

THE VALUE OF THE NOTANGARA TRADITION AS A FORM OF SOCIAL CONTROL IN ADDRESSING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-01-2026

Revised : 07-02-2026

Accepted : 25-05-2026

KEYWORDS

Notangara Tradition;

Juvenile Delinquency;

Social Control;

Local Wisdom;

Restorative Justice;

ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency in Palu City requires a restorative approach grounded in local values to complement formal legal mechanisms. This study aims to analyze the role of the Notangara tradition within the Kaili ethnic culture as a social control mechanism in shaping adolescent character. A qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews involving traditional leaders, parents, and adolescents. Data analysis was guided by Travis Hirschi's social control theory, encompassing attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. The findings reveal that the Notangara tradition effectively restores social relationships, strengthens adolescents' attachment to family and community, and reinforces commitment to social norms through customary sanctions and written agreements. In addition, embedded local moral values enhance adolescents' belief in socially accepted behavioral standards. This study concludes that the Notangara tradition functions as both a preventive and curative form of social control. The findings imply that integrating local wisdom into guidance and counseling practices provides a contextually relevant strategy for addressing juvenile delinquency.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a critical transitional phase characterized by significant biological, psychological, and social changes that shape individual identity and behavior (Ratu et al., 2024). In the context of rapid modernization and globalization, this phase becomes increasingly vulnerable to shifts in traditional values, which may weaken existing social norms and control mechanisms. As a result, the incidence of juvenile delinquency has shown a growing trend, including in the city of Palu (Aisy et al., 2025; Lubis & Ritonga, 2023). Juvenile delinquency manifests in

various forms, ranging from minor violations such as truancy to more serious offenses, including theft and drug abuse (Davino & Susilawati, 2023; Lubis, 2024). These behaviors are closely linked to weakened self-control and the declining role of parental supervision within the family environment (Alisa & Lestari, 2025).

Juvenile delinquency can be conceptualized as deviant behavior that violates social norms, legal provisions, and moral or religious values, reflecting instability in adolescent development (Setya et al., 2025; Siregar et al., 2024). If not addressed early, such behaviors may escalate into more serious forms of criminality, posing risks to both individuals and society. From the perspective of social control theory, particularly Hirschi's framework, delinquent behavior emerges when individuals' social bonds—attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief—are weakened. Thus, strengthening these social bonds becomes a key strategy in preventing and addressing juvenile delinquency.

In this context, local wisdom offers a culturally grounded approach to reinforcing social control through internalized values and communal practices. Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of cultural traditions in shaping adolescents' character and moral awareness. For instance, the "Sumang" tradition among the Gayo community has been shown to function as a moral framework that guides adolescent behavior through the internalization of customary and religious values (Hamda et al., 2023). Similarly, local cultural values can act as a protective mechanism against the negative impacts of modernization by fostering social cohesion and normative compliance (Mawaddah & Misrah, 2023).

Despite these findings, there remains a significant research gap in examining local traditions as integrative and applicable models of social control within guidance and counseling practices, particularly in the Kaili ethnic community of Palu. Existing approaches tend to rely predominantly on formal legal systems, which are often punitive and less effective in promoting long-term behavioral change. The Notangara tradition, which embodies principles of deliberation, kinship, and restorative justice, has not been widely explored as a structured mechanism for addressing juvenile delinquency.

This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how the values embedded in the Notangara tradition can be reconstructed into an effective social control model amid the pressures of modernization. It is hypothesized that the application of deliberative and restorative principles within Notangara can function both as a deterrent mechanism and as a pedagogical tool for character rehabilitation by strengthening adolescents' social bonds (Salsabilla, 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in positioning the Notangara tradition not merely as a cultural practice, but as an alternative social control instrument within the framework of guidance and counseling. By integrating local wisdom into counseling practices, this study offers a contextual and culturally relevant approach to enhancing adolescents' moral awareness and behavioral regulation, thereby contributing to the development of more adaptive and restorative intervention models.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore in depth the values of local wisdom embedded in the Notangara tradition as a form of social control over juvenile delinquency. The research was conducted in the Petobo neighborhood, Palu City, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, from January to March 2025, considering the area as one of the communities where the Notangara tradition is still actively practiced in resolving social conflicts involving adolescents. Data were collected through three primary techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Waruwu, 2024). Participant observation was carried out by directly engaging in community activities related to the implementation of Notangara, while documentation included written agreements, customary records, and relevant community archives.

Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, which involves choosing informants considered to be the most knowledgeable and directly involved in the research subject (Ritonga et al., 2022). The study involved 12 informants consisting of 3 traditional leaders (as key actors in the implementation of Notangara), 5 adolescents who had experienced the Notangara process due to delinquent behavior, and 4 parents of the adolescents to provide a family perspective. The selection criteria included (1) direct involvement in the Notangara process, (2) willingness to participate voluntarily, and (3) the ability to communicate experiences clearly and reflectively.

