

Ain Ni Ain Philosophy in Peace Counseling : A Cultural Approach to Conflict Resolution between That Kei Communities in Sorong City

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Abstract

Local wisdom plays a strategic role in maintaining social cohesion and resolving conflicts in multicultural societies. Ain Ni Ain is a cultural value upheld by the Kei ethnic community of Southeast Maluku, Indonesia. This philosophy, which literally means “one belongs to another,” emphasizes brotherhood, solidarity, and collective responsibility as the foundation of social relations. However, these values have experienced cultural shifts in the urban context of Sorong City, Southwest Papua. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Ain Ni Ain values within a peace counseling approach as a strategy for conflict resolution among the Kei community in Sorong City. The study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with customary leaders, religious leaders, counselors, and members of the Kei community involved in or affected by conflicts, supported by participatory observation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques. The findings indicate that Ain Ni Ain remains relevant in peace counseling practices through community deliberation, customary mediation, reinforcement of collective moral commitments, and spiritual legitimization by traditional and religious leaders, with counselors acting as facilitators of reflective dialogue in reconciliation processes. These findings suggest that integrating local cultural values into counseling practices can strengthen community-based conflict resolution and contribute to the development of culturally grounded peace counseling in multicultural societies.

Introduction

Indonesia’s multicultural landscape is marked by the coexistence of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, religions, and forms of local wisdom across its regions. Rather than merely constituting a marker of national identity, this diversity provides an important social foundation for fostering communal solidarity, sustaining social relationships, and developing locally grounded mechanisms of conflict resolution. Within local communities, values, norms, and social institutions are transmitted across generations and function as collective guidelines for maintaining social harmony (Tarjo et al., 2024). In this sense, local wisdom is not simply a cultural inheritance, but also a social resource that regulates interpersonal relations, mediates disputes, and preserves social balance amid differences in interests, identities, and social backgrounds (Lederach, 1997).

Among Indonesia’s indigenous communities, the *Kei* ethnic group from Southeast Maluku is widely recognized for its strong cultural traditions and enduring value systems. Over time, members of the *Kei* community have migrated to various regions across Indonesia, including Sorong City in Southwest Papua. This mobility has been shaped by multiple factors, including economic necessity, access to education, employment opportunities, and broader patterns of development in eastern Indonesia (Premikha et al., 2026). Rather than representing mere geographical movement, such migration reflects the community’s capacity for social adaptation in response to changing socio-economic structures at both regional and national levels.

Despite bringing their cultural values and traditions into diaspora contexts, the *Kei* community encounters complex challenges within multicultural urban settings. A notable tension arises between inherited values of brotherhood and solidarity, as embodied in the philosophy of *Ain Ni Ain*, and the everyday social realities faced by the community in urban life (Teniwut et al., 2023). Internal conflicts related to customary leadership, communal land ownership (Bahri et al., 2026), mixed marriages (Yuserina et al., 2025), and youth disputes (Basir et al., 2025) reveal not only social fragmentation but also broader cultural shifts and the declining authority of traditional social control mechanisms. These dynamics are further intensified by urbanization, modernization, and a growing crisis of cultural identity among younger generations.

However, empirical research specifically examining how *Ain Ni Ain* values are implemented in peace counseling practices among the *Kei* diaspora community remains scarce. Most existing studies have tended to position *Ain Ni Ain* primarily as a form of local wisdom or cultural identity, rather than as a practical framework for counseling and conflict resolution in multicultural urban settings (Ufie, 2013). This limitation reveals an important research gap, particularly within the field of culturally grounded guidance and counseling, where indigenous values can serve as contextual resources for peacebuilding, dialogue, and social reconciliation. However, empirically studies That in particular research that implementation *Ain Ni Ain* values in peace counseling practice between that *Kei* community still limited (Handoko et al., 2025). Most which exists studies tend to discussing *Ain Ni Ain* as a form from local wisdom or cultural identity, without directly connect he to counseling practice and conflict resolution in a multicultural urban context. This limitations shows that there is a research gap need to become aimed, especially in terms of field from culturally stranded guide And counseling.

