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Social recognition as a mechanism for children's identity restoration: a study of the porayamata practice in the pamona indigenous community

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ABSTRACT

Children's identity within Indigenous communities is constructed not only through family relationships but also through social recognition and community acceptance. This study aims to examine how the Porayamata practice reconstructs the identity of ana ngkadoe within the Pamona Indigenous community and to explore its implications for social justice counseling. The study employed a qualitative approach with a critical ethnographic design, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that ana ngkadoe experience limited recognition within the kinship system, which affects their social standing. Through the involvement of families, the Dewan Adat, customary symbols, and community recognition, Porayamata reconstructs children's identities as legitimate members of both the family and the broader community. These findings suggest that identity restoration requires institutionalized social recognition embedded in cultural practices, thereby extending the perspective of social justice counseling, which has traditionally focused primarily on individual-level change.



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Introduction

Children's identity is not formed solely through individual psychological development but also through social relationships that enable children to recognize themselves and gain acceptance as legitimate members of both their families and communities. Contemporary scholarship on belonging demonstrates that a sense of belonging develops through the interaction of opportunities for acceptance, the capacity to establish relationships, the motivation to connect with others, and the ways individuals interpret responses from their social environment (Allen et al., 2021). Identity development is likewise shaped by family, cultural, community, and broader social contexts, all of which influence how children make meaning of their personal experiences. Sirin et al. (2024) argue that understanding child and adolescent identity must move beyond individualistic models because the lives of most young people unfold within social and cultural contexts that are far more diverse than the Western settings that have traditionally dominated developmental psychology research. This empirical foundation is consistent with the classic proposition that the need to belong and maintain meaningful social relationships constitutes a fundamental psychological need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Vansteenkiste et al., 2023).

Social recognition is essential because acceptance not only fosters interpersonal comfort but also affirms an individual's status within a group. Conversely, rejection and exclusion can diminish one's sense of belonging,

social support, and opportunities for meaningful participation. According to stigma theory, these consequences arise when a particular difference is labeled, associated with stereotypes, used to separate individuals from the dominant group, and followed by status loss or discrimination within unequal power relations (Fan et al., 2021). Accordingly, identity-related problems do not always originate from an individual's inability to accept themselves. Under certain circumstances, identity-related harm is instead produced by a social environment that fails to provide the recognition necessary for individuals to establish themselves as legitimate members of their families and communities.

The relationship between recognition and identity formation is firmly grounded in Recognition Theory. Honneth (1996) explains that individuals develop positive self-relations through three spheres of recognition: love within primary relationships, recognition of rights, and social esteem for one's qualities and contributions. Taylor & Gutmann (1997) conceptualizes identity as inherently dialogical, arguing that individuals' understanding of themselves is shaped through language, evaluation, and the responses of others. Hargreaves et al. (2024) further demonstrate that injustice cannot be understood solely as an issue of resource distribution but also involves institutionalized patterns that prevent certain individuals from participating as equal members of society. Ricoeur (2007), together with Ikäheimo & Laitinen (2011), extends this discussion by distinguishing the mere acknowledgment of a person's existence from normative recognition that genuinely affirms them as a subject possessing dignity. Collectively, this body of scholarship provides a conceptual foundation for understanding that identity requires not only emotional acceptance but also relational, social, and institutional legitimacy.

Nevertheless, identity research continues to exhibit significant contextual imbalance. Sirin et al. (2024) found that identity development research remains overwhelmingly dominated by Western populations, despite the fact that most of the world's children and adolescents live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This imbalance risks producing theories that primarily conceptualize identity formation as an individual project while giving insufficient attention to the roles of lineage, community, cultural authority, and collective rituals. In societies where kinship constitutes the basis of social membership, self-identification is determined not only by the question, "Who am I?" but also by "Whom do I come from?", "Where do I belong?", and "Who recognizes my social position?" Consequently, examining Recognition Theory within Indigenous communities is important not merely to incorporate local contexts but also to broaden theoretical understanding of the social mechanisms through which identity acquires legitimacy.

This perspective aligns closely with social justice counseling, which views psychological problems as inseparable from discrimination, cultural marginalization, unequal power relations, and structural barriers. Rather than focusing exclusively on helping individuals adapt to their environments, this approach shifts attention toward analyzing the social conditions that generate suffering and restrict meaningful participation (Burholt et al., 2020; Osei Baah et al., 2018; Ratts et al., 2016). Counselors are therefore expected not only to understand clients' emotions and behaviors but also to consider family relationships, cultural norms, institutions, and social practices that determine who is accepted and who is excluded. Although social justice has become a central orientation within the counseling profession, Dollarhide et al. (2024) found that articles explicitly addressing social justice remain relatively limited across counseling journals. This finding suggests that translating social justice principles into community-based research and practice continues to require further development.

This need becomes even more relevant within Indigenous contexts. Indigenous psychology scholarship demonstrates that Indigenous identity and well-being must be understood through the interrelationships among historical experience, colonialism, social inequality, discrimination, intergenerational transmission of values, collective identity, and Indigenous knowledge systems (González et al., 2022). Research on Indigenous resilience likewise indicates that the capacity to endure and recover depends not solely on individual capabilities but also on relationships with family, community, language, culture, ancestors, land, and collective resources (Usher et al., 2021). Cultural practices, therefore, should not merely be regarded as the background against which psychological problems occur. Rather, they embody systems of meaning and relational mechanisms through which communities restore connectedness, validate changes in social status, and rebuild a sense of belonging.

