e-ISSN: 2656-7997
p-ISSN: 2775-3425

JOURNAL of ASIAN ORIENTATION in THEOLOGY
Vol. 07, No. 02, August 2025 : 267 - 305

CATHOLIC–MUSLIM DIALOGUE OF LIFE IN WOLOSAMBI PARISH: A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

Polikarpus Raga [a, *]
Herlina Hadia [b]
F.X. Armada Riyanto [a]

[a] Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi Widya Sasana, Malang - Indonesia
[b] University of Divinity – Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne - Australia

[*] *policarpusraga76@gmail.com*

Submitted: 03-01-2025 | Accepted : 20-08-2025

Abstracts:

Interreligious dialogue is essential for maintaining peace and social cohesion in plural societies such as Indonesia. This study examines Catholic–Muslim relations in Saint John the Baptist Wolosambi Parish, Archdiocese of Ende, as a model of interreligious life within a local community. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation involving both Catholic and Muslim members. The research seeks to describe everyday faith interactions, identify the supporting and hindering factors of local harmony, and interpret these practices through the lens of Catholic theology of encounter. The findings reveal that dialogue is expressed in daily cooperation, joint celebrations, kinship-based solidarity, and the active involvement of religious leaders. These practices integrate local wisdom with Catholic Social Teaching, particularly the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good. The Wolosambi experience demonstrates that interreligious dialogue constitutes a form of everyday discipleship, a contextual witness of faith that offers a model for Catholic–Muslim encounter in plural societies.

Keywords:

Catholic–Muslim dialogue, Interreligious relations, Phenomenology,

DOI: https://doi.org/10.24071/jaot.v7i2.11138
Web: http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/JAOT | E: jaot@usd.ac.id

This work is license under CC BY-SA
Creative Common Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

Theology of Encounter, Wolosambi Parish.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a nation of immense cultural and religious diversity, has long experienced interreligious interactions.[1]. Within this national landscape, Saint John the Baptist Wolosambi Parish in the Archdiocese of Ende provides a distinctive microcosm of interreligious life. Catholics, who predominantly inhabit the mountainous *Wawo rala*, and Muslims, who reside along the coastal *Au rala*, live side by side with a smaller Protestant minority. The Catholic presence in the area was established through the missionary work of the Societas Verbi Divina (SVD) in the early twentieth century, while Islam was introduced through maritime trade networks.[2] Despite different historical trajectories and spatial settlements, the people of Wolosambi have sustained peaceful coexistence over generations, shaped by kinship relations, mutual assistance, and participation in shared cultural traditions.

Although interreligious dialogue in Indonesia has been widely studied, much of the scholarship emphasizes formal institutions such as the *Forum for Religious Harmony* (FKUB) or focuses on urban contexts where diversity is mediated through structured mechanisms. Far less attention has been given to rural communities, where interfaith relations are cultivated through everyday practices rather than formal dialogue forums. This lack of attention creates a gap in understanding how interreligious harmony is sustained organically in peripheral, culturally

1 Sarah Farneyanan, Julio Eleazer Nendissa, Ridwan Henry Simamora, Dewi Magdalena Rotua, dan Pangeran Guntar Wijaya Baringbing, "Pluralisme Agama-Agama: Tantangan, Peluang, Dan Perspektif Teologis Dalam Membangun Kerukunan Umat Beragama Di Indonesia," SAMI: Jurnal SosialAgamadan Teologi Indonesia 2, no. 2 (2024): 158 https://ejournal.uksw.edu/sami/article/view/14644.

2 Remigius Ceme, "Jejak Berdirinya Paroki Santu Joanne Baptista Wolosmbi," dalam Gemerlap Intan (Karya Tuhan Di Lembah Subur) (Maumere: Ledalero, 2015), 6.

rooted contexts such as Flores. Against this backdrop, this article asks: how is Catholic–Muslim dialogue practiced in daily life at Wolosambi Parish, what factors support or challenge its continuity, and how can this lived reality contribute to the development of a contextual Catholic theology of encounter?

The purpose of this study is threefold: first, to describe the lived experience of Catholic–Muslim relations in Wolosambi; second, to analyze the factors that support and challenge the sustainability of local harmony; and third, to interpret these experiences through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching and the theology of encounter promoted by Pope John Paul II. In doing so, the article seeks to move beyond mere description and contribute to theological and pastoral reflection on dialogue in pluralistic societies.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on everyday interreligious praxis as a form of dialogue of life, manifested in acts of solidarity, forgiveness, and mutual care that transcend doctrinal boundaries. Unlike formal or top-down models often discussed in interfaith literature, the Wolosambi experience demonstrates how dialogue emerges organically from grassroots realities and is reinforced by local wisdom, expressed through kinship proverbs, communal cooperation (*gotong royong*), and shared rituals, which resonate with Catholic principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good. This integration of cultural traditions with magisterial teaching not only sustains harmony but also provides a contextual theological framework that can be described as everyday discipleship, where ordinary acts of cooperation and compassion are understood as expressions of Christian witness in a pluralistic context.

To develop this argument, the article proceeds in four steps. It begins by outlining the socio-historical context of religious pluralism in

Wolosambi, followed by a presentation of empirical findings from interviews and observations on daily interfaith encounters. The next section analyzes the supporting factors, challenges, and strategies for sustaining harmony, drawing on sociological, cultural, and theological perspectives. The final section discusses the broader theological and pastoral implications of the Wolosambi experience, highlighting its contribution to a contextual Catholic theology of encounter relevant for Indonesia and beyond.

In doing so, this article seeks to show that Catholic–Muslim relations in Wolosambi Parish exemplify interreligious dialogue as a lived praxis of faith. It aims to contribute to a contextual Catholic theology of encounter that integrates Church teaching with local wisdom, offering insights for both the Indonesian context and the wider discourse on interfaith dialogue.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the relational experiences of Catholic faithful in their daily interactions with Muslims at St. Joanne Baptista Parish, Archdiocese of Ende. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it emphasizes understanding individuals' subjective experiences within their social and religious contexts, thereby enabling the researcher to capture the tangible meaning of interreligious dialogue at the community level.[3] In this framework, the researcher acts as a neutral listener, providing respondents with the space to express their opinions, experiences, and feelings authentically, without interference or pressure. This principle

[3] Veronica Cibotaru, "Interreligious Dialogue: A Challenge for Phenomenology," Religions 14, no.3 (2023): 302, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030302.

aligns with the core aim of phenomenology, which is to understand human experiences as they are, ensuring that the meanings generated genuinely reflect the respondents perspectives and lived realities.[4]

Humans should not be understood as mere passive recipients of external knowledge; instead, they actively generate knowledge, shape their own understanding of the world, and construct the course of their personal and collective history.[5] In other words, humans actively construct their worldview, or *Weltanschauung*. Within the context of Catholic-Muslim dialogue, the experiences of Catholics in building relationships with Muslims, whether through social cooperation, participation in shared religious activities, or everyday interactions, are understood as phenomenological data. Such data do not merely represent objective facts; they reflect the existence, meaning, and ways in which participants comprehend the world through their lived experiences. This approach allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how Catholics perceive interreligious dialogue, not solely from formal or doctrinal perspectives but through authentic everyday experiences.

