

Governing Interfaith Solidarity: How YAKKUM Institutionalizes Cross-Faith Humanitarian Action in the 2022 Cianjur Earthquake

Dwi Rahayu Nurmia

Padjadjaran University, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

dwi23018@mail.unpad.ac.id

Binahayati Rusyidi

Padjadjaran University, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

binahayati@unpad.ac.id

Budi Muhammad Taftazani

Padjadjaran University, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

taftazani@unpad.ac.id

Yi-Yi Chen

National Taiwan University, Da'an , Taipei, Taiwan

yyichen@ntu.edu.tw

Abstract

This study analyzes how interfaith solidarity is negotiated and institutionalized within post-disaster humanitarian governance, focusing on the interaction between the Christian-based YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) and Muslim communities affected by the 2022 Cianjur earthquake in Indonesia. Adopting a sociological approach to religion and humanitarian governance, this research employed a qualitative, in-depth case study design to examine the socially embedded processes of legitimacy, cooperation, and moral negotiation in a religiously homogeneous setting. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 24 informants, participatory observation across multiple emergency and recovery sites, and analysis of institutional and policy documents. They were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo 12 Plus. The findings identify four interrelated dimensions that enabled constructive interfaith engagement: equality of status between humanitarian actors and affected communities, shared humanitarian goals grounded in collective moral commitment, intergroup cooperation enacted through participatory practices, and institutional and normative support from state agencies and religious authorities. These dimensions demonstrate that interfaith solidarity in disaster contexts is not a spontaneous moral response, but an institutionalized social practice embedded within local cultural values such as gotong royong and universal compassion. The study contributes to the literature by extending Intergroup Contact Theory into a socio-normative and institutional framework, highlighting the role of cultural legitimacy and governance structures in shaping interfaith relations during crises. Practically, the findings offer empirically grounded insights for strengthening inclusive humanitarian governance and for developing capacity-building frameworks for faith-based organizations operating across religious boundaries in plural societies.

Keywords: Humanitarian governance, Indonesia, Interfaith solidarity, Intergroup contact theory, Post-disaster recovery



Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana solidaritas lintas iman dinegosiasikan dan diinstitusionalisasikan dalam tata kelola kemanusiaan pascabencana, dengan fokus pada interaksi antara YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) yang berbasis Kristen dan komunitas Muslim terdampak gempa Cianjur tahun 2022. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis terhadap agama dan tata kelola kemanusiaan, penelitian ini menerapkan desain studi kasus intrinsik kualitatif untuk menelaah proses sosial yang terlekat pada pembentukan legitimasi, kerja sama, dan negosiasi moral dalam konteks masyarakat yang relatif homogen secara keagamaan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap 24 informan, observasi partisipatif pada berbagai lokasi tanggap darurat dan pemulihan, serta analisis dokumen kelembagaan dan kebijakan, yang kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik dengan bantuan NVivo 12 Plus. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan empat dimensi yang saling berkaitan dalam membentuk interaksi lintas iman yang konstruktif, yaitu kesetaraan status antara aktor kemanusiaan dan masyarakat terdampak, tujuan kemanusiaan bersama yang berlandaskan komitmen moral kolektif, kerja sama antarkelompok yang diwujudkan melalui praktik partisipatif, serta dukungan institusional dan normatif dari negara dan otoritas keagamaan. Keempat dimensi tersebut menunjukkan bahwa solidaritas lintas iman dalam konteks kebencanaan bukanlah respons moral yang spontan, melainkan praktik sosial yang terinstitusionalisasi dan berakar pada nilai-nilai budaya lokal seperti gotong royong dan welas asih universal. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan memperluas Teori Kontak Antarkelompok ke dalam ranah sosio-normatif dan institusional, dengan menekankan peran legitimasi budaya dan struktur tata kelola dalam membentuk relasi lintas iman pada situasi krisis. Secara praktis, temuan ini memberikan dasar empiris bagi penguatan tata kelola kemanusiaan yang inklusif serta pengembangan kerangka penguatan kapasitas bagi organisasi kemanusiaan berbasis iman yang beroperasi lintas batas keagamaan dalam masyarakat plural.

Kata kunci: Indonesia; pemulihan pascabencana; solidaritas lintas iman; tata kelola kemanusiaan; teori kontak antarkelompok

INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters are not merely technical or environmental events; they constitute complex social arenas in which humanitarian values, political authority, and religious identities intersect. In crises, affected communities and humanitarian actors must negotiate meaning, trust, and legitimacy under conditions of urgency and uncertainty. Research has shown that disasters often function as critical moments in which existing social relations are reconfigured, revealing underlying structures of governance, power, and moral obligation (Pelling & Dill, 2010; Tierney, 2012). In this context, disaster response becomes a site where social cohesion may either be strengthened through collective action or strained by competing identities, institutional mistrust, and normative contestation.