Contemporary evidence on community-based mental health interventions further reinforces this perspective. Venugopal et al. (2021) found that Indigenous mental wellness initiatives commonly integrate cultural teachings, traditional activities, land-based practices, knowledge exchange, family involvement, the participation of Indigenous Elders, and community leadership. Although the quality of program evaluations and the extent of Indigenous leadership vary across initiatives, culture consistently emerges as an essential component of interventions that are both socially relevant and culturally safe. Dutta (2025) further argues that Indigenous communities should not be positioned as passive recipients of externally developed service models. Instead,

communities should retain the authority to determine whether professional services will be accepted, adapted, integrated with Indigenous knowledge, or rejected altogether. These findings do not imply that every customary ritual should automatically be regarded as therapy or professional counseling. Rather, customary rituals and Indigenous institutions may serve as valuable sources of knowledge for understanding how healing occurs through relationships, symbols, social responsibilities, and community authority.

The Pamona Indigenous community in Central Sulawesi provides an important context for examining these relationships. Ethnographic documentation of Pamona society describes a social order structured around kinship, marriage as an alliance between families, collective responsibility, deliberation, and customary regulations that maintain community cohesion (Adriani & Kruijt, 1912; Ayi, 2023; Sebrero, 2026; Sigilipu & Sigilipu, 2015). These communal values are reflected in the philosophy of Sintuwu Maroso, which emphasizes collective life, solidarity, and strength cultivated through mutual support. Within such a social structure, a child's identity depends not only on biological relationships with parents but also on the clarity of the child's position within lineage, family, and the Indigenous community. The 2021 publications cited in this study represent republications or edited versions of earlier ethnographic documentation; accordingly, they are used as historical-cultural sources rather than as new empirical evidence concerning the contemporary condition of the Pamona community.

Within Pamona society, the term *ana ngkadoe* refers to children born outside a marriage recognized under customary law. This status is associated with ambiguity regarding the child's position within the kinship structure, particularly in relation to paternal genealogy, family identity, and acceptance within the customary social order. The present study demonstrates that the issue extends beyond birth status or administrative classification to encompass how children are positioned, identified, and treated in everyday social life. Violations of customary marriage norms may be resolved through the mechanism of *giwu* as a form of accountability and restoration of social order. However, resolving an adult's customary violation does not automatically restore the child's genealogical status. In other words, resolving customary wrongdoing and restoring a child's identity are two related yet distinct processes that do not necessarily occur simultaneously.

Stigma theory helps explain how differences in birth status may develop into labeling, social separation, status loss, and restricted participation (Charlesworth & Hatzenbuehler, 2025). However, the experiences of *ana ngkadoe* exhibit characteristics that extend beyond conventional understandings of stigma. The primary source of stigma lies not in the child's personal attributes but in the ambiguity surrounding the legitimacy of the child's position within the genealogical structure that underpins social relationships in Pamona society. A child may be biologically and socially present within the community while still lacking full recognition within the kinship lineage. To capture this distinctive phenomenon, this study introduces the concept of genealogical stigma, defined as a form of exclusion that operates through ambiguity or denial of an individual's position within systems of descent and kinship. This concept is not proposed as a universal category or a replacement for existing stigma theory; rather, it is offered as an analytical lens derived from the Pamona context that warrants examination in other kinship-based societies.

The Pamona community recognizes *Porayamata* as a customary practice associated with changing the status of *ana ngkadoe*. Based on the context and empirical findings of this study, the process involves family deliberation, willingness to assume responsibility, symbolic acts, formal ratification by the *Dewan Adat*, affirmation of family identity, public testimony, and community participation. This process does not merely declare that a child is personally accepted; rather, it transforms private acceptance into recognition that carries both social and customary legitimacy. Because detailed descriptions of the stages, symbols, and meanings of *Porayamata* are derived primarily from this study's field data and Pamona-specific documents, the practice is not presented as a universal characteristic of all Indigenous communities. Nor does this article equate *Porayamata* with professional counseling services. Instead, *Porayamata* is analyzed as a community-based restorative practice that offers conceptual insights for social justice counseling.

This review of the literature reveals three major research gaps. First, although Recognition Theory has explained the relationships among acceptance, dignity, rights, social esteem, and identity formation, its application to customary rituals that generate genealogical legitimacy remains limited. Second, while stigma theory has explained labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination, it has not specifically conceptualized exclusion rooted in ambiguity regarding an individual's position within a kinship system. Third, although social justice counseling emphasizes interventions at the individual, relational, community, and systemic levels, the role of local cultural institutions as sources of knowledge for identity restoration has received little attention within the counseling literature. These gaps are significant because identity-related harm produced by social rejection cannot always be restored solely through changes in an individual's cognition or emotions. Restoration may also require changes in how families, institutions, and communities recognize an individual's social position.

