled into the domestic sphere. The lessons were clandestinely relocated to individual residents' homes, taught directly by parents or close relatives, and conducted at night with minimal lighting so as not to arouse the suspicion of military patrols, as recounted by Zaida (personal communication, August 6, 2025). This historical fact demonstrates that the armed crisis did not completely extinguish education and culture; rather, it altered their landscape, medium, and space of execution from the public realm (*surau*) to the private realm (the household).

The Militarization of Civil Space and the Restriction of Play Activities

Childhood represents a distinct stage of life experienced by every individual (Firmansyah & Perang, 2024, p. 1492). Play serves as a child's most fundamental right and the primary medium for understanding the environment, building social relationships, and developing cognitive and motor skills (Rohmah, 2016, p. 28-29). Under normal conditions before 1958, rural Minangkabau children were accustomed to spending their days playing in open spaces closely connected with nature. Expansive house yards, newly harvested rice fields, and clear riverbanks served as arenas for free play and exploration. Traditional games such as *sipak rago*, among others, or simply swimming in the river, were daily routines that forged the collective identity of their childhood (personal communication, August 5, 2025). As Inun recounted: “*ndk ado kami bamain cando biaso di lua rumah, sebab takuik ado tantara patrol*” (We did not play outside the house as we usually did, out of fear of the patrolling soldiers)

The interview demonstrates how the PRRI upheaval disrupted children's play spaces. The militarization of civil space placed every corner of the *nagari* under tight military surveillance through the establishment of guard posts and armed patrols across various village areas. Children suddenly lost their freedom and no longer dared to play outside their homes. The condition indicates that the impact of the PRRI affected the psychological state of the Minangkabau community (Fahrezi & Midawati, 2025, p. 222-223). Parents during that era provided counsel and

gave warnings for children not to play beyond the boundaries of their house yards to avoid the stray bullets that frequently erupted without warning during firefights between the APRI and the PRRI.

Due to the loss of access to these public spaces, the sociology of children's play has had a significant transformation. Children were forced by circumstances to adapt, turning to types of games that were much more passive, required less physical energy, made no loud noises, and were kept strictly within the domestic confines of the *rumah gadang*. The laughter of children that usually echoed across the village yards was replaced by silence and hyper-vigilance. This confirms historical findings that war, in its most tangible form at the local level, forcibly deprives children of their fundamental right to a space of freedom, restricts social mobility, and silences the expression of childhood happiness.

The Involvement of Children in Forced Displacement and Family Economic Support

The main novelty of this study is most transparently reflected in the aspect of the transformation of the family economic structure during wartime. In addition to deploying physical military operations by land and air, the central government also implemented a highly strict economic blockade strategy along the coastal waters of western Sumatra. The objective was to paralyze the logistical supplies, ammunition, and foreign trade routes that formed the economic lifeline of the PRRI (Nadhirianto, 2024, p. 27). The implication of this blockade, combined with runaway inflation triggered by the circulation of unrecognized local PRRI currency, created an extraordinarily severe structural economic paralysis at the grassroots level (Sitompul, 2018; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi [Kemendikbudristek], 2024). Traditional markets fell into a comatose state, supplies of necessities were severed, and civil society across the *nagari* was suddenly confronted with the very real threat of widespread starvation.

It is at this crisis point that conventional historical assumptions that frequently view children merely as dependent or passive victim entities are inherently disproven by oral data. The condition of families within the Minangkabau matrilineal kinship system became very critical when the primary economic protectors and networks of support, namely the *mamak* (uncles/maternal brothers) (Wulandari & Kadarisman, 2025, p. 2371-2372), adult men, or biological father figures, were forced to hide and withdraw into the forests and remote inland villages to evade arbitrary arrest by the central government's military (Novita, 2021, p. 104). The loss of productive adult male labor within this lineage structure automatically created a vacuum in the roles of protector and breadwinner. Within this vacuum, underage children were structurally forced to step in, fill the role deficiency, and take over the burden of adult physical labor.

To sustain the lives of their families during the uncertain period of forced displacement, these children had to bury any remaining desires to play. Anak-anak dipaksa oleh kondisi perang dan keadaan alam untuk ikut bekerja demi mempertahankan kehidupan keluarga. They were forced by the conditions of war and natural hardships to work alongside adults to maintain their families' survival. Children accompanied their mothers in a guerrilla-like existence, moving in and out of

the forests and cutting through thick underbrush to forage for agricultural products or wild flora, such as ferns, cassava, or any wild leaves that could be boiled and consumed merely to stave off hunger. They lived nomadically, moving from place to place to evade military patrol routes, and slept in makeshift leaf-roofed huts under deeply concerning sanitary, hygienic, and health conditions. The historical memory regarding the severity of this childhood in displacement was recounted in depth by Ima (personal communication, October 22, 2025), one of the survivors of the tragedy:

"Maso lari ka rimbo tu, ikuik urang tuo kama pai, kok ka ladang, sawah. Baju dulu tu dari kulik kayu, Ndak ado baju nan dari kain elok maso kini doh. Makan pun saado nyo se nyo, kok apo nan lai, ubi bagai alah juo."