Methodologically, the study distinguishes between textural description, which focuses on the concrete experiences of participants, and structural description, which examines how these experiences are interpreted and understood.[6] Textural description focuses on the actual experiences of participants concerning interreligious dialogue, including daily interactions, social activities, and forms of interfaith collaboration. Structural description examines how participants interpret and make

4 Brian Bantugan, "Qualitative Mindset behind Phenomenology: Implications to Qualitative Research Training," International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies 9, no. 4 (2025): 4627–4641, https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400331.

5 Mathias Jebaru Adon, Charles Virgenius Setiawan, and Arnold Suhardi, "Konsep Filsafat Relasionalitas Armada Riyanto Sebagai Metode Berfilsafat di Indonesia," Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan 5, no. 1 (2025): 3, https://doi.org/10.52738/pjk.v5i1.646.

6 Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, Handbook of Qualitative Research, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 216.

sense of these experiences, such as their perceptions, spiritual values, and personal motivations in building harmonious relationships with Muslims. Both aspects are applied concretely by observing actual interfaith dialogue practices in the Wolosambi parish, making the data analysis both descriptive and interpretative. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with twelve key informants selected via purposive sampling,[7] including two parish priests, three members of the Pastoral Council, and seven lay Catholics actively engaged in dialogue with Muslims. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the collection of rich and relevant data from informants who have direct experience in building interfaith relationships. Interview questions were open-ended, focusing on daily dialogue practices, personal perceptions and experiences in fostering interfaith relations, as well as the challenges and benefits encountered.

In addition to interviews**,** participant observation was conducted to supplement data collection.[8] The researcher directly observed interactions between Catholics and Muslims across various community activities, such as religious ceremonies, traditional rituals, social activities, interfaith forums (FKUB), and other interfaith gatherings. This approach enabled the researcher to record behaviors, interactions, and social dynamics not always revealed in interviews, thereby increasing the objectivity and validity of the data. [9] Data analysis followed a phenomenological-interpretative approach. Interview transcripts and observation notes were read thoroughly to understand the Catholic participants' experiences in

7 K. R. Subedi, "Determining the Sample in Qualitative Research," Journal of Education and Practice 12, no. 11 (2021): 5, https://doi.org/10.3126/scholars.v4i1.42457.

8 Soo Young Shin and Serena Miller-Carpenter, "A Review of the Participant Observation Method in Journalism: Designing and Reporting," Review of Communication Research 10, no. 2 (2022): 135, https://doi.org/10.12840/ISSN.2255-4165.035.

9 Jessica R. Spence; Jack Elliot & Meikah Dado, "The Case of Contradictions: How Prolonged Engagement, Reflexive Journaling, and Observations Can Contradict Qualitative Methods," International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22 (2023): 7, .https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231189372.

interfaith dialogue. Textural descriptions were created to depict empirical facts, including concrete forms of interaction and activity, while structural descriptions interpreted the respondents' subjective experiences, including motivations, spiritual values, and perceptions regarding the importance of harmonious relations with Muslims. A synthesis of textural and structural descriptions was then used to identify the existential structure of Catholic experiences in the context of interreligious dialogue, with direct quotations and observation notes integrated to enhance data authenticity.

The study adhered to key phenomenological principles, including attentiveness to participants' lifeworlds, openness to their lived experiences, the provision of accurate and nuanced descriptions, and the pursuit of the essence of the phenomena under investigation.[10] These principles were applied to the interactions between Catholics and Muslims in Wolosambi Parish, enabling the research not only to document social realities but also to interpret the deeper meanings embedded in interfaith dialogue practices. Data validity was further ensured through methodological triangulation between interviews and observations, along with the researcher's active participation in community activities, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and religious contexts.[11]

[10] Carla Willig, Ntroducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method, 2nd ed. (Open University Press, 2008). 78.

[11] Hendro Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah. "Examining Muslim Tolerance Toward Ordinary Non-Muslims: Social, Religious, and Political Tolerance in Indonesia." International Journal of Sociology 54, no. 2 (2024): 123, https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2024.2301881.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Context: Religious Pluralism at Saint John the Baptist Wolosambi Parish

Saint John the Baptist Wolosambi Parish, situated within the Archdiocese of Ende, is a religiously pluralistic community where Catholics, Muslims, and a small Protestant minority coexist. Catholics predominantly inhabit the mountainous area (Wawo rala), while Muslims reside mainly along the coast (Au rala). Historical records and interviews reveal that Catholicism was introduced to the region through Societas Verbi Divina (SVD) missionaries from the Netherlands and religious educators, whereas Islam arrived subsequently via maritime trade routes.[12] Despite these religious differences, Saint John the Baptist Wolosambi Parish, located within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Ende, is emblematic of Indonesia's rich tapestry of religious pluralism. This parish presents a microcosm of interreligious coexistence, where predominantly Catholic and Muslim communities live side by side, complemented by a smaller Protestant presence. The distinct spatial settlement, Catholics primarily occupying the mountainous region of *Wawo rala* and Muslims residing in the coastal *Au rala*, reflects historical settlement patterns, influenced by geography, economy, and social structures.

Historically, the introduction of Catholicism into the Wolosambi region is attributed to the efforts of the Societas Verbi Divina (SVD)

[12] Remigius Ceme, "Jejak Berdirinya Paroki Santu Joanne Baptista Wolosmbi," dalam Gemerlap Intan (Karya Tuhan Di Lembah Subur) (Maumere: Ledalero, 2015), 8.

missionaries from the Netherlands, along with the work of religious educators who laid the foundation for Catholic evangelization and education. This missionary activity, characteristic of the early 20th century colonial and post-colonial periods, involved not only religious conversion but also social services and education, which contributed to the consolidation of Catholic identity in the mountainous regions. And, Islam's introduction came later, diffused predominantly through maritime trade networks along the coast. This mode of Islamization, consistent with broader historical patterns in Southeast Asia, involved peaceful cultural and commercial exchanges rather than military conquest, facilitating its acceptance and integration into local customs.[13] This dual religious presence in Wolosambi, shaped by different historical trajectories, created a pluralistic social structure with distinct yet overlapping identities. Notably, despite the inherent potential for tension in such religiously mixed communities, Wolosambi has maintained a remarkable level of social harmony, with no recorded incidents of religiously motivated conflict. This absence of conflict suggests the existence of underlying social mechanisms and cultural norms that regulate interreligious relations and promote coexistence.

The peaceful coexistence can be analyzed through several lenses. Sociologically, the parish community demonstrates characteristics of pluralism, defined as the sustained acceptance and mutual accommodation of different religious identities within a shared social space.[14] The community members engage daily in cooperative social activities, family ties, and shared cultural practices, which function as

[13] Remigius Ceme, "Jejak Berdirinya Paroki Santu Joanne Baptista Wolosmbi," dalam Gemerlap Intan (Karya Tuhan Di Lembah Subur) (Maumere: Ledalero, 2015), 9.