Building upon these gaps, this article conceptualizes Porayamata as an institution of customary recognition—a cultural mechanism through which children's identities are reconstructed via family recognition, genealogical legitimacy, customary authority, symbolic action, and community acceptance. This study aims to analyze how recognition operates within the Porayamata practice, how this process relates to changes in the status of *ana ngkadoe* within the Pamona kinship system, and what implications these findings hold for Recognition Theory and culturally responsive social justice counseling. Conceptually, the article introduces the notion of genealogical stigma to explain exclusion arising from ambiguity in kinship status and employs the concept of an institution of customary recognition to interpret the social function of Porayamata. Both concepts are proposed cautiously as analytical lenses derived from a specific cultural context rather than as universally established categories.

Accordingly, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How do family recognition, customary legitimacy, and community acceptance operate within the Porayamata practice? (2) How are these processes related to changes in the status and identity of *ana ngkadoe* within the Pamona kinship system? and (3) What implications do the findings on Porayamata have for Recognition Theory and the development of culturally responsive social justice counseling? Through these questions, the study seeks not merely to describe a local customary ritual but also to examine how a community constructs mechanisms for restoring identities that have been harmed by unequal structures of recognition. This perspective creates a dialogue among Recognition Theory, stigma studies, Indigenous psychology, and social justice counseling while preserving the cultural distinctiveness of the Pamona Indigenous community.

Method

This study employed a critical ethnographic approach to examine how the Porayamata practice shapes the processes of social recognition and identity reconstruction among children (*ana ngkadoe*) within the Pamona Indigenous community in Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. This approach was selected because the study sought not only to describe the stages of this customary practice but also to analyze how power relations, kinship systems, customary norms, and structures of social recognition operate in constructing and restoring an individual's identity. Unlike descriptive ethnography, which primarily focuses on documenting culture, critical ethnography enables researchers to examine cultural practices as mechanisms that generate legitimacy, inclusion, and social exclusion (Madison, 2005; Shih, 2019; Thomas, 1993). In this study, Porayamata is understood as a cultural institution that represents the way the Pamona community reconstructs recognition of children through the family, the Dewan Adat, and the broader community.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in the Porayamata practice and the social life of the Pamona community. The participants included customary leaders, religious leaders, village officials, members of the Indigenous community, families who had participated in the implementation of Porayamata, and individuals with lived experience as *ana ngkadoe*. This diversity of participants enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives on the recognition process, including those of customary authorities, family members, and individuals who had personally experienced changes in their social status. Data collection continued until the information obtained demonstrated recurring patterns and no longer generated new conceptual categories relevant to the objectives of the study.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted to understand the implementation of Porayamata, interactions among family members, the roles of the Dewan Adat and religious leaders, and community responses throughout the customary process. The in-depth interviews explored participants' experiences regarding the meaning of *ana ngkadoe* status, family acceptance, the implementation of the ritual, changes in social standing, and experiences of gaining or losing recognition within community life. In addition, the study analyzed various documents, including customary archives, church records, village documents, ethnographic literature on the Pamona community, and documentation of Porayamata ceremonies obtained with the consent of the relevant parties. The use of these multiple data sources was intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon while facilitating triangulation of information obtained through interviews and observations.

Data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, as developed by Braun & Clarke (2006, 2021). The analysis began with repeated readings of interview transcripts, field notes, and research documents to develop a comprehensive understanding of the dataset. Initial coding was then conducted on data segments relevant to the research focus. The resulting codes were subsequently organized into preliminary themes, which were continuously refined through iterative reflection and comparison across the dataset until themes were identified that adequately explained the mechanisms of social recognition within the Porayamata practice. The final themes were developed interpretively through dialogue between the empirical findings and Recognition Theory,

stigma theory, the concept of rites of passage, and the perspective of social justice counseling. Within this study, themes are understood as products of analytical construction emerging from the reflective interaction among empirical data, the researcher's positionality, and the study's conceptual framework.

The trustworthiness of the study was established according to the four criteria proposed by Lincoln (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through source and methodological triangulation by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence, complemented by member checking with several key informants. Transferability was supported through rich contextual descriptions of the kinship system, customary governance, and the Porayamata practice, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to contexts with similar characteristics. Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of all stages of the research process, whereas confirmability was strengthened through the use of reflexive memos, peer debriefing, and continuous examination of the relationship between the researchers' interpretations and the empirical data on which they were based.

The study also incorporated the principle of reflexivity by recognizing the researcher as an integral part of the knowledge-construction process. Throughout the research, the researcher continuously reflected on personal assumptions, academic background, relationships with participants, and the potential influence of these factors on both data collection and interpretation. These reflections were documented through reflexive memos and discussed periodically with peer researchers to minimize interpretive bias. This study does not seek to provide a normative evaluation of the Porayamata practice or to characterize it as a form of professional counseling. Rather, it aims to understand how the Pamona community interprets the practice as a mechanism of social recognition, genealogical legitimacy, and children's identity reconstruction within its own cultural framework.

All stages of the research were conducted in accordance with fundamental principles of research ethics, including respect for participants' dignity, confidentiality of information, and voluntary informed consent. All participants received a clear explanation of the study's objectives, interview procedures, intended use of the data, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and assurances that their identities would remain confidential. Given that the research addressed issues related to birth status, family relationships, and experiences of stigma, interviews were conducted with particular sensitivity to participants' emotional well-being, and questions that might have caused retraumatization were deliberately avoided. All research data were stored securely and used exclusively for research purposes. In reporting the findings, the researchers sought to avoid reproducing stigma or oversimplifying the cultural practices of the Pamona community, thereby ensuring that the interpretations remained respectful of the social context and customary values underlying those practices.

