

THE CATECHETICAL DIMENSION OF TRADITIONAL WISDOM TEGI NDETER AGU NDE TAR AS A PATH TO PEACE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study explores the catechetical dimensions of *tegi ndeter agu ndetar*, an indigenous reconciliation ritual in Manggarai, Eastern Indonesia, and its contribution to peace education. This study used a qualitative descriptive narrative case study in Manggarai Regency, Flores Island, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Five key informants, including traditional elders, a Catholic catechist, and a cultural practitioner, provided insights into the symbolic, moral, and catechetical dimensions of the *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* ritual. Data were analyzed through reduction, display, and interpretation using peace education, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and transformative learning theories, supported by relevant previous studies. Interpreted through peace education, transformative learning, and inculturation catechesis, the findings show that reconciliation is taught as a lived practice, where paradox and ritual generate transformative learning and Gospel values are transmitted through cultural forms. The study contributes theoretically by expanding peace education beyond classrooms into embodied cultural practice, affirming the role of paradox in transformative pedagogy, and grounding inculturation catechesis in communal life. Practically, it highlights opportunities for catechists, educators, and peacebuilders to collaborate with cultural elders in fostering reconciliation as a living curriculum of peace. Ultimately, *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* demonstrate that indigenous wisdom and Christian catechesis can converge as a pathway to sustainable peace education. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to bridging indigenous traditions and Christian pedagogy, offering a model of culturally rooted peace education that can inspire both academic discourse and practical pastoral approaches in diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords

Catechetical Dimensions, Inculturation Catechesis, Indigenous Wisdom, Peace Education, Transformative Learning.



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INTRODUCTION

The catechetical dimension of the indigenous wisdom of *Tegi Ndetar agu Ndetar* is evident in the way this ritual conveys moral, religious, and social values that serve as guiding principles for the Manggarai community. Symbolic acts such as offering cigarettes (*rongko*) and palm wine (*tuak*) embody humility and the willingness to reconcile, functioning as a form of “teaching through action” that instills values of forgiveness, reconciliation, and fraternity (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021; Harris & Morrison, 2023). These values can be interpreted catechetically because they parallel the transmission of the Gospel message of peace and love, but are expressed through local cultural forms. Thus, the ritual operates not only as an indigenous mechanism for conflict resolution but also as a living medium of peace education within everyday community life (Gill & Stern, 2022; Reardon, 1998).

The integration of this indigenous wisdom into peace education programs is shaped by cultural, social, and religious factors unique to Manggarai. Culturally, the authority of traditional elders grants legitimacy to the messages of reconciliation embedded in the ritual (Paris & Alim, 2020; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). Socially, Manggarai communities are deeply communal, where harmony is considered a vital condition for coexistence. Religiously, the Catholic majority provides fertile ground for inculturation, allowing *Tegi Ndetar agu Ndetar* to be understood simultaneously as an expression of faith and a pedagogy of peace. However, an academic challenge emerges: how can these indigenous values be interpreted and integrated into peace education without reducing their religious depth or instrumentalizing culture merely as a pedagogical tool? (Dami, 2014; Jebarus, 2018).

Strategies for implementing the catechetical dimensions of *Tegi Ndetar agu Ndetar* in strengthening conflict resolution and social harmony involve collaboration between traditional elders, catechists, and educators (Suryani, 2019; Tilaar, 2002). First, the ritual can serve as inculturated catechesis within parish life and small Christian communities. Second, its symbolic practices of reconciliation can be incorporated into both formal and non-formal education as concrete examples of peace learning. Third, involving youth in documenting and transmitting the ritual can sustain the intergenerational transfer of peace values. Nevertheless, these strategies face challenges from secularization, modernization, and the risk of cultural marginalization among younger generations. This highlights the academic problem at the heart of the research: how to bridge indigenous wisdom and formal education so that *Tegi Ndetar agu Ndetar* continues to serve as

both a source of peace education and an expression of inculturated faith.

