



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Iraw Tengkeyu Culture: Stability of Behaviour in Solidarity Among Tribes in Tarakan City

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Abstract: Iraw Tengkeyu is a cultural tradition preserved by the people of Tarakan City, North Kalimantan, that engages various ethnic groups in a shared ceremonial event. This tradition not only symbolizes cultural continuity but also serves as a psychosocial platform to foster interethnic solidarity and cultural resilience in a multicultural society. This study aims to examine the psychosocial processes embedded in the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration, focusing on social connectedness, collective identity formation, intrinsic motivation, environmental consciousness, and the symbolic meanings constructed within the community. Employing a qualitative realist approach, data were collected through semi-structure interviews with four key informant organizers and local participants. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, with triangulation used to enhance the validity of the findings. The findings demonstrate that Iraw Tengkeyu strengthens social cohesion through interethnic rituals, reinforces inclusive cultural identity, and promotes civic participation. The celebration also nurtures ecological awareness and sustains a collective memory rooted in gratitude and togetherness. Theoretically, this study contributes to understanding how cultural rituals function as psychosocial mechanisms for identity integration and solidarity in diverse settings. Practically, it emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural heritage into public policy to foster inclusive citizenship, social harmony, and environmental responsibility in multicultural contexts.

Keywords: Iraw Tengkeyu, Cultural Ritual, Social Cohesion, Multicultural Community, Psychosocial Dynamics, Identity Formation, Civic Engagement

Abstrak: Iraw Tengkeyu merupakan tradisi budaya yang dilestarikan oleh masyarakat Kota Tarakan, Kalimantan Utara, yang melibatkan berbagai kelompok etnis dalam suatu perayaan bersama. Tradisi ini tidak hanya melambangkan kesinambungan budaya, tetapi juga menjadi ruang psikososial yang memperkuat solidaritas antar-etnis dan ketahanan budaya dalam masyarakat multikultural. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji proses-proses psikososial yang terkandung dalam perayaan Iraw Tengkeyu, dengan menitikberatkan pada keterhubungan sosial, pembentukan identitas kolektif, motivasi intrinsik, kesadaran lingkungan, serta makna simbolik yang dibangun oleh komunitas. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan paradigma realist, dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi terstruktur kepada empat informan kunci yang terdiri dari penyelenggara acara dan partisipan lokal. Analisis tematik diterapkan untuk mengidentifikasi pola psikososial yang muncul, serta validitas data diperkuat melalui teknik triangulasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Iraw Tengkeyu memperkuat kohesi sosial melalui ritual lintas etnis, memperteguh identitas budaya yang inklusif, serta mendorong partisipasi kewargaan. Perayaan ini juga menumbuhkan kesadaran ekologis dan melestarikan memori kolektif berbasis rasa syukur dan kebersamaan. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman bagaimana ritus budaya berfungsi sebagai mekanisme psikososial dalam integrasi identitas dan penguatan solidaritas sosial di tengah keberagaman. Secara praktis, hasil penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi warisan budaya dalam kebijakan publik guna memperkuat ketahanan sosial, kewargaan inklusif, dan pelestarian lingkungan pada masyarakat multikultural.

Kata Kunci: Iraw Tengkeyu, Ritus Budaya, Kohesi Sosial, Masyarakat Multikultural, Dinamika Psikososial, Pembentukan Identitas, Partisipasi Kewargaan

INTRODUCTION

Culture reflects a society's collective identity through values, customs, and behavior. Globally, culture plays a key role not only in shaping identity but also in facilitating education and social cohesion (Arisandi, 2022). In Indonesia, a country known for its vast cultural diversity, local traditions are preserved as essential elements of everyday

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life and intergroup interaction (Afriansyah & Sukmayadi, 2022).