Results and Discussions

Analysis of the interview, observational, and documentary data indicates that Porayamata is not merely a customary ritual for changing the status of *ana ngkadoe* to *ana ngkoro*. Rather, it functions as a mechanism of social recognition that progressively reconstructs children's identities through transformations in genealogical relationships, customary legitimacy, and community acceptance. The findings demonstrate that identity reconstruction unfolds through four interconnected processes: (1) the emergence of genealogical stigma, (2) the development of genealogical recognition, (3) the functioning of Porayamata as an institution of customary recognition, and (4) the implications of these processes for the development of social justice counseling. The relationships among these processes are summarized in Figure 1.

The conceptual model illustrates that children's identity reconstruction occurs through the mechanism of social recognition embedded within the Porayamata practice. Social exclusion gives rise to genealogical stigma, placing children in a liminal identity condition. Through successive stages of family acceptance, customary legitimacy, and community recognition, Porayamata facilitates identity reconstruction, enabling children to regain social recognition within both the kinship system and community life. These findings provide a conceptual foundation for developing social justice counseling practices that integrate family, community, and cultural institutional dimensions.

Genealogical Stigma: Identity Between Social Exclusion and Kinship Ambiguity

The first finding demonstrates that the status of *ana ngkadoe* does not simply refer to children born outside a marriage recognized under customary law. Within Pamona society, this status develops into a social category that influences how individuals are identified, positioned, and treated within the kinship system. Children may grow up with their mothers and maternal extended families while remaining in an ambiguous position because their genealogical relationship with the paternal lineage has not yet received customary legitimacy. Consequently, the primary challenge experienced by these children lies not in the biological circumstances of their birth but in the ambiguity of their social position within the kinship network.

Field data indicate that this experience is produced through a series of interconnected social processes. Initially, customary violations (*kasalaa*) are attributed to adults through the mechanism of *giwu*, yet the social consequences do not end once the sanction has been fulfilled. Narratives surrounding the violation continue to attach to the child through family conversations, collective memory, and the ways in which community members explain the child's origins. As a result, children are evaluated not on the basis of their own actions or personal character but through genealogical relationships regarded as incomplete. In several cases, this condition manifested in restrictions on children's participation in certain customary practices, limitations concerning the use of family identity, and repeated questioning regarding their origins.

The findings indicate that stigma operates through five interrelated mechanisms: labeling, status differentiation, genealogical ambiguity, restrictions on symbolic participation, and the reproduction of social narratives. These mechanisms do not function independently; rather, they reinforce one another to produce a relational experience of exclusion. Children experience not only negative evaluations but also persistent uncertainty regarding their place within the family and the broader community. Consequently, the stigma observed in this context is more appropriately understood as a problem of social relationships than merely one of individual perception.

This interpretation extends the classical understanding of stigma. Goffman (2009) conceptualized stigma as a discrediting attribute that causes individuals to be perceived as lacking a complete social identity. In the case of *ana ngkadoe*, however, the attribute that becomes discrediting is not a personal characteristic but the genealogical origin attributed to the child. Thus, the discredited identity arises not from the individual's own actions but from a social structure that links birth, customary marriage, and membership within a kinship group.

Goffman's explanation becomes even more relevant when integrated with the stigma model developed by Andersen et al. (2022). According to their framework, stigma emerges through processes of labeling, stereotyping, social separation, status loss, and discrimination operating within unequal power relations. All of these elements are evident in the experiences of *ana ngkadoe*. Labeling occurs through references to birth status, stereotypes develop through assumptions that children bear the consequences of their parents' violations, and status loss is reflected in the ambiguity surrounding children's relationships with their paternal lineage. However, the findings reveal that the primary source of status loss is not personal attributes but the absence of recognition of an individual's genealogical position within the kinship system. In other words, power relations operate through family and customary structures that determine who is recognized as a legitimate member.

The findings also provide a new perspective on the concept of self-stigma proposed by Styła & Switaj (2023). They argue that repeatedly experienced stigma may become internalized, leading individuals to accept society's negative evaluations as part of their self-identity. In the context of *ana ngkadoe*, this internalization extends beyond feelings of shame or inferiority to include uncertainty regarding one's right to belong to the family and the community. Accordingly, children's psychological experiences cannot be separated from the social structures that continually remind them of the ambiguity surrounding their genealogical relationships.

Another finding supporting this interpretation concerns the experience of *eya mata*, a form of shame experienced not only by individuals but also by the extended family because the violation is perceived as affecting collective dignity. Unlike shame as an individual emotion, *eya mata* emerges from the ways in which the community perceives and discusses a particular event. This sense of shame is produced through social observation, everyday conversations, and concern about others' judgments. Consequently, the experiences of both the child and the mother are shaped not only by family relationships but also by social dynamics that preserve collective memories of the violation. In some cases, these experiences are further reinforced by certain institutional practices when messages of acceptance are not fully reflected in the treatment of the mother and child.

