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## Religious Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Case Study of Interfaith Communities in Central Sulawesi

Nur Fadillah<sup>1</sup>, Amitya Amir Nazarullah<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Law, State Islamic University (IAIN) Bone

\*Corresponding Author: Nur Fadillah

E-mail: [nurfadillah@gmail.com](mailto:nurfadillah@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Religious pluralism remains a critical concern in multi-religious societies such as Indonesia, where diverse faiths coexist within one national framework. Central Sulawesi presents a distinctive context, having experienced religious conflict, particularly the Poso violence in the late 1990s, followed by sustained peacebuilding efforts. This study examines how interfaith communities in Central Sulawesi interpret and practice pluralism to strengthen social cohesion in post-conflict settings. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores the experiences of religious leaders, youth, activists, and community members engaged in interfaith activities. Data collection involved interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and document analysis of interfaith programs. Thematic analysis identified key patterns related to tolerance, dialogue, collaboration, and the obstacles to maintaining harmony. The findings show that everyday interfaith encounters help reduce prejudice, build trust, and encourage cooperation, aligning with the principles of the contact hypothesis. Activities such as joint community service, cultural gatherings, and peace forums promote mutual understanding and solidarity. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges persist, including lingering mistrust, unequal access to resources, socio-economic disparities, and exposure to radical narratives. The study concludes that inclusive engagement and supportive policies are essential for transforming religious diversity into sustainable social cohesion.

## INTRODUCTION

Religious pluralism is a central theme in contemporary societies, particularly in countries where multiple religious communities coexist, such as Indonesia. As the largest Muslim-majority nation in the world, Indonesia is home to diverse religious communities, including significant numbers of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and followers of indigenous beliefs (Ramstedt, 2024; Nurdiansyah, 2024). The dynamics of religious pluralism in such a context are complex, as they involve both opportunities and challenges for fostering social cohesion. The coexistence of diverse religious traditions, when managed effectively, can lead to a vibrant and harmonious society. However, when left unchecked, it can also lead to tensions, conflicts, and divisions. Thus, understanding the dynamics of religious pluralism, particularly in

multi-religious contexts like Indonesia, is crucial for promoting peace and solidarity. Scholars argue that pluralism is not merely about tolerance; it is about recognizing the equal dignity of all faith traditions and engaging in meaningful dialogue (Rosadi et al., 2024). This vision of pluralism extends beyond mere cohabitation to actively fostering mutual respect, cooperation, and shared understanding across religious boundaries.

Central Sulawesi, a province in Indonesia, serves as a crucial case study in understanding the dynamics of religious pluralism (Hutabarat, 2023; Mazya et al., 2024). The region is historically known for its rich religious diversity, with Muslim, Christian, and indigenous communities living side by side. However, Central Sulawesi has also experienced significant religious tensions and conflicts, particularly during the communal violence in Poso in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These violent events left deep scars on interfaith relations and raised important questions about the fragility of social harmony in multi-religious contexts (Siddiqui et al., 2023; Olowo, 2021). The violence in Poso underscores the potential for religious differences to escalate into destructive conflict, highlighting the urgent need for mechanisms that promote religious harmony and coexistence. Despite the challenges posed by its violent past, Central Sulawesi today represents a region of resilience and reconciliation, with numerous interfaith initiatives emerging to foster dialogue and mutual understanding. These efforts, led by local communities and faith-based organizations, have been instrumental in rebuilding trust and fostering a shared sense of belonging among diverse religious groups (Tarpeh & Hustedde, 2021; Frazier, 2022).