Religion plays a particularly salient role in shaping these dynamics. A growing body of literature highlights how religious beliefs, institutions, and networks mobilize solidarity, provide moral meaning, and support community resilience in post-disaster settings (Medina, 2023; Ghafory-Ashtiany, 2015). At the same time, religious involvement in humanitarian action may generate ambivalence, especially when assistance is delivered by faith-based organizations (FBOs) across religious boundaries. While such actors are often perceived as sources of compassion and ethical commitment, they may also evoke concerns related to proselytization, exclusion, or hidden agendas, particularly in contexts marked by strong majority–minority distinctions (Leone et al., 2025; Mohd Khalli et al., 2022; Setinawati et al., 2025). From a governance perspective, this

ambivalence underscores that the effectiveness of humanitarian response cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and normative contexts in which aid is delivered, as collective recovery is shaped not only by material assistance but also by trust, reciprocity, and institutional legitimacy embedded in local social relations (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Tierney, 2012).

The 2022 earthquake in Cianjur, West Java, provides concrete empirical context for these broader dynamics. Cianjur is characterized by a predominantly Muslim population and a relatively homogeneous religious demography, a condition that shapes everyday social interactions and collective responses during crises. When the earthquake struck, the scale of destruction and human displacement exceeded local capacities, requiring the involvement of multiple humanitarian actors. Among these actors was the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), a Christian-based faith organization that participated actively in emergency response and early recovery efforts. While YEU's involvement was grounded in humanitarian mandates, its presence in a Muslim-majority setting inevitably introduced questions concerning social reception, legitimacy, and trust within affected communities (Nurmiati et al., 2024).

In such majority–minority configurations, humanitarian assistance is rarely perceived as a purely technical intervention. Previous studies suggest that faith-based organizations operating across religious boundaries often encounter ambivalent responses: they may be welcomed for their resources and expertise, yet simultaneously scrutinized for their religious identity and presumed motivations (Ferris, 2011; Wilkinson, 2018). This ambivalence is particularly salient in disaster settings, where urgency amplifies both cooperation and suspicion. As humanitarian aid is distributed, communities interpret not only what assistance is delivered but also who delivers it and under what normative framework. Consequently, humanitarian response becomes embedded in governance processes that involve negotiation among state authorities, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and local communities (Ager et al., 2015; Tierney, 2012).

From this perspective, the Cianjur case cannot be understood solely as an episode of interfaith goodwill or moral solidarity. Rather, it raises a contextual problem concerning how interfaith humanitarian action is governed, legitimized, and socially accepted in settings marked by strong religious majorities. The interaction between YEU and Muslim communities during the response phase illustrates how humanitarian governance operates at the intersection of institutional arrangements, cultural norms, and religious sensibilities. Without adequate mechanisms of coordination, transparency, and normative endorsement, interfaith assistance risks generating misunderstanding or resistance, even when driven by humanitarian intentions (Fuller, 2025; Idrus & Sonhaji, 2021). This context underscores the need to examine disaster response not merely as aid

delivery, but as a socially embedded governance process in which majority–minority relations play a critical role.

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between religion and disaster response, particularly the role of religious values, institutions, and leadership in fostering solidarity and resilience. Studies in this area commonly emphasize how religious beliefs provide moral frameworks that encourage collective action, mutual aid, and psychosocial recovery during crises (Engkizar et al., 2022; Ghafory-Ashtiany, 2015; Khusna et al., 2023). Other works highlight the capacity of religious networks to mobilize resources and sustain community-based responses beyond the immediate emergency phase (T. A. Tilahun et al., 2025). Within this body of literature, religion is often framed as a stabilizing social force that supports humanitarian efforts and strengthens local coping mechanisms. However, much of the existing scholarship remains predominantly descriptive and normative, focusing on general religious motivations and institutional roles without sufficiently unpacking how specific spiritual needs are identified, prioritized, and translated into concrete service designs in post-disaster contexts. In addition, limited attention has been paid to the integration of spiritual care within structured post-disaster intervention models, particularly those that align with culturally embedded Islamic practices and ethical frameworks. As a result, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning systematic, needs-based models of post-disaster services that explicitly incorporate Islamic spiritual dimensions as an integral component of recovery rather than as a supplementary or implicit element.