One example of Indonesia's enduring local traditions is the Iraw Tengkeyu ceremony, which originates from the Tidung ethnic group in Tarakan City, North Kalimantan. Linguistically, "Iraw" means celebration, and "Tengkeyu" refers to a small island in the region. This tradition is rich in symbolism and rituals that emphasize togetherness, cooperation, and respect across ethnic lines (Setyami, 2021). More than a cultural display, Iraw Tengkeyu is a spiritual expression of gratitude for nature's abundance, rooted in centuries old beliefs.

Tarakan City, located on the northeast coast of Borneo, serves as both an economic hub and a melting pot of diverse ethnic groups. Its strategic coastal location and multicultural population make it a unique case for studying how urban coastal traditions, such as Iraw Tengkeyu, contribute to interethnic solidarity and civic harmony. Despite its importance, such regional cultural practices from Kalimantan remain underrepresented in national discourses on cultural identity. Tarakan City is a multicultural urban area where interethnic relations are continuously shaped by both formal structures and informal cultural interactions. This diversity presents challenges as well as opportunities for strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation across ethnic lines.

One tradition that plays a central role in facilitating this is the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration. More than a ceremonial gathering, it functions as a public platform for inclusive participation and social integration (Munifah, 2017). The centerpiece ritual, the *Padaw Tuju Dulung* procession, in which a richly decorated boat is ceremonially released to the sea, reflects the community's gratitude for natural blessings. The preparation and execution of this ritual require the collaborative involvement of multiple ethnic groups, reinforcing not only spiritual meaning but also interpersonal solidarity, shared responsibilities, and ecological values (Fitria et al., 2019).

Despite its cultural richness, Kalimantan especially in the national narrative has remained peripheral compared to Java or Bali. This imbalance overlooks the distinctive features of Kalimantan's heritage, particularly its integration of ecological awareness and multiethnic participation (McHattie & Ting, 2024). Iraw Tengkeyu, as practiced in Tarakan, stands out as an urban coastal ritual that reflects both indigenous values and contemporary multicultural dynamics. Although rooted in Tidung customs, the tradition openly welcomes participation from Bugis, Javanese, and other ethnic groups, exemplifying shared ownership and cross-cultural inclusiveness (Salim et al., 2023). Unlike many ceremonial traditions preserved only in rural or isolated areas, Iraw Tengkeyu remains active in a modern city with economic, demographic, and environmental pressures. This situates the ritual within a unique socio-ecological framework where urban identity, spiritual gratitude, and interethnic cooperation converge. Therefore, it offers a novel case of how traditional practices continue to evolve in urban coastal settings, contributing to cultural resilience, ecological ethics, and national integration (Sillander & Alexander, 2016).

In a multicultural society like Tarakan City, social interactions are shaped not only by formal structures but also through shared cultural practices that foster social cohesion. Among these, the Iraw Tengkeyu tradition provides a space for strengthening cross-ethnic relationships through collaborative engagement in rituals.

The concept of social solidarity is central to understanding this phenomenon. Solidarity functions as a social force that binds individuals and groups through

shared norms, collective experiences, and emotional involvement. Durkheim in 1984 introduced the concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity, both of which coexist in the Iraw Tengkeyu tradition ((as cited in Khairuliyadi et al., 2022). Mechanical solidarity emerges from emotional and symbolic unity, while organic solidarity arises from functional cooperation among diverse roles and identities (Thijssen, 2012).

These dimensions are reflected in Iraw Tengkeyu. The shared responsibilities in preparing and conducting the celebration demonstrate mechanical solidarity. Meanwhile, organic solidarity appears through interethnic collaboration, where each group contributes its unique role, thereby ensuring the success of the ritual (Funay, 2020). Solidarity manifests when individuals recognize commonality with others, resulting in mutual commitment. It may also arise in contexts of marginalization or identity assertion (Alfaqi, 2015). In the case of Iraw Tengkeyu, solidarity is expressed not through adversity, but through unity in diversity during a peaceful celebration (Alfaqi, 2015).

