

Sociocultural Capital and Customary Justice in Preventing Violence Against Women and Children in Sentani, Papua

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how Sentani sociocultural capital in Jayapura Regency, Papua, contributes to preventing and addressing violence against women and children (VAWC), while shaping family resilience and minority-group communication within customary territory.

Research Methodology: A qualitative ethnographic design was employed. Data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with Ondoafi, Village Court members, Women's and Children's Protection Task Force members, and residents of Yakonde and Yoka villages. Data were analyzed thematically using the Miles and Huberman interactive model and validated through source and technique triangulation.

Results: Customary dispute resolution has evolved into a semi-formal Village Court that filters domestic violence cases before referral to state courts and prioritizes restorative sanctions, including Tomako stone-money fines. Dogabia, customary compensation, and Toki Perahu reconciliation help restore victims' dignity and family relationships. However, bridewealth and early betrothal may restrict women's autonomy. The Village Court has also created limited space for women's participation.

Conclusions: Sentani sociocultural capital represents legal pluralism that is becoming more gender-responsive while preserving customary values.

Limitations: The study covers only two villages, limiting broader generalization.

Contributions: The study highlights indigenous mechanisms for VAWC prevention and recommends regulatory support, standardized customary sanctions, and documented adat rulings to strengthen protection for women and children. It further demonstrates how customary institutions can complement justice through culturally grounded, restorative, and community-based protection mechanisms.

Keywords: Customary Justice, Family Resilience, Sentani, Sociocultural Capital, Violence Against Women and Children

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1. Introduction

Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) remains a persistent social problem across Indonesia, including in Papua, where it is often shielded by family norms and patriarchal customary values. Violence against children specifically remains widespread and substantially underreported nationally, compounding the urgency of effective community-based prevention and protection mechanisms ([Rumble et al., 2020](#)). In the Sentani tribe of Jayapura Regency, domestic violence continues to affect the physical and psychological well-being of women, frequently driven by economic pressure, unequal power relations, and patriarchal expectations tied to the payment of bridewealth. Cases are commonly resolved through customary mechanisms centred on the Dewan Adat (customary council) in order to restore peace and avoid shame (*aib*), although formal legal intervention is still required in serious cases.

The Sentani tribe possesses strong local wisdom expressed through the Ondofolo customary leadership system, communal solidarity practices, and traditional expressions that together constitute a form of sociocultural capital for building mutual respect and social harmony. At the same time, several customary norms, particularly bridewealth obligations and rigid gender-role divisions, can place women and children in a vulnerable position when violence occurs, and have not yet been fully developed as a routine instrument of prevention and protection for families and minority groups, including religious and migrant communities living within Sentani territory.

Customary responses to domestic violence in the Sentani context prioritise a family-based approach through the *Dewan Adat Suku* (Tribal Customary Council), which focuses on conflict resolution, customary fines to remove shame, and the restoration of family harmony. Customary sanctions, such as restitution or symbolic payment, are intended to create a deterrent effect while restoring the family's good name. Communication among minority communities in Jayapura similarly unfolds within a multicultural setting that upholds local wisdom as a unifying value, in which customary institutions play an important role in producing social harmony and equality. Interaction between majority and minority communities in Jayapura is generally reported to be intensive, supported by the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), although intercultural communication barriers persist between indigenous Papuans and migrant communities because of linguistic and perceptual differences.

Although a number of studies have examined the role of women in Sentani family life, the function of Sentani customary councils in resolving domestic conflict, and social capital in the prevention of violence against women elsewhere in Indonesia, three gaps remain insufficiently addressed. First, existing studies on Sentani womanhood tend to focus on specific customary practices, such as the regulation of early marriage, without connecting them to a systemic mechanism for preventing violence. Second, studies on Sentani customary councils document their mediating function in domestic conflict but rarely trace how this function has evolved institutionally in recent years. Third, no study has yet integrated the analysis of sociocultural capital, family resilience, and minority communication within a single framework specific to the Sentani context. This study addresses these gaps by examining how sociocultural capital simultaneously functions as an instrument of violence prevention, a foundation for family resilience, and a mediating structure for minority communication in Sentani customary territory.

