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Shared principles of islamic-catholic dialogue: a comparative thematic analysis of theological documents

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes shared principles of interreligious dialogue in Islam and Catholicism using an interpretive qualitative design that combines library research, document study, qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative interpretation. The corpus comprised five primary documents—the Qur'an, Nostra Aetate, Dialogue and Proclamation, A Common Word Between Us and You, and the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together—and 38 secondary scholarly sources. Secondary literature was identified through Scopus with Sider Scholar support using keywords on Islam–Catholic dialogue, Muslim–Christian dialogue, interreligious dialogue, Nostra Aetate, A Common Word, human fraternity, and dialogue of life. Peer-reviewed publications from 2007–2026 were prioritized, while older foundational sources were retained when directly relevant. Units of meaning were coded deductively across theological foundation, human dignity, religious freedom, openness, identity honesty, rejection of violence, cooperation, justice, and peace, and inductively for emerging themes. Coding was conducted by one researcher; reliability was supported through repeated coding, an audit trail, source triangulation, and comparison of data, interpretation, and conclusions. Three findings emerged: both traditions connect faith with human dignity and peace; authentic dialogue requires freedom, equality, listening, and honest identity without mixing doctrines; and dialogue must extend into social cooperation, education, humanitarian service, advocacy, conflict resolution, and digital literacy. The shared ground is therefore ethical-relational rather than complete theological equivalence.



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Introduction

Religious plurality is a social reality that cannot be separated from the life of contemporary society. Encounters between believers of different religions take place in various spaces, ranging from family environments, education, work, politics, culture, to digital media. Such encounters can be a source of cooperation and solidarity, but they can also develop into prejudice, exclusivism, discrimination, and conflict if not managed through open and equal communication. In this context, interreligious dialogue can no longer be placed as a ceremonial activity carried out only by religious figures, but as a social and theological necessity to build a peaceful coexistence.

Islam and Catholicism are two great religious traditions that have a long and complex history. The relationship between the two was once colored by intellectual exchanges, trade, social cooperation, and

coexistence, but also by war, colonialism, political rivalry, mission activities, and the formation of negative stereotypes. That historical legacy still influences the way some Muslims and Catholics view each other. In a number of contexts, Islam is still perceived through issues of violence, extremism, and threats to Western culture. In contrast, Christianity and Catholicism are sometimes seen as part of Western expansion, colonialism, or Christianization efforts. When religious identity is used as an instrument of fear politics, interreligious relationships become more polarized (Palaver, 2019).

This condition shows that the problem of Islamic and Catholic relations is not solely related to differences in teachings, but also concerns the way in which each community understands the identity, history, power, and existence of the other. Dialogue is important because it allows both communities to break out of the pattern of relationships formed by prejudice and suspicion. Research by Brown & Baker (2016) shows that religion is not always a source of prejudice. In certain situations, religious teachings, leaders, and communities can actually play a role in reducing prejudice when they develop positive encounters, inclusive norms, and intergroup cooperation. Thus, religion can be a source of reconciliation if its ethical and spiritual values are translated into open social relations.

Conceptually, interreligious dialogue cannot be equated with a theological debate that aims to prove the superiority of a religion and defeat the beliefs of others. Dialogue is also not the process of mixing all religious teachings to form a new religion. Dialogue is an encounter that allows each party to be honest with their religious identity, listen to the other party's experiences, correct misunderstandings, and seek possibilities for cooperation without erasing differences. Kritzinger (2008) describes interfaith encounters as a form of encounterology, which is a theological process formed through real encounters with other parties. In this approach, the other party is not positioned as an object to be studied, converted, or defeated, but rather as a subject with experience, beliefs, dignity, and voice.

Such an understanding places dialogue as a relational process. The success of the dialogue is not only measured by the participant's ability to explain their religious doctrines, but also by their willingness to build trust. Dialogue requires epistemological humility, that is, the recognition that human knowledge of religious reality always has limitations. Such humility does not mean weakening the commitment to faith, but rather prevents religious believers from acting as if they have understood the whole truth and all the religious experiences of others. (Admirand, 2019) emphasizes that a healthy public space requires religious discourse that is humble, open to criticism, and willing to cooperate with groups with different views.

In the Islamic tradition, dialogue is based on the view that human diversity is part of God's will and wisdom. The Qur'an explains that humans were created in a diversity of nations and tribes in order to know each other, not to eliminate each other. The principle of ta'aruf shows that differences can be a path to knowledge, relationships, and shared responsibility. The Qur'an also commands Muslims to dialogue in the best possible way, use wisdom, good advice, and avoid insulting the beliefs of others. Therefore, dialogue from an Islamic perspective should not be understood only as a social strategy, but also as an implementation of morals, justice, and respect for human freedom.

However, the dialogue between Islam and other religions does not mean erasing theological beliefs regarding prophethood, revelation, monotheism, and the position of the Qur'an. A Muslim can fully defend his or her beliefs while still respecting followers of other religions. Dialogue requires clarity of identity so that encounters do not turn into artificial communication. Avcı (2018), through the discussion of comparative theology and scriptural reasoning, shows that interfaith learning can be done without requiring one to abandon one's religious traditions. Joint reading of sacred texts can create a learning space that allows participants to recognize the similarities, differences, and complexities of each other's interpretations.

In the Catholic tradition, important developments regarding interreligious dialogue were marked by the Second Vatican Council, in particular through the declaration of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965. The document changed the official pattern of the Catholic Church's relations with non-Christian religions. The Catholic Church expresses appreciation for the elements of truth and holiness found in other traditions and specifically views Muslims with respect. *Nostra Aetate* recognizes that Muslims worship the One God, honor Abraham, glorify Jesus as a prophet, honor Mary, and emphasize prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. The document also calls on Muslims and Catholics to forget past hostilities and work together in defending social justice, moral values, peace, and freedom.

