



## The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Shaping the Social Identity of Street Children: A Social Identity Theory Approach

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims the role of interpersonal communication in the formation of the social identity of street children at the Roemah Tawon Education Foundation, Tangerang City. Street children are often in a stigmatized and marginalized social position, resulting in low self-confidence and limited social participation. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews with 15 informants, and supporting documents. The results show that empathetic, equal, and supportive interpersonal communication acts as an interaction space that allows for the negotiation of meaning and the strengthening of social identity. Referring to Social Identity Theory, this study found that the processes of social categorization, social identification, and social comparison occur dynamically through daily communication practices. Therefore, social stigma remains a challenge, interpersonal communication functions as an important arena in reconstructing the social identity of street children in a more positive and inclusive manner.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As we know street children are victims of a social system that doesn't favour them. According to the website [banten.bps.go.id](http://banten.bps.go.id), the percentage of poor people as of March 2025 reached 722,000 people (Badan pusat statistik, 2025). One factor is the high poverty rate, which makes them vulnerable to social problems. Another factor is limited access to social services, which makes street children even more vulnerable to social problems such as crime, exploitation, and violence. Street children are a vulnerable social group who often face limited access to education, social discrimination, and negative stigma from their surrounding environment (Prastika, 2022). This stigma not only influences how society views street children, but also impacts the formation of their self-identity and social identity.

Street children are often perceived as troubled individuals with no future and little power, a perception that reinforces their feelings of inferiority and hinders their ability to interact positively in social settings. One of the main impacts of being a street child is social stigma, which leads to street children becoming victims of discrimination from both the general public and social institutions (Sundari et al., 2024). Thus, street children can be categorized as a group whose activities mostly take place on the streets. These activities include basic needs such as finding food, earning income, and social activities such as interacting with other street children and the people they encounter (Muawanah, 2019).

Several studies also state that street children are also influenced by a lack of parental supervision and attention, environmental and social pressure, experiences of violence in the family, and minimal literacy and access to formal education (Putri et al., 2023). Therefore, this causes street children to spend most of their time on the streets, whether it is for trading, busking, or just looking for a place for social interaction that is more accepting of their situation (Wijanarko & Ginting, 2021).

In various social contexts, street children are often negatively perceived as deviant, problematic, and without a future. This perception creates a social stigma that not only results in discriminatory treatment from society but also influences how street children view themselves (Goffman, 2014). Therefore, the stigma that is continuously experienced will potentially reduce their self-confidence and hinder their ability to build social relationships.

The Roemah Tawon Education Foundation plays a strategic role, not only providing shelter and education for street children but also providing a conducive environment for them to develop social skills. Located on the outskirts of the Tanah Tinggi railway line, the Roemah Tawon Education Foundation is one of the institutions that places serious emphasis on empowering street children. Its programs focus on learning, mentoring, and developing social skills that support children's self-confidence and independence. Through intense and supportive interpersonal interactions, the foundation plays a crucial role in helping street children develop a more positive social identity.

For vulnerable groups like street children at the Roemah Tawon Foundation, the quality of interpersonal communication is a crucial factor in

determining whether social interactions are empowering or reinforce stigma and powerlessness. Therefore, interpersonal communication plays a strategic role in shaping how individuals perceive themselves. Repeated social interactions, both positive and negative, will influence the construction of a person's self-identity and social identity (Berger, 2014).

In line with the study of communication science, social relationships and the formation of self-meaning are inseparable from the interpersonal communication process. Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging individual messages, involving verbal and nonverbal aspects and influenced by openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality (Berger, 2014). Therefore, through interpersonal communication, individuals have the opportunity to express their thoughts, build emotional bonds, and gain social recognition. For vulnerable groups such as street children, the quality of interpersonal communication is a crucial factor in determining whether the social interactions they experience are empowering or reinforce existing stigma (Indra, 2021).

As a street children, the process of social identity formation often takes place in a disadvantageous context. Discriminatory treatment and stigma from society lead them to internalize a low self-image and feel unworthy of social recognition. Tajfel and Turner (in Littlejohn et al., 2017), explains that social identity is formed through meaningful social interactions, so that changes in interaction patterns can open up opportunities for identity reconstruction. In other words, when street children experience positive, supportive, and equal communication, space opens up for the formation of a more constructive social identity.