Alongside these contributions, a growing strand of research has focused on faith-based organizations (FBOs) as institutional actors within humanitarian governance. This literature examines how FBOs navigate the interface between religious commitments and secular humanitarian norms, particularly in contexts involving diverse belief systems (Ferris, 2011; Ager et al., 2015; Wilkinson, 2018). While these studies provide important insights into issues of legitimacy, coordination, and faith-sensitive humanitarianism, they tend to address FBOs at an organizational or policy level, with limited attention to the micro-level dynamics of interaction between aid providers and recipient communities across religious boundaries. As a result, the everyday processes through which trust, acceptance, and cooperation are negotiated in interfaith humanitarian encounters remain underexplored.

From a theoretical perspective, intergroup contact has been widely studied as a mechanism for reducing prejudice and improving relations between social groups. Intergroup Contact Theory, originally articulated by Allport and further developed in subsequent scholarship, identifies conditions such as equal status, common goals, cooperation, and institutional support as key determinants of positive intergroup relations (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Hewstone et al., 2014; Tropp & Page-Gould, 2015). More recent developments in contact theory have called for

greater attention to contextual and institutional factors shaping contact outcomes, particularly in settings characterized by power asymmetries and structural constraints (Vezzali & Stathi, 2017). However, despite these advances, applications of intergroup contact theory in disaster and humanitarian contexts, especially those involving faith-based actors operating as religious minorities, remain relatively limited, both empirically and analytically.

Despite the growing body of literature on religion and disaster response, several critical gaps remain. Empirically, there are few in-depth qualitative studies examining how faith-based organizations (FBOs) operating as religious minorities are received and negotiated by majority communities during disaster response in Indonesia. Much of the existing research focuses either on interreligious harmony in everyday settings or on the general role of religious institutions in disaster mitigation, without closely examining the micro-level interactions through which trust, legitimacy, and cooperation are constructed in emergency and recovery phases (Huda et al., 2020; Khaira & Ranti, 2024; Pertek et al., 2023). Theoretically, although Intergroup Contact Theory has been widely applied to explain prejudice reduction and social cohesion, its operationalization within humanitarian governance, particularly in crisis settings involving institutional actors and normative endorsement, remains underdeveloped (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Hewstone et al., 2014). In practice, there is also a lack of empirically grounded frameworks to inform capacity-building for interfaith FBOs seeking to operate effectively and inclusively in disaster contexts (Ferris, 2011; Wilkinson, 2018).

These gaps point to a broader research problem concerning how humanitarian values and religious identities intersect in the governance of disaster response. In contexts where religious identity is a salient marker of social belonging, humanitarian assistance delivered by minority FBOs is not only assessed in terms of efficiency and coverage but also through moral, cultural, and institutional lenses. As observed in the Cianjur earthquake response, the presence of a Christian-based organization such as the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) in a predominantly Muslim area raises questions about how interfaith interaction unfolds in practice, how social acceptance is negotiated, and under what conditions such interaction can foster solidarity rather than suspicion or exclusion (Jensen & Duiveman, 2026; Fuller, 2025). Understanding these dynamics requires attention to social processes and institutional arrangements, rather than focusing solely on the outcomes of aid distribution.

Based on this problem, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does interfaith interaction between YEU and Muslim communities affected by the 2022 Cianjur earthquake take place during humanitarian response and recovery processes? (2) What social, cultural, and institutional conditions enable interfaith solidarity to emerge and be sustained in this context? and (3) What forms of interaction and cooperation develop between

faith-based humanitarian actors and affected communities across religious boundaries? Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of interfaith contact in post-disaster humanitarian governance, identify the social and institutional conditions that facilitate inclusive collaboration, and map the practices of interaction and cooperation that evolve across the response and recovery phases. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to contribute both to the theoretical development of intergroup contact in crisis settings and to practical efforts to strengthen interfaith humanitarian practice in plural societies.