Research on peace education (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021; Harris & Morrison, 2023), has been established that peace can be taught as both knowledge and practice through dialogue, conflict resolution skills, and community engagement. These studies highlight how education systems can nurture reconciliation and justice, but they remain largely classroom-centered and do not fully account for indigenous ritual practices as embodied pedagogies of peace.

In the field of transformative learning theory, Mezirow, (1997) has shown how critical reflection and disorienting dilemmas can lead to perspective transformation. This framework is widely applied in adult education and professional training, but little attention has been given to how ritual paradoxes—such as using contested objects like cigarettes and palm wine—can provoke transformative learning in community-based reconciliation settings.

Studies on culturally responsive pedagogy Ladson-Billings (1995), have emphasized the importance of grounding learning in students' cultural contexts to affirm identity and promote equity. While influential globally, this scholarship has primarily focused on classroom strategies for minority education rather than examining how cultural rituals in non-formal settings can function as catechetical acts that transmit both cultural and Gospel values. Meanwhile, Indonesian scholarship on local wisdom (Anata et al., 2023; Suryani, 2019), has predominantly examined ecological knowledge, customary law, and performing arts as vehicles of cultural sustainability. These studies demonstrate the richness of indigenous traditions but have not addressed their catechetical or pedagogical dimensions, particularly in the context of reconciliation and peacebuilding rituals like *Tegi Ndeter agu Ndetar*. Finally, the field of restorative practices (Morrison & Vaandering, 2022; Zehr, 2002), has explored reconciliation processes worldwide, focusing on dialogue circles, mediation, and justice frameworks. However, little research has examined how everyday materials—such as cigarettes and alcohol—are re-signified within indigenous reconciliation rituals and mobilized as pedagogical tools for teaching forgiveness, humility, and community harmony (Groome, 2022; Mazur, 2024).

The novelty of this study lies in reframing *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* as a catechetical pathway to peace education. It interprets the ritual not only as cultural heritage but as a theological-pedagogical locus where humility and reconciliation are taught experientially. By doing so, it challenges deficit perspectives that dismiss indigenous rituals as “backward” and instead demonstrates their potential to enrich global discourses on peace education and catechesis. Moreover, it contributes to the

decolonization of pedagogy by foregrounding the epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2020) as legitimate sources of theological and educational knowledge.

This study is grounded in the intersection of local wisdom and educational discourse, drawing upon both policy and theoretical frameworks. From a policy perspective, Indonesia's *Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional* emphasizes that national education should not only develop intellectual capacity but also promote spiritual, moral, and social values rooted in local culture. Similarly, the Kurikulum Merdeka highlights the importance of character education and the integration of cultural heritage into learning processes, which provides an opening for rituals such as *Tegi Ndeter agu Ndetar* to be recognized as living educational practices in fostering peace and harmony.

The purpose of this research is to explore and analyze the catechetical dimensions of the indigenous reconciliation ritual *Tegi Ndeter agu Ndetar* in Manggarai, Eastern Indonesia, by identifying its pedagogical meanings, examining the cultural, social, and religious factors that influence its integration into peace education, and formulating strategies for its implementation in strengthening conflict resolution and social harmony. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of peace education by extending its scope from formal classrooms to embodied cultural practices, enriching transformative learning and inculturation catechesis through the reinterpretation of paradox and cultural symbols as pedagogical instruments. Pragmatically, the study offers practical insights for catechists, educators, and peacebuilders by providing a model of collaboration between cultural elders and the Church in fostering reconciliation as a living curriculum of peace, while also serving as a reference for designing contextually grounded catechetical and conflict resolution programs in Manggarai and Eastern Indonesia more broadly.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive narrative design with a case study approach, conducted in Manggarai Regency, Flores Island, Eastern Indonesia. The research data consist of oral data from interviews, behavioral and activity data from observations, and written data from documentation. The sources of data include traditional elders, a Catholic catechist, a cultural practitioner/author, as well as cultural and catechetical documents related to the *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* ritual.

Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. During the observation stage, the researcher attended the *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* ritual between March and August 2024 in several Manggarai communities, recording the sequence of the ritual, the use of symbols, and participant interactions. In-depth interviews were conducted with five key informants, namely three traditional elders, one Catholic catechist, and one cultural practitioner/author, to explore symbolic meanings, moral values, and catechetical roles within the ritual. Documentation included cultural texts, ethnographic writings, and parish catechetical materials that record and interpret the practice of *tegi ndeter agu ndetar*, serving as supporting and comparative data for the interviews and observations.

Data analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. In the reduction stage, the researcher selected and simplified interview transcripts, field notes, and documents to focus on the themes of catechesis, reconciliation, and ritual symbolism. The data were then presented in descriptive narratives highlighting the role of traditional elders, the meaning of ritual symbols, and the process of peacebuilding enacted through the ritual. Finally, the researcher conducted a critical analysis using theories of peace education, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and transformative learning. To ensure validity, the findings were also compared with relevant previous studies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study highlight that *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* is not merely a cultural tool for resolving conflicts but a catechetical practice that teaches repentance, reconciliation, and peace through embodied rituals. From interviews, observations, and document analysis, five interrelated catechetical dimensions emerged. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Catechetical Dimensions of *Tegi Ndeter agu Ndetarle*, 6 Rows, 4 Columns

No	Catechetical Dimension			Empirical Findings (Field Data)	Catechetical / Pedagogical Meaning
1.	Penitential Pedagogy			The offender offers cigarettes (<i>rongko</i>) and palm wine (<i>tuak</i>) with bowed head and humble words.	Ritualizes repentance and humility; teaching that reconciliation begins with acknowledging fault.
2.	Reconciliation	as	Lived Catechesis	Parties exchange forgiveness through dialogue, handshakes, and shared drinks in <i>lonto leok</i> (sitting cross-legged together in	Models forgiveness and restored communion; catechesis becomes an embodied practice of reconciliation.

3. Elders as Catechists	a circular formation). Elders (<i>tua adat</i>) lead ritual, interpret symbols, and guide participants with proverbs and prayers.	Elders act as catechetical mediators, transmitting wisdom and faith; embodying the Church's teaching role.
4. Symbolic Re-Signification	Cigarettes and alcohol, normally stigmatized, serve as ritual tools of reconciliation.	Teaches re-signification of the ordinary/paradoxical: brokenness transformed into communion (2 Cor 12:9).
5. Intergenerational Pedagogy	Youth observe parents and elders reconciling publicly through ritual offerings.	Provides a living curriculum of peace; catechesis through example, memory, and communal witness.

Source: Compiled by the author from interviews with elders and participant observations is Manggarai (2025).

Penitential Pedagogy

The ritual demonstrates how acts of humility, such as offering *rongko* and *tuak* with bowed heads, function as a structured way of expressing repentance. The gesture itself serves as a form of moral instruction, showing that acknowledging wrongdoing is the first step toward reconciliation and communal harmony.

Reconciliation as Lived Catechesis

Reconciliation is enacted through dialogue, mutual forgiveness, and shared participation in ritual drinking while seated together in a circular formation. This practice models how forgiveness can be lived out collectively, turning catechesis into an embodied experience rather than a purely verbal or doctrinal teaching.

Elders as Catechists

Traditional elders lead the ritual, interpreting symbolic actions and guiding participants with culturally grounded proverbs and prayers. Their role functions as catechetical mediation, transmitting moral and religious teachings through example and authoritative presence, reflecting a community-based pedagogy of faith.

Symbolic Re-Signification

Objects that are normally stigmatized, such as cigarettes and alcohol, are repurposed as instruments of reconciliation. This transformation conveys the lesson that ordinary or even paradoxical items can become vehicles for teaching forgiveness, humility, and communal restoration.

Intergenerational Pedagogy

Youths are active observers of the ritual, witnessing elders and family members publicly engage in acts of reconciliation. This observation allows them to internalize lessons of peace and forgiveness, creating a living curriculum where catechesis is passed down through example, shared memory, and communal participation.