Based on these findings, this study proposes the concept of genealogical stigma as a conceptual synthesis. Unlike conventional understandings of stigma as a discrediting personal attribute, genealogical stigma refers to processes of labeling, status loss, and restrictions on social participation arising from ambiguity or denial of an individual's position within a system of kinship. This concept is not intended to replace existing stigma theory but to extend it by demonstrating that, in kinship-based societies, the primary source of social exclusion may lie within genealogical structures rather than personal attributes. Accordingly, the identity-related harm experienced by *ana ngkadoe* should be understood not merely as an individual psychological issue but as a consequence of social recognition structures that have yet to provide a clear genealogical place.

Genealogical Recognition: From Family Acceptance to Customary Legitimacy

The second finding indicates that the restoration of the identity of *ana ngkadoe* does not begin with the implementation of *Porayamata* itself but rather when the family recognizes that the child's genealogical ambiguity constitutes a shared problem requiring collective resolution. Recognition, therefore, does not emerge

as a ceremonial act performed on the day of the ritual but as a social process that develops through family deliberation, moral willingness to assume responsibility, the involvement of the Dewan Adat, and the legitimacy conferred by the community. Field data demonstrate that changes in a child's status occur only when all of these actors reach a shared understanding that the child deserves a clearly recognized place within the kinship structure.

This process reveals a fundamental distinction between private acceptance and genealogical recognition. Many participants explained that a child may be accepted, cared for, and loved by the mother and her extended family from birth. However, such acceptance does not automatically transform the child's position within the kinship system. Children may still face questions regarding the family name they should use, their relationship with the paternal family, and their place within the family genealogy. In other words, family affection provides an emotional foundation for children's development but does not fully eliminate the ambiguity surrounding their social status as embedded in their genealogical identity.

The findings demonstrate that recognition unfolds progressively. The first stage involves relational acceptance, in which individuals or families willingly acknowledge the child as part of their familial relationships. The second stage involves institutional recognition, whereby the Dewan Adat formally legitimizes the child's change in status. The third stage involves communal recognition, in which this change is witnessed and accepted by the community through the implementation of Porayamata. Consequently, the child's new identity is not created through a single event but through the cumulative recognition that occurs across multiple levels of social relationships.

This interpretation suggests that identity restoration within Pamona society is not merely a matter of changing individuals' perceptions of themselves. Rather, restoration occurs when the social relationships that previously generated ambiguity are restructured through collective action. Recognition, therefore, is not simply a declaration that a child is accepted but a process of reorganizing the relationships among the child, the family, the lineage, customary institutions, and the community.

These findings closely correspond with Recognition Theory as developed by Honneth (1996). Honneth argues that positive self-relations develop through three forms of recognition: love, rights, and social esteem. All three forms are evident within the Porayamata practice, although they are expressed through culturally distinctive forms. Love is embodied in the family's willingness to accept the child as a member of the family. Rights are manifested through customary ratification, which establishes the child as a legitimate member of the family. Social esteem emerges when the community accepts the child's new status and treats the child accordingly. Thus, the findings do not contradict Honneth's framework but rather demonstrate that the media through which recognition is expressed within Indigenous communities may differ from those characteristic of the modern societies in which the theory was originally developed.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that recognition within Pamona society extends beyond the act of being recognized toward what McArthur (2021) describes as the movement from identification to mutual recognition. Initially, the community acknowledges the child's existence as part of a social event. However, such acknowledgment does not provide the child with a clearly defined position within the kinship structure. Through Porayamata, recognition evolves into a reciprocal relationship in which the family, the Dewan Adat, and the community collectively acknowledge that the child occupies a legitimate place within the community. Identity transformation therefore arises not from unilateral recognition but from a shared social agreement that establishes a new relationship between the individual and the community.

Ricoeur's perspective also clarifies why genealogical recognition cannot be reduced to administrative or biological recognition. A child may know the identity of their biological father yet still lack normative recognition as a legitimate family member. Through Porayamata, however, this relationship acquires social legitimacy that enables the child to enact their identity without being continually overshadowed by uncertainty concerning their origins. Thus, what is restored is not merely information about ancestry but the social meaning of genealogical relationships themselves.

The findings are likewise consistent with Ikäheimo's distinction between identification and normative recognition. According to Ikäheimo, an individual is not genuinely recognized simply because others know of their existence; true recognition occurs only when that individual is treated as a person possessing dignity and moral standing within social relationships. This distinction is particularly evident in the Pamona context. The existence of *ana ngkadoe* has never been questioned as a biological fact, yet their social status remains incomplete until customary legitimacy is conferred. Consequently, Porayamata functions as a mechanism that transforms biological identification into normative recognition through the combined actions of the family, customary authority, and communal witnessing.

The dialogue between the empirical findings and Recognition Theory demonstrates that the decisive factor is not biological relatedness itself but genealogical legitimacy. Biological relationships provide the factual basis of a person's origin, whereas genealogical relationships determine whether that origin receives legitimate social recognition. In kinship-based societies such as the Pamona, such legitimacy carries significant implications for the use of family names, positions within genealogical lineages, social rights and obligations, and acceptance within communal life. Accordingly, the central challenge facing *ana ngkadoe* is not the absence of biological relationships but the incompleteness of the social recognition attached to those relationships.