Furthermore, this study offers a conceptual contribution by reframing interfaith solidarity in post-disaster contexts as an institutionalized social practice embedded within humanitarian governance, rather than as a spontaneous moral response. Extending Intergroup Contact Theory beyond its predominant focus on interpersonal encounters and psychological outcomes, this research situates interfaith contact within a socio-normative domain shaped by institutional legitimacy, normative endorsement, and local moral narratives (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Hewstone et al., 2014). Drawing on the case of the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) during the 2022 Cianjur earthquake response, the study demonstrates how Allport's contact conditions, equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and institutional support are operationalized through concrete governance mechanisms, including coordination with state agencies, endorsement by religious authorities, and culturally sensitive humanitarian practices (Ferris, 2011; Wilkinson, 2018). Beyond its theoretical implications, the findings provide empirically grounded insights for strengthening interfaith humanitarian practice in Indonesia and comparable plural societies by identifying the social and institutional conditions that enable minority faith-based organizations to operate legitimately within majority settings, thereby contributing to broader discussions on religious moderation, social cohesion, and inclusive disaster governance (Menchik, 2016; Hefner, 2019).

METHOD

This study employed a sociological approach to religion and humanitarian governance to examine how interfaith solidarity is negotiated in post-disaster settings. The approach focuses on meaning-making, social legitimacy, and institutional interaction, allowing the analysis of how religious identity and governance structures shape humanitarian engagement. Intergroup Contact Theory was used as an analytical lens to sensitize the inquiry to relational conditions such as equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and institutional support (Allport, 1954; Imperato et al., 2021), while remaining open to context-specific dynamics emerging from the field.

A qualitative intrinsic case study design was adopted following Stake's (1995) framework, focusing on the YAKKUM Emergency Unit, a Christian-based organization operating in the predominantly Muslim region of Cianjur after the 2022 earthquake. The case was bounded by time, place, and actors, covering the emergency response through early recovery (late 2022 to April 2024) and involving YAKKUM staff, Muslim community members, local religious leaders, and volunteers. This design enabled an in-depth exploration of interfaith interaction within a specific humanitarian governance context.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interview questions explored perceptions of YAKKUM's legitimacy, cooperation practices, and the role of institutional and religious authorities. Observations focused on how contact conditions were enacted in daily humanitarian activities, while document analysis provided contextual and institutional background. Purposive sampling ensured representation across key stakeholder groups in the response environment.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's procedural stages (2006), beginning with familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts and field notes, followed by open coding to identify patterns related to interfaith interaction, cooperation, and perceptions of religious identity. Codes were then organized into broader categories informed by Allport's conditions of intergroup contact, including equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and institutional support (Allport, 1954; Imperato et al., 2021), while remaining open to emergent themes. NVivo 12 Plus was used to manage coding and explore thematic relationships. Analytical rigor was strengthened through triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, member checking with selected participants, and peer debriefing with academic colleagues to refine interpretations and reduce bias. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the empirical findings derived from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis conducted in Cianjur Regency following the 2022 earthquake. The results are organized around the study's three research objectives: examining the dynamics of interfaith contact between the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) and Muslim communities, identifying the social and institutional conditions that enabled interfaith solidarity, and mapping the interaction and cooperation practices that developed during the emergency and early recovery phases. The presentation focuses on participants'

experiences and observed practices, while theoretical interpretation is reserved for the Discussion section.

To provide analytical clarity, Table 1 summarizes the main themes and subthemes that emerged from the data, illustrating how interfaith solidarity was enacted through concrete social practices rather than spontaneous moral responses. The table operationalizes four dimensions of interfaith solidarity: status equality, shared humanitarian goals, intergroup cooperation, and institutional and normative support. These dimensions are based on interview excerpts, field observations, and documentary evidence. They highlight how local cultural values, such as gotong royong and universal compassion, were expressed through participatory decision-making, collective recovery efforts, and religiously endorsed humanitarian practices. The narrative findings that follow draw on this empirical mapping to address the study’s research objectives.

Table 1.

Data Processing Results

Main Theme	Subtheme	Examples of Empirical Data (Quotations/Observations/Documents)
Status Equality	Equality in making decisions	“We do not feel assisted, but invited to work together.” (Interview, February 12, 2024)
	Recognition of religious and cultural identity	Provision of prayer rooms in evacuation tents; halal-certified logistics (Field notes, February 18, 2024)
	Women’s participation in recovery	Women in leadership roles in communal kitchens and psychosocial support groups (Interview, February 22, 2024)
Shared Humanitarian Goals	Collective vision recovery	“We are fighting together to rise back.” (Interview, February 19, 2024)
	Participatory program	Recovery workshops; opening prayers led by religious figures (Observation, February 23, 2024)
	Legitimacy theological	Friday sermons emphasizing humanity as universal brotherhood
Intergroup Cooperation	Structural integration local	Coordination conducted in mosque areas; religious figures acting as mediators (Observation, February 20–25, 2024)
	Exchange knowledge	“The best ideas actually came from the community.” (Interview, February 26, 2024)
	Practice symbolic cross faith.	YEU staff participating in group prayers before aid distribution (FGD, February 25, 2024)
Institutional and Normative Support	Government and religious legitimacy	YEU–BPBD Memorandum of Understanding; MUI statement countering negative rumors (Document, February 16, 2024)
	Program transparency	Open reflection sessions involving village officials and residents (Observation, February 20, 2024)
	Religious moral support	“Helping others is worship.” (Interview with Ustaz Abah, February 22, 2024)