Therefore, this study is significant because it seeks to examine the implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* values within a peace counseling approach as a culturally grounded medium for conflict resolution among the *Kei* community in Sorong City. Theoretically, the findings are expected to enrich the body of knowledge in guidance and counseling, particularly in relation to culturally grounded counseling and indigenous approaches to peacebuilding. Practically, this study may provide valuable insights for the *Kei* community, customary leaders, religious leaders, counselors, and local government in designing sustainable conflict resolution strategies and strengthening social cohesion within multicultural society.

Method

Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Qualitative approach is selected Because This study aims to to gain a deeper understanding understand from that meaning, value, and social practice embedded in cultural philosophy from *Ain Ni Ain*, and how this value are implemented in a peaceful atmosphere counseling practice between that *Kei* community in Sorong City. The focus from This research inactive measurement or generalization, but on developing contextual understand from experience, social interaction, and conflict dynamics in a certain context cultural community. Therefore, qualitative approach is considered that most in accordance method for exploring that complexity from cultural and public conflict phenomenon which is rich in social aspects meaning (Sugiyono, 2015). Research design using a case study approach focus on that *Kei* community in Sorong City as a single individual case to get deep and contextualized understand from that symptom under investigation. Case study approach allows researchers to research complex social phenomenon holistically in real life context, in particular when that limitation between Tthat symptom and his social very close environment intertwined (Yin, 2018). In this study, case study is interpretive, purposeful to research how that values *Ain Ni Ain* is understood, negotiated, and enforced by many kinds of social actor in process from peace counseling.

Participants

This study involved key informants purposively selected from the *Kei* community in Sorong City, Southwest Papua. The participants consisted of *Kei* customary leaders, religious leaders, community counselors, and community members who had direct experience with, or had been affected by, internal conflicts within the community. Informants were selected based on their knowledge, lived experience, and social roles in relation to the interpretation and enactment of *Ain Ni Ain* values in peace counseling and community-based conflict resolution. The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics Profile from Research Participant

No	Response	(N)	Gender	Age Range	Educational background	Religion
1	Traditional Leader	1	Man	65-70	Bachelor Degrees	Islam
2	Religious leaders	1	Man	75–80	High School School	Islam
3	Counselor	1	Man	70–75	Master's Degree Degrees	Islam
4	Community Members	1	Man	60 - 65	Bachelor Degrees	Islam

A purposive sampling strategy was applied using several criteria: (1) having a strong understanding of the cultural philosophy of *Ain Ni Ain*; (2) having direct experience in conflict resolution processes, either as a mediator, counselor, or party involved in conflict; and (3) actively participating in counseling practices, customary mediation, or socio-religious activities related to restoring community relationships. This sampling strategy is consistent with qualitative research principles that prioritize information-rich participants to generate contextualized and in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation. This study was conducted in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, with a focus on the *Kei* community experiencing internal conflict. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that Sorong City is one of the major migration destinations for the *Kei* people, where traditional values are still maintained but are increasingly confronted with the dynamics of multicultural urban life. This condition makes Sorong City a relevant context for examining the implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* values in peace counseling practices. The study was conducted over a three-month period, from June to August 2025, to obtain broad and in-depth data about conflict dynamics and the counseling and mediation processes occurring within the community.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were used as the main technique to explore the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of key actors, including customary and religious leaders, counselors, and members of the *Kei* community, regarding conflict and the implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* values in peace counseling practices. The in-depth interview technique enabled researchers to obtain rich, reflective, and contextual data regarding the construction of social meaning, the process of negotiating cultural values, and relational dynamics that cannot be adequately revealed through a quantitative approach.