In addition to Iraw Tengkeyu in Tarakan City, a number of local cultures in Indonesia also have similar functions in maintaining the stability of social behavior and strengthening solidarity between community groups. One of them is the Bau Nyale tradition in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (Hanik & Khamidah, 2022). It is an annual celebration of the Sasak people who collectively hunt Nyale (sea worms) along the southern coast of Lombok. Rooted in the legend of Princess Mandalika, the tradition symbolizes sacrifice for unity, and in practice contains strong social values such as cooperation, tolerance, and a sense of belonging to the culture and environment. Cross-group participation in Bau Nyale demonstrates that cultural rituals can be an effective medium for uniting communities in ethnic diversity, creating emotional attachments, and maintaining stable patterns of collective behavior from year to year (Sucilestari et al., 2023). Similarly, the *Labuhan* ritual along Java's southern coast, despite its spiritual differences, provides a social platform for peaceful intergroup relations. Offerings to Nyi Roro Kidul symbolize gratitude and protection, and the ritual draws people across social strata into cooperative interaction (Alviyah et al., 2020).

These three traditions *Iraw Tengkeyu*, *Bau Nyale*, and *Labuhan* function as psychosocial mechanisms to build social ties and behavioral stability in diverse communities. They offer models for how local wisdom sustains harmonious interethnic coexistence in Indonesia's multicultural landscape. The significance of solidarity in the Iraw Tengkeyu context lies in its capacity to bring together people from different ethnic backgrounds in cooperative, voluntary participation. This nurtures a collective identity that transcends tribal lines. The tradition is not a static legacy but a living system that aligns with contemporary values of tolerance and inclusivity.

From a psychological perspective, solidarity can be observed in terms of group cohesion, collective action, and social identity. According to Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory (1979, as cited in Khadka, 2024), individuals align with certain groups based on perceived similarity, which motivates participation in shared activities (Reynolds et al., 2003). In Iraw Tengkeyu, this identification extends beyond ethnicity to a shared civic identity as citizens of Tarakan.

This aligns with Van Zomeren et al. (2012) theory of collective action, which is driven by perceived efficacy, group identity, and shared goals. The diverse participants in Iraw Tengkeyu reflect a collective psychological

engagement fueled by belonging, mutual trust, and a desire for social harmony (Van Zomeren et al., 2012). Hence, this cultural ritual is not merely sociological but also deeply psychological in its impact. It shapes collective behavior through emotional experience, shared responsibility, and identity negotiation. Solidarity is thus not used here interchangeably with other terms like cohesion or collaboration, but rather as a conceptual lens that captures the psychosocial attachments among diverse cultural groups. Participation in Iraw Tengkeyu emerges not from formal obligation but from shared emotional bonds and mutual trust.

This study positions solidarity as both a theoretical and empirical framework to understand how urban coastal rituals foster enduring interethnic cooperation. It reveals how Iraw Tengkeyu enables participants to affirm shared identities, negotiate diversity, and build sustainable behavioral norms rooted in culture. By analyzing the contribution of Iraw Tengkeyu to the psychosocial life of Tarakan City, this research aims to provide insights into cultural preservation and the formulation of policies that strengthen social integration in Indonesia's urban coastal settings.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore the psychosocial dimensions of the Iraw Tengkeyu cultural celebration in Tarakan City. A qualitative approach was chosen as it provides a deeper understanding of collective behaviour, symbolic meanings, and emotional connections within multi-ethnic communities participating in the tradition. This approach aligns with the need to investigate subjective experiences and social behaviours in the cultural context of the Iraw Tengkeyu festival.