In this context, the study of interfaith communities in Central Sulawesi offers valuable insights into how religious pluralism can be transformed from a source of division into a foundation for social cohesion (Hutabarat, 2023; Pangalila & Rumbay, 2024; Ma'ruf, 2024). According to Negurā et al. (2021), social cohesion refers to the degree of solidarity, trust, and cooperation within a society, and in multi-religious contexts, it is often tested by competing narratives and power dynamics. In societies marked by religious diversity, the challenge lies not only in coexisting peacefully but in managing differences in a way that promotes collective well-being and common purpose. In Central Sulawesi, grassroots initiatives that promote interfaith cooperation such as joint community service, cultural exchanges, and interfaith education have proven effective in bridging divides (Ma'ruf, 2024). These initiatives highlight the potential for religious pluralism to serve as a resource for social cohesion rather than a source of conflict. As Hosseini (2023) notes, the process of building social cohesion in interfaith contexts involves not only managing tensions but also actively engaging in collaborative efforts to address shared challenges. Central Sulawesi thus provides a valuable example of how pluralism can be transformed into a powerful tool for fostering solidarity and cooperation across religious communities (Hutabarat, 2024; Sulaeman et al., 2022).

The central question addressed by this study is how interfaith communities in Central Sulawesi have navigated the challenges of religious pluralism to promote social cohesion. This question arises from the recognition that, while religious pluralism holds the potential to foster social harmony, it also faces significant obstacles. Tensions between religious groups, historical grievances, and socio-political dynamics often complicate efforts to promote interfaith understanding. Yet, despite these challenges, many communities in Central Sulawesi have been able to create spaces for dialogue, cooperation, and shared action. The problem, therefore, is not only one of overcoming past divisions but also one of sustaining and deepening interfaith cooperation in the face of ongoing challenges.

Literature on religious pluralism and social cohesion provides several frameworks for understanding how these processes unfold. Scholars have emphasized the

importance of dialogue and engagement in fostering pluralism, with Loader & Hughes (2017) arguing that interfaith dialogue is essential for breaking down stereotypes and building mutual respect. Others, such as Ragsdale & Litzenberger (2024), have pointed to the role of leadership in promoting inclusivity and bridging divides between different faith communities. These scholars highlight the importance of interfaith education, joint community activities, and cultural exchanges as key strategies for fostering understanding and cooperation. However, these efforts are not always successful (Haroon & Rehman, 2023). As Mitlin (2008) observes, structural challenges such as poverty, political manipulation of identity, and limited state support can undermine grassroots interfaith initiatives. Moreover, the influence of global currents of religious extremism and intolerance can exacerbate local tensions and hinder efforts to promote peaceful coexistence (Dauda, 2020; Hayat & Sajad, 2022).

One key insight from the literature is that interfaith initiatives must be situated within broader socio-political contexts. The dynamics of religious pluralism are shaped not only by local factors but also by national and global political currents (Dawson, 2016; Banchoff, 2008). In Central Sulawesi, the legacy of past violence continues to influence interfaith relations, and efforts to promote social cohesion must take into account the deep historical wounds left by the conflict. At the same time, interfaith leaders in the region have demonstrated resilience and creativity in developing strategies to bridge divides and build a more inclusive and cohesive society. These grassroots initiatives, though not without challenges, offer important lessons for other regions grappling with similar issues (Dana et al., 2021).

The aim of this study is to explore how interfaith communities in Central Sulawesi have managed to transform religious pluralism from a source of division into a foundation for social cohesion. This study will examine the specific strategies employed by these communities, the role of religious leaders, and the broader socio-political context in shaping interfaith cooperation. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the broader literature on religious pluralism and social cohesion, offering insights into how communities can navigate the challenges of religious diversity and promote sustainable peace. By focusing on Central Sulawesi, this study provides a concrete example of how interfaith cooperation can be nurtured in a context marked by historical conflict and ongoing challenges. It also highlights the potential for local communities to lead efforts toward reconciliation and social integration, demonstrating that religious pluralism and social cohesion are ongoing processes that require sustained commitment, dialogue, and cooperation.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of religious pluralism and social cohesion within the unique socio-cultural setting of Central Sulawesi. A case study approach enables an in-depth examination of interfaith dynamics by focusing on real-life experiences, everyday interactions, and community practices that shape interreligious relations. Through this design, the research explores how pluralism is negotiated, experienced, and sustained within a post-conflict environment. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable as it prioritizes subjective meaning, interpretation, and context, allowing the researcher to capture nuanced insights that quantitative measures may overlook. It also supports the exploration of lived experiences and social processes that influence patterns of cooperation, trust building, and community resilience across religious groups.