Based on this background, the study addresses three research questions:

- RQ1:* How does sociocultural capital function in the prevention and handling of the consequences of violence against women and children among the Sentani tribe in Jayapura Regency?
- RQ2:* How does cultural capital influence family resilience and the customary response to domestic violence?
- RQ3:* How does the communication system and social institutions of the Sentani tribe support or constrain the access of women, children, and minority groups to protection and recovery services?

The study aims to describe the forms and functions of Sentani sociocultural capital in preventing and addressing VAWC, and to identify how this capital builds or constrains family resilience and the quality of communication among minority groups. Academically, the study contributes to the literature on sociocultural capital in the Papuan context and strengthens scholarship on

Sentani local wisdom; practically, it is intended to inform gender-sensitive and minority-inclusive customary–government policy collaboration (adat–P2TP2A–village programmes) in Jayapura Regency.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Capital

Social capital refers to the capacity of a community to act collectively and to draw on networks of trust, norms, and reciprocity in pursuit of shared goals. [Putnam \(1993\)](#) frames social capital as the trust that binds citizens to one another and to their leaders, while [Fukuyama \(1995\)](#) conceptualises it as the capacity of a society to build trust for collective action, resting on three interrelated components: trust, social networks, and social norms. More recent theorising further distinguishes trust and reciprocity as two related but analytically separate sources of social capital, each embedded in a different type of social relationship ([Torche & Valenzuela, 2011](#)), a distinction that remains foundational to contemporary studies of how trust sustains collective action within both formal and informal institutions ([Six et al., 2015](#)).

Both perspectives converge on the idea that social capital functions as an intangible resource that sustains cooperation, coordination, and the productivity of a social organisation, and that individuals who withdraw from communal life are, by this logic, poorer in social capital regardless of material wealth. In the Indonesian setting specifically, empirical evidence from Indonesia shows a more complex pattern: communities of differing ethnic composition do not simply lose their capacity for collective action; rather, local governments in more diverse regions have been found to broaden the range of local public goods they provide, accommodating a wider set of group preferences ([Siburian, 2020](#)).

In the Sentani context, sociocultural capital is embedded in customary structures, namely the Ondoafi leadership system, kinship networks, and communal labour traditions, that regulate everyday social relations and, by extension, shape how conflict, including domestic violence, is anticipated and resolved.

2.2 Customary Institutions and the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children

Violence against women is defined by the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as any gender-based act that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm, arising from unequal power relations between men and women; the concept extends to violence against both adult women and girls ([Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2017](#)). National policy responses in Indonesia have had to adapt continually to changing social conditions, as illustrated by adjustments to protective mechanisms for domestic violence victims during the Covid-19 pandemic ([Purwanti & Setiawan, 2020](#)). Structurally, violence is commonly attributed to a combination of factors: unequal decision-making power, rigid gender roles, permissive community attitudes, and socio-economic pressures such as poverty and unemployment.

Customary law in Indonesia continues to operate alongside state law as part of a wider condition of legal pluralism, in which more than one normative order governs the same social field ([Griffiths, 1986](#)). In many Indonesian communities, customary institutions retain authority over marriage, land, and domestic conflict, applying restorative rather than retributive logic that privileges reconciliation, restitution, and the restoration of social equilibrium over punitive sanction ([Kasim & Nurdin, 2020](#); [Utama, 2021](#); [Wiratraman, 2022](#)). This body of customary law itself is far from monolithic, varying considerably in form and complexity across Indonesia's diverse communities ([Manullang, 2021](#)). Recent studies confirm this pattern specifically for domestic violence: adat institutions across Indonesia, ranging from West Sumatra to East Nusa Tenggara to Dayak communities in Kalimantan, commonly channel domestic violence cases toward family-based mediation before, or instead of, formal prosecution ([Zurnetti & Muliati, 2022](#); [Lestari et al., 2019](#); [Wulandari et al., 2022](#)). In Papua specifically, customary criminal resolution (delik adat) is built on the same restorative logic, resolved first between offender and victim, then between families, and only escalated to the Ondoafi or a customary tribunal when informal reconciliation fails ([Suhariyanto et al., 2024](#)).