A realist paradigm was adopted for this study, focusing on uncovering the underlying meanings and motivations behind social solidarity and community cohesion among participants. Based on Coccia and Benati (2018) the realist paradigm assumes that objective realities, such as the cultural practices and social dynamics of the festival, exist. However, individual interpretations and meanings assigned to these practices differ across participants. This study draws on similar frameworks that have been applied in other local cultural research, particularly in the exploration of community behaviours and cultural practices, such as those in Javanese (Munawaroh & Setyawan, 2024), Dayak (Farida & Setiawan, 2025), and Bugis (Hasanuddin et al., 2025) communities. The realist paradigm, with its emphasis on both the objective and subjective dimensions of cultural phenomena, offers a comprehensive approach for exploring the meaning-making processes of the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration.

Participants and Data Collection Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling to select four key informants based on their active involvement in the Iraw Tengkeyu festival and their ethnic representation. The selection process began by reaching out to local figures from three ethnic groups: Tidung, Bugis, and Javanese, to determine if they met the study's criteria: (1) individuals with firsthand experience of the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration, (2) long-term residents of Tarakan (minimum 10 years), and (3) recognized cultural contributors within their

community. Initial discussions were conducted to confirm the participants' eligibility based on their involvement in the festival and cultural background. After verifying their eligibility, 4 participants were selected for the study.

The sample size of four participants was chosen to align with the qualitative research approach, which allows for in-depth exploration of individual experiences and the context of the celebration. Although small, this sample size is sufficient for the study's goals of examining the roles, interpretations of solidarity, and experiences of the informants during the festival. Data was collected in the first week of April 2024 through semi-structured interviews, both online (via Zoom) and offline, depending on participant availability. Each session lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was recorded with participant consent.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that helps identify and report patterns (themes) within the data (Cernasev & Axon, 2023). This approach enabled a profound understanding of the psychosocial dynamics underlying social solidarity and community cohesion. The thematic analysis involved coding the interview data to identify categories, which were then organised into themes. The analysis process followed these steps: (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. Triangulation was employed to validate the findings through member checking, in which preliminary findings and interpretations were presented to selected participants for confirmation and feedback, ensuring the accuracy and relevance of the results. To maintain the trustworthiness of the analysis, the process was carried out collaboratively by the researchers, ensuring intersubjective agreement and reducing individual bias.

The final analysis was built from the coded data, which were synthesised into key themes that emerged inductively from the data, focusing on the participants' roles, interpretations of solidarity, and experiences during the celebration. The credibility of the findings was ensured through the use of triangulation and member checking, allowing for a robust interpretation of the participants' perspectives.

Ethical procedures were rigorously followed to ensure the protection and well-being of participants throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any stage. Participants were fully informed about the study's aims and assured that their identities would remain confidential in any publications or presentations resulting from the research. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection process, and all data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes. Debriefing sessions were conducted after each interview to ensure participants felt emotionally comfortable and to address any questions or concerns they may have had about the study. This approach helped safeguard the participants' rights while ensuring the ethical integrity of the research process.

RESULTS OF STUDY

These distinctive patterns between cultural centrality and inclusive flexibility, between ritual leadership and

supportive participation invite deeper interpretation of how solidarity is constructed and sustained. Rather than being uniform, the experience of social cohesion in Iraw Tengkeyu emerges through negotiated roles, evolving identities, and generational perceptions of cultural meaning. This complexity underscores the importance of viewing

traditional rituals as dynamic psychosocial spaces that adapt to the plural realities of urban coastal life in Indonesia. Based on the data analysis of Iraw Tengkeyu cultural practices in Tarakan City, several important themes were found that reflect the role of this culture in shaping the social dynamics of a multicultural society (See table 1).