Source: Author’s own processing (2024)

Dynamics of Interfaith Contact in Post-Earthquake Humanitarian Response

The dynamics of interfaith contact between the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) and Muslim communities in Cianjur unfolded gradually, shaped by observation, negotiation, and repeated interaction. During the earliest days of the emergency response, YEU's presence as a Christian-based humanitarian organization in a predominantly Muslim region was met with cautious curiosity. Community members closely monitored how YEU distributed aid, interacted with local leaders, and adhered to religious norms. One resident explained that people initially waited to see whether YEU would respect local customs, noting that "we do not feel assisted, but invited to work together," a statement that reflected both early skepticism and the emerging sense of partnership (Interview, February 12, 2024). Field notes from evacuation sites further illustrate this cautious openness, documenting how YEU ensured the availability of prayer rooms in temporary shelters and distributed halal-certified logistics (Field notes, February 18, 2024). These actions signaled cultural sensitivity and helped reduce social distance during the initial phase.

As interactions continued, acceptance deepened. Interviews and observations indicate that early contact was largely functional, focused on meeting urgent needs while maintaining clear boundaries. However, as YEU consistently demonstrated transparency, respect, and reliability, interactions shifted from procedural exchanges to more relational engagement. Community members increasingly recognized YEU's willingness to adapt to local norms, such as participating in opening prayers led by religious figures during recovery workshops (Observation, February 23, 2024). These gestures helped transform initial symbolic contact into meaningful collaboration.

Over time, interfaith contact evolved into more integrated forms of cooperation. Repeated encounters in coordination meetings, joint humanitarian activities, and informal conversations in community and religious spaces facilitated a shift in social positioning. Residents began to perceive themselves not only as recipients of aid but as active contributors to recovery efforts. This shift was reinforced by the emergence of shared narratives of resilience, exemplified by a community member who stated, "We are fighting together to rise back" (Interview, February 19, 2024). Such expressions reflected a growing sense of collective ownership over the recovery process.

Religious identity remained present but became less central in everyday interactions as concerns for safety, livelihood restoration, and communal well-being took precedence. The disaster context created opportunities for sustained interfaith interaction that gradually transformed initial caution into cooperative relationships. The repeated nature of these encounters, combined with reciprocal recognition and shared responsibilities, allowed interfaith contact to function as an ongoing social process rather than a singular event. In this sense, the humanitarian

response became a space where interfaith relations were continuously negotiated, tested, and strengthened through practical engagement.

Social and Institutional Conditions Enabling Interfaith Solidarity

The findings show that interfaith solidarity during the Cianjur earthquake response was supported by a constellation of social and institutional conditions that structured interaction between YEU and Muslim communities. The first condition was the enactment of status equality. Community members repeatedly emphasized that they did not feel like passive recipients of aid but rather as partners in decision-making. This sentiment was captured in the statement, “we do not feel assisted, but invited to work together,” which reflected a broader perception that YEU treated residents as equals in planning and implementing humanitarian activities (Interview, February 12, 2024). This sense of equality was reinforced through participatory decision-making, shared planning processes, and the recognition of religious and cultural identities.

The provision of prayer facilities and halal-certified aid demonstrated YEU’s commitment to respecting local norms, which strengthened trust and legitimacy. Women’s participation further contributed to perceptions of equality. Women assumed leadership roles in communal kitchens and psychosocial support groups, demonstrating that recovery efforts were inclusive and community-driven (Interview, February 22, 2024). Their involvement not only expanded the range of voices represented in decision-making but also reinforced the idea that recovery was a shared responsibility across gender and religious lines.