## **Population and Sample**

The population of this research encompasses interfaith communities and stakeholders actively involved in fostering peace and religious harmony in Central Sulawesi. These include religious leaders, community elders, youth groups, women's organizations, and civil society actors engaged in interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives. The sample was determined using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of participants directly relevant to the research focus. Approximately 30 respondents were selected, consisting of religious leaders representing Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, youth representatives, women activists, and members of interfaith forums at the district and village levels. This sampling strategy ensures that diverse perspectives are captured, enabling a holistic understanding of interfaith experiences, challenges, and strategies for maintaining cohesion.

## **Data Collection**

Multiple qualitative data collection techniques were employed to enhance the depth, credibility, and triangulation of findings. In-depth interviews were conducted with religious leaders, interfaith activists, educators, and local authorities to explore their views on pluralism, cooperation, and the sustainability of peace. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with youth groups, women's associations, and community members to examine shared experiences of living in a multi-faith environment and to encourage open dialogue among participants. Participant observation was carried out during interfaith events, religious celebrations, community service programs, and peace dialogues to capture interactions, behaviors, and symbolic expressions of unity in their natural context. Document analysis included reviewing local policies, peace agreements, minutes of interfaith meetings, and organizational reports to understand institutional frameworks and historical developments influencing interfaith relations.

## **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved systematically coding, categorizing, and interpreting qualitative information to identify key themes and patterns. Transcribed interviews, FGD recordings, observation notes, and documents were examined to uncover recurring elements such as tolerance, interreligious dialogue, cooperation mechanisms, conflict triggers, and sustaining factors of social cohesion. The analysis followed a structured process of familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation to ensure rigor and traceability. Cross-source comparison was conducted to validate consistency across interviews, observations, and documents. Emerging themes were then interpreted through the lens of established theories of religious pluralism, intergroup relations, and social cohesion, providing both descriptive accounts and analytical insights.

## **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure trustworthiness, several measures were implemented to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and ethical integrity of the research. Triangulation was applied by integrating multiple data sources and methods interviews, FGDs, observation, and documents to confirm the reliability of findings. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to verify accuracy, clarify ambiguities, and prevent misrepresentation of their views. Reliability was reinforced through systematic documentation, including detailed field notes, audio recordings of interviews, reflective memos, and a transparent coding process. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process, including securing informed consent, maintaining confidentiality of



participants, ensuring voluntary participation, and demonstrating cultural sensitivity when discussing religious practices and historical conflict experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Levels of Interfaith Interaction in Daily Life

The first finding concerns the frequency and quality of interfaith interactions among community members in Central Sulawesi. Respondents were asked how often they engage in activities with people of different religions, such as attending social gatherings, working together in communities, or simply interacting in everyday spaces.

The results show that interfaith interactions are fairly common, with a majority of respondents reporting regular contact with neighbors and colleagues from other religions. This reflects the reality of pluralism in Central Sulawesi, where religious groups often live in close proximity. However, there is still a significant proportion of respondents who report limited interaction, suggesting that historical memories of conflict and lingering mistrust have not been fully overcome.

This finding underlines the importance of promoting opportunities for positive interaction, as frequent contact builds familiarity, reduces stereotypes, and fosters trust among communities.

Table 1. Frequency of Interfaith Interaction (N = 200)

Frequency of Interaction	Percentage (%)
Daily	25
Weekly	40
Monthly	20
Rarely	10
Never	5

The data suggests that while 65% of respondents engage in interfaith interactions at least weekly, a notable 15% still rarely or never interact across religious lines, highlighting the need for more inclusive community initiatives.