Table 1
Coding and Themes

Theme	Tidung Community	Bugis Community	Javanese Community
Social Connectedness	Ritual leaders, central figures in ceremonial processions	Culinary and boat decoration contributions	Dance and performance, cultural representation from Java
Identity Formation	Emphasis on ancestral roots and local legitimacy	Maritime pride, spiritual connection to the sea	Hybrid cultural expression, flexibility in traditional clothing
Motivation	Moral obligation to continue the heritage	Gratitude for livelihood and marine resources	Social recognition and emotional satisfaction from performing in public
Environmental Awareness	Emphasis on the sacredness of water elements	Use of sustainable materials in food offerings	Participation in beach cleaning and decoration using recycled materials
Positive Perception	Pride and spiritual value of the tradition	A moment of togetherness and cultural gratitude	Festive, educational, and entertaining cultural event

The visualization above reinforces the idea that, despite differences in cultural backgrounds, each ethnic group contributes uniquely and meaningfully to the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration. These varied experiences do not hinder cohesion; rather, they serve as the foundation for fostering inclusive social solidarity and a shared sense of collective identity. Accordingly, Iraw Tengkeyu functions not only as a cultural ritual but also as a dialogical space for interethnic engagement that strengthens social cohesion, cultivates ecological consciousness, and sustains cultural continuity in a multicultural society.

Social Connectedness

The Iraw Tengkeyu tradition in Tarakan City involves various ethnic groups such as the Tidung, Bugis, Javanese, and other tribes. During the celebration, many forms of social interaction are created, both in the preparation stage of the event, the implementation of rituals, and through active participation in activities such as joint dances and traditional processions. These interactions strengthen inter-group relationships, forming a sense of community in an atmosphere of wisdom. Inter-ethnic participation is reflected through open cooperation, such as in preparing decorations, arranging ritual boats, and providing food. The social networks formed during this process create a space for harmonious communication, enabling mutual understanding and peaceful management of differences. Through these activities, solidarity is built, which forms the basis of social attachment between different ethnic groups.

"...so it is necessary to involve all the people whether it is various ethnicities, various religious differences, there must be various all there..."

"...jadi perlu dilibatkan semua orang baik itu berbagai suku, berbagai perbedaan agama, pasti ada berbagai semua disitu..."

(Page.3/ Line.10/ Identitas: D)

The cultural practices contain local wisdom values that have been passed down from generation to generation. This wisdom is reflected in the way the community responds to change, maintains traditional values, and establishes cross-group cooperation in dealing with the needs of life. This local wisdom also plays an important role in strengthening

social relations and maintaining the stability of collective behavior in the community.

Identity Formation

The Iraw Tengkeyu tradition acts as a space that allows groups from different ethnic backgrounds to develop and express their identity. It serves as a means to build pride in one's cultural origins while emphasizing one's place in a mixed society. Active participation in rituals such as dancing, hosting, or wearing traditional clothing, strengthens the bonds of the social group and clarifies the position of cultural identity in everyday life.

"...for example, the use of traditional clothes, we do not have to determine which clothes are in temperance, but we are free to use those that exist in the community, free from the archipelago and so on..."

"...misalnya penggunaan baju adat kita tidak harus satu menentukan baju ada yang ada ditarakan, tapi bebas menggunakan yang ada di masyarakat bebas dari nusantara dan sebagainya..." (Page.18/ Line.20/ Identitas: AN & SH)

In this context, the use of cultural attributes such as traditional clothing from various regions becomes a form of acceptance of diversity and emphasizes a non-differentiating self-identity. This process shows that self-formation is not only influenced by a single cultural background but also by rich and open social interactions. The Iraw Tengkeyu tradition provides a real experience for the group to affirm its identity as part of a cultural community, as well as citizens of a dynamic multicultural society. The identity that is formed reflects the combination of cultural heritage and social realities that influence each other in life.

Motivation

Community participation in the Iraw Tengkeyu tradition is driven by various forms of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsically, each group feels proud of its cultural heritage and gains emotional satisfaction when it can express its cultural identity through traditional ceremonial activities. The feeling of joy and pride, of being able to engage in cultural activities together is also a strong

driver to continue participating in this celebration every year.

"...when I first started teaching in 2013, I used to accompany the children to dance, they filled the Iraw Tengkeyu event, so they participated in the mass dance, at that time I accompanied them to practice and started from..., if we as teachers we immediately saw the preparation on the Amal beach there, then it used to be normal, not too much effort like now..."