The process of eliminating stigma requires consistent, empathetic, and supportive interactions within the social environment. Social stigma is not merely a negative treatment but a social mechanism that directly shapes the identity of street children. This stigma phenomenon is one part of prejudice, which refers to discriminatory treatment and differentiation of individuals. Furthermore, efforts to address street children have so far focused largely on material approaches, including those that fulfill basic needs, provide economic assistance, or provide educational facilities. While these approaches are important, they have not fully addressed the psychosocial aspects that form the foundation for the formation of a child's personality and social identity. Therefore, a more holistic approach is needed, one of which is through strengthening interpersonal communication as a means of social empowerment.

Previous studies have shown that empathetic and supportive social interactions can be a crucial factor in the psychosocial empowerment of marginalized groups. Non-judgmental interpersonal communication that allows for self-expression allows individuals to develop self-confidence, social skills, and a sense of self-worth (Chairunnisa et al., 2024). Therefore, interpersonal communication is no longer understood as merely a process of exchanging messages, but rather as a social practice that has profound psychological and social impacts.

Several studies have been conducted on street children and social stigma, research specifically examining the role of interpersonal communication in the formation of street children's social identity using the Social Identity Theory perspective is still relatively limited, particularly in the context of educational and supportive social interactions. Therefore, further research is needed that can explain how interpersonal communication can contribute to the process of forming and reconstructing street children's social identity. Based on the descriptions previously explained, this study aims to analyze the role of interpersonal communication in the formation of street children's social identity through the perspective of Social Identity Theory.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Interpersonal Communication***

Interpersonal communication is a form of communication that occurs between two or more people through the direct exchange of messages, both verbally and non-verbally (Chairunnisa et al., 2024). In this process, each individual uses all elements of communication such as messages, context, perception, feedback, and the social relationships that underlie it (Febrianti et al., 2025).

According to Berger (2014), Communication plays a passive, active, and interactive role. The better the interpersonal relationships with others, the better the interpersonal communication. Therefore, Interpersonal communication can also influence each other with every piece of information or thought that exists so that news that is spread can become shared information.

Interpersonal communication not only helps in the overall development of human beings, but also contributes in building healthy social relationships (Indra, 2021). Interpersonal communication requires: 1) openness, 2) empathy, 3) supportiveness, 4) positive behavior, and 5) equality (Berger, 2014). Therefore, these elements are highly relevant for street children, who need supportive interactions to build self-confidence and reduce the stigma that has been attached to them.

According to Hurlock (2014) and Saudia (2019), effective interpersonal communication involves openness, caring, good behavior, equality, confidence, and a focus on others. Interpersonal relationships and communication are influenced by a person's interpersonal competence, which, according to Buhrmester, creates successful interactions and communication, thus fostering good relationships between individuals (Juliana & Nurrizalia, 2023).

Rogers (in Chairunnisa et al., 2024) stated that interpersonal communication failure can occur when someone tries to avoid communicating with others, resulting in the message not being conveyed properly. Therefore, when someone fails to establish communication and interpersonal relationships, the impact will be visible to the individual.

Interpersonal communication ultimately becomes a means to help individuals express themselves, understand others, and build emotional bonds. Therefore, in the context of street children, interpersonal communication serves as a bridge to creating a safe and positive social environment, allowing them to develop better social skills.

### ***Social Identity Theory***

As we know that social identity is not only related to who the individual is, but also how the individual is positioned and recognized within a particular social group. Social Identity Theory yang dikemukakan oleh Tajfel & Turner provides a relevant theoretical framework for understanding how social identities are formed through the processes of social categorization, group identification, and social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 2022). Therefore, when individuals are consistently placed as part of an out-group, the social identity that is formed tends to be negative and detrimental.

The process of social identity formation among street children is often influenced by an unsupportive social environment. The discrimination and stigma they experience continually internalize a negative self-image and undermine their sense of self-confidence and social recognition. The process of removing that stigma requires consistent, empathetic, and supportive interactions from the social environment.

Tajfel & Turner (in Littlejohn et al., 2017) explains that the formation of a person's identity is formed through three processes: 1) Social Categorization, 2) Social Identification, and 3) Social Comparison. Therefore, social stigma is not merely negative treatment but a social mechanism that directly shapes the identity of street children. This stigma phenomenon is one part of prejudice, which refers to discriminatory treatment and differentiation of individuals.