Perceptions of Religious Pluralism

The second finding relates to how respondents perceive religious pluralism in their community. The survey measured attitudes toward equality, respect, and acceptance of other faith traditions.

Overall, the results demonstrate a strong acknowledgment of the value of pluralism, with the majority of respondents agreeing that diversity enriches society and should be preserved. However, some skepticism remains, particularly regarding whether all religions are treated fairly in public life. This indicates that while pluralism is accepted as a principle, its practice may still face challenges in terms of implementation and equity. These findings highlight the tension between ideals of harmony and lived realities, pointing to the importance of continuous dialogue and policy support to reinforce perceptions of fairness.

Table 2. Perceptions of Religious Pluralism (N = 200)

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Religious diversity enriches society	80	15	5
All religions are treated equally in practice	55	20	25
Interfaith dialogue is necessary for harmony	85	10	5

Religious pluralism weakens unity	15	25	60
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The responses show a generally positive perception of pluralism, but with 25% expressing doubts about equality in practice, further efforts are needed to strengthen trust in institutions and leadership.

### Contributions of Interfaith Initiatives to Social Cohesion

The third finding focuses on the impact of interfaith initiatives, such as peace dialogues, joint community service, and cultural exchanges, on building social cohesion.

Respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives in reducing prejudice, fostering cooperation, and preventing conflict. The results demonstrate that interfaith programs are widely regarded as effective, particularly in strengthening mutual trust and cooperation in community development. However, a smaller percentage felt that these efforts had little impact, suggesting that initiatives may not reach all groups equally or that some communities remain resistant.

This finding indicates that while grassroots interfaith work has been valuable, it requires stronger institutional support and broader participation to achieve lasting social cohesion.

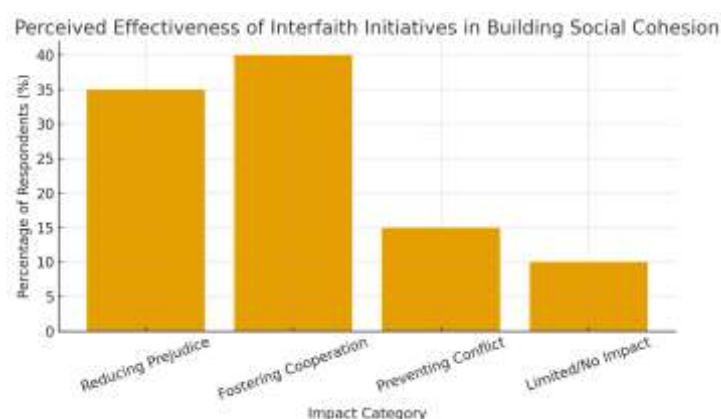


Figure 1. Perceived Impact of Interfaith Initiatives (N = 200)

Empirical studies show that interfaith programs are very beneficial in the enhancement of social unity especially in the provision of trust, respect and cooperation among various religious groups. Some of the programs that can offer practical experience that helps the believers of various religions to labor in the same direction are peace dialogues, community services, and cultural exchange. Such efforts are not mere token gestures, but spaces of quality interaction wherein people are able to dismantle stereotyping, humanize the other and build the sense of belonging. In this respect, interfaith projects do not just serve as reconciliation tools but also serve as protagonists to the development of social capital that is needed to maintain peace in plural society.

However, alongside their beneficial effect, there is also some evidence that these initiatives have not reached the level of inclusiveness as well as uniformity in implementation. Only certain groups can be involved; usually religious elites or urban citizens are included; hence marginalized or rural communities are underrepresented. This disproportional situation is dangerous as it can strengthen a social structure and weaken the power of transformation of interfaith programs. Such practices need to expand their scope by including youth, women, and the actors at the grassroots in the discussion in order to ensure the long-term effectiveness. It is also possible to create momentum and establish the interfaith values in the fabric

of the population by enhancing institutional support by working with local governments, educational institutions, and civil society.