The change does not mean that the Catholic Church has erased its Christological identity. Catholic dialogue is built on a creative tension between loyalty to the faith and openness to the other. Ganeri (2012) explains that the involvement of Catholic theology with non-Christian thought can result in a renewed theological identity without losing its continuity with tradition. This means that dialogue does not always

threaten religious identity. Conversely, encounters with other traditions can encourage a person to understand his or her faith in a more reflective, mature, and responsible way.

In subsequent developments, Pope Francis placed the culture of dialogue as one of the main orientations of the Catholic Church's relationship with Islam. Dialogue is understood not only as an exchange of ideas among theologians, but also as an attitude of life that includes openness, brotherhood, acceptance, service, and defense of vulnerable groups. Catalano, (2022) shows that Pope Francis' approach to Islam moves from formal dialogue to a culture of encounter. This culture places humans as brothers and sisters who are called to face common problems, such as poverty, migration, conflict, environmental damage, injustice, and extremism.

One of the important milestones of the Islamic-Catholic dialogue was the birth of the document *A Common Word Between Us and You* in 2007. The document was initiated by Muslim scholars and leaders as an invitation to Christian leaders to build relationships based on two ethical and spiritual principles, namely love of God and love of neighbor. This initiative is important because it shows that dialogue does not only come from the Church, but also receives an active response from the Islamic world. These similarities are not meant to negate the differences between Islamic and Catholic understandings of God, revelation, Jesus Christ, salvation, and the church. The similarity serves as a moral basis for the formation of a common life.

This development was further strengthened through the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* signed by Pope Francis and Al-Azhar High Imam Ahmad al-Tayyeb in 2019. The document of human brotherhood affirms that faith should lead people to see their fellow man as brothers to be supported and loved. Violence in the name of religion is seen as a deviation from the authentic values of religion. Thus, the responsibility of religious people does not stop at the maintenance of group identity, but also includes the protection of human dignity, religious freedom, justice, peace, and the lives of poor and marginalized groups.

Based on these developments, Islam and Catholicism have a number of similarities in understanding dialogue. First, dialogue is based on the recognition of human dignity. A person should be respected not because he shares the same beliefs, but because he is a human being who has freedom, conscience, and moral responsibility. Second, dialogue demands honesty of identity. Muslims do not need to be less Islamic and Catholics do not need to be less Catholic in order to be able to dialogue. Third, dialogue prioritizes listening and understanding before giving assessments. Fourth, dialogue must produce joint action, especially in answering humanitarian issues. Fifth, dialogue rejects violence, religious coercion, humiliation, and manipulation of other parties.

This similarity of understanding is also seen in the concept of life dialogue. The dialogue of life takes place when Muslims and Catholics live in neighbors, work, study, help each other, attend social activities, and solve environmental problems together. This form of dialogue is often more influential than formal seminars because it touches on everyday experiences. Sintang et al. (2012) show that life dialogue has an important meaning in interfaith relationships because it builds trust through continuous interaction. Nolte et al. (2018) also show that interreligious relationships are not only shaped by official doctrine, but by social practices, language, family closeness, and shared lifestyles at the local level.

In addition to the dialogue of life, there is a dialogue of action, a theological dialogue, and a dialogue of spiritual experience. Action dialogue is realized through social cooperation, disaster management, education, health services, environmental protection, and peace advocacy. Theological dialogue is conducted through academic exchanges regarding teaching, history, and interpretation of sacred texts. Meanwhile, the dialogue of spiritual experiences allows believers to share experiences regarding prayer, fasting, compassion, repentance, and service without mixing up ritual practices. The four forms of dialogue complement each other. Theological dialogue without the dialogue of life can be elitist, while social cooperation without theological understanding can be easily distracted by religious suspicion.

Research by Cullell et al. (2021) shows that interfaith dialogue groups can strengthen human agency, especially when each participant is given the opportunity to speak equally and be involved in decision-making. Inclusive dialogue brings together not only formal leaders, but also women, youth, minority groups, and conflict-affected communities. Canete & Castillo (2022) added that interpersonal fellowship and closeness can be an important basis for building dialogue with different parties. Therefore, Islamic-Catholic dialogue needs to move from elite diplomacy to relationships involving grassroots communities.

In the Indonesian context, Islamic and Catholic dialogue has a very strong relevance. Indonesia is known as a pluralistic society that has a long history of coexistence and cooperation between religious communities. However, the relationship still faces challenges in the form of identity politics, rejection of houses of worship, the spread of false information, hate speech, prejudice against minority groups, and religious instrumentalization in political contestation. Kusuma & Susilo (2020) found that the involvement of young people in interfaith groups can increase intercultural and interreligious sensitivity. This shows that dialogue needs to be developed through education and hands-on experiences, not just through the normative presentation of the concept of tolerance.

The Islamic-Catholic dialogue in Indonesia also cannot be separated from the historical memory of Muslim-Christian relations. Mujiburrahman (2006) shows that the relationship between Muslims and Christians during the New Order Indonesia period was formed by feelings of mutual threat, identity competition, state policies, and suspicion about religious missions. That legacy can still emerge in new forms, especially through digital media that allow prejudices and narratives of conflict to spread quickly. Therefore, dialogue is not enough when a conflict has occurred. Dialogue must be built as a preventive process that forms mutual acquaintances, cooperation networks, and problem-solving mechanisms.

In this study, interreligious dialogue is operationally defined as a relational process in which Muslims and Catholics present their religious identities honestly, listen to the other party's self-understanding, correct misrepresentation, and cooperate on shared ethical and humanitarian concerns without mixing doctrines. The phrase "shared principles" refers not to theological identity, but to recurring ethical-relational dimensions in the selected documents: human dignity, religious freedom, openness, equal participation, honesty of identity, rejection of violence, social cooperation, justice, and peace. These dimensions are observed through statements, concepts, arguments, and themes and are classified as direct similarities, functional similarities, or substantive differences.

Accordingly, the study adopts an interpretive qualitative paradigm and a comparative document-study design. This design is appropriate because the object of analysis is textual and normative rather than behavioral: the study interprets how selected Islamic and Catholic documents construct dialogue and compares their ethical and theological boundaries, rather than measuring attitudes or frequencies in a population.

