

BEYOND DIALOGUE: INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND THE ROLE OF FKUB IN MANAGING INTERFAITH HARMONY IN BANDUNG

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Abstract

Religious diversity in pluralistic urban societies presents significant governance challenges, requiring institutional mechanisms to sustain interfaith harmony and prevent social conflict. Although previous studies have examined interfaith dialogue and religious moderation, limited attention has been paid to how collaborative institutional governance manages religious diversity at the local level and to the empirical mechanisms by which local intermediary bodies translate normative tolerance into operational conflict prevention. This study aims to analyze the role of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) within the institutional governance framework for maintaining interfaith harmony in Bandung, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the Chairman of FKUB Bandung, the Acting Head of the Bandung City National Unity and Politics Agency (*Kesbangpol*), and the Head of the National Vigilance and Conflict Management Division, complemented by documentary analysis of official reports and conflict monitoring records. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis involving data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation. The findings reveal that religious harmony in Bandung is sustained through collaborative governance involving FKUB, *Kesbangpol*, religious organizations, community leaders, and local government agencies. FKUB functions not only as an interfaith dialogue forum but also as an institutional

mediator facilitating communication, coordination, and conflict prevention. Most social tensions originate from socio-economic, socio-cultural, organizational, and political dynamics rather than theological differences. Building on these findings, the study conceptualizes religious harmony as an outcome of institutionalized social cohesion produced through collaborative governance, rather than as a passive absence of conflict. The study concludes that integrating institutional mediation, religious moderation, and cross-sector collaboration is essential for strengthening social resilience and sustaining long-term interfaith harmony in plural urban societies. Because the analysis draws on a single city and on institutional informants, the findings are presented as a transferable governance model rather than as a generalizable claim.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance; Conflict Prevention; FKUB; Religious Diversity Governance; Religious Harmony.

Abstrak

Keragaman agama dalam masyarakat perkotaan pluralistik menghadirkan tantangan tata kelola yang signifikan, membutuhkan mekanisme kelembagaan yang mempertahankan harmoni antaragama sekaligus mencegah konflik sosial. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya telah meneliti dialog antaragama dan moderasi agama, perhatian terbatas telah diberikan pada bagaimana tata kelola kelembagaan kolaboratif mengelola keragaman agama di tingkat lokal, dan pada mekanisme empiris di mana badan perantara lokal mengubah toleransi normatif menjadi pencegahan konflik operasional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran Forum Kerukunan Beragama (FKUB) dalam kerangka tata kelola kelembagaan untuk menjaga kerukunan antaragama di Bandung, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan Ketua FKUB Bandung, Plt. Kepala Badan Persatuan Nasional dan Politik (Kesbangpol) Kota Bandung, dan Kepala Divisi Kewaspadaan dan Penanggulangan Konflik Nasional, dilengkapi dengan analisis dokumenter laporan resmi dan catatan pemantauan konflik. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik yang melibatkan reduksi data, pengkodean, kategorisasi, dan interpretasi. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa kerukunan beragama di Bandung dipertahankan melalui tata kelola kolaboratif yang melibatkan FKUB, Kesbangpol, organisasi keagamaan, tokoh masyarakat, serta instansi pemerintah daerah. FKUB berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai forum dialog antaragama tetapi juga sebagai mediator kelembagaan yang memfasilitasi komunikasi, koordinasi, dan pencegahan konflik. Sebagian besar ketegangan sosial berasal dari dinamika sosial-ekonomi, sosial-budaya, organisasi, dan politik daripada perbedaan teologis. Berdasarkan temuan ini, studi ini mengkonseptualisasikan kerukunan beragama sebagai hasil dari kohesi sosial yang dilembagakan yang dihasilkan melalui tata kelola kolaboratif, bukan sebagai ketiadaan konflik secara pasif. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa mengintegrasikan mediasi kelembagaan, moderasi agama, dan kolaborasi lintas sektor sangat penting untuk memperkuat ketahanan sosial serta mempertahankan harmoni antaragama jangka panjang dalam masyarakat perkotaan yang plural. Karena analisis ini mengacu pada satu kota dan satu informan institusional, temuan ini disajikan sebagai model tata kelola yang dapat ditransfer, bukan sebagai klaim yang dapat digeneralisasi.

Kata kunci: Tata Kelola Kolaboratif; Pencegahan Konflik; FKUB; Tata Kelola Keanekaragaman Agama; Kerukunan Beragama.

INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity has become one of the most pressing challenges and opportunities in contemporary plural urban societies, directly influencing social cohesion, public trust, and democratic stability. In modern multicultural

environments, differences in religious identities and practices simultaneously foster intercultural cooperation and introduce structural risks of social friction. Recent scholarly debates increasingly emphasize that sustaining long-term interfaith harmony requires more than promoting tolerance at the interpersonal level; it fundamentally depends on institutional arrangements that facilitate cross-sector communication, mediation, and systemic conflict prevention. In line with the theoretical framework established by Koch (2020), the management of pluralism must shift from reactive measures to cosmopolitan modes of governing religious diversity, incorporating multilevel communication frameworks and formal networks to accommodate differences within shared civic spaces. Consequently, religious harmony is increasingly conceptualized not as the mere absence of conflict, but as a dynamic governance outcome actively produced through continuous coordination among state actors, civil society institutions, and religious organizations (Obiekezie & Timothy, 2015). This study adopts collaborative governance theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015) as its analytical lens, treating religious harmony as a product of shared responsibility and coordinated institutional action rather than a purely normative or theological achievement. This governance-oriented perspective shifts the academic focus from normative declarations of tolerance to the analysis of concrete public policy instruments and institutional arrangements that manage diversity within complex, heterogeneous social ecosystems.