Participant observation was used to capture social practices directly in a natural context, especially the conflict resolution process and the implementation of customary-based peace counseling in the *Kei* ethnic community. Through observation, researchers were able to understand patterns of social interaction, cultural symbols, and non-verbal practices that reflect the actualization of *Ain Ni Ain* values in everyday life. Next, a documentation study was conducted to complete the field data by examining relevant documents, such as customary mediation notes, community activity archives, and related journals and reports. The combination of these three data collection techniques allowed for triangulation of sources and methods, thereby increasing the depth of analysis and the credibility of the research findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study followed an interactive analysis model, which conceptualizes qualitative data analysis as a cyclical and continuous process from data collection to drawing conclusions. This model allows for a systematic investigation of empirical data, social context, and the interpretation of meaning. The analysis was conducted iteratively through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman 1994). Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying information obtained from in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis relevant to the research objectives, particularly the implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* values in peace counseling and conflict resolution within the *Kei* community. The reduced data were organized into descriptive-analytical narratives, matrices, and thematic categories to facilitate the identification of patterns, relationships between categories, and emerging social processes.

Conclusion drawing and verification were conducted through the interpretation of recurring data patterns while continuously cross-checking raw data, field notes, and supporting sources to ensure the consistency and credibility of the findings. This analytical process allowed for contextualization and an in-

depth understanding of the role of *Ain Ni Ain* cultural values in peace counseling practices among the Kei community in Sorong City. The validity of the data in this study was confirmed through the application of trustworthiness strategies, including source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. This approach was used to increase the credibility of the findings by ensuring that data interpretation did not depend on a single source, single method, or single moment of data collection, but was consistently confirmed through various perspectives and contexts. The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research emphasizes the importance of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as indicators of research quality (Moleong, 2018).

Source triangulation was employed by comparing data obtained from customary and religious leaders, counselors, and members of the *Kei* community to identify both convergence and divergence in perspectives regarding conflict and the implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* values in peace counseling. Methodological triangulation was conducted through the systematic comparison of findings derived from in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, thereby ensuring consistency across verbal accounts, observed social practices, and documented evidence. Temporal triangulation was implemented by collecting data at different stages: before, during, and after the counseling or community mediation process, allowing the researchers to capture the evolving dynamics of meaning construction, social relationships, and conflict resolution. The integration of these triangulation strategies enhanced the credibility, dependability, and interpretive rigor of the research findings.

Results

Implementation *Ain Ni Ain* Values in Peace Counseling

Based on the interview results, the informants interpreted *Ain Ni Ain* as an essential value that affirms brotherhood, equality, and a sense of belonging within the Kei community in Sorong City. This value is not merely understood as a cultural symbol, but as a moral foundation that shapes social behavior in everyday life. Informants emphasized that *Ain Ni Ain* functions as an ethical guideline for reducing conflict and maintaining social harmony. This value is most often referred to by customary and religious leaders when internal disputes arise. As stated by a customary leader (M): “*Ain Ni Ain* is not just a slogan, but a way of life. When there is conflict, we remind one another that we are brothers and sisters, and we must not compete to bring each other down.” A similar point was made by a religious leader (A), who said: “In our sermons or peace advice, we always refer to *Ain Ni Ain* as a moral basis for mutual respect.”



Figure 1. Figure Customs, Religion, And Counselor.

The *Ain Ni Ain* value-based peace counseling process was carried out in several stages, namely pre-deliberation, dialogue, mediation, and mutual agreement. In the pre-deliberation stage, religious leaders played a role in contacting the conflicting parties to build emotional readiness. The dialogue stage was carried out in an open setting to express the problem honestly without blaming one another. Mediation was then facilitated by customary leaders or counselors, with an emphasis on collective consciousness rather than determining who was right or wrong. A counselor (C) stated: “We do not directly seek who is at fault, but rather how both parties realize that they are still brothers. That is the essence of *Ain Ni Ain*.” The final stage was a peace agreement that was mutually accepted as a form of social responsibility.

The concrete implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* values can be seen in the practice of customary deliberation, which provides a safe space for dialogue between conflicting parties. This deliberation creates a

conducive atmosphere because it is based on the values of brotherhood and respect for customary norms. In addition, customary mediation is combined with a reflective counseling approach, in which the parties are invited to reflect on the impact of the conflict on kinship relationships. After mutual understanding is achieved, a customary oath is made as a moral lesson and social commitment not to repeat the conflict. A community representative (A) said: “After we made peace and recited the customary promise, it felt as if a burden had been lifted. We would feel ashamed to violate it again because we made a promise before our customs and God.” This promise becomes a strong moral bond because it is witnessed by customary and religious leaders, as well as the community.