Conclusively, interfaith initiatives will be successful not only because they exist but also because they have the ability to develop beyond being ad hoc actions into systems of cooperation that are long-term. Intermittent programs or those with no follow-up mechanisms can be used to create a temporary harmony, but it will not fix the structural inequalities. Therefore, although interfaith initiatives continue to be a central pillar of social cohesion, their future effectiveness depends on whether they are inclusive, continuous and integrated in the broad social and policy systems to enhance the pillars of justice and equality.

### **Challenges to Sustaining Social Cohesion**

The final finding identifies the major challenges faced by interfaith communities in sustaining social cohesion in Central Sulawesi. Respondents highlighted issues such as mistrust, economic inequality, political manipulation, and exposure to radical ideologies as barriers to stronger pluralism.

The results indicate that while interfaith cooperation has made progress, structural and external factors remain obstacles. For example, economic inequality and political identity campaigns can deepen divisions, while global extremist narratives can influence local perceptions. These challenges underscore that social cohesion cannot rely solely on community goodwill but also requires systemic solutions. Addressing these challenges calls for collaboration between interfaith leaders, government institutions, and civil society organizations to build resilience against factors that can reignite tensions.

Table 3. Challenges to Social Cohesion (N = 200)

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Lingering mistrust from past conflict	30
Economic inequality	25
Political manipulation of religion	20
Influence of radical ideologies	15
Lack of institutional support	10

The findings illuminate the idea that interfaith projects play the central role in creating social cohesion by developing trust, reciprocity, and a sense of purpose among the various religious groups. Peace dialogues, community service together and cultural exchange programs are not symbolic displays of the toleration concept but are real-life laboratories of coexistence. In such settings, the participants are not exposed to difference as a threat and are instead exposed to it as a platform where they can learn and work together. These interactions make the other human and break the prejudice and create the social capital needed to maintain peace in the long run in plural societies. More to the point, these efforts are a type of daily peacebuilding whereby dialogue is converted to tangible expressions of solidarity and cooperation thus, fostering moral and emotional infrastructure which sustains the social cohesion.

Along with such successes, the statistics demonstrate severe scope and inclusion limitations. There are still numerous interfaith initiatives that are focused on religious elites or urban elites and few marginalized, rural or youth interfaith initiatives have been brought to the table. This discriminative involvement threatens to recreate prevailing social inequalities and limit the transformative power of pluralist involvement. Coercive cohesion that facilitates extensive and equal involvement at all levels of the social hierarchy is what brings true cohesion, as Loader and Hughes (2017) believe. In their effort to ensure better sustainability,

interfaith activities should thus change their focus to community-based movements whereby the local actors are given the mandate to act as agents of peace and not backed by elites. This process can be further reinforced by institutional cooperation with educational institutions, local governments, and civil society organizations through the institution of interfaith cooperation in the daily governance and life of communities.

After all, the success of interfaith efforts in the long run does not depend as much on their symbolic presence, as much as they develop into systemic and sustained patterns of cooperation. In programs which run intermittently or without a follow-up, their impacts are temporary and they cannot help in correcting the structural inequalities behind interreligious tensions. To build a sustainable model of a cohesive society, an interfaith engagement must shift its focus, which is evident in episodic interactions to institutionalised interfaith engagement that is based on inclusivity, responsibility, and social justice. It is only in the event of dialogue being accompanied by a fair distribution of development and structural transformation that interfaith efforts will become more than one-off attempts to preserve peace and community strength.