[14] Peter L. Berger, The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age (Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014), 56.

integrative forces superseding religious boundaries. This pluralism is not a mere tolerance of difference but an active engagement with diversity, producing a lived experience of interreligious solidarity. From an anthropological perspective, the kinship relations that transcend religious affiliations, rooted in shared ancestry and local cultural values, act as social glue binding the community together. The existence of interfaith families and interwoven social networks dilutes rigid religious exclusivism and encourages relational openness. This dynamic aligns with the concept of embedded pluralism, where religious identities coexist fluidly within the broader matrix of family and community life.[15] Theologically, this coexistence reflects post-Vatican II ecclesiological insights that understand the Church not as an isolated institution but as a sacrament of salvation within the wider human family.[16] The parish's experience embodies this vision by witnessing to a Church that respects religious freedom and acknowledges the presence of the divine in other traditions, consistent with *Nostra Aetate*'s call for openness and dialogue.

Furthermore, the geographic distinction between Catholics and Muslims within the parish territory provides a spatial dimension to pluralism that mitigates potential friction by allowing each group to maintain cultural and religious practices in their respective environments. However, this spatial separation does not prevent daily interaction; rather, it is complemented by strong intercommunal bonds, shared responsibilities, and mutual respect. The continuity of peaceful relations amidst a complex religious landscape in Wolosambi offers valuable insights for understanding contextual models of interreligious dialogue. Unlike institutionalized or top-down dialogues, the parish demonstrates

15 Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 254.

16 Simon Mary Asese Aihiokhai, "Going beyond Nostra Aetate: The Way Forward for Interreligious Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 51.3 (2016): 393, https://doi.org/10.1353/ecu.2016.0033.

how interfaith engagement can flourish organically through shared history, social embeddedness, and cultural respect. The religious pluralism at Saint John the Baptist Wolosambi Parish is a dynamic interplay of historical trajectories, geographic realities, socio-cultural norms, and theological openness that collectively foster peaceful coexistence. This context provides fertile ground for deeper theological reflection and practical application of interreligious dialogue principles, contributing to the broader discourse on pluralism in Indonesia and beyond.

Explicit Findings from Interviews and Observations

Everyday Interreligious Dialogue: Lived Experiences of Catholic-Muslim Relations at Wolosambi Parish

At Saint John the Baptist Wolosambi Parish, interreligious dialogue is not primarily the product of theoretical instruction or formal academic training; rather, it emerges organically from the parishioners' everyday lived experience. Religious difference is not perceived as an obstacle but as a contextual backdrop that shapes social interactions harmoniously. "Many of us have not received formal education, and therefore our knowledge is limited; yet in our daily lives, we understand what actions to take when interacting with our Muslim brothers and sisters."[17] In daily life, the Wolosambi community exemplifies pragmatic pluralism, where practical needs and ethical responsibilities toward others take precedence over sectarian boundaries.[18] Collaborative activities, ranging from communal house building, supporting bereaved families, to participating

[17] Ambros Waja, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 22, 2024.

[18] Franklin Hutabarat, "Navigating Diversity: Exploring Religious Pluralism and Social Harmony in Indonesian Society," European Journal of Theology and Philosophy, 3.6 (2023): 8, https://www.ejtheology.org/index.php/theology/article/view/125.

in shared celebrations, represent a tangible form of *dialogue-in-action*, where solidarity and coexistence are enacted through concrete practices rather than mere verbal exchange.

Religiosity within this community emphasizes ethical conduct and relational quality over ritual observance or doctrinal adherence. Care for others, willingness to assist, and everyday acts of kindness serve as concrete measures of faith, reflecting Catholic social teaching on the preferential option for the poor and the call to love one's neighbor. "In our daily lives, we consistently practice love and compassion without distinguishing people based on their religious background. We love our Muslim neighbors as we love ourselves, and when mistakes or misunderstandings occur, we forgive one another."[19] Through practical expressions of care and mutual forgiveness, Catholic parishioners translate their religious teachings into real-life relationships with their Muslim neighbors. [20] Reconciliation is understood not merely as the absence of conflict but as an ongoing process of relational restoration, requiring mutual recognition and the readiness to embrace the other with openness and respect. This approach aligns with Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy and encounter as foundational for building bridges across faith communities.[21]

Interfaith dialogue in this community is not limited to formal forums; it occurs informally through daily conversations, social cooperation, and participation in shared cultural traditions. Ethical values

19 Gerardus Janga, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 22, 2024.

20 William Hubbard, "The Preferential Option for the Poor and Participation," National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly 23, no. 1 (2023): 67, https://www.pdcnet.org/ncbq/content/ncbq_2023_0023_0001_0057_0068.

21 Pope Francis, "Interreligious Dialogue as a Path to Peace," address to representatives of different religions, Clementine Hall, Vatican, November 3, 2016, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/november/documents/papa-francesco_20161103_udienza-interreligiosa.html.

such as mutual respect, shared responsibility, and forgiveness serve as practical guidelines that strengthen interfaith solidarity. "We have never participated in formal dialogue forums, but we enact dialogue in our everyday lives. We greet one another when we meet, engage together in various activities, and help each other." [22] In this context, doctrinal differences do not act as barriers but are respected in daily social life. This reflects how Pope John Paul II's teaching on the theology of encounter can be realized in practice: dialogue, understanding, and cooperation become part of the community's routine life, rather than merely a formal obligation.[23]

Interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Catholics in Wolosambi is clearly reflected in daily life, which is grounded in intensive social interactions. Members of both religions live side by side within a single community, so everyday activities such as working in the fields, attending traditional ceremonies, or participating in community meetings always involve cross-faith interactions. "Despite our religious differences, in our daily lives we interact closely with one another. We greet each other and assist one another in various activities without making distinctions based on faith."[24] These interactions are spontaneous and natural, not the result of formal planning, yet they foster mutual respect and a sense of togetherness. This demonstrates that interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi is practical and lived, rather than merely theoretical or ceremonial.

[22] Lukas Lena, "Interview on the Practice of Interreligious Dialogue in Wolosambi," 2024. interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 23, 2024.

[23] Pope John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis: Christ as the center of human life and history (Vatican: Vatican Press, 1979), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html.

[24] Aspin Moni, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 23, 2024.

A tangible form of dialogue is cooperation in social and communal activities. Catholics and Muslims often work together to build public facilities or assist neighbors during life events such as weddings and funerals. These practices show how solidarity and social care serve as concrete media for interfaith dialogue. Additionally, joint participation in religious and cultural celebrations also functions as a means of dialogue. While each religion maintains its own rituals, community members do not merely attend as spectators; they actively engage. For instance, during the ordination of an imam or a post-pilgrimage thanksgiving celebration, community members from both faiths help prepare stages, decorations, and meals. "During the thanksgiving celebration for the ordination of an imam, our Muslim brothers and sisters assist us with catering and security, while the Catholics typically focus on preparing the liturgical aspects of the ordination. Similarly, during the joint Eid al-Fitr celebration, the Catholic participants were actively involved in preparing refreshments and ensuring security, whereas the Muslim participants appeared to focus more on receiving greetings from the guests."[25] These joint activities cultivate a sense of togetherness that transcends doctrinal differences while strengthening social networks and trust between Catholics and Muslims. Dialogue in Wolosambi is also evident in informal daily interactions. Residents greet each other, inquire about one another's well-being, and offer assistance whenever needed. Ethical values such as mutual respect, forgiveness, and shared responsibility serve as practical guidelines carried out without the need for formal discussion. Simple activities like helping neighbors, building houses together, or joking and socializing form part of a lived practice of dialogue.