Indonesia provides an important empirical context for examining the governance of religious diversity, given its constitutional commitment to protecting pluralism amid rapid urbanization and shifting sociopolitical landscapes (Wafir, 2025). Within this national framework, local governments are mandated to operationalize religious harmony guidelines, primarily through joint ministerial regulations that establish dedicated intermediary bodies. In this study, the primary unit of analysis is the institutional role of the Forum for Religious Harmony (*Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama*/FKUB) and its collaborative relationship with the Bandung City National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) in governing urban religious diversity. Bandung represents a strategic urban setting where intensive everyday interactions across multiple religious, cultural, and socio-economic lines present complex public policy challenges. The institutional link between FKUB and Kesbangpol is important to analyze because social tensions in pluralistic cities rarely stem from isolated theological disputes; instead, they are often driven by underlying socio-economic competition, administrative oversights, and organizational frictions. Official records in Bandung indicate that out of approximately 110 potential conflicts identified across 25 districts between 2020 and 2025, and 50 potential vulnerabilities identified in 14 districts during 2025, only six escalated into active public disputes. These figures illustrate both the operational complexity of urban diversity management and the importance of investigating local institutional mechanisms that prevent latent communal tensions from escalating into destructive social conflict. Existing scholarship has generated a substantial body of knowledge regarding interfaith relations, social cohesion, and institutional mediation in multicultural societies. Research on community-level peacebuilding consistently demonstrates that

structured intergroup contact and continuous dialogue reduce socio-cultural prejudice and enhance mutual understanding among diverse groups (Daheri et al., 2023; Jubba et al., 2022; Rohmawati et al., 2022). Literature on social cohesion further demonstrates that sustainable coexistence relies on cross-boundary networks, shared civic norms, and inclusive community engagement that buffer societies against fragmentation (Ardiansyah, 2012; Nawir et al., 2025). Within the Indonesian empirical landscape, specialized studies have mapped the institutional functions of FKUB, focusing primarily on its statutory duties in facilitating interfaith communication, mediating local disputes, and providing administrative recommendations for the establishment of houses of worship (Hudin et al., 2025; Rofiq, 2023; Syukran et al., 2025). Subchi et al. (2022) further establish that religious moderation among Indonesian Muslims is closely linked to tolerance, national civic commitment, and the capacity to accommodate local cultural wisdom. A bibliometric analysis by Zaluchu et al. (2025) maps the evolution of religious moderation research in Indonesia, confirming that while its core intellectual themes revolve around multiculturalism, tolerance, and national commitment, strategic implementation must align with local socio-cultural realities to protect social harmony.

Despite these research trends, several limitations in the existing literature remain unresolved. First, current scholarship predominantly conceptualizes FKUB as a symbolic dialogue forum or an ad hoc mediator, without adequately evaluating its structural positioning as a formal governance actor within local administrative frameworks, as in research by Aslati (2014) and Asnawati (2012). Consequently, the systemic institutional governance dimension of religious diversity management has received limited analytical attention in contemporary public policy debates. Second, previous studies often focus either on community-level interactions or top-down government policies in isolation, creating a separation between informal societal dynamics and formal state enforcement mechanisms. Third, while conflict prevention is frequently cited as a goal, there is limited empirical evidence showing how local institutions operationalize early detection, spatial conflict mapping, and collaborative multi-agency networks in response to emerging communal tensions. This gap is further evident when comparing local policy strategies across the nation. As demonstrated by Anas et al. (2025) in their study of the inclusive city of Salatiga, effective tolerance policies require a structured, multi-stakeholder strategy that involves religious leaders, local institutions, and education systems to build social resilience. The limited integration of collaborative governance dynamics with empirical conflict-monitoring data restricts current understanding of how plural urban societies proactively sustain harmony amid mounting socio-political pressures. This study examines the operational mechanics of governing religious diversity through a collaborative partnership among FKUB, Kesbangpol, and local community leaders in Bandung. Moving away from normative descriptions of tolerance, the article proposes an integrated framework that views religious harmony as a concrete outcome of institutional governance, supported by early detection networks and practical frameworks for religious moderation. By combining institutional data with spatial conflict-monitoring maps, this research explains how cross-sector coordination

operates in real-world urban environments to mitigate communal vulnerabilities. Accordingly, the primary purpose is to analyze how governance mechanisms maintain interfaith harmony in Bandung and to demonstrate how coordinated multi-agency arrangements enhance localized conflict prevention in complex urban societies. This investigation offers a theoretical contribution to public policy and diversity governance while providing insights for safeguarding stability across plural societies.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to examine the governance of religious diversity and the role of institutional actors in maintaining interfaith harmony within a plural urban society. A qualitative design was selected because the research sought to explore complex institutional practices, perceptions, interactions, and governance mechanisms that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design enabled an in-depth, localized examination of how religious harmony is managed within a specific administrative boundary and how multiple institutions collaborate to prevent conflict and strengthen social cohesion. This design allowed the researchers to investigate how institutional actors collectively govern religious diversity and maintain long-term stability within a heterogeneous urban environment.

The research was conducted in Bandung, Indonesia, a multicultural metropolitan area characterized by significant religious, cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity. Bandung was selected as the research site because it offers a relevant empirical setting where intensive everyday interactions among diverse religious communities present distinct public policy and conflict-prevention challenges. Fieldwork and data collection were conducted between April and May 2026, a period during which local institutional programs, multi-agency coordination meetings, and community-based conflict-monitoring systems remained actively implemented. During this timeframe, primary data were gathered through field interactions, while secondary documentary materials were collected from official municipal databases to provide a contextual baseline.

The unit of analysis in this study focuses specifically on the collaborative institutional governance practices employed by state and civil society actors to manage diversity and preserve interfaith harmony. Informants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that participants held direct statutory authority and decision-making roles within the city's conflict-management networks. Based on these operational criteria, three key informants were selected: the Chairman of FKUB Bandung, the Acting Head of Bandung City Kesbangpol, and the Head of the National Vigilance and Conflict Management Division. While a sample of three informants is limited, each was purposively selected for holding direct statutory authority over religious harmony governance and conflict management in the city, and their accounts were systematically cross-examined against official programmatic documents (Table

1) to strengthen the credibility of the findings. This trade-off between breadth of perspective and institutional depth is addressed further in the Limitations section.

Table 1.
Research Participants and Institutional Roles

Participant	Position	Institution	Primary Role
P1	Chairman	FKUB Bandung	Interfaith dialogue and institutional mediation
P2	Acting Head	Kesbangpol Bandung	Religious diversity governance
P3	Head of National Vigilance and Conflict Management Division	Kesbangpol Bandung	Conflict prevention and early detection

Source: Primary data processed, 2026.