In the data collection process, the researcher used a structured interview guide based on the four aspects of social control according to Travis Hirschi's theory: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied triangulation techniques, including source triangulation (comparing data from traditional leaders, adolescents, and parents), method triangulation (observation, interviews, and documentation), and time triangulation. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming interview results with informants to ensure the accuracy of interpretations.

Data analysis was conducted interactively following the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). Data reduction involved coding and categorizing findings based on Hirschi's social bond components, while data display was presented in narrative and thematic matrices to facilitate interpretation. The conclusion drawing process was carried out iteratively until data saturation was achieved.

Ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing participants' identities. The researcher also ensured that the study did not harm participants psychologically or socially, particularly considering the sensitive nature of juvenile delinquency cases.

RESULT

Field findings derived from structured interviews indicate that the Notangara tradition operates as an effective form of social control in addressing juvenile delinquency in Palu City. Rather than functioning solely as a cultural practice, Notangara demonstrates a systemic role in restoring weakened social bonds, which, according to Hirschi's social control theory, are the primary determinants of deviant behavior. The increasing incidence of juvenile delinquency reflects the fragility of adolescents' social attachment and moral regulation in the face of modernization. In this context, Notangara offers a restorative and culturally legitimate alternative to formal interventions, emphasizing reintegration rather than punishment (Ratu et al., 2025).

From the attachment perspective, Notangara serves to rebuild emotional connections between adolescents and their social environment. Hirschi posits that strong emotional attachment to family and community reduces the likelihood of deviance; thus, the erosion of such bonds often underlies delinquent behavior. Field data show that deliberative dialogue within Notangara creates an inclusive communicative space where adolescents are treated as members of a collective rather than isolated offenders.

As expressed by an informant:

"Our purpose in sitting together is so that this child does not feel neglected..."

Analytically, this process reflects a shift from punitive exclusion to relational restoration, where dialogue functions as a mechanism to re-establish trust and emotional closeness. This finding confirms that strengthening attachment through culturally embedded practices can effectively reduce the risk of repeated delinquency.

The commitment aspect is operationalized through collectively agreed customary sanctions that impose concrete responsibilities on the offender. In Hirschi's framework, commitment is associated with the perceived cost of deviance; individuals with stronger commitments are less likely to violate norms due to the potential loss of social standing and moral credibility. The classification of sanctions—from material compensation to symbolic rituals such as *memboisi ngata*—illustrates a structured system that integrates both social and spiritual accountability.

As stated by an informant:

"There are sanctions for material losses and social sanctions..."

The addition of a written agreement further strengthens this dimension by institutionalizing commitment in a formalized manner. This agreement functions as a socio-moral contract that binds adolescents psychologically and socially, thereby increasing their awareness of normative obligations and reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

The involvement dimension is reflected in post-mediation efforts to actively engage adolescents in positive and structured activities. Hirschi emphasizes that involvement in conventional activities limits opportunities for deviance; thus, the absence of structured engagement increases vulnerability to negative influences. Field findings indicate that

parents and community members assume an active role in ensuring adolescents' participation in productive activities following the Notangara process.

As noted by an informant:

"Teenagers' participation in positive activities is crucial..."

This finding suggests that Notangara does not end at conflict resolution but extends into preventive social control by restructuring adolescents' daily routines. Such involvement reduces idle time and strengthens conformity to social norms, thereby functioning as a long-term behavioral regulation mechanism.

The belief dimension refers to adolescents' acceptance of the moral legitimacy of social norms. According to Hirschi, belief in the validity of rules is a critical factor in preventing deviant behavior; when individuals perceive norms as just and meaningful, compliance increases. The findings reveal that adolescents undergoing the Notangara process tend to internalize customary values as morally binding rather than coercive.

This is reflected in an informant's statement:

"It's fair because what we replace is commensurate with what we take from the victim."

This perception indicates that the sanctions imposed are viewed as proportionate and just, thereby enhancing normative acceptance. Furthermore, the role of traditional leaders as moral educators—rather than punitive authorities—strengthens the internalization of values.

As explained by another informant:

"There are two legal systems that may differ slightly..."