[25] Aris Ndona, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 23, 2024.

Although formal education is limited in this community, daily life experiences serve as an effective means of learning. Community members learn to understand each other's needs and perspectives through shared living practices, making tolerance and understanding part of local culture. As an example, during customary rituals, religious events, and family gatherings that require animal sacrifices, Muslim participants hold the exclusive right to perform the slaughter. Such recognition of religious roles is mirrored in everyday life, with Catholic parents instructing their children to respect Muslim friends in play, schooling, and domestic settings, and Muslim parents doing likewise. This approach demonstrates that education in pluralistic values and dialogue can grow naturally within the life of the community.

Furthermore, religious leaders play a crucial role in strengthening dialogue. The parish pastor and local imams actively communicate, remind the community of the importance of harmony, and collaboratively mediate potential conflicts.[26] Although formal forums are not always held, the presence of these leaders symbolizes a commitment to peace and mutual respect. Their support ensures that dialogical practice extends beyond the individual level and becomes institutionalized locally through both informal and formal mechanisms, such as the Interreligious Harmony Forum (FKUB).

Overall, the practice of Muslim-Catholic dialogue in Wolosambi demonstrates that interreligious dialogue can be realized through concrete everyday actions. Moral values, social cooperation, and participation in joint activities serve as primary mediums for expressing

[26] Bruno Sawi, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 24, 2024.

Catholic principles.[27] In other words, dialogue is not merely about conversation or discussion but is a continuous process that builds solidarity, respects differences, and promotes communal well-being.

A Catholic figure puts a mask on a Muslim before performing prayers at a mosque in Mauwaru Wolosambi.

[27] Artur Michał Banaszak, "The Relevance of Catholic Social Teaching for Building a Better World: Conflict with Values Promoted on Social Media," Journal of Modern Science 51, no. 2 (2023).: 563, https://doi.org/10.13166/jms/169263.

Joint carnival activities involving Catholics and Muslims in Wolosambi

Dynamics of Interreligious Dialogue in Wolosambi Parish: Supporting Factors, Challenges, and Strategies for Sustaining Harmony

The lived experience of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi Parish illustrates a complex yet constructive interplay between the supporting factors, challenges, and strategies that collectively shape the sustainability of local harmony. This dynamic is neither incidental nor merely the result of individual goodwill; rather, it emerges from a long history of Catholic–Muslim coexistence in Flores, where religious identity is deeply intertwined with kinship networks, customary traditions, and cultural values transmitted across generations.[28] Historical accounts suggest that Catholicism took root in the region through missionary encounters in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while Islam was introduced via inter-island trade and migration from neighboring islands such as

[28] Anselmus Dorewoho Atasoge; Fatimah Husein & Siswanto Masruri, "Accommodative-Hybrid Religious Encounters and Interfaith Dialogue: A Study of Lamaholot Muslims and Catholics in East Flores," Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan, 30.1 (2023): 41, https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.30.1.10980.

Sumbawa and Sulawesi.[29] Over time, both faith communities developed parallel yet intersecting social worlds, bound together by intermarriage, ritual cooperation, and shared participation in communal life. Building on this historical foundation, the interplay of supporting factors, challenges, and strategies in Wolosambi's interreligious dialogue becomes more intelligible. The legacy of intertwined kinship networks and shared cultural practices provides a resilient framework for sustaining trust and cooperation between Catholics and Muslims, serving as a primary supporting factor. Yet, this cohesion is periodically tested by exclusivist theological narratives, sometimes introduced by external actors, that risk fragmenting communal bonds. Additionally, the influence of global religious and political tensions can create subtle undercurrents of division, particularly when local sympathies align with broader conflicts. In response, the community's strategies draw on both cultural capital and theological resources: reaffirming the unifying principles of local adat, reinforcing mutual obligations through shared rituals and cooperative projects, and fostering structured dialogue platforms such as the *Interreligious Harmony Forum*. Together, these elements reveal that the endurance of harmony in Wolosambi is not accidental but the result of an ongoing, deliberate effort to negotiate differences while preserving a shared moral and social space.

Supporting Factors for Interreligious Dialogue

At the heart of Wolosambi's interreligious harmony lies the Catholic theological foundation of the "law of love." Rooted in Christ's command to "*love the Lord your God*" and "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matt

[29] Remigius Ceme, "Jejak Berdirinya Paroki Santu Joanne Baptista Wolosmbi," dalam Gemerlap Intan (Karya Tuhan Di Lembah Subur) (Maumere: Ledalero, 2015), 9.

22:37–39), this principle transcends the boundaries of group identity. A Catholic leader remarked, "As followers of Christ, we believe that just as Jesus was always open to receiving and loving anyone He met, we too are called to do the same, embracing anyone regardless of their religion."[30] This attitude reflects the Church's teaching that love of neighbor is inseparable from love of God, thereby calling the faithful to embrace all.[31] By building on Pope John Paul II's characterization of interreligious dialogue as a shared journey, Pope Francis frequently employs the image of "walking together," framing such dialogue as a communal pilgrimage.[32] In Wolosambi, this theological mandate is not confined to abstract principles but is embodied in the rhythms of everyday life, where openness, mutual assistance, and respect for each other's religious practices are woven into the fabric of social relations. This is evident in acts such as Catholic families helping prepare food for Muslim celebrations, Muslim neighbors assisting in church construction projects, and the reciprocal exchange of visits during religious holidays. Such practices move beyond mere gestures of courtesy; they serve as lived expressions of a shared moral commitment grounded in both faith traditions and reinforced by local customary values.