This synthesis shows that the ritual serves as a catechetical pathway to peace education in five ways: it instills humility through penitence, enacts forgiveness as lived catechesis, entrusts elders with teaching roles, re-signifies contested symbols into instruments of grace, and passes values across generations. Together, these dimensions illustrate how indigenous rituals can function as pedagogical spaces where faith and culture intersect, offering a powerful model of contextualized catechesis that fosters reconciliation and community cohesion.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* embodies catechetical dimensions that can be fruitfully interpreted through the lenses of peace education, transformative learning, and inculturation catechesis. Far from being a peripheral cultural ritual, it constitutes a pedagogical event where faith, culture, and reconciliation converge. Each dimension resonates with and extends existing theoretical frameworks, offering both contextual depth and universal insights.

Penitential Pedagogy and Peace Education

The Manggarai ritual of *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* illustrates a pedagogy of penitence in which reconciliation is taught not as abstract doctrine but as embodied practice. The offender's gesture of bowing and offering *rongko* (cigarettes) and *tuak* (palm wine) communicates humility and contrition in visible form, transforming repentance into a communal lesson of accountability and peace.

Contemporary peace education scholarship emphasizes the formative power of embodied acts. Zembylas (2021) shows that peace education should be understood as an *embodied practice*, in which emotions and vulnerability serve as central sites of pedagogy rather than peripheral factors. This resonates strongly with the Manggarai context, where ritual acts themselves constitute moral instruction. Similarly, Harris and Morrison (2023) argue that peace education is most effective when learners experience forgiveness as a lived practice rather than as abstract content.

The paradoxical use of culturally ambivalent objects such as cigarettes and alcohol intensifies the ritual's pedagogical value. Krüger (2023) notes that "agonistic" dimensions of peace—moments of tension and paradox—are pedagogically productive because they force participants to confront

contradictions and seek new relational meanings. In Manggarai, the re-signification of these objects becomes a *disorienting dilemma* in Mezirow's sense, challenging assumptions and fostering transformative learning. Dirani et al. (2021) confirm that crises and dilemmas can function as catalysts for perspective transformation when communities are guided through reflection and dialogue.

This penitential dimension also aligns with restorative justice approaches in education. Vaandering and Hantzopoulos (2021) show that restorative frameworks emphasize public acknowledgment of harm and concrete acts of reparation as central to reconciliation, making accountability visible to the community. The Manggarai ritual embodies this dynamic, as penitential offerings symbolize restitution and open the way for restored relationships.

From a catechetical perspective, the ritual echoes the Christian praxis of reconciliation. Groome (2022) stresses that catechesis is "shared praxis," where faith is taught through life experience. The penitential act thus mirrors sacramental confession and forgiveness, enacted communally rather than privately. Phan (2021) similarly highlights that inculturation requires discerning engagement with cultural symbols, affirming their capacity to mediate Gospel truths when critically appropriated.

At the same time, the use of cigarettes and alcohol poses challenges. Global health research identifies them as major contributors to social and health burdens (Babor et al., 2019; WHO, 2020). Hence, pedagogical discernment is needed to ensure that their symbolic use is understood as ritual enactment rather than habitual endorsement. Paris and Alim (2020) suggest that *culturally sustaining pedagogy* requires adaptation: indigenous practices must be affirmed but also critically interpreted in light of ethical concerns.

Finally, penitential pedagogy contributes to decolonial approaches in peace education. Bajaj (2022) argues that indigenous rituals and epistemologies must be recognized as legitimate educational frameworks, expanding peace education beyond classroom models and Western categories. The Manggarai ritual exemplifies this decolonial turn, teaching forgiveness through embodied drama that integrates cultural wisdom with Christian catechesis.

Reconciliation as Lived Catechesis

If penitential pedagogy initiates reconciliation through acts of contrition, *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* culminates in reconciliation as a lived catechesis. In the ritual, reconciliation is not restricted to verbal apologies but is embodied in gestures of restored unity: adversaries clasp hands, elders pronounce

peace, and the community shares *tuak* in the *lonto leok* (a circular gathering). This transformation of reconciliation from a private sentiment into a communal practice demonstrates that forgiveness is not merely taught but enacted.