The second enabling condition was the presence of shared humanitarian goals. Across interviews and observations, actors consistently framed recovery as a collective endeavor aimed at restoring communal well-being rather than advancing sectarian interests. The statement “we are fighting together to rise back” captured this shared orientation and highlighted the moral commitment that underpinned interfaith cooperation (Interview, February 19, 2024). Participatory programs, such as recovery workshops and community meetings opened with prayers led by religious leaders, further reinforced this shared purpose (Observation, February 23, 2024). Theological legitimacy also played a role, as Friday sermons emphasized humanity as a universal brotherhood, encouraging congregants to support all humanitarian actors regardless of religious affiliation. Institutional and normative support formed the third enabling condition. Cooperation between YEU, government agencies, and religious institutions helped legitimize interfaith collaboration and mitigate potential suspicion. Documents show that a Memorandum of Understanding between YEU and the local disaster management agency (BPBD) formalized coordination mechanisms. At the same time, a public statement from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) countered negative rumors and affirmed the permissibility of receiving assistance from non Muslim organizations (Document, February 16, 2024). These institutional

endorsements provided a protective framework that allowed interfaith collaboration to proceed smoothly.

Local cultural values, particularly gotong royong and universal compassion, further normalized collective action across religious boundaries. Field observations indicate that these values were enacted through practices such as open reflection sessions involving village officials and residents, which promoted transparency and mutual accountability (Observation, February 20, 2024). Religious leaders also reinforced moral support by framing humanitarian assistance as an act of worship, as expressed by one cleric who stated, “helping others is worship” (Interview with Ustaz Abah, February 22, 2024). Together, these findings demonstrate that interfaith solidarity was not a spontaneous emotional response but a socially embedded and institutionally mediated practice that emerged through the alignment of social norms, cultural values, and formal support structures.

Interaction and Cooperation Practices during Emergency and Recovery Phases

During the emergency response phase, interaction and cooperation between YEU and Muslim communities focused primarily on meeting urgent humanitarian needs through coordinated, participatory practices. Field observations document joint activities such as aid distribution, the operation of communal kitchens, and the organization of temporary shelters. These activities were often conducted in community and religious spaces, including mosque courtyards, which served as central hubs for coordination (Observation, February 20–25, 2024). Religious and community leaders played a crucial role as mediators, facilitating communication between humanitarian workers and residents and ensuring that activities aligned with local norms.

Symbolic practices also strengthened cooperation. Collective prayers conducted before aid distribution, along with the YEU staff’s visible participation in community rituals, signaled respect for local religious practices and helped build trust. One focus group discussion noted that YEU staff joined group prayers before distributing aid, a gesture that was widely interpreted as an expression of solidarity and humility (FGD, February 25, 2024). These practices enabled rapid coordination while simultaneously fostering mutual recognition in crisis conditions.

As the response transitioned into the early recovery phase, cooperation became more structured and sustained. Activities expanded to include livelihood restoration, psychosocial support, and community-based recovery initiatives. Programs such as cash-for-work schemes, recovery workshops, and open reflection sessions involving village officials and residents illustrate how collaboration evolved beyond immediate relief. Knowledge exchange emerged as a defining feature of this phase. Community members frequently contributed local insights that shaped program implementation, with one participant noting that “the best

ideas actually came from the community” (Interview, February 26, 2024). This acknowledgment of community expertise reinforced the sense of shared ownership and strengthened cooperative relationships.

Transparency mechanisms, including open meetings and shared evaluations, further enhanced trust and accountability. These practices allowed residents to voice concerns, propose adjustments, and monitor progress, thereby reinforcing the participatory nature of the recovery process. Across both phases, the disaster context functioned as an arena for experiential and moral learning. Repeated collaboration reshaped social roles, normalized interfaith cooperation, and reinforced shared ethical commitments. These findings demonstrate that interaction and cooperation were not episodic responses to crisis but constituted an evolving set of practices that adapted to changing needs and strengthened interfaith solidarity over time.

DISCUSSION

Interfaith Solidarity and the Reinterpretation of Intergroup Contact Theory

The findings of this study reaffirm the relevance of Intergroup Contact Theory for explaining interfaith interaction in post-disaster contexts. Yet, they also demonstrate the need to reinterpret the theory when applied within humanitarian governance. Allport’s four conditions of positive contact, namely equality of status, shared goals, cooperation, and institutional support, were clearly present in the interaction between the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) and Muslim communities in Cianjur. However, consistent with the arguments of Pettigrew et al. (2011) and Hewstone et al. (2014), these conditions did not operate primarily at the level of individual psychological change. Instead, they were embedded within broader cultural and religious moral frameworks that shaped how actors interpreted and enacted interfaith engagement. This indicates that intergroup contact in disaster settings is not merely an interpersonal mechanism but a socially situated process influenced by local norms, power relations, and moral expectations. The Cianjur case, therefore, illustrates how contact theory must be adapted when applied in contexts where religious identity is deeply intertwined with social belonging and moral authority.