Equally important is the role of socio-cultural factors that have historically underpinned interreligious relations. Kinship bonds between members of the two faith communities strengthen and affirm the harmonious relationship between Catholics and Muslims. As expressed in the local saying, "We are born of the same womb, *Ine Mite*, *Lalu Toyo*. Let

30 Arnoldus Jansen Triyono, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 25, 2024.

31 Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 22, 7 December 1965, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

32 R. Catalano, "Pope Francis' Culture of Dialogue as Pathway to Interfaith Understanding," Religions 13, no. 4 (2022): 279, https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/4/279.

us not allow religious differences to make us enemies."[33] This sentiment functions as a kind of *social injunction*, an unwritten norm, that constrains the potential for conflict and directs interactions toward cooperation.[34] In the context of interreligious dialogue, such kinship ties serve as a form of *bridging social capital*, connecting distinct groups through strong personal relationships and fostering mutual trust across religious boundaries.[35]

Traditional expressions such as *Ana nee ame*, *kae nee ari*, *weta nee naya*, *ipa weki*, and *Ulu atu pulu eko atu pongo* embody values of unity, shared destiny, and collective responsibility that are deeply rooted in the life of the Wolosambi community. "These expressions constantly remind us that religious differences do not hinder the cultivation of togetherness in our daily life experiences."[36] Culturally, these expressions foster the perception that every individual, regardless of their religious affiliation, remains part of one extended family, so that differences in faith should never justify severing relationships or fostering hostility. Their symbolic power lies in their capacity to cultivate an awareness of equality and interconnectedness that transcends religious boundaries, while simultaneously affirming the moral obligation to protect and support one another.[37] Such local wisdom, manifested through these expressions, not only reinforces the existing social harmony but also serves as a cultural

33 Martinus Tenga, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 25, 2024.

34 Gunawan, "The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in Fostering Interfaith Harmony Through Social Capital in Palembang City," Jurnal Sosiologi USK 18, no. 2 (2024): 192, https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/JSU/article/view/42449.

35 Michael Daniel Driessen, "Interreligious Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: A Review," Religions 16, no. 2 (2025): 150, https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/16/2/150.

36 Bruno Sawi, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 25, 2024.

37 R. King, H., Crossley, S., & Smith, "Responsibility, Resilience and Symbolic Power," The Sociological Review 69, no. 1 (2021): 13, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0038026120986108.

foundation that sustains the continuity of interfaith dialogue in Wolosambi.

The tradition of *gotong royong*, or mutual assistance, in the Wolosambi context, is not merely a social practice but also reflects deeply rooted collective moral and ethical values. "The attitude of mutual assistance is a distinctive characteristic of our community and constitutes a cultural heritage passed down from our ancestors. Our level of civility is also measured by our involvement in helping those in need and participating in socio-religious activities."[38] Activities such as the joint construction of places of worship, participation in religious ceremonies and traditional rituals, and active involvement in assisting the underprivileged demonstrate how routine cooperation serves as a medium for strengthening interreligious solidarity. Through these daily interactions, individuals learn to view personal well-being as part of the community's well-being, making *gotong royong* a social bridge that reduces distances and tensions between religious groups. This tradition represents a valuable form of social capital, as the personal relationships and collective networks it fosters can mitigate potential conflicts and reinforce community cohesion. *Gotong royong* not only enhances social harmony at the community level but also provides a cultural foundation that sustains interfaith dialogue, as the internalized collective and moral values encourage the development of an inclusive and empathetic society. The practice embodies the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly solidarity and the common good, because through concrete actions, the community learns to situate individual well-being within the

[38] Aris ndona, "Interview on the Practice of Interreligious Dialogue in Wolosambi." interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 23, 2024.

framework of collective interests.[39] Routine acts of mutual assistance cultivate a sense of moral responsibility toward others and emphasize the importance of respecting human dignity.

Challenges to Interreligious Harmony

Despite its strong foundation, Catholic–Muslim relations in Wolosambi are not without challenges. The first is the persistence of exclusivist attitudes among a minority within the Catholic community. "A small portion of Catholics in this area are relatively fanatical. They consider Catholicism to be the only true religion capable of leading humans to salvation, while religions outside of Catholicism are regarded as false."[40] Such perspectives reflect a theological rigidity, where salvation is perceived as attainable only through the Catholic faith, leading to the marginalization of other religious traditions. This mindset, although limited in scope, can subtly hinder dialogue and mutual understanding, as it fosters a sense of superiority over non-Catholic neighbors. This theological rigidity reveals how exclusive interpretations of faith can shape social interactions within a pluralistic community. By defining salvation solely through the Catholic lens, it risks creating invisible boundaries that separate believers from their non-Catholic neighbors. Although held by only a small minority, these exclusivist attitudes can subtly disrupt the broader harmony of interreligious life in Wolosambi, influencing the quality of dialogue, mutual trust, and cooperative practices between Catholic and Muslim community members.

39 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Vatican: 2004), para. 42, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.htm.

40 Frans Sales Gore, “Interview on the Practice of Interreligious Dialogue in Wolosambi,” 2024..

The second challenge comes from the presence of external groups promoting exclusivist theological narratives. "The harmony of religious life between Catholics and Muslims can be disrupted by the arrival of groups from outside the region acting in the name of religion. At times, they provoke local residents to associate and cooperate only with people of their own faith."[41] These groups often advance an exclusivist claim, that their religion alone possesses ultimate truth, while all others are false or misguided. Such assertions, which can be rooted in a literalist interpretation of sacred texts and a rigid boundary between in-group and out-group identities, have the potential to erode the foundations of long-standing interfaith harmony.[42] From a sociological perspective, the influence of these groups can be understood as a form of religious boundary-making, where identity is reinforced through differentiation and, in some cases, antagonism toward others.[43] Psychologically, these exclusivist messages can resonate with individuals seeking certainty, belonging, or a clear moral framework, particularly in times of social or economic uncertainty. This dynamic increases the susceptibility of some local residents to negative provocations that undermine mutual trust.[44] Theologically, such positions stand in tension with Catholic magisterial teaching, which affirm that truth and goodness can be found in other religions and encourage respectful dialogue. When exclusivist rhetoric gains traction, it not only weakens existing patterns of cooperation but

41 Herman Loy, "Interview on the Practice of Interreligious Dialogue in Wolosambi," 2024.

42 Eylem Kanol, "Explaining Unfavorable Attitudes Toward Religious Out-Groups," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 60, no. 3 (2021): 598, https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12725.

43 Elise Margrethe Vike Johannessen, "Contesting Religious Boundaries at School: A Case from Norway," Critical Research on Religion 10, no. 2 (2022): 193..

44 Robert B. Arrowood, Kenneth E. Vail III, & Cathy R. Cox, "The Existential Quest: Doubt, Openness, and the Exploration of Religious Uncertainty," The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion 32, no. 2 (2022): 122, https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2021.1902647.

also narrows the space for dialogue, thereby diminishing the community's capacity for peacebuilding and mutual enrichment.[45]

Although the direct impact of distant conflicts on local interfaith relations may appear limited, empirical evidence indicates that such events can exert a subtle yet corrosive influence over time. "The conflicts and wars in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine also influence the lives of Catholics and Muslims in this area. There is a tendency for Catholics to support Israel and for Muslims to support Palestine. Catholics often feel pleased when Israel is victorious, while Muslims usually rejoice when Palestine prevails."[46] High-profile global or regional disputes, such as the Israel–Palestine conflict, often become symbolically significant for local religious communities, with members identifying strongly with co-religionists abroad. This identification can lead to divergent allegiances within the same locality, for example, Muslims tending to express solidarity with Palestinians and Catholics aligning more readily with Israeli perspectives. When framed through exclusivist narratives, these alignments risk deepening group boundaries and fostering mutual suspicion.[47] These dynamics stand in tension with Catholic magisterial teaching, which affirms that truth and goodness can be found in other religions and calls for sustained, respectful engagement.[48] If left unaddressed, these external tensions may narrow the discursive space for constructive exchange, weaken patterns of cooperation, and erode the trust necessary for effective peacebuilding. Addressing them requires

45 Harold Kasimow, Pope Francis and Interreligious Dialogue: Religious Thinkers Engage with Recent Papal Initiatives, ed. Harold Kasimow & Alan Race (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 56.