The traditional authority exercised by figures such as the Ondoafi corresponds closely to what [Weber \(1978\)](#) describes as charismatic-traditional authority, in which legitimacy rests on inherited status and is treated by the community as largely unquestionable. This authority is frequently mobilised in the customary handling of domestic conflict across Papua, including in support of formal health and protection programmes, precisely because community trust in customary leadership remains high ([Sanggenafa & Hidayana, 2020](#); [Sudayasa et al., 2021](#)).

Empirical evidence on the specific link between sociocultural capital and violence prevention is still limited but growing. A qualitative case study of women survivors of violence in Bandung Regency found that social capital, namely support drawn from family, religious groups, and community networks, meaningfully assisted survivors in preventing and coping with violence, whereas cultural capital rooted in patriarchal norms had comparatively little protective effect ([Sari & Pawitan, 2024](#)). Family resilience research elsewhere in Indonesia similarly shows that communication grounded in local wisdom functions as a protective mechanism for the family unit under social pressure ([Muhajir, 2022](#)), and that empowerment-focused civil society organisations play a brokerage role in strengthening women's influence and channelling protection efforts within rural Indonesian communities ([Diprose, 2023](#)). This reflects a broader global pattern in which culturally grounded, indigenous approaches are increasingly recognised as important complements to formal institutional responses in identifying and addressing family violence ([Alice et al., 2022](#)).

2.3 Prior Research on the Sentani Tribe and the Present Study's Contribution

Research on the Sentani tribe of Jayapura Regency has expanded in recent years but remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries. Anthropological studies of Sentani local wisdom document core kinship-based values of peace and social harmony, such as the Akha Peakhe concept of communal brotherhood, as central to Sentani cultural identity ([Ibo, 2023](#)), while linguistic and ecological studies describe the symbolic role of customary food and land practices among neighbouring Sentani communities ([Kalilago & Suwae, 2021](#)). Studies of Sentani customary marriage and life-cycle ritual document the symbolic meaning of bridewealth and kin-based ceremonial payments, including the multi-stage marriage process and the yung head-payment ritual performed at death ([Sokoy & Idris, 2024](#)), and kinship structure ([Imbiri, 2014](#); [Mansoben, 1995](#)), but generally treat these institutions as descriptive ethnography rather than as instruments of violence prevention.

A second cluster of studies traces the institutional role of the Dewan Adat Suku Sentani specifically in resolving domestic conflict, showing that the council performs legal, political, and security functions parallel to the state ([Sanggenafa & Hidayana, 2020](#)), and that Sentani customary leadership at the village level has itself been shifting from purely hereditary Ondoafi authority toward more formalised village governance structures, a pattern consistent with the wider Papuan trend of adat institutions being reshaped as they are drawn into formal government recognition processes ([Dewi, 2017](#)), and unfolding alongside continuing legal uncertainty over the customary (ulayat) land rights the Ondoafi system underwrites ([Reumi & Katjong, 2021](#)), a shift that unfolds alongside continuing legal uncertainty over the customary (ulayat) land rights the Ondoafi system underwrites ([Reumi & Katjong, 2021](#)). Neither cluster, however, connects these institutional shifts explicitly to family resilience or to the communication needs of minority residents living within Sentani customary territory, and this is the gap this study addresses. Building on this literature, the present study's contribution is to show empirically how a single customary infrastructure (the Ondoafi–Peradilan Kampung–Satgas PPA nexus) simultaneously performs three functions that prior Sentani scholarship has treated separately: preventing and resolving VAWC, sustaining family resilience through symbolic and material obligation, and mediating the position of women and minority residents within an evolving, pluralistic legal order.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive design with an ethnographic approach, chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of how the sociocultural capital of the Sentani tribe functions as an instrument for preventing violence and strengthening family and community resilience. The research was conducted in the customary territory of the Sentani tribe, Jayapura Regency, Papua, focusing on Kampung Yakonde (Distrik Waihu) and Kampung Yoka (Distrik Heram), an area selected for its

comparatively well-preserved customary structure and its socially heterogeneous population. Fieldwork, comprising pre-field preparation, data collection, and reporting, was conducted over a three-month period.