First is *social categorization* which refers to the tendency of individuals and societies to group others into specific social categories, such as "us" and "them." This process simplifies social reality but also creates symbolic boundaries between in-groups and out-groups. In the context of marginalized groups, this categorization is often associated with negative stereotypes and stigma (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

Second is *social identification*, the process by which individuals begin to internalize group membership as part of their self-concept (Littlejohn et al., 2017). At this stage, individuals not only recognize their belonging to a group but also adopt the values, norms, and emotional meanings inherent in that group. When individuals are consistently positioned as part of an out-group, the resulting social identity tends to be negative and can undermine self-confidence and social self-esteem

The third process, *social comparison*, occurs when individuals compare their group with other groups to evaluate their social standing and maintain self-esteem (Littlejohn et al., 2017). In unequal social conditions, this comparison often disadvantages marginalized groups, as they are perceived as having lower social status. As a result, the resulting social identity becomes disadvantageous and reinforces experiences of social exclusion.

In the context of street children, Social Identity Theory will provides a relevant analytical framework for understanding how stigma and discriminatory treatment function as social mechanisms that shape identity. Stigma not only emerges as a form of negative treatment but also plays a direct role in the processes of categorization, identification, and social comparison that ultimately shape street children's social identities structurally and symbolically. Therefore,

efforts to change negative social identities require consistent, empathetic, and supportive social interactions so that the identity formation process can move in a more positive and empowering direction.

### ***Social Stigma and Self-Identity***

Social stigma can be defined as a social label given to someone, where attributes associate a person with stereotypes and negative judgments, leading to discrimination or being considered abnormal. Social stigma is a form of prejudice that refers to discriminatory treatment and differentiation of individuals (Prastika, 2022). Goffman explains that stigma is an attribute that makes someone different from other people, namely an attribute that discredits them so that it can reduce their social identity (Goffman, 2014).

There are several forms of social stigma in society, according to Link and Phelan (Goffman, 2014) include: 1) labelling, 2) stereotyping, 3) separation, and 4) discrimination. These four forms of stigma are interconnected and interconnected. When all components of social stigma converge, stigma can be said to have emerged in a person. This stigma has a significant impact on the identity and behavior of street children. Street children often feel inferior, worthless, or unworthy of education and support. This can exacerbate their psychological and social conditions.

As we referring to Social Identity Theory, a person's social identity is formed through interactions with surrounding groups. Therefore, street children who continue to receive negative treatment will develop a negative identity about themselves. The process of removing stigma requires consistent, empathetic, and supportive interaction from the social environment.

This phenomenon of social stigma is one aspect of prejudice, which refers to discriminatory treatment and discrimination against individuals. Being negatively categorized ultimately leads street children to be viewed as an outgroup with a lower status than other children attending formal education.

In addition, this stigma causes society and street children to place them at the bottom of the hierarchy. This social comparison almost always leads to feelings of inferiority, inability to compete, and unworthy of achievement. Therefore, the formation of social identity and the process of creating social stigma directly impact street children's self-image, self-confidence, and behavior.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. According to Yin (2018) case studies emphasize in-depth exploration of contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts. The case study method was chosen because this research focuses on understanding complex and contextual interpersonal communication processes, particularly in relation to the formation of the social identity of street children. Denzin and Lincoln also explain that case study research will focus on a particular case in depth so that it can identify social relationships through the process of examining and analyzing the case at hand (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

This study used two sources of data, there are: 1). Primary data obtained from non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with a total of 15

informants/children who were selected using purposive sampling techniques with predetermined informant criteria, namely diversity in age and social experience, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal communication and social identity formation. In addition, data was also obtained through non-participant observation conducted by the researcher to provide a clear description of the respondents' behaviour or activities, events, objects, time, and feelings of the informants during the research (Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021).

Furthermore, 2). Secondary data sources in this study were obtained through documentation, literature reviews, assessment tests (pre-tests & post-tests), and internal reports from the Roemah Tawon Education Foundation related to foster children who regularly participate in activities. This data was used in the analysis to supplement and validate the primary data found previously. This research was also conducted over a period of two months, from November to December 2025, at Roemah Tawon Education Foundation in Tanah Tinggi, Tangerang City.