46 Januarius Woso, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 23, 2024.

47 Tery Setiawan, Edwin B. P. de Jong, Peer L. H. Scheepers, and Carl J. A. Sterkens, "Support for Interreligious Conflict in Indonesia: Tests of Theories on Interethnic Threat and Distrust versus Contact," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 60, no. 2 (2021): 136, https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12725.

48 Ahmad Pope Francis; Al-Tayyeb, "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," 2019. https://www.vatican.va/various/pope-francis/documents/20200204-document-human-fraternity_en.html.

proactive, context-sensitive strategies, such as joint public statements rejecting collective blame, structured intergroup contact programs, and pastoral formation that integrates doctrinal clarity with a sincere openness to encounter. These measures not only align with the Church's vision of a "culture of dialogue" grounded in mutual respect but also correspond with evidence-based practices shown to mitigate polarization and foster resilient interfaith relations.[49]

Strategies for Sustaining Harmony

In the face of these challenges, the people of Wolosambi draw upon the strength of their cultural values, traditions, and faith commitments. Local proverbs such as *Ulu atu pulu, eko atu pongo, sa'o ma'e bi'a, tenda ma'e begha* continue to serve as moral anchors, reminding the community that unity must not be broken by differences. "In striving to realize a peaceful and harmonious life, we face numerous challenges, yet we do not give in. The cultural teachings passed down by our ancestors serve as our primary guidance in confronting these challenges."[50] These values are embodied in concrete practices, joint social work, shared celebrations of religious festivals, and cooperative efforts in building houses of worship for both Catholics and Muslims. The cultural values, traditions, and ancestral teachings that emphasize unity and solidarity reflect the Catholic Church's principles of human dignity and universal fraternity. Concrete practices such as joint social work, shared religious celebrations, and the cooperative construction of houses of worship exemplify the application of

49 Rahkman Ardi; Marselius S. Tondok & Suryanto Suryanto, "Building Bridges in Diverse Societies: A Meta-Analysis of Field Experimental Cooperative Learning Studies on Intergroup Relations in Educational Settings," Societies 14, no. 11 (2024): 221, https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14110221.

50 Ambros Lobo, interview by Policarpus Raga, on the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wolosambi, February 23, 2024.

Pope John Paul II's theology of encounter, which promotes dialogue, collaboration, and harmony among believers.[51]

Furthermore, the establishment of the Interreligious Harmony Forum (FKUB) serves as a strategic measure to address and prevent the emergence of religion-based conflicts. The establishment of this institution was initiated by the religious leaders in the region. The FKUB functions as a platform for dialogue, conflict prevention, and the building of mutual trust. A few years ago, religious leaders in the area jointly established the FKUB, whose management consists of the parish priest and several mosque imams. The existence of this forum is crucial to ensuring positive interreligious relations in the region. Its presence demonstrates that interfaith interactions are not merely spontaneous or informal but are grounded in a structured institutional mechanism capable of regulating interactions, resolving differences, and strengthening solidarity among religious communities. The FKUB in Wolosambi can be understood as a concrete implementation of the principles of the theology of encounter taught by the Catholic Church. The Church emphasizes that Catholics must respect other religions, recognize the values of goodness inherent within them, and actively engage in constructive dialogue for the sake of peace.[52]

DISCUSSION

The praxis of Catholic–Muslim dialogue at St. John the Baptist Parish in Wolosambi illustrates how Church teachings and local cultural

51 Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Hominis: Christ as the center of human life and history (Vatican: 1979), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html.

52 Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions (Vatican: 1965), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

realities interact to shape a distinctive model of interreligious relations in Indonesia. Dialogue here extends beyond theological discourse or magisterial directives; it manifests as a lived praxis that unites people from diverse religious backgrounds. This section discusses the relationship between the research findings and theological, sociological, and cultural perspectives, while highlighting the novelty and pastoral implications of the dialogical experiences of the Wolosambi community.

The Catholic Church, especially since the Second Vatican Council, has emphasized openness toward other religions and the recognition that truth and holiness can also be found outside the Church.[53] Through the theology of encounter, Pope John Paul II underscored that the Church's mission is carried out through dialogue that respects the dignity of each person and the freedom of conscience, remains open to the "seeds of truth" in other traditions, witnesses faith through love and solidarity, and fosters peace through concrete encounters.[54] With his concept of the culture of encounter, Pope Francis calls on the Church and society to build bridges through humble dialogue, attentive listening, prioritizing the marginalized, and collaborating for social fraternity and peace.[55] Research findings in Wolosambi indicate that these teachings find tangible expression in everyday community life, for instance, through joint efforts in public infrastructure development, participation in traditional rituals, and solidarity in times of misfortune. These practices affirm that dialogue is an integral part of the Church's mission, realized through a life of

53 Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions (Vatican: 1965), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

54 Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate (Vatican: 1990), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html.

55 Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel, On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (Vatican, 2013), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.htm.

witness characterized by openness, charity, and fraternity.[56] Consequently, Wolosambi can be regarded as a *locus theologicus*, a space where God's will is recognized through simple yet meaningful human encounters.

Religious harmony in Wolosambi is influenced not only by religious teachings but also supported by cultural values. The internalization of local cultural values in everyday life serves as a vital resource to prevent division and foster interreligious harmony. Traditional expressions such as *Ana nee ame, kae nee ari, weta nee naya, ipa weki*, and *Ulu atu pulu eko atu pongo* convey meanings of unity, shared responsibility, and communal solidarity across joy and suffering without regard to religious differences. Practices such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) demonstrate how culture underpins interfaith dialogue. Joint participation in building places of worship, traditional ceremonies, or helping those in need reflects the principles of solidarity and *bonum commune* in Catholic Social Teaching. Hence, local wisdom and Catholic teachings do not conflict but rather reinforce each other, providing a strong foundation for interreligious life.[57]

Catholic–Muslim relations in Wolosambi are further strengthened by social capital in the form of kinship ties. Despite religious differences, Catholics and Muslims maintain strong familial connections, so that faith distinctions do not hinder solidarity. Interreligious family ties serve as a natural platform for dialogue, preventing social segregation and fostering a sense of mutual belonging. Through blood relations and interfamily marriages, a space for organic dialogue emerges, reinforcing

56 Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions (Vatican: 1965) <https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.htm.