Informants were selected purposively across four categories chosen for their direct knowledge of the phenomenon under study: (1) customary leaders (Ondoafi/Khose) and Village Court members, providing data on sociocultural capital and adat philosophy; (2) women community leaders (Mama-Mama Papua), providing perspectives on family resilience and lived experience of violence; (3) representatives of the Jayapura Regency Office for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DP3A), providing formal case data; and (4) representatives of minority residents, providing perspectives on communication and social integration. Data collection combined participant observation of everyday customary and communal activity, in-depth semi-structured interviews with informants from each category, and documentary review of village records, DP3A annual reports, and relevant local regulation.

Data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, comprising three concurrent stages: data reduction (summarising and focusing transcripts and field notes on themes relevant to social and cultural capital, family resilience, and communication); data display (organising reduced data into descriptive narrative to reveal relationships among these themes); and conclusion drawing and verification (iteratively checking emerging conclusions against the raw data to answer the research questions). Trustworthiness was addressed through triangulation of sources, namely comparing accounts from customary leaders against those of government officials and community members, and triangulation of technique, cross-checking interview data against field observation.

Given that several informants were, or were closely connected to, survivors of domestic violence, the research protocol followed standard ethical safeguards for vulnerable populations: informants were briefed on the purpose and scope of the study prior to participation and gave their consent to be interviewed; identities in this article are represented only by initials and approximate age rather than full names; interview questions concerning violence were asked openly but non-directively, allowing informants to decline any question; and information obtained was used solely for research purposes and reported without addition or omission. The anonymisation protocol applied to survivor-informants is documented in the underlying field records held by the authors.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Research Setting

Kampung Yakonde lies on the shore of Lake Sentani in Distrik Waibu and comprises five sub-clans (Daimoe I Bairi Imea, which is the Ondoafi's own clan, Daimoe II Anetoro, Daimoe III Temeng Imea, Dawe Pantara, and Tungkoye Douge Imea), with a population of roughly 638 people across 140 households. According to the current sub-clan head, Donald Tungkoye, decisions in the village follow a deliberative pattern in which sub-clan leaders confer before the Ondoafi issues a final ruling, and the mother tongue is actively preserved through a local-content curriculum in the village school. Kampung Yoka, situated in Distrik Heram roughly ten kilometres from central Jayapura, was formally established as a village in 1964 and is today led by a democratically elected village head supported by a village secretary and neighbourhood-unit administrators, alongside customary structures that continue to operate in parallel with formal local government.

4.2 Sociocultural Capital in Preventing and Addressing Violence Against Women and Children

Field data show a clear institutional shift in how domestic violence has been handled in the two villages. Before 2023, cases were addressed informally by neighbourhood-unit officials with the Ondoafi present in an advisory capacity; since 2023, a semi-formal Village Court (*Peradilan Kampung*) has taken over adjudication, working alongside a ten-member Satgas PPA representing customary, women's, youth, and medical stakeholders.

“Before, cases of domestic violence were handled directly by the village government through the neighbourhood units, with the Tribal Head and the Ondoafi present. If a customary sanction was decided, the offender had to pay a fine such as stone-money. Since the Village Council took over, we

usually resolve matters without a monetary fine, although recently there was an unusual case involving the Ondoafi's own child, where the woman's family insisted on a fine, so it was decided the man's family had to pay." Interview with YD, 50.

This shift illustrates legal pluralism in practice ([Griffiths, 1986](#)): state law, customary law, and the newly formed Village Court interact rather than displace one another, with the Village Court functioning as a filtering institution before cases reach the formal justice system. Since its establishment in 2023, the Village Court in the study sites has resolved thirteen cases, spanning domestic violence, land disputes, and debt, with one case of alleged assault still under process.