Based on these findings, the study proposes the concept of genealogical recognition as a conceptual synthesis. Genealogical recognition is defined as a process of social recognition that legitimately positions an individual within family relationships, lineage, and community through the integration of relational acceptance, institutional legitimacy, and communal recognition. Unlike prevailing conceptions of recognition that emphasize interpersonal relationships or formal legal rights, this concept demonstrates that, within kinship-based Indigenous societies, recognition also possesses a genealogical dimension that fundamentally determines an individual's social position.

This concept is not intended as a universal category applicable to all Indigenous societies. Rather, genealogical recognition represents a conceptual abstraction derived specifically from the context of Pamona society and the practice of *Porayamata*. Nevertheless, these findings contribute to the further development of Recognition Theory by demonstrating that recognition is not always mediated through state institutions or individual relationships but may also be produced through customary institutions possessing the authority to reconstruct genealogical relationships and transform an individual's social identity. Consequently, identity restoration within Indigenous communities begins not primarily with changes in individuals' self-perceptions but with changes in the ways families, customary institutions, and communities collectively recognize them as legitimate members of social life.

Porayamata as an Institution of Customary Recognition

The findings indicate that *Porayamata* cannot be understood merely as a sequence of cultural symbols marking the transformation of *ana ngkadoe* into *ana ngkoro*. Field data demonstrate that this transformation occurs only after a process involving the family, the *Dewan Adat*, community leaders, and the broader community within a mechanism governed by shared rules, authority, procedures, and socially recognized consequences. Accordingly, the primary function of *Porayamata* is not simply to declare that a child has been accepted but to generate recognition endowed with social legitimacy, thereby producing a genuine transformation in the child's genealogical status within the community.

Analysis of the implementation process reveals that recognition is constructed through three interconnected stages. The first stage consists of family deliberation, during which all relevant parties discuss the child's status, the willingness of the receiving family to accept the child, and the responsibilities that must be fulfilled. At this stage, the family does not merely resolve an internal matter but collectively acknowledges that the child's genealogical ambiguity constitutes a social issue requiring a communal resolution. The willingness to accept the child therefore represents a moral commitment that precedes all subsequent ritual actions.

The second stage involves customary ratification through symbolic acts. At this point, recognition moves beyond the private sphere of the family into the public domain through the presence of the *Dewan Adat*, extended family members, community leaders, and witnesses. The presentation of customary animals, the holding of the ceremonial rope, carrying the child, declarations of acceptance, the conferral of family identity, prayers, and other symbolic acts are not merely ceremonial elements. Rather, they constitute the means through which the child's change of status becomes publicly known and collectively recognized. These symbols derive their significance not from any intrinsic power but from their performance in accordance with customary procedures that are collectively understood and accepted.

The third stage consists of *molimbu*, or communal dining, which serves as an affirmation of communal recognition. The conclusion of the ritual does not signify the completion of the recognition process. Instead, through sharing a communal meal, the community publicly affirms that previously disrupted social relationships have been restored. The participation of all parties in the communal feast transforms customary ratification into a collective experience, confirming that the child has been accepted as a legitimate member of communal life. Consequently, recognition extends beyond the decision of the *Dewan Adat* and is sustained through social acceptance embodied in everyday relationships.

These three stages demonstrate that *Porayamata* functions as a social institution rather than merely as a cultural ritual. What transforms the child's identity is not any single symbol but the broader social structure that enables those symbols to acquire meaning. Without the family's willingness, the symbols lose their relational foundation. Without the *Dewan Adat*, they lack normative legitimacy. Without the community, they lose public

recognition. In other words, the effectiveness of Porayamata derives from the interaction among actors, norms, authority, and collective participation that together constitute an institution of recognition.

This interpretation broadens existing understandings of rites within Indigenous societies. van Genneep & Kertzer (2019) argued that rites of passage move individuals from one social status to another through the phases of separation, liminality, and incorporation. The findings support this framework while also demonstrating that, within Pamona society, status transformation results not solely from ritual transition but also from the process of social negotiation that precedes the ritual itself. The liminality experienced by *ana ngkadoe* does not automatically end with the performance of the ceremony; rather, it concludes only when the family, the Dewan Adat, and the community collectively recognize the child's new status.

Turner et al. (2011) conception of liminality also acquires an additional dimension through these findings. Turner describes the liminal phase as a transitional period during which an individual's previous identity has been relinquished while the new identity has not yet been fully established. Within the context of Porayamata, however, this liminal phase represents not only an individual's symbolic transition but also a space for social negotiation in which all actors construct a shared consensus concerning the child's new identity. Thus, liminality is experienced not only by *ana ngkadoe* but also by the family and the community as they collectively transform their social relationships.

The findings further demonstrate that recognition within Porayamata is produced not solely through interpersonal interaction but also through a process of institutionalization. Berger & Luckmann (2011) explain that social reality is constructed through the interconnected processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. This pattern is clearly reflected in the Porayamata practice. The family's willingness to accept the child constitutes an act of externalizing values that initially exist at the relational level. The Dewan Adat subsequently objectifies this decision by conferring normative legitimacy upon the child's new social status. Finally, the community internalizes this transformation through public witnessing and continued social interaction following the ritual. Accordingly, the child's new identity is not merely declared but institutionalized as a shared social reality.