Data were gathered through a combination of semi-structured interviews and document analysis, capturing both experiential institutional perspectives and official administrative records (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The semi-structured interview protocol used an open-ended interview guide that focused on four core themes: the current baseline of urban religious harmony, the operational role of FKUB, early-warning conflict-prevention mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder collaborative networks. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, digitally recorded with participant permission, and transcribed verbatim for systematic text analysis. Document analysis was conducted using a structured review protocol analyzing official conflict-monitoring spreadsheets, spatial vulnerability maps, and policy reports from 2020 to 2025.

The gathered qualitative text data were systematically evaluated using the six-phase thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2013), following the applied coding procedure of Ahmed et al. (2025). The analytical procedure began with data familiarization through repeated readings of the transcriptions and cross-checking against the document review notes. Next, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful data segments related to institutional mediation, early detection networks, and religious moderation initiatives. In the third and fourth phases, these codes were clustered into overarching conceptual themes, which were iteratively refined to ensure analytical consistency across all data sources. Finally, the themes were defined, interpreted, and synthesized into a coherent narrative linked directly to collaborative governance and social cohesion theories.

To support the trustworthiness, dependability, and credibility of the findings, the study implemented triangulation strategies (Arianto, 2024; Carter et al., 2014). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing the interview narratives of FKUB leaders against the administrative accounts of Kesbangpol officials and official statistical reports. Methodological triangulation was achieved by cross-checking the experiential data from face-to-face interviews with the empirical trends extracted from spatial conflict documents. An audit trail was maintained by documenting each step

of the research process, including raw transcripts, coding decisions, and thematic mapping schemas, to minimize researcher bias.

Ethical considerations were upheld throughout all stages of this qualitative inquiry to protect human participants and sensitive data. Institutional clearances were secured from FKUB Bandung and the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) before entering the research field. All informants participated voluntarily and provided formal written informed consent after receiving a detailed explanation of the study's academic purpose and their right to withdraw at any stage. To protect institutional integrity and confidentiality, participant accounts are presented strictly within the boundaries of their public administrative functions. All analyzed public policy documents and reports were accessed legally through institutional permission, in accordance with principles of academic integrity.

FINDINGS

This section presents empirical findings from semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis on the collaborative governance of religious diversity in Bandung. The findings are organized into four sequential thematic categories derived from fieldwork data: (1) the structural baseline of religious harmony in Bandung, (2) the multi-functional institutional roles of FKUB, (3) early-detection monitoring systems and regional conflict mapping, and (4) collaborative governance networks and localized religious moderation programs. The presentation focuses on empirical evidence, official data, and field testimonies obtained during the investigative process, leaving extended theoretical interpretation for the Discussion section.

Religious Harmony in Bandung's Plural Society

The first empirical finding indicates that religious harmony across Bandung's diverse metropolitan landscape is generally maintained at a stable and conducive level. Informants across public and civil sectors consistently reported that functional interactions among different religious groups occur regularly within community-level administrative bodies (*Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga*), multi-faith educational institutions, and cross-cultural public safety events. In everyday urban life, differences in religious identity are treated as a normal societal feature rather than a source of communal friction. According to the primary testimony of the Chairman of FKUB Bandung:

"Secara umum, kerukunan umat beragama di Kota Bandung relatif terjaga dengan baik. Masyarakat dari berbagai latar belakang agama telah terbiasa hidup berdampingan secara harmonis, dan apabila muncul perbedaan pandangan, biasanya dapat diselesaikan melalui dialog antartokoh agama dan tokoh masyarakat."

Translation: "In general, religious harmony in the city of Bandung is relatively well maintained. Communities from various religious backgrounds have grown accustomed to living side by side harmoniously, and when differences of opinion arise, they can usually be resolved through dialogue among religious and community leaders."(*Interview with AS, April 13, 2026*).

This baseline evaluation is supported by administrative observations shared by representatives of Kesbangpol. The Acting Head of Kesbangpol confirmed that daily socio-religious interactions remain secure because local neighborhood structures maintain active, accessible cross-faith communication channels. While minor neighborhood misunderstandings occasionally arise, these issues are typically mitigated at the sub-district level before developing into broader societal friction. Documentary data reviewed during this investigation further reveal that most reported public complaints involve zoning or technical administrative matters rather than explicit theological or interreligious animosity.

The empirical evidence further demonstrates that local social resilience is reflected in the active participation of multiple faith communities in shared public welfare programs. Informants provided examples of institutionalized field cooperation involving cross-denominational youth groups, local non-governmental organizations, and municipal enforcement bodies. These grassroots initiatives manifest in joint social assistance distribution, multi-faith disaster management operations, public environmental campaigns, and collaborative neighborhood maintenance projects. This sub-section demonstrates that urban harmony in Bandung is defined by structural communication pathways and collaborative socio-economic mobilization, which preserve stable interfaith conditions despite ongoing urban demographic change.

Institutional Role of FKUB in Managing Interfaith Relations

The second core finding outlines the specific operational functions FKUB performs to safeguard interfaith stability. Field interview transcripts reveal that FKUB operates as a formal, legally recognized platform where designated representatives from all recognized religious bodies systematically coordinate, consult, and evaluate potential socio-religious issues. Informants consistently highlighted that the forum serves as a structural bridge between non-state religious organizations and municipal government departments. As articulated by the Chairman of FKUB Bandung:

"FKUB berfungsi sebagai forum dialog lintas agama yang mempertemukan pemimpin agama untuk membahas persoalan keagamaan di masyarakat, termasuk memberikan rekomendasi pendirian rumah ibadah dan memfasilitasi mediasi ketika terjadi perselisihan."

Translation: "The FKUB basically works as a place where leaders from different religions can sit down and talk things through, dealing with religious issues in the community, giving the green light on building new houses of worship, and stepping in to help sort things out when conflicts pop up." (*Interview with AS, April 13, 2026*)

Organizing regular interfaith encounters is among FKUB's most frequent field operations. Coordination meetings are held to evaluate emerging local issues, zoning applications, and socio-cultural trends that could affect local community relations. These statutory assemblies bring together regional religious leaders, providing an institutionalized channel to defuse tensions before they expand into the public sphere.

Another significant regulatory function involves evaluating and processing legal validation letters for the establishment of physical houses of worship. Documentary evidence shows that FKUB conducts multi-layered verification procedures on all applications, aligning field checks with existing joint ministerial decrees. Informants explained that this administrative duty requires field-level mediation with local neighborhood committees, regional religious groupings, and district heads to ensure that permit processes remain transparent and compliant with municipal zoning rules.