Although the study of the relationship between Islam and Christianity has evolved, there is still a tendency to discuss dialogue primarily from the perspective of the history of conflict, comparative doctrine, or institutional policy. Studies that specifically place the similarity of Islamic and Catholic understandings on the nature of dialogue as the center of analysis still need to be strengthened. These similarities are important to examine not to conclude that the two religions have identical teachings, but to find a conceptual basis that allows differences to be managed constructively. Theological differences remain real and should be explained honestly, but differences do not have to result in hostility.

Based on these issues, this article aims to analyze shared principles of interreligious dialogue in Islam and Catholicism through comparative thematic analysis of selected theological and institutional documents. The analysis is directed at theological foundations, ethical principles, forms of implementation, and challenges in a plural society. The study argues that Islamic-Catholic dialogue becomes stronger when it is rooted not only in demands for social tolerance but also in the internal sources of each tradition. When dialogue is understood as a call to faith, respect for human dignity, mutual learning, and cooperation for the common good, Islamic and Catholic relations can develop from passive coexistence into active and transformative social fraternity.

Method

This research uses an interpretive qualitative approach with a library research design, document study, and comparative thematic analysis. The design was selected because the research object consists of ideas, theological principles, institutional positions, and ethical constructions of dialogue contained in sacred texts, official religious documents, interfaith statements, and scholarly publications. Literature research is treated not merely as the collection and summary of references, but as a systematic process of searching, assessing, organizing, interpreting, and synthesizing sources. Snyder (2019) explains that a literature review can function as a research methodology when source selection and analysis are transparent, structured, and traceable.

The study of documents is used to uncover the meanings contained in Islamic and Catholic documents regarding interreligious dialogue. Documents are treated as research data because religious texts and institutional documents not only convey information, but also represent values, theological positions, social orientations, and a community's response to the reality of diversity. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents, both in printed and electronic form. The procedure involves initial reading, deep reading, interpretation, and organizing information into categories and themes related to the research question.

This research is descriptive-interpretive and comparative and uses criterion-based purposive selection of documents. The descriptive component explains the concept of dialogue from internal Islamic and Catholic sources; the interpretive component reads each text within its theological, historical, and social context; and the comparative component places both traditions in one analytical framework to identify similarities, differences, and possibilities for cooperation. Comparison is not intended to determine which religion is truest or most superior, but to understand how Islam and Catholicism construct dialogue without losing their respective theological identities.

Research Focus and Questions

The focus of this research is the similarity of Islamic and Catholic understandings of interreligious dialogue. These similarities are analyzed in several dimensions, namely the theological foundation of dialogue, respect for human dignity, recognition of religious freedom, openness to listen, honesty in expressing religious identity, rejection of violence, social cooperation, and commitment to justice and peace.

Based on this focus, the research was directed to answer three questions. First, how do Islam and Catholicism provide a theological and ethical basis for the implementation of interreligious dialogue? Second, what principles are the common ground between the Islamic and Catholic understandings of dialogue? Third, how can these common understandings be developed into a framework of dialogue that does not erase theological differences, but encourages humanitarian cooperation?

Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis are statements, concepts, arguments, and themes contained in the selected documents. The unit is not limited to the word “dialogue” but includes concepts substantively related to dialogue, such as mutual knowledge, religious freedom, love of neighbor, respect, justice, brotherhood, peace, witness to faith, cooperation, reconciliation, and rejection of religious coercion.

Analysis is not only carried out on stand-alone sentences. Each statement is read with regard to the relationship between the part of the text, the purpose of the document, the context of the publication, the publisher, and the target reader. This step is important to avoid taking the quotation out of context and prevent interpretations that do not match the intent of the document.

Data Source

The final analytical corpus consisted of five primary documents and 38 secondary scholarly sources. Primary sources directly represent Islamic, Catholic, or jointly formulated Islamic-Catholic positions, while secondary sources provide methodological, historical, and analytical context. Islamic primary data include Qur'anic verses concerning human diversity, relations with the People of the Book, freedom of religion, justice, respect for other faiths, and dialogue conducted in the best manner. Interpretation is supported by relevant exegetical literature so that the meaning is not detached from the context of the verses.

Primary Catholic sources include official documents of the Catholic Church relating to interreligious relations, especially the Declaration of *Nostra Aetate* of 1965. This document was chosen because it is one of the important foundations of the Catholic Church's view of non-Christian religions and specifically contains views on Muslims. Other documents used include *the Dialogue and Proclamation*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Fratelli Tutti*, while the analyzed sections are directly related to interfaith dialogue, fraternity, and cooperation.

The research also used *A Common Word Between Us and You* in 2007 and *the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* in 2019. Both documents are important because they show the direct encounter between Islamic authorities, leaders, and scholars with the Catholic and Christian communities in formulating a common foundation of love for God, love of neighbor, human brotherhood, and peace.

The 38 secondary sources consist of journal articles, academic books, and book chapters discussing Islamic-Catholic dialogue, Islamic-Christian dialogue, theology of religions, comparative theology, pluralism, tolerance, religious freedom, culture of encounter, and interfaith practice. Peer-reviewed

international journal articles, especially those indexed in Scopus, were prioritized. Secondary sources provide the methodological framework, clarify historical context, and support interpretation of the development and practical implications of Islamic-Catholic dialogue.

Literature Search Strategy

Literature search was conducted through Scopus and assisted by Sider Scholar to find metadata, DOIs, abstracts, and inter-publication connections. The search is done using English keywords because most international articles use that language. Keywords used include:

“Islam Catholic dialogue”, “Muslim Catholic dialogue”, “Christian Muslim dialogue”, “interreligious dialogue”, “interfaith dialogue”, “Nostra Aetate and Islam”, “A Common Word Between Us and You”, “human fraternity”, “Pope Francis and Islam”, “religious pluralism”, “dialogue of life”, dan “Catholic Muslim relations”.