Berger and Luckmann's perspective helps explain why identity transformation endures beyond the ritual itself. The child's new identity does not depend solely on the memory of those who accepted the child but is sustained by social institutions that continually reproduce its meaning through everyday social practices. Consequently, Porayamata should be understood not as a single ceremonial event but as an institutional mechanism that ensures the long-term social continuity of the child's transformed status.

This institutional character becomes even more apparent when analyzed through Catherine Bell (1992) theory of ritual. Bell argues that rituals do not merely represent social values but actively construct, organize, and legitimize social relationships. The findings demonstrate that the symbolic actions within Porayamata operate performatively. Carrying the child, holding the ceremonial rope, presenting customary animals, conferring the family name, and sharing a communal meal do not merely symbolize acceptance; rather, they create the conditions under which such acceptance becomes legitimate according to customary law and recognized by the community. Thus, these symbols derive their effectiveness because they are performed by actors possessing recognized authority and witnessed by a community that accepts the social consequences of these actions.

The synthesis of the empirical findings and theoretical perspectives indicates that the primary strength of Porayamata lies not in its ritual symbols but in its capacity to transform the structure of social recognition. Before the ritual, the child's relationship with the family and community exists in a contested state. After the entire process has been completed, these relationships are redefined through customary legitimacy, thereby providing the child with a new social foundation for identity. Consequently, the transformation produced is not merely symbolic but institutional, influencing how the community recognizes, identifies, and treats the child in everyday life.

Based on these findings, this study proposes the concept of an Indigenous Institution of Recognition as a conceptual contribution. An institution of customary recognition is defined as a cultural mechanism that collectively produces identity transformation through the integration of customary norms, Indigenous authority, symbolic action, and community participation. Unlike approaches that primarily conceptualize recognition as an interpersonal relationship or the conferral of rights by the state, this concept demonstrates that Indigenous communities possess social institutions capable of independently generating recognition through their own cultural resources.

This contribution should be interpreted with appropriate caution. The present study does not claim that all Indigenous communities possess institutions of recognition identical to Porayamata. Rather, the findings

demonstrate that, within the Pamona context, identity reconstruction occurs because customary institutions possess the authority to transform genealogical relationships into socially legitimate ones. Accordingly, Porayamata enriches Recognition Theory by illustrating that recognition may be generated not only through interpersonal relationships or state institutions but also through living customary institutions that possess cultural legitimacy and are acknowledged by the community as moral authorities in shaping an individual's social identity.

Implications for Social Justice Counseling

The findings demonstrate that the vulnerability experienced by *ana ngkadoe* cannot be understood solely as an individual psychological issue. Within the Pamona community, wounded identity is shaped through the complex interaction of family relationships, kinship systems, customary authority, the broader community, and, in certain cases, institutional religious practices. Consequently, the primary source of children's suffering lies not merely in their internal emotional experiences but also in the structures of social recognition that determine how they are recognized, positioned, and treated within communal life. This implication shifts the focus of counseling from helping individuals adapt to stigma toward understanding—and, where possible, transforming—the social relationships that generate such stigma.

This interpretation is consistent with the paradigm of Social Justice Counseling, which regards psychological problems as inseparable from social injustice. Wallace et al. (2021), Ahlberg et al. (2019), and Ratts et al. (2016) argue that individual suffering is often a consequence of discrimination, marginalization, and unequal power relations embedded within society. In the present study, the experiences of *ana ngkadoe* demonstrate that vulnerability in identity arises not primarily from individual characteristics or abilities but from the ambiguity of genealogical recognition produced by the social system. Consequently, counseling should not be directed solely toward changing how individuals perceive themselves but should also consider how the social environment perpetuates or alleviates experiences of exclusion.

The findings further indicate that the family constitutes the initial context in which identity reconstruction begins. The family's willingness to accept the child creates opportunities for broader transformations in social relationships. However, family acceptance alone does not fully eliminate the ambiguity surrounding the child's status unless it is accompanied by customary legitimacy and community recognition. These findings demonstrate that identity restoration operates at multiple levels, beginning with interpersonal relationships, extending through social institutions, and ultimately becoming sustained within communal life. Consequently, interventions that focus exclusively on the individual risk overlooking the social factors that constitute the principal source of vulnerability.

These findings expand the framework of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) developed by Ratts et al. (2016). These competencies position counselors as professionals who understand not only clients' psychological experiences but also the cultural contexts, power relations, and social structures that shape those experiences. Within the Pamona community, these structures include not only formal institutions but also kinship systems, the authority of the *Dewan Adat*, the values of *Sintuwu Maroso*, and cultural practices such as *Porayamata*. Therefore, cultural responsiveness in counseling cannot be expressed solely through respect for cultural diversity but also requires an understanding of how communities construct recognition, legitimacy, and identity reconstruction.

The findings also provide important insights for Indigenous Counseling. Many counseling approaches continue to emphasize the therapeutic relationship between counselor and client as the primary context for psychological healing. The present findings suggest that, within Indigenous communities, healing frequently occurs through communal mechanisms that have long been embedded within the community's cultural traditions. *Porayamata* demonstrates that families, customary leaders, cultural symbols, and the community collectively function as agents of identity restoration. Accordingly, this study does not advocate replacing the role of professional counselors with customary institutions. Rather, it demonstrates that culturally responsive counseling should acknowledge and engage with restorative mechanisms that already exist within Indigenous communities.