Direct mediation also represents an essential element of FKUB's structural duties. When administrative or socio-cultural frictions arise within local communities, FKUB establishes joint ad hoc committees comprising neutral interfaith leaders. Interview narratives show that these field interventions focus on clearing misunderstandings, establishing consensus, and formalizing mutual social agreements. Document analysis confirms that FKUB collaborates with Kesbangpol and local universities to host public workshops, youth tolerance camps, and neighborhood awareness programs to sustain long-term civic trust.

Conflict Mapping and Early Detection Mechanisms

The third empirical finding addresses the data-driven systems used to monitor, map, and evaluate potential social vulnerabilities across the city. Internal reports from Kesbangpol reveal that local security assessments are conducted continuously through an integrated reporting network that links community-based observers to formal district security desks. This early warning apparatus covers all 30 sub-districts (*kecamatan*) in Bandung and logs multiple socio-political and economic variables.

According to official Kesbangpol institutional databases, approximately 110 potential sources of societal friction were detected across 25 districts during the five-year tracking cycle between 2020 and 2025. More recent internal datasets from 2025 logged approximately 50 localized social vulnerabilities distributed across 14 sub-districts. Of these 50 flagged cases, only six escalated into active public disputes requiring formal law-enforcement intervention. These figures indicate that early diagnostic monitoring allows municipal actors to de-escalate tensions before they transform into open communal conflict.

To visualize and manage these structural risks, Kesbangpol developed a spatial conflict vulnerability index across the municipality. This mapping framework highlights specific territories where latent social, administrative, or environmental frictions were documented during routine field observations in 2025. Rather than indicating active physical clashes, this geographical index serves as an administrative roadmap for pre-emptive resource allocation by local authorities and civic stakeholders. The spatial layout of these monitored urban areas is displayed in Figure 1.

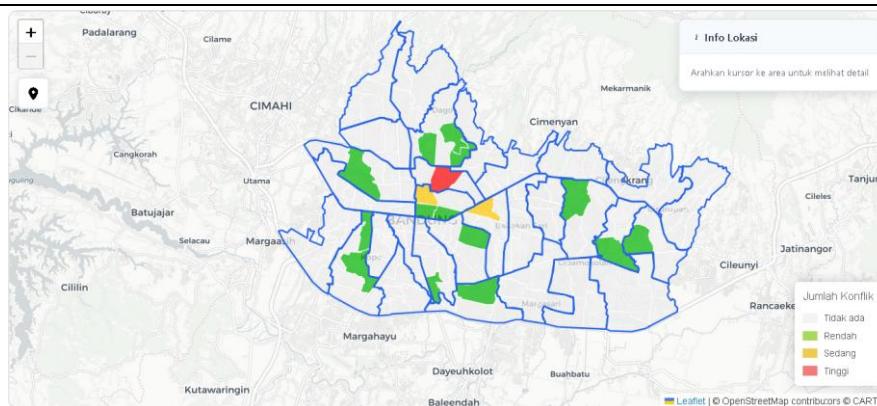


Figure 1. Distribution of Potential Conflict Areas in Bandung City (2025)

Source: Kesbangpol Bandung City, 2025.

Figure 1 shows that potential conflicts were distributed across several districts, including Arcamanik, Babakan Ciparay, Bandung Kidul, Bandung Wetan, Batununggal, Buahbatu, Cicendo, Cinambo, Coblong, Gedebage, Lengkong, Panyileukan, Regol, and Sumur Bandung. These districts were identified through routine monitoring conducted by Kesbangpol and local stakeholders. Although categorized as areas with conflict potential, most reported cases remained at the level of social tension and did not develop into open conflict. The map therefore illustrates the geographic distribution of conflict vulnerability within Bandung rather than the occurrence of large-scale social unrest.

In addition to spatial distribution, conflict-monitoring data classify potential conflicts by their primary characteristics. This categorization is important for understanding the variety of issues encountered in urban society and for identifying the dominant sources of social tension. Based on Kesbangpol monitoring records, potential conflicts in Bandung were grouped into several categories, including economic disputes, socio-cultural tensions, ideological or religious issues, organizational conflicts, environmental disputes, and political disagreements. The distribution of these conflict categories is presented in Figure 2.

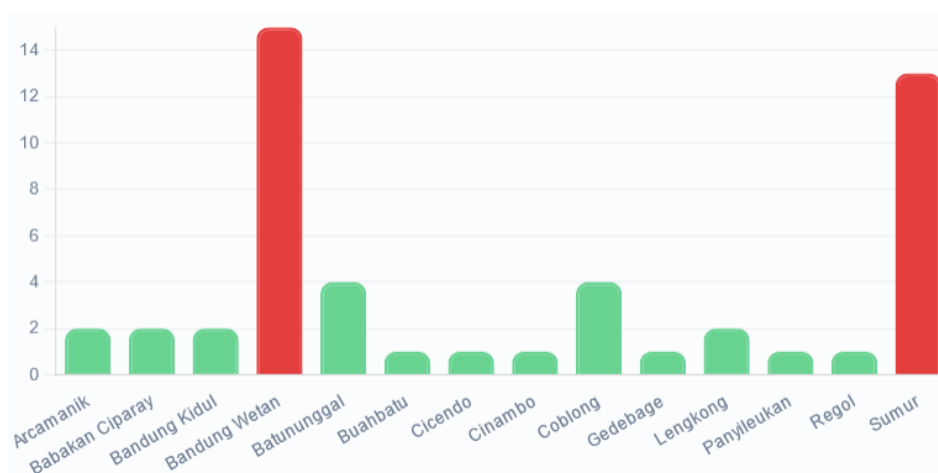


Figure 2. Categories of Conflict in Bandung City, 2025

Source: Bandung City National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol), 2025.

Figure 2 indicates that potential conflicts in Bandung originated from multiple social sectors rather than a single issue. Socio-cultural and economic tensions constituted a substantial share of recorded cases, followed by organizational and political disputes. Religious or ideological issues were also identified during the monitoring process, though at a lower frequency than several other categories. The findings suggest that social tensions in Bandung are multidimensional, involving economic, cultural, political, and community-related factors.