These findings show that *Ain Ni Ain* functions as a normative and operational framework for peace counseling among the Kei community in Sorong City (see table 2). This value shapes collective awareness that conflict is not merely an individual problem, but rather concerns broader relationships of brotherhood. The involvement of customary and religious leaders, as well as counselors, strengthens the moral legitimacy of the peace process. Thus, this approach not only formally resolves conflict but also restores ongoing social relationships. Cultural values and the Islamic counseling approach are combined to build social harmony based on local wisdom.

Table 2. Findings on the Implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* Values in Peace Counseling

No	Main Theme	Subthemes / Indicators	Form Implementation	Parties Involved
1.	The Meaning of <i>Ain Ni Ain</i>	Brotherhood, equality, race has	Affirmation of values in traditional & religious advice	Figure customs, religious figures
2.	Counseling Process	Pre-deliberation dialogue mediation agreement	Open dialogue & mediation based on collective consciousness	Traditional figures, counselors
3.	Peace practice	Customary deliberation & customary oath	Safe dialogue space, expressing moral commitment	Traditional figures, religious figures, community

Role Figure Customs, Religion, And Counselor

Kei customary leaders function as traditional mediators in the peace counseling process by bridging conflicting parties through the cultural principle of *Ain Ni Ain*, which emphasizes shared kinship and collective identity within the Kei community (see Figure 1). From this perspective, conflict is interpreted not merely as an interpersonal dispute, but as a disruption of communal harmony that must be restored collectively. In practice, customary leaders facilitate reconciliation by leading customary deliberation, mediating dialogue between the parties involved, and guiding the recitation of customary promises as a symbolic commitment to peace. Their authority within the customary system also provides social legitimacy to the reconciliation process, ensuring that the outcomes are respected and upheld by the community (see Table 2 for details).

Religious leaders play a complementary role by providing spiritual and moral legitimacy in the peace counseling process. Their involvement strengthens ethical and religious values that encourage forgiveness, compassion, and reconciliation between conflicting parties. By framing conflict resolution within broader religious teachings, religious leaders help participants internalize the importance of restoring relationships and maintaining social harmony. Empirically, their role is reflected in activities such as leading collective prayers before or after customary deliberation and conveying religious messages that emphasize brotherhood, peace, and mutual respect as basic principles in social life.

Counselors contribute to the peace counseling process by acting as facilitators of constructive dialogue between conflicting parties. Their role focuses on the psychological dimensions of reconciliation by creating a safe and supportive communicative environment in which individuals can express emotions, share experiences, and understand different perspectives. Through reflective dialogue facilitation, counselors help participants manage emotional tension, clarify misunderstandings, and develop mutual empathy. This facilitative process helps guide the interaction toward an agreement.

The *Kei* community also plays an important role through active social participation in sustaining the

reconciliation process. Community involvement strengthens collective responsibility and social accountability, which are essential for maintaining long-term peace after conflict has been resolved (see table 3). In practice, community members attend customary deliberations, provide moral support to the parties involved in reconciliation, and collectively uphold the agreement reached during the mediation process. Through this shared participation, the outcomes of reconciliation become embedded in the broader social structure, ensuring that peace is maintained through collective commitment within the community. Customary figures function as mediators who connect conflicting parties, while religious figures provide spiritual legitimacy through collective prayer. Counselors play a role in accompanying the dialogue process to create mutual understanding. This collaboration among the three parties strengthens the effectiveness of culturally based peace counseling.

Table 3. Roles of Traditional Leaders, Religious Leaders, and Counselors in Counseling Peace Based *Ain Ni Ain*

No	Informant	Main Role	Specific Functions in Counseling Peace	Form Field Practice
1	figure <i>Kei</i> customs	customary mediator	Bridging conflicting parties by using the values of <i>Ain Ni Ain</i> brotherhood as the basis for reconciliation	Leading customary deliberations, facilitating dialogue between parties, and guiding the recitation of customary oaths as a commitment to peace.
2	religious leaders	Legitimater spiritual	Providing moral and spiritual strengthening so that the parties accept the peace process sincerely	Prayer together before or after deliberation, conveying religious messages about brotherhood and peace
3	counselor	Dialogue facilitator	Accompanying the communication process so that both parties can express their feelings and understand each other's perspectives.	Facilitate reflective dialogue, help manage the emotions of conflicting parties, and direct the process towards a peaceful agreement.
4	public <i>Kei</i>	Social participation	Supporting the reconciliation process and maintaining sustainable peace in social life	Attendance at customary deliberations, providing moral support to the parties making peace, and maintaining social commitments after the conflict.