These implications also reshape the role of the counselor. Within the Pamona context, counselors do not possess the authority to conduct or modify *Porayamata*. Such authority properly remains with the family, the *Dewan Adat*, and the community in accordance with customary law. The counselor's role is more appropriately understood as that of an ethical facilitator, helping to ensure that the process consistently serves the child's best interests, respects the voluntary participation of all parties, minimizes the risk of retraumatization, and provides psychosocial support before and after the ritual. This position preserves the distinction between the counselor's professional authority and the cultural authority of Indigenous institutions.

The findings further indicate that symbolic recognition does not necessarily guarantee sustained restoration. Although the transformation of status through Porayamata creates conditions conducive to identity reconstruction, its long-term effectiveness ultimately depends on how the family and community treat the child after the ritual has concluded. If previous labels continue to be used, the child's origins remain the subject of public discussion, or participation in community life continues to be restricted, symbolic recognition has not yet developed into substantive social recognition. Consequently, social justice counseling should conceptualize restoration as a long-term process requiring consistent behavioral change within both families and communities rather than merely the successful completion of a ritual.

From a conceptual perspective, the findings extend the orientation of Social Justice Counseling in three important respects. First, they demonstrate that social recognition constitutes a critical dimension of identity restoration that has received insufficient attention within predominantly individual-oriented counseling practices. Second, they show that customary institutions can function as social partners in reconstructing recognition for individuals experiencing exclusion, provided that the rights, dignity, and best interests of those individuals remain respected. Third, the findings emphasize that identity transformation requires not only intrapsychic change but also changes in the relational structures that produce stigma. Accordingly, social justice counseling should seek not only to strengthen individuals' resilience in the face of injustice but also to promote changes in the social conditions that enable identities to receive more equitable recognition.

These implications, however, should be interpreted with appropriate caution. This study does not propose Porayamata as an intervention model that can be universally applied to other communities. The practice is rooted in the unique history, language, kinship system, and customary authority of the Pamona community and therefore cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it developed. The contribution of this study lies instead in the broader principle that socially produced identity-related harm requires restorative processes involving relational, institutional, and communal transformation. This principle may provide a foundation for developing Social Justice Counseling practices that are more contextually grounded, collaborative, and responsive to the restorative mechanisms already embedded within Indigenous communities.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that Porayamata is not merely a customary ritual that transforms the status of *ana ngkadoe* into *ana ngkoro*, but rather a mechanism of social recognition that reconstructs children's identities through a gradual and sequential process. This reconstruction begins with the experience of genealogical stigma, which places children in a liminal position due to ambiguity in their kinship relationships. It subsequently progresses through family recognition, customary legitimacy, and community acceptance, culminating in the formation of a new social identity. Accordingly, identity restoration within Pamona society occurs not primarily because individuals change how they perceive themselves but because the structure of recognition governing the relationships among the child, the family, customary institutions, and the community is transformed. Conceptually, this study makes three principal contributions. First, it develops the concept of genealogical stigma to explain that, in kinship-based societies, the source of social exclusion may arise from ambiguity regarding an individual's genealogical position rather than solely from personal attributes. Second, it introduces the concept of genealogical recognition as a process through which an individual's social position is restored by integrating relational acceptance, institutional legitimacy, and communal recognition. Third, the study demonstrates that Porayamata functions as an Indigenous Institution of Recognition, transforming genealogical relationships into socially legitimate relationships. These three contributions are synthesized into a conceptual model of identity reconstruction illustrating how recognition progresses from the family level to the broader community, ultimately producing sustained identity restoration. The findings also have important implications for the development of social justice counseling. The results underscore that identity restoration cannot always be achieved through individual-centered psychological interventions alone. Instead, it requires consideration of the family relationships, cultural institutions, and social structures that shape experiences of exclusion and recognition. Within Indigenous communities, culturally responsive counseling requires collaborative engagement with families, customary leaders, and the broader community while maintaining respect for the rights, dignity, and best interests of individuals. Accordingly, this study expands the perspective of social justice counseling by conceptualizing recognition as a fundamentally relational, institutional, and cultural process. This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted within a single Indigenous community—the Pamona community—and therefore its findings are not intended to be generalized to all Indigenous communities in Indonesia. Second, the study focused specifically on the process of recognition through Porayamata and therefore did not examine children's long-term experiences following their acquisition of a new social status or the evolving dynamics of their social relationships in everyday life. Moreover, the study did not compare recognition mechanisms across other Indigenous communities characterized by different kinship systems and

customary rites. In light of these limitations, future research could undertake comparative studies of recognition mechanisms across diverse Indigenous communities in Indonesia and other regions to better understand how cultural institutions contribute to identity restoration. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine the long-term effects of Porayamata on psychological well-being, social acceptance, and identity development across different stages of life. Furthermore, future studies in guidance and counseling could develop collaborative models involving counselors, families, customary institutions, and communities as more contextually grounded approaches to supporting identity restoration within societies characterized by strong cultural values and kinship-based social structures.

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