Interview findings indicate that conflict monitoring is conducted through coordination among local government agencies, subdistrict administrations, community leaders, and religious representatives. According to the Head of the National Vigilance and Conflict Management Division of Kesbangpol, information regarding emerging tensions is collected through routine communication networks operating at multiple administrative levels. He explained:

"Deteksi dini dilakukan melalui koordinasi dengan berbagai unsur masyarakat dan pemerintah wilayah. Informasi yang diperoleh kemudian dipetakan untuk mengidentifikasi potensi konflik serta menentukan langkah-langkah pencegahan yang diperlukan."

Translation: "Early detection happens by teaming up with different folks in the community and local government. Whatever info comes in then gets mapped out to spot potential trouble spots and figure out what steps need to be taken to head off any conflict before it starts." (*Interview with STP, May 20, 2026*).

The evidence therefore indicates that conflict monitoring in Bandung relies on a combination of institutional coordination, community reporting, and continuous assessment of local conditions. These mechanisms provide the information relevant institutions use to respond to emerging social tensions.

Collaborative Governance and Religious Moderation Initiatives

The fourth finding concerns collaborative governance practices implemented by FKUB, Kesbangpol, religious leaders, and community organizations. Interview data reveal that maintaining religious harmony is not the responsibility of a single institution but requires cooperation among multiple actors operating across different sectors of society.

Informants reported that collaborative activities include interfaith dialogues, public discussions, educational programs, conflict-prevention campaigns, and community engagement initiatives. These programs involve religious leaders, educational institutions, youth organizations, civil society groups, and government representatives. According to participants, such activities provide opportunities for interaction among different social groups and facilitate communication regarding issues affecting community relations.

The Acting Head of Kesbangpol explained that institutional cooperation is essential because many social tensions involve factors that extend beyond religious issues alone. Consequently, conflict-prevention strategies often require coordination among government agencies, community leaders, security institutions, and religious organizations.

The findings further indicate that religious moderation constitutes an important theme within many collaborative programs. Informants described activities intended to promote tolerance, mutual respect, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence, implemented through public education programs, seminars, community outreach activities, and interfaith meetings organized throughout the city.

Documentary evidence shows that religious moderation programs are frequently integrated into broader social cohesion initiatives. Rather than focusing exclusively on theological discussions, these activities emphasize practical cooperation among communities in addressing shared social concerns. Informants reported that this approach helps strengthen relationships among community members while reducing the likelihood of misunderstanding and social polarization.

Overall, the fourth finding demonstrates that religious harmony in Bandung is supported by collaborative governance arrangements involving multiple institutions and stakeholders. The evidence indicates that conflict prevention, community engagement, and religious moderation initiatives are implemented through coordinated efforts rather than isolated institutional actions.

The findings collectively reveal three interconnected patterns. First, religious harmony in Bandung remains relatively stable despite the city's plural social composition. Second, FKUB performs significant institutional functions related to dialogue, mediation, and interfaith coordination. Third, conflict prevention relies on continuous monitoring, institutional cooperation, and collaborative governance involving multiple stakeholders. Together, these findings indicate that maintaining religious harmony in Bandung is supported by a combination of institutional engagement, conflict-prevention mechanisms, and sustained cooperation among diverse actors. These findings provide the basis for the analytical discussion presented in the following section.

DISCUSSION

The empirical findings demonstrate that maintaining religious harmony in a plural urban society requires more than harmonious, unmediated social interaction among diverse religious communities. Rather, the evidence indicates that sustainable interfaith harmony is achieved through a dynamic interplay among formal institutional governance, multi-actor collaborative networks, structured conflict-prevention mechanisms, and continuous community engagement. This perspective shifts the analytical focus from understanding harmony as a purely social or cultural phenomenon toward recognizing it as a governance outcome shaped by coordinated institutional action. The Bandung case therefore provides a strategic opportunity to reconsider how religious diversity is governed within complex, rapidly expanding urban environments where social, political, and cultural dynamics intersect. By framing interfaith relations through an institutional lens, this discussion interprets the empirical data in relation to theories of social cohesion, collaborative governance, conflict prevention, and religious moderation, positioning the study within contemporary scholarly debates on the governance of religious diversity.

Religious Harmony as a Product of Institutionalized Social Cohesion

The first major finding demonstrates that religious harmony in Bandung is sustained by continuous interaction, supported by institutional arrangements, rather than by the mere absence of conflict (Erawati et al., 2026). This finding is significant because it reconceptualizes harmony as an active, continuously negotiated social process that involves both community participation and institutional facilitation. From the perspective of social cohesion theory (Julius et al., 2026), peaceful coexistence depends on the development of interpersonal trust, shared norms, reciprocal relationships, and opportunities for collective participation across diverse social groups. Previous studies similarly argue that interfaith contact and inclusive public engagement strengthen mutual understanding and reduce prejudice among religious communities (Japar et al., 2025). The Bandung experience confirms these arguments and demonstrates that sustained religious harmony is strengthened when interpersonal interaction is embedded in supportive institutional structures.

The findings further indicate that communication among religious leaders, local communities, and government institutions constitutes a central mechanism for maintaining harmonious interfaith relations. Rather than functioning only during periods of tension, these communication channels operate continuously through community meetings, interfaith activities, educational initiatives, and public engagement programs. This pattern supports the argument that social cohesion develops through repeated interaction that enables communities to cultivate familiarity, trust, and mutual recognition across religious boundaries (Triyanto et al., 2025), reinforcing earlier scholarship suggesting that regular intergroup contact reduces social distance and creates conditions conducive to peaceful coexistence in plural societies (Stathi et al., 2020). Consequently, harmony in Bandung reflects an institutionalized pattern of social interaction rather than a temporary condition dependent solely on the absence of disagreement.

An important contribution of this study is the finding that interpersonal relationships alone are insufficient to sustain harmony within increasingly complex urban societies. Although previous research frequently emphasizes dialogue, tolerance, and community participation as the primary foundations of peaceful coexistence (Dewi et al., 2025; Neger S et al., 2025), the Bandung case demonstrates that institutional actors play an equally important role in maintaining those relationships over time. Institutions such as FKUB and Kesbangpol provide organizational continuity, mediation mechanisms, and communication platforms that enable cooperation even when disagreements emerge among community groups. This finding extends previous studies by demonstrating that social cohesion is reinforced through the interaction between informal community relations and formal governance arrangements, rather than by either dimension alone. Institutional facilitation therefore becomes an essential component of sustainable religious harmony in plural urban settings.