Recent scholarship affirms that reconciliation is most effectively learned through lived encounters. Skårås (2021) highlights how teaching reconciliation in divided societies requires pedagogical strategies grounded in experience and collective practice rather than abstract moral instruction. Similarly, Harris and Morrison (2023) describe peace education as a “pedagogy of encounter,” where learners engage conflict transformation through dialogue and practice. These insights are vividly embodied in the Manggarai ritual, where reconciliation unfolds in open dialogue, public acknowledgment of harm, and shared symbolic acts.

The dialogical nature of reconciliation resonates with Paulo Freire’s emphasis on education as liberation through dialogue. However, recent work pushes this further. Bajaj (2022) argues that decolonial peace education requires elevating indigenous rituals as authentic pedagogical frameworks rather than treating them as cultural add-ons. In this sense, *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* exemplifies a decolonial catechesis where cultural rituals themselves embody Gospel values of forgiveness and communion.

The theological and pedagogical significance of reconciliation as lived catechesis is also underscored by Zembylas and Loukaidis (2023), who propose “pedagogies of generosity” as essential for peace education. They emphasize that forgiveness must be visible and practiced communally to cultivate dispositions of mercy and solidarity. This framework aligns with the Manggarai ritual, where reconciliation is performed before the community and thereby transmitted as collective memory and catechetical witness.

Furthermore, restorative justice literature reinforces this dynamic. Vaandering and Hantzopoulos (2021) show that reconciliation in education must prioritize repairing relationships through dialogue circles, community participation, and public rituals of accountability. The Manggarai practice mirrors this by making forgiveness a communal event rather than a private exchange.

At the intergenerational level, reconciliation as lived catechesis creates a curriculum of peace that is both moral and cultural. Lastikova (2023), in her study of Ubuntu-inspired peace education, demonstrates that youth internalize values of forgiveness and nonviolence when they witness reconciliation enacted in their communities. In Manggarai, children observe elders reconcile

publicly, learning by participation and observation that peace is a normative expectation of communal life.

Thus, reconciliation in *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* embodies a lived catechesis: forgiveness is performed, dialogue becomes sacramental, and reconciliation is transmitted across generations. It demonstrates that peace education is not only a matter of teaching concepts but of cultivating communal rituals that make forgiveness visible, repeatable, and sustainable.

Elders as Catechists and Cultural Pedagogues

In the *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* ritual, traditional elders function as more than ritual specialists or conflict facilitators; they act as living catechists and cultural pedagogues who mediate moral meanings, transmit intergenerational knowledge, and embody communal authority. Their role is pedagogical in three mutually reinforcing ways: (1) they provide interpretive frameworks that make symbolic acts meaningful; (2) they model moral comportment and mediate dialogical processes that teach reconciliation; and (3) they anchor communal memory by repeatedly enacting and explaining ritual forms to younger generations.

First, elders supply the hermeneutic keys that translate embodied ritual into moral and theological lessons. Contemporary work on culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy stresses that local knowledge-holders are essential interpreters of cultural practices, because they possess the situated language and historical memory needed to make local symbols intelligible as pedagogical resources (McCarty & Brayboy, 2021). In Manggarai, elders' proverbs, narrative commentaries, and ritual scripts render the offering of *rongko* and *tuak* intelligible as acts of penitence and communal reparation rather than mere convivial consumption; this hermeneutic mediation is a form of contextualized catechesis that locates Gospel values in culturally legible forms.

Second, elders act as moral exemplars whose embodied comportment becomes an important mechanism of social learning. Recent empirical studies emphasize that Indigenous elders operate as knowledge holders and teachers across domains, from land-based practices to relational norms, and that their presence in educational encounters significantly shapes younger people's attitudes and behaviors (Reid et al., 2022; Tessaro, 2022). Through repeated public enactment of humility, apology, and reconciliation, elders provide concrete models that younger observers can imitate, internalize, and later deploy in everyday conflicts. This aligns with socially situated theories of learning: children and youth learn moral repertoires through observation, narrative, and participation in communal practices.