57 Dewa Agung Gede Agung; Ahmad Munjin Nasih; Sumarmi; Idris & Bayu Kurniawan, "Local Wisdom as a Model of Interfaith Communication in Creating Religious Harmony in Indonesia," Social Sciences & Humanities Open 9 (2024): 100827, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100827.

fraternity and providing a solid foundation for local interfaith harmony. This aligns with Émile Durkheim's analysis that social cohesion is formed through shared values, norms, and practices that bind members into collective solidarity.[58] In the context of interfaith dialogue, this suggests that active participation in community traditions and activities not only strengthens social relationships but also naturally cultivates mutual respect among members of different religious communities.[59]

Religious leaders also play a crucial role by acting as connectors between Catholic and Muslim communities and serving as moral exemplars.[60] The parish priest and mosque imam maintain daily communication while facilitating formal meetings through the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) to build mutual understanding. Their presence provides guidance, symbolism, and legitimacy to efforts sustaining harmony. Therefore, interfaith coexistence in Wolosambi arises from a combination of local cultural values and proactive religious leadership, not merely by chance.

Despite a solid foundation of harmony based on local cultural values and active religious leadership, challenges persist. Some Catholics still hold exclusivist views that salvation exists only within the Church, potentially undermining openness to dialogue. Moreover, the influx of external groups promoting exclusivist theological narratives may trigger social segregation. Global conflicts, such as the Israel–Palestine issue, also affect local interreligious relations, leading some community members to take sides along religious identities. These phenomena indicate that local

58 Louis Moustakas, "Social Cohesion: Definitions, Causes and Consequences," Encyclopedia 3, no. 3 (2023): 1034, https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia3030075.

59 Clever Mpoha, "Influence of Cultural Identity on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation in Zambia," European Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion 8, no. 2 (2024): 46, https://doi.org/10.47672/ejpcr.2293.

60 Cristy Hanna Queen B. Ledesma, "Lived Experiences of Interfaith Leaders in Promoting Solidarity and Peace in Pagadian City," Canadian Journal of Education and Social Studies 5, no. 2 (2025): 90–114, https://doi.org/10.53103/cjess.v5i2.335.

dialogical praxis is influenced by global social realities. Thus, sustaining religious harmony in Wolosambi requires continuous nurturing, where the Church is called to be a sacrament of unity, prioritizing a culture of peace and reinforcing spaces for encounter. [61]

A defining characteristic of Wolosambi society is that dialogical practice is not confined to formal spaces; it manifests naturally in everyday interactions, reflecting the *dialogue of life*. This underscores that interfaith dialogue is not limited to official forums but is an inseparable part of social life. Daily interactions in markets, gardens, households, and traditional activities create consistent and continuous spaces for encounter, transforming dialogue into a social habitus that fosters trust and strengthens interfaith bonds. Moreover, the dialogue of life in Wolosambi demonstrates that religious harmony can be nurtured not solely through theological statements or official documents but through concrete everyday praxis. Acts of solidarity during misfortunes, participation in traditional celebrations, or collaboration in public works illustrate dialogue as a relational dynamic shaping communal identity. Consequently, the Wolosambi experience offers a model of dialogue that is not merely conceptual but deeply embedded in lived praxis, constituting a distinctive contribution to the development of a theology of encounter in a pluralistic context.

From a pastoral perspective, the Wolosambi experience underscores the need for Church strategies grounded in grassroots engagement. [62] Dialogue is primarily an everyday praxis emerging in markets, gardens, traditional rituals, and religious ceremonies as real

[61] Pope Francis, Per Rafforzare Una Convivenza Pacifica e Feconda (Vatican, 2024), https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/2024/acta-settembre2024.

[62] Mario Alexander Betu & Markus Situmorang, "Participation of Young Catholics in Church Life as an Effort to Grow Faith," Paideía Christiana: Journal of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Religious Education in Asia 1, no. 2 (2023): 158, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11209019.

spaces of interfaith encounter. Hence, empowering the laity becomes urgent, as they are the principal agents interacting daily with members of other faiths. Through faith education and social involvement, laypersons act as dialogue agents, embodying Gospel values in communal life and enhancing community capacity to foster harmony. [63] Additionally, integrating local wisdom enriches dialogue praxis, making it more contextualized and grounded. Values of mutual cooperation, kinship solidarity, and traditional rituals can be harmonized with Gospel principles to create a distinctive dialogical model. The Wolosambi experience exemplifies a pastoral paradigm that combines Church teachings with local realities to achieve interreligious harmony. Theologically, the Wolosambi experience demonstrates that dialogue is a praxis of faith affirming human dignity and manifesting God in pluralistic reality.[64] In line with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, dialogue is understood not merely as a social strategy but as participation in the *missio Dei*, realized through life witness, solidarity, and interfaith cooperation.[65] Catholic teaching on dialogue and openness toward others finds concrete expression in daily life, transforming diversity into a space for communion and a vehicle for promoting the common good.

This study demonstrates that interfaith dialogue praxis in Wolosambi is primarily realized through everyday interactions, such as participation in mutual cooperation, social solidarity, and public encounters, gradually forming a dialogical habitus that can be interpreted

63 Jeff Clyde G. Corpuz, "Toward Grassroots Interfaith Dialogue: The Role of a Faith-Based Movement," Religions 16, no. 3 (2025): 345, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030345.

64 Francis-Vincent Anthony, "Intercultural, Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue: An Introduction," Religions 14, no. 9 (2023): 1143, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091143.

65 Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions (Vatican: 1965) <https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.htm.

as the practical expression of faith within a pluralistic context. These findings contrast with Kusmayani (2023), who situates youth interfaith dialogue within the framework of *everyday citizenship* as a civic practice supporting social cohesion. In Wolosambi, everyday dialogical practice engages all community members and transcends mere civic participation, conceptualized as *everyday discipleship*, an expression of faith rooted in Catholic spirituality. Within this framework, openness toward others and appreciation of diversity are not simply social obligations but integral components of Christian witness embodying the Gospel in a pluralistic reality. Similarly, Agung et al. (2024) highlight the strategic role of local wisdom in fostering social harmony; the Wolosambi context enriches this perspective by systematically integrating Catholic Social Teaching principles, such as solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good—into local interfaith dialogue. This integration produces a contextual pastoral dialogue model rooted in lived experience and social environment while affirming the theological and ethical dimensions of interreligious interaction. This approach reflects a synergy between local culture and magisterial doctrine in sustaining social harmony. Furthermore, the study complements Dewi (2025), who emphasizes the FKUB as an official interfaith dialogue forum. Findings from Wolosambi show that social harmony originates from informal community interactions, which subsequently underpin FKUB effectiveness. This perspective underscores that interfaith dialogue is not merely a formal institutional activity but a socio-theological praxis grounded in Catholic faith, Flores local culture, and active religious leadership. Hence, this study offers an original contribution through the development of a contextual theology of encounter, emphasizing the integration of spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions in cultivating relationships within pluralistic communities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the Wolosambi experience and the teachings of the Catholic Church, interreligious dialogue is understood not merely as a social strategy but as active participation in the *missio Dei*. *Nostra Aetate* (1965) emphasizes the importance of respecting the spiritual and moral values found in other religions, while *Ad Gentes* (1965) highlights life witness as the tangible expression of the Church's mission within a pluralistic context. *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) further expands this understanding by framing interreligious dialogue as an authentic complement to evangelization, and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991) underscores that the involvement of the faithful in solidarity and cross-faith cooperation constitutes active participation in God's work. Consequently, the Wolosambi experience demonstrates that dialogue rooted in faith, life witness, and social cooperation can affirm human dignity, embody Gospel values in pluralistic realities, and foster sustainable harmony within a multi-religious society. This study therefore contributes to pastoral theology by presenting a contextual model of Catholic–Muslim dialogue of life that integrates Catholic teaching with local wisdom, offering the Church a concrete pastoral strategy for nurturing harmony in plural societies.