The Bandung findings also highlight the significance of everyday cooperation in strengthening interfaith relations beyond formal dialogue forums. Community service activities, educational programs, disaster response initiatives, and

neighbourhood-based collaboration create repeated opportunities for individuals from different religious backgrounds to interact constructively in pursuing shared social objectives. These routine interactions help reduce stereotypes, strengthen interpersonal trust, and normalize diversity as an integral part of everyday urban life. Similar observations have been reported in studies emphasizing that practical cooperation often produces stronger and more durable social cohesion than symbolic declarations of tolerance alone (Xinglong Qu et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2025). The governance of religious diversity should therefore incorporate not only institutional dialogue but also sustained collaborative activities that foster long-term community engagement.

The findings additionally challenge deterministic assumptions that multicultural urban environments inevitably generate religious conflict due to demographic complexity and competing social interests. Instead, Bandung demonstrates that diversity can function as a source of social resilience when supported by effective governance mechanisms, institutional cooperation, and inclusive public participation. This observation complements emerging discussions on the governance of religious diversity that emphasize the importance of institutional capacity in transforming social diversity into collective social capital rather than fragmentation (Monia, 2023). By integrating institutional facilitation with continuous community interaction, the Bandung model illustrates how plural urban societies can sustain peaceful coexistence despite complex social dynamics. This study therefore proposes that religious harmony is best understood as a form of institutionalized social cohesion, in which governance institutions and community participation jointly create the conditions necessary for long-term interfaith stability.

FKUB and the Governance of Religious Diversity

The second major finding demonstrates that FKUB should be understood as a primary institutional actor within the wider governance of religious diversity rather than merely as a symbolic interfaith dialogue forum. This perspective broadens conventional administrative interpretations that often limit FKUB's function to facilitating basic communication among religious bodies. The empirical evidence indicates that FKUB performs multiple governance functions, including policy consultation, conflict mediation, inter-agency coordination, and the facilitation of cooperation between non-state religious organizations and municipal government institutions (Rohmawati et al., 2022; Taopan et al., 2020). These findings align with public governance perspectives that emphasize the importance of intermediary institutions in addressing complex social issues through horizontal collaborative networks rather than relying solely on hierarchical state intervention. Accordingly, religious diversity governance in Bandung is characterized by institutional collaboration, with FKUB serving as a strategic bridge between state institutions and civil society networks.

The empirical findings also reinforce previous policy studies arguing that effective governance in plural societies depends on collaborative, multi-layered arrangements among stakeholders rather than on isolated, top-down institutional

action. Managing religious diversity is inherently a multidimensional governance challenge, encompassing social, administrative, philosophical, and political dimensions (Irastorza et al., 2026; Tuzzo et al., 2023). In Bandung, FKUB works closely with Kesbangpol, religious organizations, community leaders, and neighborhood institutions to coordinate preventive actions before localized disagreements escalate into broader public confrontations. This collaborative network reflects the core structure of collaborative governance theory (Wang & Ran, 2023), in which complex public problems are addressed through shared responsibility, continuous interaction, and collective decision-making. Horizontal institutional cooperation is therefore a fundamental operational component in maintaining sustainable religious harmony in an increasingly diverse urban environment.

Another contribution of this study concerns the specific governance role of mediation in managing urban religious diversity (Ansyar et al., 2025). Rather than relying primarily on legal enforcement, administrative penalties, or top-down state authority, FKUB frequently employs structured dialogue, consensus-seeking consultation, and interest-based negotiation as practical mechanisms for resolving disputes involving religious communities. This finding supports contemporary studies on interfaith governance arguing that non-coercive mediation strengthens institutional legitimacy by creating inclusive spaces for multi-stakeholder communication and consensus-building. Through these institutionalized mediation processes, administrative and socio-cultural disagreements are addressed before becoming polarized conflicts that threaten broader municipal social cohesion. Local mediation therefore functions not only as a reactive conflict-resolution mechanism but also as a proactive governance instrument that reinforces public trust among diverse religious actors.

The Bandung case further highlights that FKUB's operational effectiveness depends on its dual institutional legitimacy within both governmental and societal domains. As an institution formally recognized by the state and simultaneously representing grassroots religious communities, FKUB possesses a dual legitimacy that enables it to facilitate communication across institutional boundaries (Zahra & Sazali, 2024). Previous domestic studies on FKUB have generally emphasized its narrow statutory role in promoting interfaith dialogue and issuing formal administrative recommendations concerning permits for houses of worship (Faqih, 2021). The present findings extend this scholarship by demonstrating that FKUB performs broader, systemic governance functions, including cross-sector institutional coordination, active conflict mediation, and collaborative local policy implementation. This positioning expands the scholarly understanding of FKUB from a symbolic forum to a functional governance institution that manages religious diversity in plural urban societies.

Overall, the findings suggest that the effective governance of religious diversity requires institutional arrangements that integrate dialogue, mediation, collaboration, and public coordination into a coherent governance system. Religious harmony in Bandung is sustained not only by communication among different communities but also by institutional actors who continuously facilitate those interactions through

structured governance mechanisms. This study therefore advances the literature by conceptualizing FKUB as a governance institution operating within collaborative networks involving government agencies, religious organizations, and local communities. Diversity governance thus becomes a collective institutional process through which peaceful coexistence is continuously negotiated, coordinated, and sustained over time.

Conflict Prevention and Early Detection Mechanisms

One important aspect of Bandung's conflict prevention system is the continuous documentation and classification of social conflicts that have occurred across the city over the past several years. Rather than focusing exclusively on religious disputes, the municipal government systematically records a broad range of conflict categories to identify emerging patterns and support evidence-based preventive interventions, consistent with an evidence-informed policy approach (Suazo-Galdames et al., 2025). This conflict mapping provides empirical support for the operation of Bandung's early warning system, which seeks to detect potential risks before they escalate into wider public disturbances. By integrating conflict data into routine governance practices, local authorities can allocate institutional resources more strategically while strengthening preventive coordination among relevant stakeholders.