Third, elders institutionalize intergenerational transmission by embedding reconciliation within communal memory and ritual repetition. Research on elder-centered methodologies and community-based participatory studies shows that centering elders in research and pedagogy not only honors knowledge sovereignty but also secures practices within a living social archive that resists superficial or instrumental appropriation (Crouch et al., 2023). In *tegi ndeter agu ndetar*, elders' repeated enactment of ritual—accompanied by proverbs, explanations, and public adjudication—functions as a “living curriculum” of peace that binds episodic restitutions into an enduring moral habitus.

Importantly, elders' pedagogical authority must be read relationally rather than absolutist. Contemporary literatures caution against uncritical romanticization: elders' authority is most pedagogically effective when it is dialogical, accountable, and responsive to youth voices (Sharma, 2023). This dialogical orientation also enables elders to adapt ritual meanings to contemporary ethical concerns (for example, reinterpreting the symbolic use of alcohol and tobacco in light of public health knowledge), thereby preserving pedagogical potency while attending to changing moral landscapes.

Finally, situating elders as catechists bridges inculturation catechesis and decolonial pedagogy. McCarty and colleagues argue that culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies require centering Indigenous epistemic authority in order to resist epistemic marginalization and to foster educational sovereignty (McCarty & Brayboy, 2021). When elders serve as catechists, they enable a two-way inculturation: Christian catechesis is articulated through local idioms, and indigenous pedagogies are recognized as legitimate conveyors of ethical and theological knowledge. This reciprocal dynamic enhances the credibility of catechetical efforts and strengthens the plausibility of ritual-based peace education as both culturally authentic and theologically faithful.

Collectively, these dynamics show that elders in *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* are not merely custodians of tradition but active pedagogues who translate, model, and transmit reconciliation. Their role illustrates a culturally sustaining pedagogy that is contextual, embodied, intergenerational, and dialogical, a pedagogy particularly well-suited to catechetical aims where faith formation is inseparable from communal life.

Symbolic Re-signification: Redeeming the Contested

One of the most striking features of *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* is its symbolic re-signification of objects that are often stigmatized in broader society, namely, cigarettes (*rongko*) and palm wine

(*tuak*). While these substances are frequently associated with addiction and social harm, within the ritual, they acquire new meaning as tokens of penitence and reconciliation. This transformation illustrates what Turner once described as the liminal power of ritual; yet, recent scholarship shows that such paradoxical uses of ordinary or contested materials can be pedagogically generative.

In the field of peace education, Krüger (2023) highlights that agonistic dimensions of peace, moments of tension, contradiction, or paradox, are not pedagogical obstacles but opportunities for deeper reflection. The Manggarai ritual exemplifies this dynamic by using culturally ambivalent objects to provoke dissonance that leads to critical moral insight. Similarly, Dirani et al. (2021) describe “disorienting dilemmas” as powerful triggers for transformative learning, whereby unsettling experiences open pathways for perspective transformation.

Restorative justice literature also affirms the pedagogical potential of symbolic acts. Vaandering and Hantzopoulos (2021) argue that reconciliation processes in education require concrete, visible gestures of reparation to restore trust. In Manggarai, the re-signification of *rongko* and *tuak* serves precisely this function: they operate as ritualized reparations, signaling humility and making forgiveness materially tangible. Parker (2021) further shows that restorative education circles gain legitimacy when ordinary objects are reinterpreted as carriers of reconciliation.

From a theological perspective, re-signification embodies what Phan (2021) calls the intercultural work of inculturation: allowing ambiguous cultural forms to be transfigured by the Gospel without erasing their local meanings. Zembylas and Loukaidis (2023) describe this as a “pedagogy of generosity,” wherein educators embrace cultural complexity rather than dismissing it, using paradox as a resource for building peace. In Manggarai, the Eucharistic resonance of sharing *tuak* in a communal circle demonstrates how ordinary cultural elements can be sacramentalized into channels of reconciliation.