Types of Conflict Identified

Based on interviews, observations, and field documentation, conflicts within the *Kei* community in Sorong City are generally related to social issues, customs, and intergroup relations, as presented in Table 4. These conflicts include disputes over customary land, disputes between youths influenced by village affiliations, and family disputes related to mixed marriages. Most conflicts are triggered by social changes resulting from modernization and urbanization, as well as the weakening influence of customary values in regulating social relations. This condition often leads to misunderstandings between individuals and groups, especially when customary norms are no longer the primary reference for problem solving. This is in line with the view that shifts in cultural values can trigger social conflict when traditional social control mechanisms are weakened.

The first conflict that frequently arises is the dispute over customary land. For the *Kei* people, customary land holds significant significance because it is linked to kinship identity, customary ownership rights, and family livelihoods. Conflicts typically arise when customary land boundaries are unclear or when multiple parties claim the same ownership rights. In some cases, conflicts also arise from land use without the consent of the extended family or clan that holds customary rights. A traditional leader stated in an interview: "*Customary land is not just land, but part of the family's identity. If someone takes it without agreement, it usually triggers conflict between relatives.*" (M – Traditional Leader)

The second type of conflict is disputes between youth influenced by their hometown affiliation. This conflict is often triggered by strong group solidarity among youth from different villages. Small disputes such as misunderstandings, social rivalries, or alcohol consumption often escalate into conflicts involving larger

groups. A counselor involved in the mediation process stated: *"Youth conflicts usually start from small issues, but because of the sense of village solidarity, they end up involving many people."* (K - Counselor).

The third type of conflict is family disputes related to mixed marriages, particularly when the marriage involves people from different clans, customs, or religions. Conflicts can arise from differing views on customary marriage procedures, family obligations, or the social status of the couple. In some cases, families feel that customary values are not being fully upheld, leading to tensions within the family. A religious figure explained: *"Mixed marriages sometimes give rise to differing views between families, particularly regarding customs and family responsibilities after marriage."* (A – Religious Figure)

The fourth type of conflict is inter-family community conflict, which commonly emerges from misunderstandings in daily social interactions among relatives or family members. These conflicts are often associated with limited communication, unresolved interpersonal tensions, and the weakening role of customary values as a reference for maintaining social harmony. Although they may initially appear as minor family disagreements, such conflicts can escalate when they are not addressed through dialogue or customary mediation. In this sense, inter-family conflict reflects not only interpersonal tension, but also a reduced internalization of togetherness and mutual respect within the community.

Table 4. Conflict Type Table in Kei Community in Sorong City,

No	Types of Conflict	Source conflict	Main Trigger Factors	Actors Involved	Meaning Conflict
1.	The struggle for customary land	Inter-clan customary land ownership claims	Customary land boundaries are unclear and land use is without family agreement.	Extended family or clan	Conflict is seen as a disruption to kinship relations because customary land is considered part of family identity.
2.	Conflict between youths	Village solidarity and group competition	Social misunderstanding, influence of alcohol, and group provocation	Inter-village youth group	Conflict is considered a form of social tension between groups that can damage brotherly relations between villages.
3.	Mixed marriage disputes	Differences in customs, culture and religion	Differences of opinion regarding customary marriage procedures and family responsibilities	Both families	Conflict is defined as a difference of opinion regarding the application of customs and family responsibilities in marriage.
4.	Inter-family community conflict	Misunderstandings in social interactions	Lack of communication and weak role of traditional values	Family members or relatives	Conflict is understood as weak communication and reduced appreciation of the values of togetherness in the family.