Figure 3. Categories of Conflict in Bandung City (2020-2025)

Source: *Dashboard of Kesbangpol of Bandung City (2026).*

As shown in Figure 3, socio-cultural conflicts account for the largest share of recorded conflict cases in Bandung during the 2020-2025 period, followed by inter-organizational disputes, political issues, land disputes, defense and security concerns, socio-political tensions, environmental conflicts, and economic disagreements. This distribution demonstrates that urban conflict in Bandung is multidimensional, extending well beyond religious differences and encompassing structural, political, and socio-economic challenges. This pattern indicates that potential threats to religious harmony frequently originate from broader urban governance issues rather than purely theological disagreements. Effective conflict prevention therefore requires comprehensive monitoring systems that can identify diverse conflict indicators across multiple sectors before they escalate into larger communal disputes.

A related finding is that religious harmony in Bandung is maintained through governance that prioritizes conflict prevention over reactive conflict resolution. The conflict mapping in Figure 3 shows that socio-cultural issues constitute the largest category of conflict recorded between 2020 and 2025, followed by inter-organizational disputes, political conflicts, land-related disputes, and defense and security issues, indicating that potential threats to harmony extend far beyond religious differences alone. These findings suggest that successful conflict prevention depends on continuous digital monitoring, spatial conflict mapping, multi-agency information sharing, and systematic field observations conducted by Kesbangpol and its institutional partners. Information collected from community organizations, religious leaders, neighborhood institutions, and government agencies is continuously consolidated to identify early indicators of emerging social tensions before they develop into larger public conflicts. Effective governance of religious diversity therefore depends not only on post-conflict management but also on institutional preparedness, anticipatory action, and evidence-based early warning mechanisms.

The findings further demonstrate that conflict prevention is strengthened through collaborative governance involving government agencies, FKUB, security institutions, grassroots religious leaders, and community organizations. Rather than operating independently, these actors routinely exchange field information, verify reports, coordinate localized preventive responses, and jointly assess potential risks through formal and informal communication channels. This collaborative arrangement reflects the governance principle proposed by Ansell and Gash (2008), which holds that complex public problems cannot be effectively managed by a single institution, as they involve multiple stakeholders with overlapping responsibilities and interests. Interview findings indicate that Kesbangpol regularly coordinates with local police, military representatives, district governments, and community leaders to validate conflict information before determining appropriate preventive measures. As a result, collaborative governance enhances both the speed and legitimacy of preventive interventions while fostering shared responsibility for maintaining social stability in Bandung's pluralistic society.

Another finding is that potential religious conflicts frequently originate from broader socio-economic inequalities, socio-cultural misunderstandings, spatial planning disputes, local political dynamics, and organizational competition rather than from theological disagreement itself. The distribution of conflict categories illustrated in Figure 3 reinforces this conclusion by showing that socio-cultural and organizational conflicts occur considerably more frequently than explicitly religious disputes, highlighting the multidimensional nature of urban conflict. These findings challenge the simplistic assumption that religious identity alone is the primary source of communal tension and instead demonstrate that religious harmony is closely intertwined with broader structural conditions shaping urban society. The integration of formal institutional monitoring with community-based knowledge enables Kesbangpol to identify subtle changes in local social dynamics that may not yet appear in official administrative records, improving the accuracy and responsiveness of preventive interventions. Overall, the Bandung experience demonstrates that

sustainable conflict prevention is achieved through the combination of collaborative governance, comprehensive conflict mapping, institutional early warning systems, and active community participation, offering a model for strengthening resilience and maintaining religious harmony in multicultural urban environments.

Religious Moderation as a Practical Framework for Diversity Governance

The final major finding demonstrates that religious moderation functions as a practical governance framework rather than merely as a normative religious discourse. This finding indicates that moderation becomes effective when translated into institutional programs, public policies, and collaborative community initiatives that shape everyday social interaction. The empirical evidence shows that moderation is implemented through educational activities, interfaith dialogue, community engagement, and collaborative programs involving FKUB, Kesbangpol, religious organizations, and local communities. These observations support previous studies arguing that religious moderation promotes tolerance, inclusivity, and balanced religious understanding while reducing the risks of extremism and social polarization (Mahmud & Umiarso, 2025; Muhaemin et al., 2023; Astuti et al., 2025). Religious moderation should therefore be understood not simply as an ethical value but as an institutional strategy for managing religious diversity and strengthening social harmony in multicultural societies.

The findings further demonstrate that religious moderation strengthens social resilience by encouraging communities to perceive diversity as a shared social reality rather than a source of division. Participants in moderation programs develop a greater willingness to communicate, cooperate, and negotiate differences through peaceful interaction, thereby reinforcing interpersonal trust and reducing prejudice that may otherwise trigger social tensions in heterogeneous urban environments. The study also reveals that moderation initiatives cannot be implemented effectively by a single institution, as they require collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, religious organizations, civil society groups, and local communities, operating through shared governance networks. This arrangement reflects the governance perspectives of Ansell and Gash (2008) and Emerson and Nabatchi (2015), who emphasize that complex public issues are addressed most effectively through institutional cooperation, shared resources, and collective responsibility. The effectiveness of religious moderation therefore depends not only on its normative principles but also on the quality of collaborative governance that supports its implementation across multiple sectors.

These findings address a gap in the literature by shifting the analytical focus of Indonesian religious moderation research from educational, theological, and campaign perspectives toward practical local governance. The Bandung case demonstrates how moderation values are operationalized through institutional coordination involving FKUB, Kesbangpol, and community organizations. Rather than treating moderation as abstract policy discourse, this study illustrates its practical implementation within institutional mechanisms designed to prevent conflict, strengthen interfaith cooperation, and enhance community resilience. This

perspective integrates religious moderation with collaborative governance and diversity management. Sustainable harmony is thus achieved when moderation is institutionalized through coordinated governance connecting ethical principles with preventive policies, collaborative action, and inclusive public participation.

Scholarly Contributions of the Study

This study contributes to the growing scholarship on the governance of religious diversity by shifting the analytical focus from interfaith dialogue toward institutional governance as the primary mechanism for sustaining religious harmony. Koch (2020) and Priyanda and Hidayati (2025) have generally emphasized governance frameworks at the policy level or within broader multicultural settings, whereas the present study demonstrates how governance is operationalized through local institutional collaboration involving FKUB, Kesbangpol, religious organizations, and community actors. The findings show that religious harmony is not merely produced through normative commitments to tolerance but through continuous institutional interaction, coordination, mediation, and collaborative decision-making. This perspective extends existing governance literature by providing empirical evidence that local intermediary institutions play an essential role in translating governance principles into practical mechanisms for managing religious diversity. This study therefore advances the conceptual understanding of religious harmony as an outcome of institutionalized collaborative governance rather than solely as a social or cultural achievement.