Table 1. Informant Data

Category	Length Involvement in Activities	Age Range	Informant Code
Children	1 Year	9–11 Years	AT 1
Children	2 Year	10–12 Years	AT 2
Children	1 Year	11–13 Years	AT 3
Children	3 Year	9–12 Years	AT 4
Children	2 Year	12–14 Years	AT 5
Children	1 Year	10–13 Years	AT 6
Children	3 Year	11–14 Years	AT 7
Children	2 Year	9–11 Years	AT 8
Children	4 Year	12–15 Years	AT 9
Children	1 Year	10–12 Years	AT 10
Children	2 Year	11–13 Years	AT 11
Children	3 Year	9–12 Years	AT 12
Children	4 Year	13–15 Years	AT 13
Children	2 Year	10–14 Years	AT 14
Children	5 Year	11–15 Years	AT 15

*Source: Author Analysis (2025)*

The collected data was then will analyzed using pattern matching analysis techniques described by (Yin, 2018). This technique then focuses on how to match patterns with the theories and concepts used against the results obtained from interviews with informants conducted by researchers. Furthermore, to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained, researchers used construct validity techniques involving the collection of concrete evidence from various data sources that had been obtained previously (Yin, 2018). Therefore, this study was able to produce conclusions that provide a comprehensive picture of how the role of interpersonal communication in shaping the social identity of street children.

## RESEARCH RESULT

Based on Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (in Littlejohn et al., 2017), this study identifies the main processes in the formation of social identity that shape the dynamics of interpersonal interaction and communication among street children. This theoretical framework emphasizes that an individual's social identity can be constructed through membership in certain social groups and is influenced by the relationship between ingroups and outgroups, which is often characterized by disparities in social status, recognition, and legitimacy. In this context, three key processes explain how the social identity of street children is formed and negotiated, namely: 1). *Social Categorization*, 2). *Social Identification*, and 3). *Social Comparison*. These processes are not static, but are dynamic and interpreted through interpersonal communication practices. The interactions that occur in the social lives of street children show how they constantly negotiate their social position and sense of self through communication with their surroundings. Social Identity Theory will illustrate how interpersonal communication can shaping the social identity of street children as below.

### *Interpersonal Communication and the Construction of Out-Group Identity*

As we know that in Social Identity Theory, social categorization is an early cognitive mechanism that allows individuals to understand their social position through the grouping of “us” and “them.” This research findings show that interpersonal communication experienced by street children in public spaces systematically shapes their awareness as part of an out-group. Then this process forms an early awareness that they belong to a social group that is different from other children in general. This categorization arises from relatively uniform social experiences, particularly stigma, rejection, and discriminatory treatment from the outside environment. This process is evident in the statement of one informant.

*“When I'm outside, I often feel different from other children. It's like being looked down on, so I feel like we're not children like them.” (AT3)*

*“Kalau di luar, saya sering merasa beda sama anak-anak yang lain. Kayak dipandang Sebelah mata, Jadi saya merasa kami ini bukan anak kayak mereka” (AT 3)*

The statement above shows how negative communication experiences shape the initial awareness of foster children about their social position as an out-group. Furthermore, Interpersonal communication plays an important role in building street children's awareness of their social position as an out-group. Their daily interactions in public spaces are often marked by discriminatory treatment, negative labelling, and exclusive and judgmental communication. Then this categorization process is both cognitive and social in nature, as it is formed through real-life interactions. A similar sentiment was expressed by another informant/foster child, who stated that social labelling made them unconsciously accept this category as their initial identity.

*“I used to think that street kids were like that, that they weren't respected. So I rarely talked to outsiders..” (AT8)*

*"Dulu saya piker memang anak jalanan itu ya seperti ini, kadang kami tidak dianggap. Jadi saya juga jarang berbicara dan berinteraksi dengan orang lain "* (AT 8)

The statement above in line with describe how social categorization is a cognitive mechanism in the formation of social identity, whereby individuals begin to understand themselves based on their membership in certain groups. This social categorization also serves to regulate individuals' cognitive activities not only by providing a shared perspective on social reality and a set of experiences, but also by providing a basis for social influence.