Keywords are combined using Boolean *AND* and *Or* operators. The main search formula is designed as follows:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Muslim Catholic dialogue” OR “Islam Catholic dialogue” OR “Christian Muslim dialogue”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“interreligious dialogue” OR “interfaith dialogue” OR “Nostra Aetate” OR “A Common Word” OR “human fraternity”).

An additional formula is used to reach articles that do not use the term “Catholic” in the title, but substantively discuss the Catholic Church’s relationship with Islam:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Islam” OR “Muslim”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Catholic Church” OR “Pope Francis” OR “Vatican”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“dialogue” OR “encounter” OR “human fraternity”).

Searches are conducted against titles, abstracts, and keywords. Xiao & Watson (2019) emphasized that a review of the literature that can be accounted for needs to use clear research questions, documented search strategies, consistent selection criteria, and synthesis processes that are in accordance with the research objectives. Therefore, keywords, databases, year ranges, and reasons for document selection are recorded in the literature search sheet.

Scientific articles are prioritized in the period 2007–2026. The year 2007 was chosen as the starting point because the publication of *A Common Word Between Us and You* marked one of the most important developments in contemporary Islamic-Christian dialogue. However, the time limit does not apply to primary sources, classical sources, and methodological articles that have great influence. Sources before 2007 are still used if they have a fundamental position in explaining dialogue theory, the history of Islamic-Catholic relations, or document analysis methods.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Literature was selected according to explicit inclusion criteria. First, a source had to discuss Islam-Catholicism, Islam-Christianity, or a theory of interfaith dialogue applicable to Islamic-Catholic relations. Second, journal articles had to be published through a peer-review process. Third, sources had to have verifiable bibliographic identities, including author, year, title, journal or publisher, volume, issue, pages, and DOI where available. Fourth, the full text had to be available or adequately accessible. Fifth, the source had to provide substantive discussion of the basis, objectives, principles, forms, challenges, or effects of dialogue. Sixth, sources had to be published in English or Indonesian. Seventh, Scopus-indexed journals were prioritized for the main scientific literature.

The exclusion criteria include writings that only mention dialogue in a cursory way, articles that have no connection to Islam and Catholicism, news, popular opinion, institutional promotional materials, documents without verifiable authors or publishers, duplicate publications, and sources that present polemic views without academic argumentation. Articles that deal solely with dogmatic debates that have nothing to do with dialogue, common life, or interreligious relations are also not used as primary sources.

The selection of sources takes place through the stages of identification, elimination of duplication, filtering of titles and abstracts, reading of the full text, and determination of the final document. Although this study is not a meta-analysis, the reporting process adapts the principles of transparency of PRISMA 2020, especially in explaining the sources of search, filtering, reasons for exclusion, and the formation of the final corpus. Page et al. (2021) emphasize that transparency of reporting is necessary so that readers can assess how evidence is found, selected, and synthesized.

Data Collection and Organizing Techniques

Data collection is carried out through documentation. Any source that meets the criteria is recorded in the analysis matrix. The matrix contains the identity of the document, the type of source, religious or institutional position, the context of the publication, the purpose of the document, the main concept, relevant citations, theological foundations, the value of dialogue, the form of implementation, and its relationship to the research question.

Primary and secondary documents are separated so that the positions of the two are not mixed. Primary documents are used to reconstruct the internal views of Islam and Catholicism, while secondary sources are used to provide explanations, criticisms, and academic context. This separation is necessary so that the views of a religion are not only inferred from the opinions of outside researchers, but especially from documents that truly represent that tradition.

Bowen (2009) explained that document analysis involves three interrelated processes, namely skimmed reading, thorough reading, and interpretation. Based on this principle, data collection in this study is carried out through three stages. The first stage is an orientation reading to recognize the structure and purpose of the document. The second stage is the analytical reading to mark the sections related to the dialogue. The third stage is the recording and interpretation of the units of meaning that have been discovered.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data was analyzed by qualitative content analysis combined with thematic analysis and interpretive comparison. Qualitative content analysis is used because research seeks to find explicit and implicit meanings in documents. Elo & Kyngäs (2008) explain that qualitative content analysis includes three main phases, namely preparation, organization, and reporting. The three phases are used as a framework for research analysis.

In the preparation phase, the entire document is read repeatedly to gain a thorough understanding. The researcher then determines the unit of meaning in the form of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that explain the principle of dialogue. Units of meaning are chosen based on their relevance to the research question, not just on the frequency with which they appear. A concept can have significance even if it only appears once if it has a strong theological or institutional standing.

In the organizing phase, the unit of meaning is coded. Coding is done deductively and inductively. Deductive coding uses initial categories derived from the focus of the research, namely theological foundations, human dignity, religious freedom, openness, honesty of identity, rejection of violence, social cooperation, justice, and peace. Inductive coding is carried out to accommodate new themes that emerge from the document, such as attitude conversion, culture of encounter, dialogue of life, human fraternity, witness of faith, and ecological responsibility.

Codes that have a close meaning are then grouped into categories. The category was then developed into the main theme. Braun & Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis includes the process of data recognition, initial code formation, theme search, theme review, theme naming, and report preparation. Based on this procedure, the theme in this study was not unilaterally determined from the beginning, but was retested against the entire document.

An example of the analysis process can be described as follows. The declaration on the prohibition of religious coercion, respect for conscience, and freedom of choice of belief is coded "freedom of religion". Statements about love for others, ta'aruf, brotherhood, and respect for others are grouped into the category of "recognition of the dignity and existence of others". The category can then form the theme "dialogue as an encounter that respects human dignity".

After the theme of each tradition was found, a comparative analysis was carried out. The themes of Islam and Catholicism are placed in a comparative matrix that contains the basis of the text, the meaning of the concept, the purpose of the dialogue, the form of implementation, and its theological limits. This process results in three possibilities, namely direct similarity, functional similarity, and substantive difference. An immediate parallel occurs when the two traditions state relatively similar principles. Functional similarities occur when the concepts used are different, but lead to the same ethical goals. Substantive differences occur when the two traditions have an incomparable theological understanding.