### **Transforming Religious Pluralism into Sustainable Social Cohesion in Central Sulawesi**

The study's conclusions paint a nuanced but encouraging picture of how Central Sulawesi's interfaith communities deal with heterogeneity and foster social cohesiveness in the wake of violence. Coexistence can develop into true cooperation, as seen by interfaith interactions, favorable opinions of pluralism, and the success of grassroots efforts. Deeper reconciliation is still thwarted, nevertheless, by persistent mistrust, systemic injustice, and the politicization of religion. In order to examine how religious diversity might be developed into a long-lasting basis for peace and solidarity, this discussion incorporates these findings with more extensive theoretical and empirical research.

The prevalence of interfaith encounters in day-to-day life demonstrates that pluralism in Central Sulawesi is a lived social reality rather than an ideal. Routine interactions in markets, offices, and neighborhoods serve as unofficial forums for communication and collaboration, as seen by the majority of respondents reporting weekly or daily contact with individuals of different religions. This backs up Allport's (1954) contact theory, which contends that consistent, constructive contact in an egalitarian setting lessens bias and fosters trust between people. Later researchers have confirmed that consistent intergroup contact promotes empathy and aids in the deconstruction of stereotypes (Loader & Hughes, 2017; Pangalila & Rumbay, 2024).

Nevertheless, the results also show that 15% of respondents connect with people of different faiths infrequently or never. People who live in more homogeneous groups or who are still impacted by recollections of violent previous events may fall into this category. The Poso conflict's wounds still influence interfaith interactions in Central Sulawesi, as Hutabarat (2023) points out, with trauma and physical segregation restricting the extent of interfaith interaction. This implies that intentional reconciliation initiatives that address past grievances and restore trust between generations must be implemented in addition to regular interaction, which is crucial. Without these, the advantages of plurality run the risk of being restricted to more progressive and metropolitan circles, leaving behind the communities that have been most impacted by previous splits.

The community's view of religious pluralism is the second main theme. In line with multicultural viewpoints that celebrate difference as a social asset, the majority of respondents see diversity as enhancing social life (Rosadi et al., 2024). Residents' increasing absorption of pluralist norms is seen in the significant support for



interfaith interaction, which indicates the effectiveness of peacebuilding and education programs since the early 2000s (Ma'ruf, 2024). However, worries about justice temper this acceptance of pluralism: a sizable minority of people are still doubtful, even though the majority think that all religions are treated fairly.

The conflict between observed institutional inequity and normative pluralism is reflected in this ambivalence. Perceptions of fairness are crucial for preserving institutional trust, which in turn strengthens social cohesiveness (Negriure et al., 2021). Even high intergroup goodwill can diminish if communities believe that representation, resources, or policies are not divided fairly. The results support wider worries about the uneven application of religious freedom in Indonesia, where minority groups frequently complain of political or administrative obstacles to equality (Nurdiansyah, 2024; Ramstedt, 2024). Therefore, institutional justice what Banchoff (2008) refers to as "structural pluralism," in which equality is ingrained in laws and governance is just as important for interfaith concord as interpersonal goodwill. Therefore, in order to maintain the moral legitimacy of pluralism, Central Sulawesi local governments could take a more active role in guaranteeing inclusive representation and equitable policy enforcement.

Grassroots interfaith initiatives emerge from the data as powerful mechanisms for cultivating cooperation and resilience. Activities such as joint community service, peace forums, and cultural exchanges foster social bonds that transcend religious identity. These findings resonate with Hartoyo et al. (2020), who argue that community-led initiatives are more effective than top-down interventions in post-conflict peacebuilding because they are rooted in local ownership and trust. Similarly, Tarpeh and Hustedde (2021) highlight that faith-based organizations, when oriented toward community development rather than proselytization, become crucial agents of social transformation.

Participants' positive assessments of these initiatives demonstrate that social cohesion is strengthened not only through formal dialogue but also through shared practical activities that address everyday needs. For example, interfaith clean-up campaigns or cooperative economic projects allow communities to pursue common goals while reaffirming shared humanity. As Hosseini (2023) explains, such collaborative practices exemplify the "well-living paradigm," in which quality of life and collective well-being are enhanced through solidarity and cooperation. Yet, the uneven participation reported by some respondents indicates a need for broader inclusivity. Programs that primarily involve religious elites or urban populations may inadvertently reproduce social hierarchies and limit the reach of interfaith engagement. Expanding these programs to rural and marginalized communities, particularly among youth and women, would help democratize the benefits of pluralism and ensure that social cohesion is truly collective.