Based on what was found in the field, street children often encounter exclusive and stigmatizing communication practices, both in verbal and nonverbal forms. Condescending looks, avoidance of interaction, and brief, cold responses are symbolic messages that consistently reinforce social differences, these communication practices ultimately convey the message that street children are outside the social category that is considered normal and worthy of recognition. One of informant also explained that

*"When I'm outside, I always feel like I'm being looked down on because I'm not like them. For example, when I meet schoolchildren of the same age and they see me, they seem to avoid me."* (AT 14)

*"Ketika berada di luar saya merasa selalu dipandang sebelah mata Karena tidak seperti mereka. Misalnya, ketika bertemu anak sekolah Yang seumuran dan melihat saya, mereka seperti menghindar"* (AT 14)

The statement above shows that the process of social categorization is formed through relational communication experiences. Street children not only recognize structural differences in social status, but also experience them directly through interpersonal interactions.

Based on the statement before, we can conclude that, when street children continuously receive messages reinforcing their social worthlessness, they eventually begin to reproduce these categories in the way they view themselves and regulate their communication behavior. In this context, social categorization is not only carried out by the dominant group towards street children, but is also reproduced internally by the street children themselves.

### ***Internalization of Group Values and Positive Social Identity***

#### **Internalization of Group Values and Positive Social Identity**

In Social Identity Theory, Social identification is an advanced stage following the process of social categorization, which is when individuals begin to associate themselves emotionally and symbolically with certain social groups. At this stage, group identity is no longer just an external label, but begins to be internalized as part of one's identity. In this context, communication interactions not only strengthen group membership, but also give emotional meaning to that identity. Interactions characterized by acceptance and openness make children feel safe to express themselves. This is in line with the following statement from an informant.

*"In here, I feel like more confident to speaking up. I'm not afraid of Making mistakes because people listen to me."* (AT 5)

*"Kalau di sini saya merasa lebih berani untuk berbicara dan ga Takut salah karena didengar oleh teman di sini" (AT 5)*

The statement above shows that interpersonal communication not only facilitates the exchange of messages, but also builds emotional bonds between individuals and groups. This process is in line with the concept of social identification, in which social identity has emotional meaning and certain values for individuals. Therefore, communication that provides recognition and a sense of security, street children begin to see group membership not merely as a consequence of stigma, but as a source of social support and belonging.

Communication experience then enabled street children to interpret group membership as a source of social support, rather than merely a consequence of stigma. Other informants also confirmed a change in the way they interpreted themselves and their group.

*"Now I feel like I belong. I feel more confident to their people." (AT 11)*

*"Sekarang saya merasa punya tempat untuk cerita, jadi kayak lebih pede untuk berbicara dengan orang lain" (AT 11)*

The statement above shows that interpersonal communication plays a role in transforming social identity from a mere social label into an identity that has positive value for an individual's self-concept. This is in line with how social identity as an individual's knowledge of group membership accompanied which certain emotional meanings and values. Therefore, supportive interpersonal communication and the social identity of street children begin to be internalized more constructively.

### ***Interpersonal Communication in Redefining Social Boundaries***

In general, in Social Identity theory, social comparison is an evaluative process in which individuals compare their group with other groups to maintain or improve their social self-esteem. Research findings show that inclusive interpersonal communication enables street children to make more adaptive social comparisons. Positive communication experiences encourage them to assess themselves and their group more equally with other social groups. This process can be seen in how street children's perspectives of themselves have changed. One informant explained that.

*"Now I feel that even though my life is different, I can still speak up and have an opinion." (AT 12)*

*"Sekarang saya merasa meskipun hidup saya berbeda, saya masih bisa bersuara dan menyampaikan pendapat" (AT 12)*

The statement above shows that social comparison is no longer based entirely on feelings of inferiority, but rather on recognition of one's own abilities. This process of social comparison does not always lead to open conflict, but rather to efforts to redefine oneself in order to gain greater self-esteem and social recognition. Therefore, the other informant explain that.

*"I used to feel inferior when I met school kids, but not so much anymore. I feel like at the end we're all human beings" (AT 14)*

*"Dulu saya merasa minder kalau ketemu anak sekolah, sekarang tidak lagi karena saya merasa kita sama-sama manusia" (AT 14)*

Based on the statement above, we can conclude that individuals strive to achieve a positive social identity through more balanced social evaluation. In this context, interpersonal communication ultimately serves as the main mechanism that facilitates changes in the social comparison patterns of street children.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the three main processes in Social Identity Theory, the results of this study confirm that the social identity of street children is dynamic and constantly changing. The processes of social categorization, social identification, and social comparison do not occur linearly, but rather intertwine and repeat themselves in everyday communication practices. Social identity is not formed in a final way, but is constantly negotiated as the context of communication and social relations change.