Underpinning this institutional layer is the enduring authority of the Ondoafi, legitimised through what informants describe as the principle of Tiga Tungku ("three hearths"): adat, church, and government acting in concert, with adat historically the highest authority in domestic matters.

"Traditionally the three hearths, namely adat, church, and government, work together. But historically, before government and church existed, adat alone controlled every household matter; adat itself was the witness. Once the Ondofole takes his seat, his decision is automatic and final." Interview with AI, 66.

This pattern corresponds to [Weber \(1978\)](#) notion of traditional-charismatic authority: the Ondoafi's rulings are treated as self-legitimising, and non-verbal cues from the Ondoafi carry the weight of formal instruction. Resolution, however, is explicitly restorative rather than punitive. The Dogabia philosophy shared between the neighbouring customary territories of Doyo Lama and Nukuboi, meaning "their hardship is our hardship," was invoked by Kampung Yakonde to resolve a domestic violence case without a customary fine, in order to preserve the Ondoafi's standing in both villages and maintain intercommunal relations.

Where a fine is imposed, it functions less as a punitive measure than as symbolic restitution for the dignity of the victim and her family. In one case mediated jointly by Satgas PPA and the Village Court, a husband who assaulted and expelled his wife, who is a member of the Ondoafi's own family, was required to pay a customary fine of Tomako (stone-money) and cash, restoring the family's honour through material compensation rather than criminal punishment.

At the same time, the Village Court's authority remains bounded by the requirements of formal legal evidence. Satgas PPA can mediate and record statements but cannot forward a case to the police or courts without sufficient documentary proof, a pattern echoed in the Indonesian adat-justice literature, where legal outcomes are shown to depend not only on substantive customary norms but on institutional capacity and evidentiary culture ([Rosalin & Usman, 2023](#)).

"As head of the task force, I met the person involved directly. At this stage there is no written statement, though we can help draft one, but we cannot take the case to the police or the courts ourselves because we do not yet have sufficient evidence." Interview with a Satgas PPA representative.

Finally, customary sanctioning follows a structured, three-stage procedure rather than an arbitrary decision by the Ondoafi alone: witnesses are heard by the customary assembly; customary elders deliberate on the testimony and formulate a proposed sanction; and the Ondoafi reviews the elders' recommendation before issuing a final, binding decision. This layered procedure, namely testimony, deliberation, and ruling, gives the appearance of an absolute, sacral authority a demonstrably participatory and accountable structure underneath.

4.3 Cultural Capital, Family Resilience, and the Customary Response to Domestic Violence

Cultural capital in Sentani manifests through symbolic obligations that bind extended families together and, informants report, discourage domestic conflict by embedding sons- and daughters-in-law within a web of mutual obligation. A son- or daughter-in-law is described as occupying an honoured position in the parents-in-law's household, symbolised by the practice of offering roasted taro (keladi bakar) as a sign of welcome and hope for the couple's maturity and independence.

“In our custom here, a son- or daughter-in-law is highly respected, especially by the wife's father. They usually prepare roasted taro for the in-law, whether son or daughter, as a sign that they will grow up to be like their own parents. Once married, an in-law still has duties, such as gathering firewood, but is never required to do heavy labour; and they are treated like royalty in the parents-in-law's house, especially if they marry an Ondoafi's daughter, out of mutual respect.” Interview with YD, 70.

This treatment functions as a form of respect distance intended to reduce friction between an in-law and the spouse's family in the sensitive early years of marriage, and is reinforced by a norm of reciprocity between villages connected through marriage: a daughter married into another village is expected to receive equivalent respect there, and parents on both sides bear responsibility for maintaining the alliance between the two extended families.

This reciprocity, however, is not unconditional. Adat draws a firm distinction between violence that occurs within the extended family's oversight and violence that occurs openly in front of a parent-in-law. In the former case, adat prohibits expelling the in-law outright; instead, an emissary is sent to the in-law's own parents to request that they counsel their child, with a lengthy grace period allowed for behaviour to change before the marriage may be considered customarily dissolved.