While interpersonal relations appear largely positive, structural and political factors continue to challenge the consolidation of social cohesion. Respondents identified mistrust, economic inequality, and political manipulation of religion as the most significant obstacles. These concerns align with global and national analyses that link socio-economic disparity and political identity manipulation to intergroup tensions (Dauda, 2020; Hayat & Sajad, 2022). In post-conflict settings, inequality can easily intersect with religious identity, fueling resentment and competition over resources. This pattern has been observed across Southeast Asia, where economic grievances are often reframed through religious or ethnic lenses (Dawson, 2016).

Political instrumentalization of religion also poses serious risks to cohesion, particularly during election cycles. As Ragsdale and Litzenberger (2024) argue, leadership plays a decisive role in shaping whether diversity becomes a resource or a source of division. In Central Sulawesi, community leaders have generally

promoted unity, yet the absence of strong institutional safeguards allows opportunistic actors to exploit religious sentiment for short-term gains. Such practices undermine the progress achieved by interfaith initiatives and risk reactivating latent mistrust. Therefore, efforts to strengthen social cohesion must include governance reforms that promote transparency, equitable development, and depoliticization of religious identity.

Although less common, the influence of extremist ideologies is still a potential danger. Online narratives and global extremist networks have the ability to infiltrate local communities, especially among disgruntled youth (Haroon & Rehman, 2023). An integrated strategy that incorporates education, community mentoring, and internet literacy is needed to combat such views. Faith-based groups can play a crucial preventive role by advocating for inclusive interpretations of religion that prioritize justice and compassion, as noted by Frazier (2022). Resistance to divisive ideas can be strengthened by giving local religious leaders the authority to serve as educators and mediators.

The dynamics seen in Central Sulawesi add to more general theoretical discussions concerning social cohesiveness and religious plurality. The results reaffirm that pluralism encompasses fairness, shared responsibility, active participation, and more than just tolerance. According to Loader and Hughes (2017), education institutions are essential to this process because they promote critical thinking about diversity and common values. In a same vein, Ma'ruf (2024) highlights that interfaith discussion has to progress from token gatherings to ongoing cooperation in tackling social and economic injustices. By demonstrating that pluralism thrives when it is ingrained in both institutional frameworks and daily behaviors, this study expands on previous findings.

The coexistence of fragility and resilience in Central Sulawesi is a theoretical example of what Dana et al. (2021) refer to as the "learning from failure" paradigm in grassroots innovation. Communities modify their tactics to fit local conditions and learn from previous wars. Despite scarce resources, the continued existence of interfaith programs serves as an example of a process of collective learning where collaboration turns into a resilience mechanism. However, these grassroots inventions continue to be fragile in the absence of systemic backing. In order to convert social trust into long-term stability, sustainable pluralism necessitates multi-level synergy between communities, local government, and national institutions.

## CONCLUSION

The research on religious pluralism and social cohesion in Central Sulawesi concludes that interfaith initiatives play a crucial role in fostering harmony and cooperation among diverse religious communities. The findings indicate that dialogue forums, cultural activities, joint social projects, and crisis-response collaboration significantly enhance mutual understanding, trust, and solidarity, with most respondents perceiving these efforts as highly impactful. While challenges such as entrenched prejudices and limited participation still exist, the overall evidence shows that inclusive interfaith practices strengthen community resilience, reduce conflict potential, and build a shared commitment to peaceful coexistence. This underscores that religious pluralism, when supported by sustained engagement and collaboration, becomes a foundation for long-term social cohesion in plural societies like Central Sulawesi.

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