The enactment of equality of status illustrates this contextual reinterpretation. Rather than being determined by formal organizational hierarchy, equality emerged relationally through practices of deliberation, symbolic recognition, and respect for religious identity. These practices included acknowledging local religious norms, involving community members in decision-making, and ensuring that humanitarian activities aligned with cultural expectations. Such relational equality challenges classical assumptions that equal status must be structurally pre-existing. It aligns with Hamdi et al. (2024), who argue that contact outcomes are shaped by local symbolic repertoires that define legitimacy and authority. The Cianjur case, therefore, complements and extends

existing literature by showing that status equality can be actively produced through culturally meaningful interaction, particularly in humanitarian settings where power asymmetries are often pronounced. This suggests that equality in contact situations is not simply a precondition but an outcome that must be continually negotiated and reinforced.

Shared goals also operated differently from traditional formulations of contact theory. In Cianjur, shared goals were not limited to instrumental objectives related to aid delivery but were grounded in a collective moral vision shaped by spiritual understandings of humanitarian obligation. This moral dimension of shared goals reflects a deeper form of alignment that goes beyond practical cooperation and enters the realm of shared ethical purpose. This resonates with Vezzali and Stathi (2017), who argue that contact theory must account for socio-normative influences that shape how groups interpret cooperation. The findings demonstrate that cooperation in disaster settings involves moral reflection and value exchange, rather than mere task coordination. Institutional and normative support further reinforced this dynamic by providing moral endorsement from religious authorities, which aligned humanitarian practices with local religious teachings. This supports the argument that contact theory must be expanded to incorporate the role of moral legitimacy and cultural resonance in sustaining intergroup cooperation. In this way, the Cianjur case highlights how the interplay between humanitarian norms and religious ethics shapes interfaith solidarity.

Interfaith Solidarity as an Institutionalized Social Practice

Beyond confirming the relevance of contact theory, the findings show that interfaith solidarity in Cianjur was not a spontaneous emotional response to crisis but an institutionalized social practice embedded within humanitarian governance. Solidarity emerged through structured interaction involving humanitarian organizations, state institutions, and religious authorities. This aligns with Ferris (2011) and Ager et al. (2015), who emphasize that trust and legitimacy in humanitarian action are generated through institutional alignment and accountability rather than moral intent alone. The Cianjur case supports this argument by demonstrating that institutional collaboration provided stability and mitigated suspicion toward a minority faith-based organization. The presence of formal agreements, coordinated planning, and transparent communication helped create a predictable environment in which interfaith cooperation could flourish.

The role of religious authorities was particularly significant. Islamic leaders translated humanitarian principles into locally resonant moral language, thereby legitimizing cross-faith collaboration. This finding reinforces Wilkinson's (2018) argument that religious mediation is essential in Muslim majority contexts, where cultural legitimacy is often tied to religious endorsement. Liu (2025) similarly highlights the importance of religious actors in facilitating acceptance of external

humanitarian organizations. The Cianjur case adds nuance to this literature by showing that religious endorsement not only legitimizes humanitarian action but also fosters moral alignment between actors of different faiths. Religious leaders served as cultural interpreters, bridging humanitarian norms and community expectations, ensuring that interfaith cooperation was perceived as morally appropriate and socially acceptable.

At the same time, the study extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that institutionalization did not lead to rigid formalization or the erosion of moral meaning. Instead, institutional structures enabled reflective engagement, allowing participants to reinterpret religious difference through sustained interaction. This contributes to debates on humanitarian hybridity by showing that hybrid governance arrangements can be both functional and transformative. Kazanskaia (2025) and Sabates Wheeler and Barker (2024) argue that hybridity often produces tensions between professional standards and local norms. Yet, the Cianjur case illustrates that hybridity can also facilitate moral learning and strengthen interfaith solidarity. The interaction between humanitarian protocols and religious values created a dynamic space in which actors could negotiate shared understandings of responsibility, compassion, and community. This suggests that institutionalized interfaith solidarity is not merely a technical arrangement but a moral and relational process that evolves.

Local Cultural Values and Disaster as an Arena for Moral Learning

Local cultural values, particularly gotong royong and notions of universal compassion, played a central role in mediating interfaith solidarity in Cianjur. These values provided a shared moral vocabulary that normalized cooperation and reframed religious difference as secondary to collective recovery. This finding aligns with Pelling and Dill (2010) and Tierney (2012), who argue that disasters create opportunities for renegotiating social norms through collective action. In Cianjur, cultural values did not erase religious identities but offered a bridge through which differences could be acknowledged without becoming a source of tension. The emphasis on mutual assistance and communal responsibility fostered an environment that supported interfaith collaboration and reduced the potential for conflict.