"...iyah awal saya ngajar dulu di tahun 2013 itu sempat mendampingi anak-anak menari, mereka mengisi acara Iraw Tengkeyu, jadi mereka itu ikut tari masalnya, waktu itu saya ikut dampingi mereka latihan dan mulai dari..., kalau kami sebagai guru kami langsung lihat persiapannya di pantai Amal sana, terus yang dulu biasa aja tidak terlalu effort kayak sekarang..." (Page.9/ Line.17/ Identitas: EA)

Meanwhile, extrinsically, participation is also influenced by social rewards and recognition from the community. Groups that are actively involved in ritual preparation and execution often receive appreciation from the community, which strengthens their social position and sense of worth. The urge to maintain traditions as a form of gratitude to nature, especially marine products that are a source of livelihood for coastal communities, is also an important source of motivation that strengthens the involvement of cross-tribal groups in this celebration. Active participation in celebrations can increase recognition and appreciation from other community members. A sense of pride in cultural heritage encourages each tribal group to continue to preserve and participate in this Iraw Tengkeyu tradition every year.

Environmental Awareness

Iraw Tengkeyu culture often involves nature-related activities, such as the use of natural materials in decorations and the provision of traditional food.

"So far, our gratitude for the sea products that we have as a source of income for many livelihoods..."

"Selama ini rasa syukur kita terhadap hasil laut yang kita sebagai pendapatan mata pencarian yang banyak..." (Page.21/ Line.23/ Identitas: AN & SH)

The Iraw Tengkeyu celebration contains elements that reflect concern for the environment. During the procession, the community actively uses natural materials for various purposes such as decorations, traditional clothing, and serving traditional food. The use of environmentally friendly materials reflects a form of respect for nature as an important part of daily life, especially the sea which is the main source of livelihood for coastal communities.

The rituals in this celebration also emphasize respect for natural elements such as water and soil, which indirectly instill environmental conservation values in the participants. Cooperation across tribal groups during the event not only strengthens social ties but also serves as a form of participation by all tribal groups in caring for nature. The activities are usually open-ended and require no special skills, allowing everyone to get involved. Through this practice, the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration reinforces social norms about the importance of cooperation and shared responsibility in preserving the environment.

Positive Perception

The people of Tarakan City view the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration as an activity that brings social and cultural benefits, especially in strengthening identity and a sense of togetherness between tribes. This positive perception grows from direct experience in participating in the celebration, stories passed down from generation to generation, as well as media highlights that describe the festivities and cultural values in the celebration. When people feel that this celebration gives meaning to their social life, they are more encouraged to be actively involved.

"... Iraw Tengkeyu senses that the peak must be the pelarungan (immersive), but there are many series including maybe, being a certain entertainment for the people of Tarakan city..."

"...rasa adanya Iraw Tengkeyu ini kan kalau puncaknya pasti pelarungan (menghanyutkan) itu, nah cuman kan rentetannya kan banyak termasuk di dalamnya mungkin, menjadi hiburan tertentu bagi masyarakat kota tarakan..." (Page.3/ Line.19/ Identitas: D)

In addition, recognition from other communities and pleasant experiences during previous activities also reinforce positive views of this tradition. Elements such as folk entertainment, boat launching, and cross-generational involvement make this celebration not only a traditional ritual but also a moment of community togetherness. Social support from the neighborhood reinforces the perception that Iraw Tengkeyu has an important value that is worth preserving and continuing.

To provide a more structured and comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences among the ethnic groups involved in the Iraw Tengkeyu celebration, the following section presents the findings in a thematic visualization. This table outlines five core themes that emerged from the data analysis: social connectedness, identity formation, motivation, environmental awareness, and positive perceptions of the tradition. Each theme is analyzed based on the distinct perspectives and lived experiences of three major ethnic communities in Tarakan namely, the Tidung, Bugis, and Javanese groups. This approach aims to highlight how cultural meanings and psychosocial values are interpreted uniquely by each group, as well as how interethnic interactions are negotiated and embodied through symbolic and emotional practices during the celebration.