“Under adat, even if a son-in-law strikes our own daughter, he cannot simply be expelled, because he remains family. What we do is send a messenger to report it to his parents, so they can advise him. If the violence still recurs, we allow a long period of time; only if he leaves after that, or remarries someone else, is the matter considered closed.” Interview with MM, 65.

But if violence occurs in the direct presence of the wife's father, the norm shifts sharply: this is treated as an unforgivable breach of respect, and the customary consequence is immediate, so the son-in-law must leave the household at once. Where the incident occurs away from parental oversight, by contrast, parents typically counsel their own daughter first to evaluate her conduct before assigning blame elsewhere, and in-laws living in the same house are explicitly barred from intervening in the couple's dispute, preserving a form of household privacy around the resolution process.

Together, these findings support a reading of Sentani family resilience through the lens of social capital ([Fukuyama, 1995](#)): trust, reciprocal obligation, and shared norms across households bind extended kin networks together and provide an informal safety net that operates in parallel with, and sometimes ahead of, formal protection services. This aligns with evidence from other parts of Indonesia that family communication grounded in local wisdom functions as a protective resource for family resilience ([Muhajir, 2022](#)), while showing that in the Sentani case this resource is inseparable from customary authority and can therefore reproduce, as well as resolve, unequal gender relations within the household.

4.4 Communication System and Social Institutions: Access for Women and Minority Groups

Women's position within purely customary proceedings is markedly different from their position within the Village Court. In customary sessions convened by male clan leaders and opened with prayer by church elders, women are present but structurally silenced, permitted to attend but not to speak.

“When a case of violence against women is brought before pure adat, we women can attend but cannot speak. In that meeting all the leaders gather, and the church is present too, and they pray first before discussion begins. If it is handled purely by adat, we women cannot speak; but if it goes through the Village Court, we can speak. Through the Village Court, women are now protected, whereas before, so many cases involved marriage followed immediately by beating and threats.” Interview with a woman informant.

The emergence of the Village Court therefore functions as what the literature on legal pluralism and access to justice describes as a bridging institution: it grants women voice and a measure of agency within a system that had previously subordinated them for the sake of clan cohesion, without displacing the religious and customary identity of the community ([Griffiths, 1986](#); [Wiratraman, 2022](#)).

Bridewealth (maskawin) practice further illustrates how Sentani customary economy encodes social hierarchy. Payment, conventionally described by informants as honouring a mother's devotion to her village and lineage, follows a fixed customary tariff: seven customary stones for marriage into a Tribal Head's family and ten for marriage into an Ondoafi's family, a scale outsiders often perceive as excessive but which functions locally as an index of lineage status rather than a market transaction.

"Payment for the head honours a mother's devotion to the village and to her descendants. People from outside sometimes say Sentani bridewealth is too expensive, but the amount, namely ten customary stones, was set by our ancestors and is received and kept by the Ondoafi; for a tribal chief it is only seven." Interview with YD, 70.

Where a woman's honour is undermined by another clan, for instance through public disrespect from a Tribal Head's family, restitution is symbolic rather than monetary: the Ondoafi initiates the Toki Perahu ("boat-knocking") ritual, in which customary food is brought to the offending family, and the exchange itself, rather than any cash payment, is understood to fully restore the wronged woman's standing.

A further institution, Hombe Hole Narembé, formalises betrothal from before a girl's birth: a prospective groom's family presents yellow beads while the mother is still pregnant, the birth of a daughter is announced in the customary council (Mengge Yasenodena), and an ear-piercing ritual (Anggaibu Kalku Yo Kwanalle) marks her as customarily betrothed. While this tradition functions, in informants' accounts, as a mechanism for securing long-term alliance and protection between clans, it also illustrates how a girl's marital future can be socially determined well before she has the capacity to consent, which is a tension the study treats as an open finding rather than a resolved one, and a clear entry point for future gender-focused customary reform.