Yet, symbolic re-signification requires discernment. Public health research warns that alcohol and tobacco are linked to global health burdens (Babor et al., 2019; WHO, 2020). Catechists and educators, therefore, must clarify the ritual’s symbolic intent while discouraging harmful practices in everyday life. This aligns with Paris and Alim’s (2020) call for culturally sustaining pedagogy, which balances respect for indigenous forms with ethical adaptation to contemporary contexts.

Thus, the symbolic re-signification of cigarettes and palm wine in *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* exemplifies a paradoxical pedagogy: contested objects become instruments of grace, tension becomes a site of learning, and ordinary materials are transformed into visible signs of humility, forgiveness, and restored communion.

Intergenerational Pedagogy: Sustaining Peace through Communal Witness

A defining strength of *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* lies in its intergenerational character. Reconciliation is not confined to private dialogue but is enacted publicly before the entire community, including children and youth. This visibility ensures that reconciliation becomes more than conflict resolution—it operates as moral and catechetical education passed across generations.

Recent research in peace education underscores that sustainable peacebuilding requires intergenerational transmission. Lastikova (2023), in her study of Ubuntu-inspired initiatives in South Africa, demonstrates that community-based peace education is most effective when young people witness reconciliation enacted by elders, allowing them to internalize forgiveness as a normative practice. Similarly, Kushakova (2024) shows that cultural heritage significantly shapes the moral orientation of youth, particularly in cultivating values of empathy, forgiveness, and relational accountability.

The pedagogical mechanism here can be described as observational learning. While earlier theories emphasized this dynamic (e.g., Bandura), contemporary work emphasizes its cultural and communal dimensions. Jelovac (2025) argues that moral formation in education is most effective when students learn from exemplars whose conduct embodies values rather than merely articulates them. In Manggarai, children and youth who observe elders enact humility and forgiveness absorb reconciliation as a lived cultural inheritance.

Zembylas and Loukaidis (2023) further propose that “pedagogies of generosity” are sustained only when values are enacted in ways that are visible and repeatable across generations. In this sense, the ritual provides a collective memory of reconciliation, ensuring that forgiveness is not only taught but also embodied, remembered, and re-enacted as cultural habitus.

At the same time, intergenerational pedagogy must be adaptive. Globalization, migration, and shifting youth sensibilities challenge the authority of elders and traditional practices. Sharma (2023) cautions that elders’ authority is most effective when exercised dialogically, respecting youth voices and contemporary concerns. This suggests that intergenerational pedagogy in Manggarai

must remain dynamic, clarifying symbolic meanings and reinterpreting contested elements while preserving the core catechetical power of ritual reconciliation.

Thus, *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* exemplifies intergenerational pedagogy as both peace education and catechesis. By enacting reconciliation in public and communal forms, it secures forgiveness as an inherited moral expectation, transmitting it through observation, participation, and collective memory. In this way, reconciliation is not simply taught but lived, not merely spoken but embodied across generations.

CONCLUSION

The Manggarai reconciliation ritual *tegi ndeter agu ndetar* demonstrates that peace is most effectively learned when embedded in cultural practice. Its key dimensions, penitential pedagogy, reconciliation as lived catechesis, elders as catechists, symbolic re-signification, and intergenerational pedagogy, show that reconciliation is a lived curriculum rather than an abstract principle. Through gestures of humility, dialogue, symbolic offerings, and communal participation, the ritual embodies both peacebuilding and moral instruction, transforming ordinary or contested elements into channels of reconciliation. Its intergenerational nature ensures that children and youth inherit not only ethical lessons but also a living tradition of forgiveness. This case highlights the value of culturally grounded and experiential pedagogy for peace education and catechesis, emphasizing the integration of moral, spiritual, and cultural wisdom into everyday life, and offering a model for sustaining reconciliation and communal harmony across generations.

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