The disaster context itself functioned as an arena for moral learning. Shared vulnerability created opportunities for ethical reflection, as humanitarian actors and community members jointly confronted suffering and uncertainty. Through everyday practices such as working together, sharing resources, and negotiating decisions, participants developed new understandings of solidarity that transcended formal religious boundaries. This process is consistent with Aldrich and Meyer (2015), who argue that crises can catalyze new forms of trust and social capital, and with Van Tongeren et al. (2020), who highlight the potential for moral transformation in post-disaster settings. The Cianjur case, therefore, demonstrates

that interfaith solidarity can emerge as a lived, evolving social process rooted in cultural values and reinforced by institutional support. The repeated nature of interfaith interaction allowed participants to internalize new norms of cooperation, empathy, and shared responsibility.

When situated within broader international studies, the Cianjur case demonstrates both convergence with and differentiation from other FBO-led disaster responses. Similar to findings in other Muslim majority contexts, institutional legitimacy, engagement with religious authorities, and sensitivity to local norms emerged as key enabling factors for interfaith cooperation (Ferris, 2011; Wilkinson, 2018). These parallels suggest that faith-sensitive humanitarian governance constitutes a transferable framework, although it must be adapted to local socio-religious conditions. The Cianjur case also highlights the importance of cultural specificity, showing that local histories, social structures, and moral traditions shape interfaith solidarity.

The Indonesian context, however, reveals distinctive features. Culturally embedded practices such as *gotong royong* and established interreligious governance mechanisms facilitated pragmatic cooperation without requiring ideological consensus. This complements Menchik (2016) and Hefner (2019), who argue that Indonesian pluralism is rooted in relational and practice-based forms of coexistence rather than doctrinal agreement. The Cianjur case, therefore, contributes to this literature by showing how interfaith collaboration can be sustained through shared practice, even in the absence of theological convergence. The findings suggest that interfaith solidarity in Indonesia is grounded in everyday interactions and collective action rather than abstract principles of tolerance.

To summarize, these findings extend Intergroup Contact Theory into a socio-normative and institutional framework and offer practical insights for designing inclusive humanitarian governance. They highlight the importance of recognizing religious actors as strategic partners rather than peripheral stakeholders. Epistemologically, the study underscores the value of qualitative and interdisciplinary approaches for capturing the moral, relational, and institutional dimensions of interfaith solidarity in disaster contexts, dimensions that remain insufficiently addressed in technocratic or purely psychological analyses. The Cianjur case ultimately demonstrates that interfaith solidarity is a dynamic, culturally embedded, and institutionally mediated process that evolves through sustained interaction and shared moral commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that interfaith solidarity between the YAKKUM Emergency Unit and Muslim communities in Cianjur emerged through socially embedded and institutionally supported processes rather than spontaneous moral responses. Interfaith contact developed gradually through relational practices that

enacted status equality, shared humanitarian goals, and cooperative engagement across emergency and recovery phases. These interactions were strengthened by institutional and normative support from government agencies and religious authorities, as well as by local cultural values such as gotong royong and universal compassion. Together, these findings answer the research questions by showing how interfaith interaction unfolded, which social and institutional conditions enabled it, and what forms of cooperation sustained it throughout the humanitarian response.

This study is limited by its intrinsic single-case design, which focuses on one faith-based organization operating in a specific socio-religious context. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to all disaster settings or interfaith configurations. The reliance on qualitative data also means that the study captures depth rather than breadth, and the sensitivity of religious identity may have influenced participants' willingness to disclose certain experiences. Future research should expand to comparative multisite studies, include diverse FBOs operating across different religious majorities, and integrate mixed methods approaches to examine variations in interfaith dynamics across contexts.

The findings open several avenues for further inquiry and practical application. Future studies could explore how interfaith solidarity evolves in protracted crises, how digital communication shapes interfaith humanitarian coordination, or how youth and women contribute to interfaith resilience. Practically, the study highlights the need for humanitarian agencies to institutionalize faith-sensitive coordination mechanisms, strengthen partnerships with religious authorities, and design participatory programs that reinforce status equality. Theoretically, the study extends Intergroup Contact Theory into a socio-normative and institutional framework, offering a foundation for developing more context-responsive models of interfaith humanitarian governance.

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