On minority communication more broadly, the customary and interfaith infrastructure described above, namely the Tiga Tungku principle binding adat, church, and government, extends past domestic violence resolution into the everyday accommodation of religious and migrant minorities within Sentani territory. Informants describe generally intensive, cordial interaction between indigenous Sentani residents and minority communities, supported at the district level by the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), even as communication barriers rooted in language and mutual unfamiliarity persist between long-settled Papuan residents and more recently arrived migrant groups. This suggests that the same sociocultural capital that filters and restrains domestic violence within Sentani households also underwrites, more diffusely, the everyday social peace between majority and minority residents of the district, although the mechanism connecting the two is looser and less institutionalised than the Ondoafi–Peradilan Kampung nexus described in Section 4.2.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusions

This study shows that the sociocultural capital of the Sentani tribe operates through three interlocking mechanisms. First, the handling of violence against women and children has moved from purely traditional structures toward a semi-formal Village Court that filters cases before they reach the state judiciary, resolving disputes through restorative, family-centred mechanisms, namely customary fines, reconciliation, and the sacred, largely unquestioned authority of the Ondoafi, rather than punitive sanction; coordination between the Village Court and Satgas PPA is essential to this process, though the two remain constrained by the evidentiary standards of formal law.

Second, Sentani cultural capital strengthens family resilience through sacred customary structures, symbolic ritual, and norms of reciprocity between intermarried villages, resolving domestic conflict through restorative rather than punitive means except where a serious taboo, such as violence in front of a parent-in-law, triggers immediate, categorical sanction. Customary compliance functions simultaneously as a protective mechanism and as a regulator of household conduct.

Third, the Sentani communication system and its social institutions display a dual dynamic: the Village Court and the Toki Perahu ritual actively support women's voice and the restoration of their honour, while bridewealth stratification and early betrothal practices remain structurally deterministic

constraints on women's autonomy from a young age. Overall, Sentani customary institutions continue to move toward a more gender-responsive form of legal pluralism without relinquishing the sacred character of adat, which is a trajectory that is incremental, contested in places, and not yet complete.

5.2 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations common to small-scale qualitative ethnographic research. First, the study draws on informants across four purposively sampled categories from two villages (Yakonde and Yoka) within Sentani customary territory. The sample is not statistically representative of the wider Sentani population or other Papuan customary territories; therefore, the findings should be considered context-specific rather than broadly generalisable. Second, fieldwork was conducted over a three-month period. This limited overall timeframe constrains the assessment of longer-term institutional changes, including the Village Court's caseload beyond the thirteen cases resolved since 2023

Third, because several informants were survivors of or closely connected to domestic violence, interviews followed a trauma-informed protocol, including informed consent, non-directive questioning, the use of initials and approximate ages, and research-only data use. Formal ethics committee approval was not obtained for this study, as the research relied on established ethical safeguards for vulnerable informants rather than institutional review; this is acknowledged as a limitation, and future research on comparable populations is encouraged to secure formal ethics committee approval. Documentation of anonymisation and data-protection procedures is retained by the authors and available upon request, subject to confidentiality requirements.

Fourth, the study lacked comparative quantitative data, such as the total number of domestic violence cases recorded by DP3A Kabupaten Jayapura during the study period. Future research combining qualitative findings with administrative data could provide a stronger assessment of the Village Court's relative contribution to case resolution.

Finally, as a single-site ethnographic study relying primarily on interviews and observations, the findings reflect informant perspectives and self-reports. Although triangulation across sources and techniques was used to reduce bias, social-desirability bias cannot be completely excluded, particularly regarding sensitive issues of gender and violence.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future research is encouraged to evaluate, using mixed methods, the comparative effectiveness and long-term outcomes of Village Court resolution versus formal judicial pathways for domestic violence cases in Sentani customary territory, and to examine directly how Sentani women themselves evaluate the trade-offs of bridewealth and early-betrothal practices.

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Author Contributions

LL conceived and designed the study, led the fieldwork and data collection through participant observation and in-depth interviews, conducted the thematic data analysis, and drafted the manuscript. MY contributed to data collection and informant coordination, assisted in verifying and triangulating field data, and reviewed and edited the manuscript for important intellectual content. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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