(When fleeing into the forest back then, we followed our parents wherever they went, to the fields, to the rice paddies. Clothing at that time was made from tree bark. There was nothing as good as what we have now. Even for food, we just had whatever was available. If there was cassava, that was more than enough).

The experience of these Minangkabau children, who shifted roles to become breadwinners and physical laborers at such a young age, represents a highly authentic manifestation of historical agency. War stripped away the innocence of their childhood without mercy, forcing them to shoulder heavy burdens and major responsibilities akin to adults (the phenomenon of premature adulthood). Consequently, entities that should have received complete affection and protection instead became little lifesavers, safeguarding the very survival of their families in the depths of the jungle.

Shifts in Parenting Patterns and Matrilineal Family Dynamics Amidst Conflict

An indirect impact of the PRRI armed upheaval that is rarely touched upon by national historical narratives is the significant shift in the parenting patterns and internal dynamics of the Minangkabau matrilineal family. In the ideal Minangkabau customary structure, the responsibility of raising, educating, and supervising a child is not solely thrust upon the biological mother or father; rather, it constitutes a communal responsibility of the extended family, particularly through the central role of a *mamak* (Junita dkk., 2025, p. 5). However, the war completely devastated this ideal social order.

The absence of the *mamak* and father figures who had gone to wage guerrilla warfare in the forests forced Minangkabau women to become the primary protectors of their families, especially their children amidst village conditions occupied by armed military forces. Generally, women in Minangkabau did not participate in earning a living, serving instead as the inheritors of property (Junita dkk., 2025, p. 5-6). This situation gave rise to a parenting dynamic that was highly protective, stringent, and filled with hyper-vigilance. Interactions between mothers and children during the PRRI period were predominantly dominated by efforts to transfer survival skills rather than formal education. Mothers taught their children how to recognize sounds of danger and the

correct way to hide inside trenches to remain unseen, out of fear of everything unfamiliar around them.

This shift proves that the Minangkabau matrilineal family possesses extraordinary flexibility and resilience when confronted with existential threats. Children growing up under the care of this crisis era were not raised on bedtime fairy tales; instead, they were educated with narratives of vigilance and suspicion toward outsiders. Children were taught to keep family secrets, to never speak carelessly to strangers, and to maintain internal solidarity (*in-group feeling*). Sociologically, the parenting pattern born from the womb of warfare shaped a generation of survivors who possessed a tough, resilient, and highly alert character, though, on the other hand, this came at the heavy cost of losing the tender affection that should ideally be received during childhood.

Psychological Impact and Traumatic Memories of the Conflict Era

The impact of this prolonged and brutal guerrilla war did not merely inflict economic and physical damage; furthermore, it left deep, enduring psychological scars that were even transmitted across generations (Novita, 2021, p. 3). One of the sharpest, most harrowing, and most uniformly shared traumatic memories embedded in the collective memory of the PRRI-era society was the overwhelming fear of airstrikes and the whiz of machine guns. The roar of fighter aircraft propellers belonging to the Indonesian Air Force (*Angkatan Udara Republik Indonesia* or AURI) became the deadliest and most iconic symbol of terror from the sky for children in West Sumatra at that time, spanning from local coastal communities to the rural interior (Afdayeni, 2022, p. 142).

Every time the faint sound of aircraft propellers approaching from the sky broke the silence of the *nagari*, all activities of both children and adults would grind to a halt in a reflex of sheer panic. This fear-filled daily life was clearly recorded through the account of Syamsudin (personal communication, August 4, 2025), a local community member who witnessed it firsthand: "*Takuik, kalau tadanga bunyi badantuang, manenmbak atau nampak kapa tabang (pesawat), kami lah lari masuk banda (selokan) atau lubang-lubang tampek bagandok.*" (We were terrified. If we heard cannons or saw an airplane, we would run into the ditches or hiding holes). The instinctive and kinesthetic physical response of these children, fleeing, diving into dirty, muddy ditches, or hiding in the dark within narrow underground shelters became a daily routine to evade gunfire.

On the other hand, the traumatic memory was recorded through physical suffering during the period of flight, particularly regarding the loss of comfort even for mere rest or sleep. They recounted how harrowing and agonizing it was to sleep for weeks on end in the depths of the wild jungle, inside makeshift shelters roofed only with sago palm (*rumbia*) leaves and floored by damp earth. The feeling of constantly having to be alert and ready to run at any moment in the pitch black of night made a peaceful night's sleep a luxury that went unexperienced for years throughout the period of conflict.