This analysis does not impose an equation. Differences regarding the concept of divinity, the position of Jesus Christ, revelation, salvation, and religious authority are still recognized as part of their respective identities. A common ground is sought at the level of ethics of dialogue and common life, not through the

mixing of doctrines. This method is important so that the research does not fall into syncretism or form the conclusion that Islam and Catholicism are identical traditions.

Coding was conducted by one researcher; therefore, an inter-rater coefficient such as Cohen's kappa was not calculated. Analytical reliability was instead strengthened through reflexive validation. The initial codes were checked against the codebook and research questions, ambiguous units were recoded after a separate reading, themes were reviewed against the full corpus, and the comparative matrix was examined for contradictory or negative cases. Additions, mergers, and changes to codes and categories were recorded in the audit trail.

Validity and Reliability of Data

Research trustworthiness is maintained through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility is supported through source triangulation by comparing the Qur'an and relevant interpretation, official Catholic documents, jointly formulated dialogue documents, and academic literature. Conclusions are not based on a single quotation but are checked across sources representing different positions.

Dependability is maintained by creating audit trails in the form of keyword records, databases, search dates, selection criteria, document issuance reasons, coding processes, and category changes. Nowell et al. (2017) emphasized that documentation of the analysis process is needed so that the formation of themes can be understood and explored by readers.

Confirmability is done by distinguishing original data, researcher interpretations, and comparative conclusions. Important citations are noted along with the page and context of the document. The researcher also noticed a possible theological bias, namely the tendency to read other traditions only through one's own religious category. To reduce such biases, the concept of Islam is interpreted based on Islamic sources and the concept of Catholicism is read based on official sources and relevant Catholic literature.

Transferability is supported through an in-depth explanation of document contexts, analytical dimensions, and research limitations. The findings are not intended to represent every individual Muslim or Catholic; they describe the principles contained in the selected documents and scholarly literature analyzed in this study.

Research Ethics

This study does not involve human informants so it does not require data collection through interviews, observations, or experiments. However, research ethics are still applied through accurate inclusion of sources, avoidance of plagiarism, respect for copyright, and proportionate presentation of the views of each religion.

The researcher does not use religious terms or quotations to disparage any tradition. Islamic and Catholic documents are read in their internal contexts before comparison. Potentially misleading quotations are explained with attention to historical context and documentary purpose. These procedures are intended to produce an academic, fair, and religiously sensitive analysis.

Results and Discussion

Coding and comparison of the five primary documents and 38 secondary scholarly sources generated three interrelated findings. The first concerns theological and ethical foundations; the second concerns dignity, freedom, and identity; and the third concerns the translation of dialogue into social cooperation. Tables 1–3 present the comparative matrices used to distinguish direct similarities, functional similarities, and substantive differences. The results are therefore reported as cross-document thematic findings rather than as separate summaries of Islamic and Catholic source material.

Similarities in the Theological and Ethical Foundations of Islamic-Catholic Dialogue

The results of the analysis show that Islam and Catholicism have an internal foundation that allows dialogue to be placed as part of religious responsibility. Dialogue does not only arise because of the demands of modern society, but can be traced from the way in which the two traditions understand the relationship between humans and God and others. Despite having different theological edifices, Islam and Catholicism both view that faith in God must produce a moral attitude toward man.

In Islam, dialogue is related to the recognition that human diversity is part of the reality of creation. The principle of ta'aruf places differences in tribes, nations, and communities as a way to get to know each other. Differences do not automatically have to be turned into competition or hostility. Differences actually require

humans to build knowledge, communication, and social responsibility. Dialogue in this context is not just a communication technique, but is part of the ethics of human relations.

The Qur'an also links dialogue with wisdom, good advice, justice, and civilized ways of arguing. Therefore, dialogue in Islam cannot be justified if it is carried out through humiliation, information manipulation, threats, or violence. The truth that a Muslim believes does not give legitimacy to degrade the dignity of the other party. The way of expressing beliefs must be in harmony with the moral values brought by those beliefs.

Meanwhile, in the Catholic tradition, an important change in relations with other religions was marked by the birth of the Declaration of *Nostra Aetate*. The document directs the Catholic Church to view other religions through respect, recognition, and cooperation, not just through dogmatic differences. In particular, *Nostra Aetate* expresses appreciation for Muslims who believe in God Almighty, honor Abraham, glorify Jesus as a prophet, honor Mary, and practice prayer, almsgiving, and fasting (Second Vatican Council, 1965).

This recognition does not mean that the Catholic Church accepts all Islamic doctrines. The Church maintains its beliefs about the Trinity, Jesus Christ, salvation, and the church. However, these differences are not used to deny the existence of Islam as a partner in dialogue. Ganeri (2012) explains that the involvement of Catholic theology with non-Christian traditions can strengthen a more reflective religious identity. Encounters with other parties encourage religious people to distinguish between the core of faith and the exclusivity that is actually shaped by social and historical factors.

This view is expanded upon in the Dialogue and Proclamation. This document emphasizes that dialogue and proclamation are not two activities that should be opposed. Dialogue demands openness, appreciation, and a willingness to learn, while preaching shows the loyalty of each community to its beliefs. This means that dialogue does not require Muslims to become less Islamic or Catholics to become less Catholic. Dialogue requires each party to be present with an honest identity and an open attitude (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue & Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1991).

Madigan (2013) emphasizes that Islamic-Christian dialogue must avoid two equally problematic tendencies. The first tendency is to make dialogue a debate to prove the defeat of the other side. The second tendency is to simplify the differences as if Islam and Christianity have completely the same teachings. A mature dialogue must accept that some theological differences cannot be brought together, but can be managed through respect, knowledge, and cooperation.