A second contribution lies in strengthening FKUB's scholarly positioning as an institutional governance actor rather than merely as an interfaith communication forum. Anas et al. (2025) and Rohmawati et al. (2022) recognize the importance of FKUB in promoting dialogue and maintaining harmonious relations among religious communities, yet relatively few studies examine its broader governance functions within local administrative systems. The Bandung case demonstrates that FKUB performs multiple institutional roles, including mediation, consultation, coordination, conflict prevention, and facilitation of cooperation among diverse stakeholders. These findings broaden previous interpretations by illustrating how FKUB serves as an intermediary institution that connects governmental structures with religious communities through collaborative governance mechanisms, providing a more comprehensive institutional perspective for understanding the governance of religious diversity in plural urban societies.

The study also contributes to the literature on religious moderation by positioning moderation as an operational governance framework rather than solely as a theological or educational concept. Recent bibliometric analyses indicate that research on religious moderation in Indonesia has predominantly focused on tolerance, multiculturalism, national commitment, and educational implementation, while institutional governance has received comparatively limited scholarly attention (Zaluchu, 2025; Subchi et al., 2022). The present findings address this gap by demonstrating that moderation becomes socially effective when institutionalized through collaborative governance involving public institutions, religious

organizations, and civil society. Through coordinated programs, interfaith dialogue, and community engagement, moderation serves as a practical mechanism for conflict prevention, institutional coordination, and strengthening social resilience.

Overall, this study contributes theoretically, empirically, and contextually to the governance of religious diversity by integrating collaborative governance, institutional mediation, conflict prevention, and religious moderation. The findings demonstrate that sustainable harmony relies on continuous collaboration among government institutions, religious organizations, and local communities rather than isolated dialogue. The Bandung case offers a conceptual framework for future comparative studies and reinforces the argument that institutional governance remains a foundational pillar for sustaining harmony and social resilience in diverse societies.

To synthesize the analytical relationships explored throughout this study, a conceptual model is presented below that maps the connections among collaborative governance networks, conflict-monitoring data, and institutionalized religious moderation programs within a unified urban landscape.

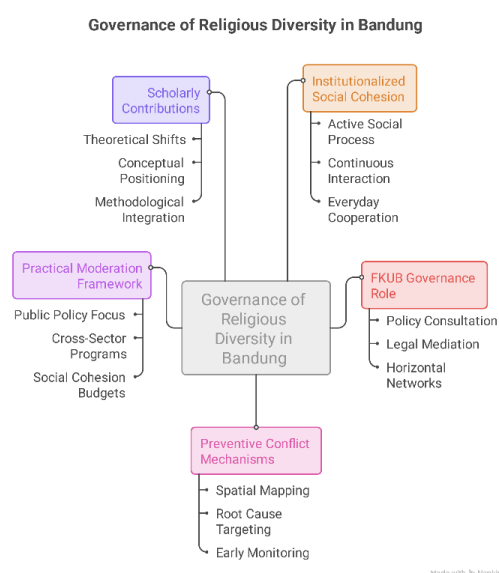


Figure 4. Conceptual Framework of Collaborative Governance and Religious Diversity Management in Bandung City

Source: Processed by the authors, 2026.

The framework in Figure 4 illustrates how formal municipal departments and non-state interfaith networks converge to cultivate social resilience. Tracing these thematic nodes reinforces that urban harmony is an institutional policy outcome continuously negotiated over time rather than a static condition. Each branch highlights the operational transition from discourse into concrete public programs, cross-sector budgets, and localized mediation frameworks. The model also depicts how integrating spatial data infrastructure with grassroots knowledge strengthens preventive conflict architectures, offering a transferable roadmap for evaluating governance of multi-actor diversity across multicultural urban settings.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that long-term religious harmony in Bandung is sustained not by the passive absence of communal conflict, but by an active mode of institutionalized collaborative governance among FKUB, Kesbangpol, religious organizations, and local stakeholders. Sustainable interfaith stability is produced through continuous communication, multi-agency coordination, mediation, data-driven conflict mapping, and religious moderation programs. Within this network, FKUB operates beyond the boundaries of a symbolic dialogue forum, functioning as an intermediary governance institution that bridges state authorities with religious communities to manage urban diversity and pre-emptively address societal frictions. The findings further show that most local vulnerabilities originate from socio-economic competition, socio-cultural misunderstandings, administrative and zoning disputes, and local political dynamics rather than from theological differences. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes religious harmony as an ongoing governance outcome grounded in structural social cohesion, rather than solely as a normative expression of interpersonal tolerance.

Theoretically, the study contributes empirical evidence of how governance principles are operationalized through local intermediary institutions in complex, multicultural urban settings, positioning FKUB as an active governance actor rather than a purely symbolic forum. Practically, the Bandung experience demonstrates that sustainable religious harmony is strengthened when collaborative governance networks integrate government agencies, formal interfaith institutions, religious leaders, educational organizations, and local community actors into coordinated mechanisms for communication, mediation, and conflict prevention. Rather than relying solely on reactive, post hoc conflict management, regional policymakers should institutionalize early warning systems, routine interfaith engagement, and community-based spatial monitoring as permanent components of local urban governance, while strengthening FKUB's internal institutional capacity and its daily operational coordination with Kesbangpol. The collaborative governance model identified in this study may serve as a useful operational reference for other rapidly growing Indonesian cities seeking to strengthen interfaith harmony through structured institutional arrangements.

This study is nonetheless limited by its single-case design, which focuses on a single urban context and primarily reflects the perspectives of formal institutional actors, thereby constraining the generalizability of its findings to other geographical contexts, rural areas, or distinct socio-political settings across Indonesia. The exclusive reliance on institutional informants, without direct perspectives from grassroots religious congregations or minority groups, means that claims about community-level collaboration rest largely on institutional accounts rather than on first-hand community testimony.

Future research should adopt comparative, multi-case designs involving different provinces, regencies, or municipalities to examine how the institutional governance of religious diversity varies across regions, incorporating perspectives from grassroots communities, religious congregations, youth organizations, and

minority groups. Mixed-methods or longitudinal approaches would further strengthen the evidence base for evaluating the long-term effectiveness of collaborative governance networks and religious moderation initiatives in sustaining religious harmony in plural urban societies.

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