Challenge Implementation

Kei traditional values have been challenged by changes in lifestyle and the influence of global culture, which have made some young people less familiar with the philosophy of brotherhood that forms the foundation of *Kei* social life. The values of *Ain Ni Ain*, which were once passed down through family education, customary rituals, and social interactions, are no longer deeply understood by some young people. As a result, when conflict occurs, the younger generation tends to respond emotionally without considering the

value of brotherhood that serves as the basis of reconciliation in *Kei* culture. The next challenge is the increasingly limited space or forum for customary deliberation as a medium for conflict resolution. In the past, customary deliberation was the primary platform for communities to engage in dialogue and collectively seek solutions. However, in an urban context like Sorong City, such spaces are not always available or are not utilized optimally. This limited forum often leads to conflicts developing without adequate dialogue mechanisms, making the reconciliation process based on *Ain Ni Ain* values more difficult.

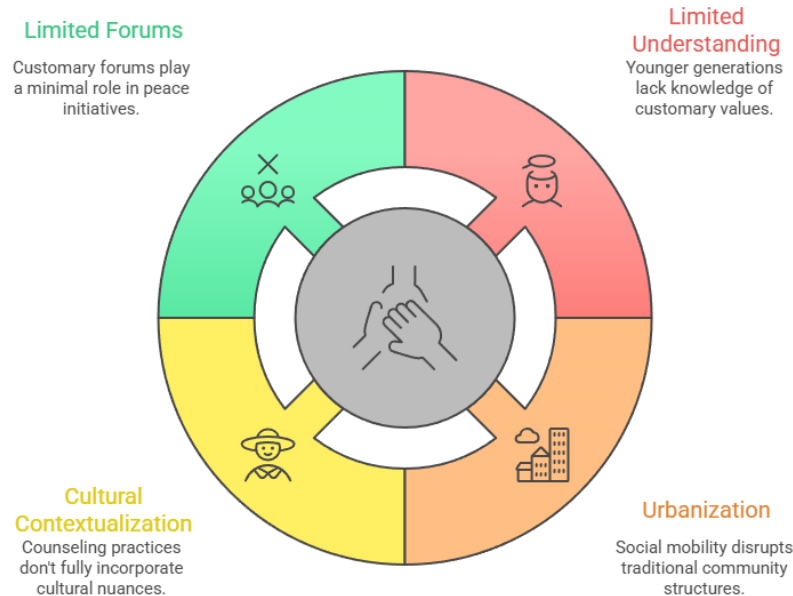


Figure 2. Challenges of implementing *Ain Ni Ain* values in *Kei* community peace counseling.

The implementation of culture-based peace counseling also faces the challenge of a limited number of professional counselors who understand the cultural context of the *Kei* community. Many counselors have academic qualifications in counseling but lack a deep understanding of local customary values, such as *Ain Ni Ain*. This often results in counseling approaches that lack contextualization with the social realities of the local community. Integrating a professional approach with local wisdom is crucial for creating an effective reconciliation process. Increasing urbanization also poses a challenge to maintaining the sustainability of *Ain Ni Ain* values. Migration from their native areas to cities has led to changes in social structures and patterns of interaction between communities. In urban environments, social relationships are often more individualistic than the communal lifestyles of their hometowns. This condition can weaken the social solidarity that has long been the foundation for implementing the values of brotherhood in *Kei* society.