The important point of the relationship between Islam and Catholicism is also seen in *A Common Word Between Us and You*. This document proposes love for God and love for others as a meeting place for Muslims and Christians. That similarity does not mean that the concept of God in Islam is synonymous with Catholic theology. The similarities serve as an ethical basis to prevent hostility and build a common life (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007).

Avcı (2018) explained that interfaith learning can be done without taking away one's commitment to one's traditions. Reading and discussing religious texts together can help participants recognize the depth of the traditions of the other party while correcting misunderstandings about their own religion. Dialogue ultimately not only produces knowledge about the other party, but also produces more critical knowledge about oneself.

The data on Table 1 shows that the common point of Islam and Catholicism is not primarily on the same dogma. The common point is the functional relationship between faith and social responsibility. Islam and Catholicism may use different terms, sources of revelation, and theological frameworks, but both have come to the ethical conclusion that human beings should not be treated unfairly simply because of religious differences.

This finding is important because some interfaith dialogue fails because it is too quick to declare that all religions are the same. The statement may be intended to create peace, but it can actually provoke rejection from communities that feel their identities are being simplified. Beyers (2017) and Freeman (2017) show that the theology of religions must face the tension between commitment to the truth of one's own tradition and openness to the truth and experience of others.

Thus, the similarity of Islamic and Catholic understandings of dialogue should be referred to as ethical-relational similarities, not theological similarities as a whole. Ethical-relational similarities mean that both traditions have a basis for respecting human beings, rejecting violence, listening to others, and cooperating, even though they do not agree on all religious doctrines.

Table 1 <Thematic Data on the Foundations of Islamic and Catholic Dialogue>

Dimensions of findings	Data in an Islamic perspective	Data in a Catholic perspective	Results of comparative interpretation	Supporting resources
Divine orientation	Dialogue is carried out as part of obedience, justice, and morality to others	Dialogue is placed as part of the call of faith and the church's relationship with humanity	Both traditions connect the relationship to God with the responsibility to man	Madigan (2013); Magesa (2007); Ganeri (2012)
Recognition of diversity	Diversity becomes a space <i>for ta'aruf</i> and a test of moral responsibility	Religious diversity is responded to through respect and the search for the common good	Differences are understood as realities that must be managed, not erased through coercion	Beyers (2017); Freeman (2017)
Communication ethics	Dialogue should be conducted with wisdom, fairness, and the best possible means	Dialogue demands respect, openness, patience, and listening	The way of dialogue is part of religious morality	Minnema (2014); (Admirand, 2019)
Religious identity	Tawheed, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the Qur'an remain the basis of Islamic identity	The Trinity, Jesus Christ, and the church remain the foundation of Catholic identity	Dialogue does not negate theological boundaries	Avcı (2018); Ganeri (2012)
Love and care	Caring is manifested through justice, mercy, and good deeds	Love for God and neighbor is the basis of social relationships	There are functional similarities in ethical orientation although the theological basis is different	Catalano (2022); <i>A Common Word</i> (2007)
Purpose of the dialogue	Preventing hostility and building a just life	Building a culture of encounter, brotherhood, and peace	Dialogue is geared towards the transformation of social relations	Magesa (2007); Catalano (2022)

Dialogue as a Recognition of Dignity, Freedom, and Honesty of Identity

The second finding shows that human dignity is central to Islamic-Catholic dialogue. Dialogue can take place only when the other party is treated as a subject with conscience, experience, rights, and the ability to explain his or her own beliefs. The other party should not be positioned merely as an object of da'wah, mission, research, political threat, or a group that must be defeated.

Kritzinger (2008) explained that interfaith encounters must shift attention from just talking about the other party to direct encounters with other parties. This change is important because prejudice often forms when a community defines another religion without listening to those religions. In such a situation, the other party is only present as an image formed by rumors, history of conflict, polemic lectures, or political interests.

Recognition of human dignity requires freedom of religion. Dialogue cannot be called authentic when one of the parties is under pressure or fear. Religious freedom includes freedom to embrace belief, practice worship, form communities, peacefully convey teachings, and reject coercion to convert.

In Islam, faith should not be formed through coercion. In Catholicism, freedom of conscience and personal dignity are also important foundations of religious relations. The meeting of these two views results in the principle that da'wah and mission must be distinguished from manipulation. The transmission of beliefs can be done openly, but it must not take advantage of a person's poverty, economic dependence, political power, psychological weakness, or social position.

Baycar (2022) shows that tolerance and multiculturalism gain strength when diversity is not only symbolically recognized, but protected through social policies and practices. This means that freedom of

religion is not sufficiently stated in the document. Freedom must be seen in access to houses of worship, legal protection, education, employment, and spaces for public participation.

The results of the study also show that dialogue requires honesty of identity. Honesty means that each participant explains his or her beliefs without hiding differences, but also without using differences to demean the other party. Dialogue that only talks about similarities will be superficial. Instead, a dialogue that only debates differences will turn into confrontation.

Identity honesty distinguishes dialogue from syncretism. Syncretism is understood as the mixing of religious elements until the boundaries of their identity become blurred. Dialogue has no such purpose. The Islamic-Catholic dialogue does not transform monotheism into a Trinity, does not equate the position of Jesus in the Qur'an with Catholic Christology, and does not reconcile the views of both traditions on revelation and salvation.