The findings of this study reinforce the central premise of Social Identity Theory that social identity is not a fixed or static attribute, but a dynamic and continuously negotiated social construct. As proposed by Tajfel and Turner, social identity is shaped through the interrelated processes of social categorization, social identification, and social comparison, which operate simultaneously rather than sequentially (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The results demonstrate that these processes are embedded in everyday interpersonal communication practices and are repeatedly activated as social contexts and interactions evolve.

The dynamic nature of social identity formation among street children becomes particularly evident in environments characterized by persistent stigma. Social categorization consistently positions street children as part of an out-group, a categorization that is reinforced through dominant societal discourses portraying them as deviant, powerless, and occupying a low social status. This categorization is not merely symbolic, it actively structures social interactions and shapes how street children are treated and perceived within broader social relations (Tajfel & Turner, 2022). As a result, categorization functions as an ongoing mechanism rather than a one-time classification.

At the level of social identification, the findings before indicate that repeated exposure to stigmatizing interactions encourages street children to internalize externally imposed group labels. However, this identification process is not uniform or irreversible. The study shows that when street children engage in interpersonal communication that is empathetic, inclusive, and supportive, alternative identity meanings emerge. Through such interactions, street children begin to renegotiate their sense of belonging and self-worth, demonstrating that identification with a group is subject to change depending on communicative experiences and relational contexts (West & Turner, 2022).

Furthermore, social comparison plays a critical role in sustaining or challenging identity hierarchies. Under conditions of social stigma, street

children are systematically positioned in unfavorable comparisons with dominant social groups, leading to a diminished sense of social value. This unbalanced comparison reinforces negative self-perceptions and perpetuates social exclusion (Baxter & Scharp, 2015). However, the findings suggest that positive interpersonal communication can disrupt these comparative patterns by enabling street children to reassess their social position and capabilities. In this sense, social comparison becomes a fluid process rather than a permanently disadvantageous one.

The results highlight that the three processes of social identity formation do not unfold in a linear progression. Instead, social categorization, identification, and comparison intertwine and recur within everyday communication. Moments of supportive interaction may weaken stigmatizing categorizations, foster more positive identification, and enable more balanced social comparisons. Conversely, encounters marked by discrimination can reactivate negative categorizations and reinforce marginal identities. This cyclical pattern underscores the fundamentally dynamic nature of social identity construction.

The formation of street children's social identity takes place amid tensions between the discourse of social stigma and the discourse of positive identity negotiated through interpersonal communication. This social stigma functions as the dominant discourse that positions street children as an out-group, i.e., a group that is considered deviant, powerless, and of low social status (Sears & Cianfrone, 2024). Based on the framework of Social Identity Theory, this condition creates an unbalanced social comparison, in which street children are placed in an inferior position compared to other social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2022).

The dynamic construction of social identity among street children reflects an ongoing negotiation between stigmatizing social structures and moments of communicative agency. While dominant discourses position street children within marginalized social categories, interpersonal communication provides a critical space for resistance and identity redefinition. These findings emphasize that social identity is continuously produced and reproduced through interaction, making communication a central arena in which social identities are challenged, maintained, or transformed.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and discussion described before, this study concludes that the formation of street children's social identity is influenced by the tension between the social stigma attached by the environment and the interpersonal communication experiences they experience. Through the perspective of Social Identity Theory, the processes of *social categorization*, *social identification*, and *social comparison* show that the social identity of street children is not static, but is continuously negotiated through daily communication interactions. Empathetic and inclusive interpersonal communication plays an important role in reducing stigma and enabling the formation of a more positive social identity, although inequality in social recognition remains a challenge in this process.

**ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This study concludes that the social identity of street children is dynamically formed through the interaction between social stigma and their interpersonal communication experiences. Using Social Identity Theory, the processes of social categorization, identification, and comparison show that their identity is continuously negotiated in everyday interactions. Empathetic and inclusive communication can reduce stigma and support the development of a more positive social identity, although unequal social recognition remains a significant challenge.

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