DISCUSSION

This research found that the Iraw Tengkeyu cultural celebration not only has symbolic meaning as a traditional ritual but also functions as a social mechanism that strengthens inter-tribal relations in Tarakan City. Themes such as social connectedness, self-identity formation, motivation, environmental awareness, and positive perceptions of culture emerged consistently as part of the community's collective experience of this tradition.

Interethnic interaction during the celebration is not simply collaborative but reflects negotiated spaces where cultural boundaries are softened through shared symbolic acts. These acts foster social networks that support multicultural cohesion beyond formal structures (Idris, 2020). This emotional engagement aligns with the concepts of emotional contagion and shared identity, where symbolic group participation cultivates feelings of pride and

belonging (Sullivan, 2014). According to Daku and Setyawan (2025), the courage to communicate support is seen as a way to adapt to a new reality that challenges their societal position, reflecting an evolving approach to intergroup relations. Rather than merely celebrating cultural rituals, such involvement reflects deeper value internalization that reinforces self-perception within the broader social context. This supports Tajfel & Turner's social identity theory, highlighting that collective emotional experiences help shape group identity (Khadka, 2024). Furthermore, cultural rituals act as affect regulation tools, allowing individuals to process emotions through shared activities (Croucher, 2017). In the Iraw Tengkeyu context, such interactions do not merely preserve tradition—they contribute to psychological stability by fostering a sense of security and mutual recognition amid diversity. Iraw Tengkeyu provides a symbolic arena for cultural identity construction, where individuals actualize their heritage through traditional clothing, rituals, and interethnic interaction (Tancher, 2019). In social psychology, this reflects self-concept and self-identity formation influenced by social roles and cultural expression (Yang, 2004). Based on symbolic interactionism (Fletcher, 2023), identity is shaped through intergroup encounters that are visible during the festival. These practices reinforce a sense of belonging as proposed in social identity theory, where cultural expression becomes a medium for affirming unity in diversity (Reynolds et al., 2003).

Community motivation to participate in Iraw Tengkeyu is driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsically, a sense of pride and emotional satisfaction emerges from expressing cultural identity; extrinsically, recognition from others enhances social status and reinforces involvement. According to self-determination theory, these dual motivations influence long-term engagement in cultural activities (Dunn & Zimmer, 2020). When groups feel valued both internally and socially, participation becomes more sustainable (Davis & Stazyk, 2022). Over time, this creates social norms that shape intergenerational commitment and strengthen group solidarity (Tranow, 2019).

The Iraw Tengkeyu celebration fosters environmental awareness through its symbolic use of natural materials and its reverence for the sea, reflecting both cultural identity and ecological education. These practices contribute to the formation of ecological identity—where individuals psychologically connect with their natural surroundings (Marković et al., 2024). Rituals such as sea offerings and eco-conscious decorations not only express tradition but also instill values of environmental responsibility. This aligns with the concept of ecological solidarity, where shared cultural engagement promotes collective care for nature. As a social mechanism, the celebration transmits ecological knowledge to younger generations and reinforces sustainable cultural practices (Aulia et al., 2024).

The community's positive perception of the celebration strengthens the sustainability of the tradition. When people view this culture as an important part of their identity, there is a sense of responsibility to preserve it. This is influenced by positive past experiences, social recognition, and media representations that build a positive image of Iraw Tengkeyu (Ghani et al., 2019). This positive perception of culture can be explained using social identity theory (Van Zomeren et al., 2012), which states that groups will identify with groups that share the same values and traditions, creating a deep sense of belonging. When people see Iraw Tengkeyu as an integral part of their group identity, they will feel compelled to preserve this tradition as a form of affirmation of their own cultural identity. Positive experiences gained from previous participation and social

recognition from other communities reinforce a sense of pride and social solidarity, which in turn encourages active participation in the future.