Table 2 <Thematic Data on Dignity, Freedom, and Identity in Dialogue

Theme of research results	Forms of data found	Analytical meaning	Potential problems	References
Human dignity	The other party is seen as a human being who has a conscience and rights	Dialogue should be oriented towards recognition, not mastery	The other party is made an object or target	Canete & Castillo (2022); Kritzinger (2008)
Freedom of religion	Rejection of coercion and protection of freedom of religion	Freedom is a condition of authentic dialogue	Majority dominance, social pressure, and restrictions on houses of worship	Baycar (2022); Lafrarchi (2020)
Identity Honesty	Each party defends its teachings while opening a learning space	Dialogue is not synonymous with relativism or syncretism	Forced equations and blurring of differences	Avci (2018); Ganeri (2012)
Willingness to listen	The other party was given the opportunity to explain himself	Knowledge about other religions must be obtained through accountable sources	Stereotypes, generalizations, and misrepresentations	Visser et al. (2021); Minnema (2014)
Equality of participation	Participants are involved in agenda formulation and decision-making	Dignity must be embodied in the structure of dialogue	Dialogue is controlled by the elite or majority group	Cullell et al. (2021)
Face-to-face meetings	Joint activities bring together individuals from different communities	Quality contacts can reduce social distancing	Brief or unequal contact can perpetuate prejudice	Pettigrew & Tropp (2006); Paluck et al. (2021)
Reflection on prejudice	Participants re-examine the assessment of other groups	Dialogue is also a process of self-correction	Participants only come to change the other party	Brown and Baker (2016); Riek et al. (2006)
Interfaith education	Knowledge combined with experience, empathy, and action	Dialogue needs to be incorporated into formal and non-formal education	Religious education that only strengthens group boundaries	Putkonen & Poulter (2023); Kusuma & Susilo (2020)

However, the recognition of differences must not stop at the attitude of keeping each other at a distance. Differences need to be the basis for questioning, listening, and understanding each other. Visser et al. (2021) found that the purpose of interfaith learning does not only include knowledge about other religions. Interfaith

learning also includes self-reflection, communication skills, empathy, attitude change, and readiness to act together.

These results are in line with Kusuma & Susilo (2020), who found that the involvement of Indonesian youth in interfaith groups is related to the development of intercultural and interreligious sensitivity. The encounter experience makes participants no longer see the other party as an abstract category. The identity of "Muslim" or "Catholic" turns into a relationship with a concrete human being who has family, experiences, fears, and hopes.

Social psychology studies reinforce the finding that encounters can reduce prejudice, but the impact depends on the quality of the encounter. Pettigrew & Tropp (2006) showed through meta-analysis that intergroup contact was generally associated with a decrease in prejudice. However, contact becomes more effective when it takes place under equal conditions, has a common goal, is supported by institutional norms, and provides opportunities to build meaningful relationships.

Riek et al. (2006) explain that prejudice is often influenced by threat perception. Other groups may be considered a threat to security, culture, identity, economy, or moral values. Because these threats are often perceptual, providing information alone does not necessarily eliminate them. Dialogue needs to provide a hands-on experience that proves that the existence of the other party does not always threaten the survival of one's own identity.

Paluck et al. (2021) remind that prejudice reduction programs are not automatically successful simply because they bring different groups together. Interventions need to pay attention to social norms, group authority, encounter design, and relationship sustainability. A ceremonial meeting that lasts only once may produce a temporary positive impression, but it does not necessarily change the structure of prejudice.

Brown & Baker (2016) also point out the ambivalent nature of religion. Religion can be used to reinforce boundaries and prejudices, but it can also provide moral norms to reduce prejudice. The role of religious leaders is very important. When leaders continue to portray the other party as a threat, the people will gain religious justification for keeping their distance. Conversely, when leaders set an example of cooperation and defend the rights of other groups, inclusive norms can grow.

Cullell et al. (2021) added that dialogue can strengthen human agency when participants are not only present, but also have a voice in setting the agenda. Equality of dialogue does not mean that all groups have the same amount or political power. Equality means that each participant has a safe and meaningful opportunity to share their experiences, criticisms, and needs.

These findings show that human dignity must be embodied in the design of dialogue. It is not enough to state that all participants are equal if the talking time, agenda, venue, financing, and decisions are still controlled by one group. An authentic dialogue must take into account majority-minority inequalities, social position, gender, age, and religious authority.

3. Transforming Dialogue into Social Cooperation, Peace, and Living Together

The third finding shows that Islamic-Catholic dialogue achieves full meaning when moving from conversation to joint action. Dialogue that only results in a declaration of friendship without changes in people's lives risks becoming ceremonial. The success of dialogue needs to be seen from its ability to change relationships, strengthen trust, prevent conflicts, and solve humanitarian problems.

Sintang et al. (2012) explain the importance of *dialogue of life*. Life dialogue occurs through daily interactions, such as neighboring, working, studying, maintaining environmental safety, attending social activities, and helping each other. This form of dialogue is often more powerful than seminars because it forms concrete experiences about the other party.

Nolte et al. (2018) show that interreligious relationships are not only shaped by official doctrine. Relationships are also influenced by language, family relationships, local customs, economic structure, living space, and intensity of encounters. Two communities can have very tolerant official documents, but still live in suspicion if they do not have a shared social space.

Therefore, Islamic-Catholic dialogue needs to be developed in several complementary forms. First, the dialogue of life through daily relationships. Second, dialogue of action through humanitarian programs. Third, theological dialogue through the exchange of knowledge and discussion of differences. Fourth, dialogue of spiritual experience through the sharing of experiences regarding prayer, fasting, forgiveness, service, and repentance without mixing rituals.

Ajibola (2024) emphasized that dialogue needs to move beyond conversations towards a model of dialogical ethics. Dialogical ethics means that encounters must result in responsibility. Muslims and Catholics not only know each other's teachings, but also jointly respond to poverty, violence, environmental damage, displacement, discrimination, and injustice.

The Human Brotherhood document reinforces that orientation. The document, signed by Pope Francis and Ahmad al-Tayyeb, places peace, justice, protection of vulnerable groups, and rejection of violence as the shared responsibility of religious people (Francis & Al-Tayyeb, 2019). The brotherhood in this document does not stop at the recognition that human beings come from one family. Brotherhood must be manifested in the real protection of human beings whose rights are violated.

Piwko & Sawicka (2024) show that Pope Francis' trips and dialogue forums in Muslim-majority regions serve as symbolic diplomacy as well as a practical invitation to expand interfaith brotherhood. The symbol of encounter has power, but it must translate into policies, education, and cooperation networks.