Analytically, this distinction highlights the comparative advantage of Notangara over formal legal systems, particularly in its ability to deliver immediate, participatory, and contextually meaningful justice. Consequently, belief in customary norms is reinforced not only through doctrine but also through lived experience, making Notangara an effective mechanism of internalized social control.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the Notangara tradition functions as an effective restorative mechanism in addressing juvenile delinquency by integrating legal, social, and psychological dimensions. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing that restorative justice approaches are more effective than punitive systems in fostering long-term behavioral change, particularly among adolescents (Saleh et al., 2024). However, this study extends prior research by showing that the effectiveness of restorative justice is significantly enhanced when it is embedded within local cultural frameworks that are socially legitimized.

From the perspective of Travis Hirschi, delinquency arises when social bonds weaken (Kristanto et al., 2024). The Notangara tradition operationalizes the four elements of social bonds in a culturally grounded manner, which explains its effectiveness within the Kaili social context. First, in terms of attachment, the involvement of traditional leaders and family members in a deliberative forum minimizes stigmatization and promotes emotional reintegration. This finding is consistent with Elvariani & Sunaryo (2025), who argue that non-stigmatizing approaches strengthen adolescents' emotional bonds and reduce recidivism. However, unlike formal counseling settings, Notangara embeds this process within kinship structures, making the emotional connection more authentic and socially binding.

Second, regarding commitment, the ritual of *memboisi ngata* and the signing of written agreements indicate that commitment is not merely procedural but also symbolic and spiritual. This supports Alhakim et al. (2023) who found that culturally embedded sanctions are more internalized because they involve moral and collective accountability. In the Kaili context, the sacred dimension of sanctions elevates commitment from a rational calculation of consequences to a moral obligation tied to family honor and community reputation. This explains why adolescents are more likely to comply with norms following the Notangara process.

Third, in the belief dimension, the legitimacy of traditional leaders plays a crucial role in transforming external control into internalized moral awareness. Consistent with Mulyadi et al. (2025), this study confirms that local wisdom-based norms have higher acceptability compared to formal legal or clinical interventions. The Kaili community perceives customary leaders as moral authorities whose decisions reflect shared values, thereby increasing

adolescents' trust and compliance. This cultural legitimacy explains why Notangara is more effective than formal legal mechanisms, which are often perceived as distant and less responsive to local realities.

Fourth, the involvement aspect is strengthened through sustained post-resolution supervision by families and communities. This finding is in line with Hasibuan (2022), who emphasizes that continuous social engagement is crucial in preventing relapse into deviant behavior. However, this study highlights that the effectiveness of such involvement is amplified when supported by culturally structured obligations, as seen in the Notangara process. The integration of family roles and community expectations ensures that behavioral change is not temporary but sustained over time.

The effectiveness of Notangara in the Kaili context can be explained by three key factors: (1) strong kinship-based social structures, (2) the high legitimacy of customary leaders, and (3) the integration of moral, social, and spiritual values within a single mechanism. These factors create a holistic system of social control that is both preventive and curative. This finding differentiates Notangara from other local traditions, such as the Sumang tradition (Hamda et al., 2023), by emphasizing its structured deliberative mechanism and formalized agreements as tools of behavioral regulation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of culturally responsive guidance and counseling by demonstrating that the integration of local wisdom into counseling practices enhances both the effectiveness and acceptability of interventions (Sumeleh, 2025). It strengthens the argument that multicultural counseling approaches must move beyond cultural sensitivity toward cultural integration in intervention design.

Practically, Notangara can be adapted as a preventive model in educational settings, particularly in addressing issues such as bullying and adolescent conflict by involving community stakeholders (Agustin et al., 2025). However, its application outside the Kaili context requires careful adaptation, as its effectiveness is highly dependent on the presence of strong communal ties and respect for customary authority.

This study also identifies several limitations. The relatively small number of informants limits the generalizability of the findings, and the study does not measure the long-term sustainability of behavioral change among adolescents. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data may introduce subjectivity in interpretation despite efforts to ensure validity.

An important unresolved issue concerns the potential integration of Notangara into formal legal or educational systems. While such integration may enhance its broader applicability, there is a risk of reducing its cultural authenticity and sacred value. Therefore, future research should employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to test its effectiveness on a larger scale and explore its adaptation in contemporary contexts, including digital environments where juvenile delinquency manifests in new forms such as cyberbullying.

CONCLUSION

The Notangara tradition functions as an effective form of culturally grounded social control in addressing juvenile delinquency by strengthening adolescents' social bonds, particularly in terms of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Its restorative approach enables the reintegration of adolescents into their social environment without stigmatization, making it more acceptable than punitive or purely formal interventions.

This study contributes to the development of culturally responsive guidance and counseling by demonstrating that local wisdom can serve as an integrative and contextually relevant intervention model for behavioral rehabilitation. However, the findings are limited to a specific cultural setting and short observation period. Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to examine the long-term effectiveness of Notangara, as well as to explore its adaptation in broader educational and socio-legal contexts.

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