The positive perception of the Iraw Tengkeyu tradition contributes significantly to its continuity. When the community sees the celebration as part of their shared identity, there is a stronger sense of responsibility to maintain it shaped by past experiences, public recognition, and media portrayal (Ghani et al., 2019). According to social identity theory, people tend to identify with groups that reflect their values, fostering belonging and commitment (Van Zomeren et al., 2012). This identification encourages individuals to stay engaged in the tradition, motivated by cultural pride and the collective meaning attached to the celebration. Media coverage contributes significantly to shaping public perceptions of Iraw Tengkeyu, reinforcing cultural pride and collective values (Rizki, 2020). As a social agent, media helps construct symbolic meaning beyond personal experience, alongside social recognition (Abduh, 2022). This strengthens traditional continuity through shared emotional ties.

The findings show that Iraw Tengkeyu acts not only as a cultural ritual but also as a psychosocial space that promotes social solidarity, ecological awareness, and identity negotiation in a multicultural context. Unlike previous studies that emphasize symbolic preservation (e.g., Ghani et al., 2019; Rizki, 2020), this research highlights the dynamic, inclusive, and adaptive nature of the ritual. Iraw Tengkeyu demonstrates broader flexibility, allowing various ethnic expressions to coexist in one shared civic ritual. These insights offer contributions to international discourse on cultural psychology and provide practical implications for community-based social integration and inclusive cultural policy. However, subtle challenges remain. For instance, the central role of the Tidung may suggest symbolic dominance, while other groups (e.g., Javanese, Bugis) often occupy supportive roles. Generational differences also emerge: some elders worry about diluted cultural purity, while youth embrace flexibility as a sign of national unity. These dynamics show how tradition continuously evolves, reflecting both unity and internal negotiation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Iraw Tengkeyu tradition serves not only as a ceremonial event but also as a psychosocial mechanism that strengthens interethnic solidarity, collective identity, and environmental awareness in a multicultural society. This study contributes novel insights by integrating cultural rituals with psychosocial theory, highlighting how emotional engagement and shared symbolism foster long-term interethnic cooperation. Unlike previous works that emphasize ritual as a symbolic act, this research uncovers its function as a tool for social resilience. The findings suggest that the Iraw Tengkeyu model has strong potential for adaptation in other multicultural contexts where ethnic integration remains a challenge.

Practically, the findings offer a foundation for culture-based policymaking, intercultural education, and character development in plural societies. The Iraw Tengkeyu tradition can serve as a meaningful space for shared identity building and social integration in ethnically diverse regions. Future research may replicate this framework in other regions to assess its cross-cultural applicability, explore how socioeconomic inequalities shape cultural participation, and investigate how digital media influences

intergenerational transmission of traditions, especially among youth.

DECLARATIONS

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study was conducted by the ethical guidelines for qualitative research. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Since this study did not involve vulnerable populations or clinical interventions, formal ethical approval was not required under institutional policy.

Consent for Publication

All participants provided verbal consent for their anonymized responses and narratives to be included in this publication.

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to confidentiality agreements with participants; however, they are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Availability of Code

Not applicable. This research did not involve the development or use of software or custom code.

Authors' Contributions

Handy Wiranto conceptualized the study, conducted the fieldwork and interviews, performed the thematic analysis, and wrote the initial draft of the manuscript. Jefri Setyawan, as the second author, contributed to supervising the data collection process, data analysis, and report writing. He was also involved in developing the interview guidelines and organizing the themes from the findings to ensure they accurately represented the focus of the research. Additionally, both authors contributed to the literature review and reviewed the manuscript for intellectual content, read and wrote the final version of the manuscript.

Authors' Information

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