Table 3 <Data on the Praxis of Islamic-Catholic Dialogue and Its Development Indicators

Synthesis data	Success indicators	Risks to avoid	Source
Regular interactions in living, educational, and work environments	Increased trust and reduced social distancing	Relationships only appear when there is an official event	Sintang et al. (2012); Nolte et al. (2018)
Cooperation in disaster relief, health, poverty, and the environment	Shared benefits and equal sharing of responsibilities	One group is always the giver and the other group is only the recipient	Ajibola (2024); Orazani et al. (2023)
Discussion of doctrines, history, and differences academically	Reduced misrepresentation of the teachings of others	Dialogue turns into apologetic debate	Madigan (2013); Meri (2021)
Interfaith learning in schools, campuses, seminaries, and Islamic boarding schools	Increased knowledge, empathy, skills, and self-reflection	Education stops at tolerance theory	Visser et al. (2021); Kusuma & Susilo (2020)
Joint defense of victims of violence and discrimination	Solidarity is given regardless of the identity of the victim	Solidarity is only given to one's own group	<i>Human Fraternity</i> (2019); Catalano (2022)
Religious literacy, hoax clarification, and peaceful narrative production	Reduced disinformation and hate speech	Algorithm amplifies polarization and echo chamber	Yilmaz & Barton (2021); Palaver (2019)
Cooperation between mosques, churches, educational institutions, and the government	Availability of conflict prevention and mediation mechanisms	Dialogs are used for institutional imagery	Orazani et al. (2023); Piwko & Sawicka, (2024)
Involvement of youth, women, teachers, students, and local communities	Dialogue agenda according to the needs of the community	Dominance of religious elites	Cullell et al. (2021); Canete & Castillo (2022)

Orazani et al. (2023) through a systematic study of social cohesion interventions, showed that effective programs usually form a shared identity, good quality of contact, concrete goals, and sustainable participation. The findings mean that the success of Islamic-Catholic dialogue cannot be measured solely by the number of meetings. Success needs to be seen from changes in knowledge, attitudes, relationships, cooperation networks, and the ability to resolve conflicts.

In the Indonesian context, the implementation of dialogue faces a historical legacy of suspicion. Mujiburrahman (2006) shows that Muslim-Christian relations during the New Order period were shaped by the perception of mutual threats, identity competition, state policies, and concerns about the spread of religion. Although the political context has changed, some of those memories remain alive in the community's narrative.

These suspicions can be strengthened when it comes to the construction of houses of worship, religious conversion, interfaith marriage, education, and the involvement of religious groups in politics. Therefore,

dialogue should not only talk about safe themes. An in-depth dialogue should provide a space to discuss sensitive issues with communication rules that protect all participants.

The next challenge is the politics of fear. Palaver (2019) explains that populism often uses religion to create a boundary between "the righteous people" and "groups perceived as threatening". In this context, religious identity is no longer only a source of morality, but an instrument of political mobilization. The other party is portrayed as a threat to religion, nation, culture, or the future of generations.

Yılmaz & Barton (2021) show that the digital space expands the mobilization of religious populism in Indonesia. Social media allows provocative information to spread faster than clarification. Snippets of lectures, images, and news without context can reinforce prejudice against Muslims and Catholics alike. Dialogue therefore needs to enter the digital space, not just take place in the meeting hall.

Another challenge is the differences within each religion. Islam does not consist of only one organization, interpretation, or social orientation. Catholics also have a variety of experiences based on region, social class, culture, and religious involvement. Krause et al. (2019) show that dialogue can even encounter obstacles within the same religious tradition. This means that Islamic-Catholic dialogue also requires internal dialogue so that the results of the encounter do not stop at certain figures.

Meri (2021) emphasized the importance of interfaith relationship education in higher education. The education needs to combine academic knowledge, communication skills, encounter experience, and the ability to understand the political context. It is not enough for students to know the definition of tolerance. They need to learn to distinguish academic criticism from insults, freedom of speech from hate speech, and testimony of faith from coercion.

Based on the overall results, the Islamic-Catholic dialogue can be formulated as a process that has four stages. The first stage is recognition, which is accepting others as human beings and communities of faith. The second stage is understanding, which is listening to and studying the other party's beliefs fairly. The third stage is reflection, which is examining the community's own prejudices and perspectives. The fourth stage is joint action, which is translating the encounter into peace, justice, education, and social service.

The novelty of this study's findings lies in the affirmation that the similarities between Islam and Catholicism regarding dialogue are not dogmatic similarities. These similarities are ethical-relational convergence. Ethical-relational convergence means that the two traditions can move towards respect, freedom, justice, peace, and solidarity through their respective theological foundations.

Thus, the ideal dialogue does not eliminate differences, but changes the way those differences are treated. Differences are no longer used to justify suspicion and violence. Differences become spaces for learning, self-correction, and cooperation. The Islamic-Catholic dialogue reaches its depth when loyalty to the faith goes hand in hand with the courage to protect the dignity of different parties.

Conclusions

Based on qualitative content analysis, thematic coding, and interpretive comparison of the Qur'an, Nostra Aetate, Dialogue and Proclamation, A Common Word Between Us and You, and the Document on Human Fraternity, this study concludes that the shared ground between Islam and Catholicism lies at the ethical-relational level rather than in the equalization of doctrine. The comparative matrices identify direct or functional convergence in respect for human dignity, religious freedom, honesty of identity, openness to listening, rejection of violence, justice, peace, and social cooperation, while substantive differences remain concerning divinity, revelation, Jesus Christ, salvation, and religious authority. The audit trail, source triangulation, repeated coding, and review of themes against the full corpus support this interpretation within the limits of a single-researcher document study. These findings indicate that authentic Islamic-Catholic dialogue should be equal, voluntary, and grounded in the self-understanding of each tradition. It should extend beyond theological discussion and ceremonial meetings into dialogue of life, interfaith education, humanitarian service, protection of vulnerable groups, advocacy, conflict resolution, and digital literacy. In this form, dialogue can reduce prejudice, strengthen trust, prevent conflict, and support peaceful and dignified coexistence without requiring either community to weaken its religious identity.

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