Urbanization and modernization have also given rise to a cultural identity crisis among the younger generation of the *Kei* community. Some young people face a dilemma between upholding local cultural values and adopting the modern lifestyles that thrive in urban environments. This situation can create a distance between the younger generation and the traditional traditions inherited from previous generations. As a result, the values of *Ain Ni Ain* are no longer the primary reference for building social relationships or resolving conflicts. Another challenge is the lack of synergy between customary institutions and formal social institutions such as educational institutions, local governments, and community organizations. In some cases, conflict resolution is largely left to formal mechanisms without optimal involvement of customary or religious leaders. This is despite the fact that customary approaches have strong social legitimacy in *Kei* society. This lack of collaboration can reduce the effectiveness of culturally based conflict resolution efforts. The final challenge relates to limited documentation and the regeneration process of indigenous knowledge. Most indigenous values and practices, including the principles of *Ain Ni Ain*, are still passed down orally through traditional leaders or elders within families. If this knowledge transfer process is not carried out sustainably, these values risk being lost in the lives of future generations. Therefore, systematic documentation and cultural education efforts are needed to ensure that *Ain Ni Ain* values remain relevant in the face of the social dynamics of modern society.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that *Ain Ni Ain* operates as a culturally embedded framework that transcends symbolic meaning and functions as a normative guide for social interaction and conflict resolution. The emphasis on brotherhood (Usman, 2025), equality (Ivarsflaten et al., 2024; Makhambetsaliyev, 2026), and collective belonging aligns with contemporary perspectives on community-based peacebuilding (Durodola, 2026; Fan & Bellmore, 2023), which highlight the centrality of shared identity in sustaining social cohesion. Within this socio-cultural context, *Ain Ni Ain* not only shapes everyday social practices but also informs community-based mechanisms for managing and resolving conflict. In this context, *Ain Ni Ain* facilitates the construction of an inclusive dialogical space, enabling conflicting parties to reframe disputes within a relational rather than adversarial perspective. Building upon these culturally grounded interaction patterns, the integration of moral values into counseling practices (Durodola, 2026; Lassoued et al., 2025) further strengthens the legitimacy and acceptance of interventions within culturally rooted communities (Vu, 2025).

deliberation, dialogue, mediation, and agreement, reflects a structured yet flexible model grounded in local wisdom. The active involvement of customary (Rashid et al., 2025; Shalihin, 2025) and religious leaders (Pajarianto et al., 2022; Suresman & Faqihuddin, 2026) in each phase highlights the importance of trusted social actors in facilitating emotional readiness and fostering constructive communication. Rather than focusing on attributing blame, the mediation process (Ngcobo, 2024; Sebyar et al., 2025) emphasizes collective consciousness and mutual recognition, which are critical for reducing defensiveness and promoting reconciliation. This approach is consistent with empirical evidence suggesting that culturally resonant mediation strategies (Zhomartkyzy, 2023) enhance participant engagement and long-term conflict resolution outcomes. Furthermore, the incorporation of reflective elements within the counseling process enables individuals to internalize the broader social implications of their actions, thereby reinforcing prosocial behavior.

Within this structured process, the use of customary deliberation (Amin et al., 2025; Junaidi, 2026; Nurdin et al., 2023) and oath-taking (Lehnertz, 2024) as mechanisms of peace agreement illustrates the integration of symbolic and practical dimensions in conflict resolution. These practices not only provide a safe and respectful environment for dialogue (Arif et al., 2025) but also establish a moral commitment that is socially and spiritually binding. The presence of community witnesses, including traditional and religious leaders, reinforces accountability and strengthens the durability of the agreement. This finding supports the notion that local wisdom-based interventions (Ferdi Hasan & Monita, 2026; Hasan et al., 2025; Uyun et al., 2024) are particularly effective in contexts where social relationships are deeply intertwined with cultural and spiritual values (Ardiana et al., 2025; Wahidin et al., 2025). Overall, the *Ain Ni Ain* framework exemplifies how indigenous knowledge systems can be operationalized within counseling practices to achieve sustainable peace. The convergence of cultural values and counseling approaches (Chen, 2024; Perron et al., 2024) thus offers a robust model for addressing conflicts in community-based settings.

In parallel with these roles, counselors contribute (Bryan et al., 2022; Simmons et al., 2025; Steele, 2025) by addressing the psychological dimensions of conflict through the facilitation of constructive and reflective dialogue (Bryan et al., 2022; Simmons et al., 2025; Steele, 2025). Their role focuses on creating a safe communicative space where individuals can express emotions, clarify misunderstandings, and develop empathy toward one another. (Ratuanak et al., 2022). This process helps reduce emotional tension and supports participants in reconstructing their perspectives in a more adaptive and relational manner (Kurmanbek et al., 2025). In addition, the active involvement of the *Kei* community reinforces collective responsibility and social accountability in maintaining post-conflict harmony. The collaboration among traditional leaders, religious leaders, counselors, and the community thus forms an integrated model of culturally grounded peace counseling that is both socially legitimate and psychologically effective.