For Rukiah, the memories of the PRRI era consistently trigger a trauma that remains profoundly intense, even into her twilight years today. She recounted that the experience of constantly having to stay alert to the sound of gunfire caused her to develop excessive anxiety and an exaggerated startle response (*hypervigilance*). To this day, every time she recalls the PRRI events or hears a loud boom such as thunder, she is instantly drawn back to those wartime experiences (Rukiah, personal communication, August 6, 2025).

The bitter memories of the informant, Supik Demi, are closely intertwined with the trauma of forced separation from her home, a place that had always symbolized safety. She recounted how heartbreaking and traumatic it was to flee and abandon her hometown in a desperate rush, carrying nothing but the clothes on her back. She still remembers her sense of despair as she looked back at her home from a distance before entering the forest. Her greatest trauma was the feeling of losing her sanctuary (*homelessness*) and living aimlessly as a fugitive in her own birthplace, a spatial crisis that deeply shattered a young child's sense of security (Demi, personal communication, August 13, 2025).

The experience of a nomadic lifestyle, the shadows of lingering fear, and the threat of death that could strike at any moment for nearly three years during the upheaval did not simply vanish when they reach adulthood. The extreme tension experienced by these children settled deeply into their subconscious, forming permanent psychological wounds highly identical to the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or resulting in deep trauma experienced by individuals on a large scale such as war (Muhlisin & Widhi, 2025, p. 2). Through the fragments of oral history recounted by survivors, this study demonstrates that childhood emotional wounds can develop into trauma that persists well into adulthood. The anxiety that abruptly surges upon hearing a loud boom, the apprehension felt when seeing military personnel in uniform, and the dark memories of the roar of fighter aircraft (*kapatabang*) that once split the *nagari* sky have, in fact, continued to be carried for decades, lingering even as their physical bodies age (Demi, personal communication, August 13, 2025).

These empirical realities simultaneously reinforce the novelty and sociological positioning of this study. For a long time, national historical narratives have often framed conflicts as ending the moment a peace agreement is signed. However, it is not that simple. Although political peace instruments have been agreed upon and the gunfire has long ceased on paper, the war itself is never truly over. It has merely shifted places, settling in and continuously reproducing a silent sequence of trauma within the depths of the survivor children's souls.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the portrait of daily life (*everyday life*) detailed above, this study concludes that the historiography of the PRRI in West Sumatra (1958-1961) must no longer be reduced solely to a political dispute between regional elites and the central military. At the grassroots level, this event

transformed into a humanitarian tragedy and an extraordinary social crisis that devastated the normal lives of civilians, including children in remote *nagari*. The prolonged escalation of military operations forcibly stripped away fundamental rights: the freedom to attend school was shattered, the transmission of culture in the *surau* was disrupted, outdoor play spaces were seized by the enforcement of military curfews, and nighttime peace was replaced by the terror of gunfire and the roar of fighter aircraft. Far beyond merely summarizing physical and psychological suffering, the most crucial finding of this study asserts that Minangkabau children during the PRRI period were not simply passive victims resigned to their circumstances. Amidst the pressure of an economic blockade that paralyzed markets and the absence of adult male protective figures (*mamak* and fathers) who had gone to wage guerrilla warfare, these children instead demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for historical resilience. They were able to navigate the military terror, take over parental responsibilities, and transform into the economic backbones of their families by laboring and sweating in the forests and fields at a very tender age. Sociologically, the PRRI armed conflict forced this generation to undergo a phase of "premature adulthood," where traumatic memories ranging from wearing tree-bark clothing to a lifelong phobia of *kapatabang* stand as an honest portrait of the Minangkabau people's mental fortitude in surviving the absolute nadir of their history.

The primary strength of this study's findings lies in its success in elevating history from below, thereby giving voice to vulnerable groups that have long been silenced and ignored in official state archives and military operation documents. The oral testimonies of the survivors serve as invaluable primary evidence for reconstructing the social reality of past crises. Nevertheless, this study is not without its share of shortcomings and limitations. The main weakness of this study is its heavy reliance on the collective memory of elderly informants, as human memory is vulnerable to distortion, fragmentation, or fading after more than six decades have passed since the events occurred. Additionally, the spatial scope of this research is still limited to the Pasaman region, meaning it does not yet fully represent the diverse experiences of Minangkabau children in other areas, such as coastal regions or urban centers, which may have experienced different dynamics of interaction with the military. Acknowledging these limitations opens vast possibilities and opportunities for further research. Future studies could expand the geographic scope of research to other PRRI based regions, compare childhood experiences between children in rural and urban areas, or employ a multidisciplinary approach by involving intergenerational clinical psychology to dissect the transmission of war trauma more deeply. The development of such research will further enrich national historiography and complete the jigsaw puzzle of PRRI's social history in a more holistic and comprehensive manner.

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