This study provides valuable insights into the practice of interreligious dialogue in Wolosambi Parish; however, it is limited by its primary focus on the Catholic perspective, with less exploration of the internal views of the Muslim community, and its qualitative, localized nature restricts generalizability. In addition, the reliance on self-reported experiences and interviews may be influenced by social desirability bias. Future research is recommended to include a more balanced representation of all religious groups, conduct comparative studies across

different regions, and further explore the role of youth, women, and religious leaders in interfaith dialogue.

REFERENCES

Adon, Mathias Jebaru, & Arnold Suhardi. "Konsep Filsafat Relasionalitas Armada Riyanto Sebagai Metode Berfilsafat di Indonesia." *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan* 5, no. 1 (2025): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.52738/pjk.v5i1.646.

Agung, Dewa Agung Gede, Ahmad Munjin Nasih, Sumarmi, Idris, & Bayu Kurniawan. "Local Wisdom as a Model of Interfaith Communication in Creating Religious Harmony in Indonesia." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (2024): 100827. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100827.

Aihiokhai, Simon Mary Asese. "Going beyond Nostra Aetate: The Way Forward for Interreligious Dialogue." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51, no. 3 (2016): 386–401. https://doi.org/10.1353/ecu.2016.0033.

Antony, Francis Vincent. "Intercultural, Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue: An Introduction." *Religions* 14, no. 9 (2023): 1143. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091143.

Arrowood, Vail, and Cox. "The Existential Quest: Doubt, Openness, and the Exploration of Religious Uncertainty." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 32, no. 2 (2021): 89–126. https://ixtheo.de/Record/1797405675?utm.

Banaszak, Artur Michał. "The Relevance of Catholic Social Teaching for Building a Better World: Conflict with Values Promoted on Social Media." *Journal of Modern Science* 51, no. 2 (2023): 552–570. https://doi.org/10.13166/jms/169263.

Bantugan, Brian. "Qualitative Mindset behind Phenomenology: Implications for Qualitative Research Training," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 9, no. 4 (2025): 4627–4641, https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400331.

Berger, Peter L. *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age.* Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014.

Betu, Mario Alexander, and Markus Situmorang. "Participation of Young Catholics in Church Life as an Effort to Grow Faith." *Paideía Christiana: Journal of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Religious Education in Asia* 1, no. 2 (2023): 155–166. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11209019.

Catalano, Roberto. "Pope Francis' Culture of Dialogue as Pathway to Interfaith Understanding." *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022): 279–294. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040279

Ceme, Remigius. "Jejak Berdirinya Paroki Santu Joanne Baptista Wolosambi." Dalam *Gemerlap Intan (Karya Tuhan Di Lembah Subur)* diedit oleh Remigius Ceme, 6–13. Maumere: Ledalero, 2015.

Cibotaru, V. “Interreligious Dialogue: A Challenge for Phenomenology.” *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 302. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030302.

Clever, Mpoha. “Influence of Cultural Identity on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation in Zambia.” *European Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religious Studies* 8, no. 2 (2024): 38–48. https://ajpojournals.org/journals/index.php/EJPCR/article/view/2293.

Corpuz, Jeff Clyde G. “Toward Grassroots Interfaith Dialogue: The Role of a Faith-Based Movement.” *Religions* 16, no. 3 (2025): 345. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030345.

Dado, Meikah, Jessica R. Spence, & Jack Elliot. “The Case of Contradictions: How Prolonged Engagement, Reflexive Journaling, and Observations Can Contradict Qualitative Methods.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 22 (2023): 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231189372.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Gunawan. “The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in Fostering Interfaith Harmony Through Social Capital in Palembang City.” *Jurnal Sosiologi USK (Media Pemikiran & Aplikasi)* 18, no. 2 (2024): 189–198. https://doi.org/10.24815/jsu.v18i2.42449.

Hutabarat, Franklin. "Navigating Diversity: Exploring Religious Pluralism and Social Harmony in Indonesian Society." *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 3, no. 6 (2023): 6–13. https://doi.org/10.24018/theology.2023.3.6.125.

Johannessen, Elise Margrethe Vike. "Contesting Religious Boundaries at School: A Case from Norway." *Critical Research on Religion* 10, no. 2 (2022): 187–199. https://doi.org/10.1177/20503032211044431.

Kanol, Eylem. "Explaining Unfavorable Attitudes Toward Religious Out-Groups." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 60, no. 3 (2021): 590–610. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12725.

Kasimow, Harold, & Alan Race, eds. *Pope Francis and Interreligious Dialogue: Religious Thinkers Engage with Recent Papal Initiatives.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96095-1.

King, Hannah, Stephen Crossley, & Roger Smith. "Responsibility, Resilience and Symbolic Power." *The Sociological Review* 69, no. 5 (2021): 920–936. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120986108.

Ledesma, Cristy Hanna Queen B., Nazma M. Lapasaran, Narfel G. Gonzales, Andres Kim Apoya, & Alfer Jann D. Tantog. "Lived Experiences of Interfaith Leaders in Promoting Solidarity and Peace in Pagadian City." *Canadian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 5, no. 2 (2025): 90–114. https://doi.org/10.53103/cjess.v5i2.335.

Moustakas, Louis. "Social Cohesion: Definitions, Causes and Consequences," *Encyclopedia* 3, no. 3 (2023): 1028–1037, https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia3030075.

Pope Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium: On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*. Vatican, 2013. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

_____. *Interreligious Audience*. Clementine Hall, Vatican, November 3, 2016. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/november/documents/papa-francesco_20161103_udienza-interreligiosa.html.

_____. *Per Rafforzare Una Convivenza Pacifica e Feconda*. Vatican, 2024. https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/2024/acta-settembre2024.

Pope Francis & Ahmad al-Tayyeb. *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*. Vatican, 2019. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

Pope John Paul II. *Redemptor Hominis: Christ as the center of human life and history*. Vatican, 1979. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html.

_____. *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*. Vatican, 1990. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican, 2004. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

Prasetyo, Hendro, & Iim Halimatusa'diyah. "Examining Muslim Tolerance Toward Ordinary Non-Muslims: Social, Religious, and Political Tolerance in Indonesia." *International Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 2 (2024): 112–131. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2024.2301881.

Second Vatican Council. *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. Vatican, 1965. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

_____. *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions*. Vatican, 1965. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

Tondok, Marselius Sampe, Suryanto, & Rahkman Ardi. "Building Bridges in Diverse Societies: A Meta-Analysis of Field Experimental Cooperative Learning Studies on Intergroup Relations in

Educational Settings." *Societies* 14, no. 11 (2024): 221. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14110221.