The findings indicate that conflicts within the *Kei* community in Sorong City are multidimensional, encompassing issues of customary land, youth relations, and family dynamics shaped by mixed marriages. These forms of conflict reflect broader socio-cultural transformations influenced by modernization and urbanization, which gradually weaken the regulatory function of customary values in everyday life. As traditional norms lose their central role in guiding social interaction, individuals and groups become more prone to misunderstanding and tension (Arsal et al., 2023; Sholiqin et al., 2024). This condition suggests that the erosion of culturally based social control mechanisms contributes significantly to the emergence of conflict. Therefore, conflict in this context should

be understood not merely as an interpersonal issue but as a manifestation of shifting cultural values and social structures. Customary land disputes, youth conflicts, and family tensions related to mixed marriages illustrate how identity, group solidarity, and cultural expectations intersect in shaping conflict dynamics. Customary land disputes are particularly sensitive, as land is closely tied to kinship identity, social status, and economic livelihood, making conflicts both material and symbolic in nature (Liang & Du, 2026; Liu et al., 2026). At the same time, youth conflicts driven by village-based solidarity demonstrate how strong group affiliation can escalate minor disagreements into broader social tensions. Family disputes arising from mixed marriages further reveal the challenges of negotiating differences in customs, cultural practices, and religious expectations within evolving social contexts. Overall, these findings highlight that strengthening communication, reinforcing shared values, and revitalizing the role of customary norms are essential for preventing conflict escalation and sustaining social harmony in the community.

The findings reveal that the implementation of *Ain Ni Ain* values in peace counseling faces significant challenges due to socio-cultural transformations driven by urbanization and modernization. The declining familiarity of younger generations with the philosophy of brotherhood indicates a weakening of intergenerational value transmission, which traditionally occurred through family, rituals, and communal interactions. This shift contributes to more reactive and emotionally driven responses to conflict, rather than reconciliation grounded in shared cultural values. In addition, the decreasing availability of customary deliberation forums in urban settings limits opportunities for culturally rooted dialogue, thereby constraining the practical application of *Ain Ni Ain* in conflict resolution. Furthermore, structural and institutional challenges also hinder the effective implementation of culture-based peace counseling. The limited number of counselors who possess both professional competencies and deep cultural understanding reduces the contextual relevance of counseling interventions. At the same time, increasing individualism in urban environments weakens social solidarity, which has historically supported collective approaches to reconciliation (Diab et al., 2022; Ikhsan et al., 2025; Sutanti & Rochaeti, 2025). The lack of synergy between customary institutions and formal systems, combined with limited documentation and regeneration of indigenous knowledge, further threatens the sustainability of *Ain Ni Ain* values. These findings underscore the need for integrative strategies that bridge local wisdom with formal practices to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of culturally grounded peace counseling.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the cultural value of *Ain Ni Ain* remains highly relevant for addressing internal conflicts within the *Kei community in Sorong City*. The philosophy, commonly understood as “one belongs to one another,” provides a moral foundation for solidarity, kinship, and collective responsibility. In the context of peace counseling, *Ain Ni Ain* functions as a culturally grounded framework that supports deliberation, customary mediation, and the involvement of traditional and religious leaders in resolving conflicts. The findings indicate that this approach is effective in mitigating various forms of conflict, including customary leadership disputes, land-related conflicts, and tensions among youth groups, while also promoting reconciliation and the restoration of social relationships. However, the study also reveals several challenges, particularly the weakening of younger generations’ understanding of customary values, the limited availability of deliberative forums, and cultural identity crises caused by urbanization and modernization. Therefore, revitalizing *Ain Ni Ain* requires systematic efforts through cultural education, locally grounded counselor training, and stronger collaboration among customary leaders, religious figures, and local government. Thus, *Ain Ni Ain*-based peace counseling should be understood not only as a mechanism for conflict resolution, but also as a transformative instrument for strengthening social cohesion, communal solidarity, and the cultural identity of the *Kei community* in a changing social landscape.

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