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Reviving the Authority of Customary and Religious Institutions: Sustaining Post Conflict Peace in Mamasa, Indonesia

Published 2026-04-30

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Article History:

Submitted: February 24, 2026
Revised: April 06, 2026
Accepted: April 19, 2026

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Laboratorium of
Sociology, UIN Sunan Kalijaga
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publication in this journal.

How to Cite:

Reviving the Authority of
Customary and Religious
Institutions: Sustaining Post
Conflict Peace in Mamasa,
Indonesia. (2026). *Jurnal
Sosiologi Reflektif*, 20(2).
<https://doi.org/10.14421/jsr.v20i2.3826>

Abstract

Post conflict societies face major challenges in rebuilding social unity, particularly in areas with long histories of communal and religious tension such as Mamasa, West Sulawesi. This study aims to analyze how customary authority and religious institutions interact with state institutions in sustaining post conflict peace in Mamasa. The research adopts a qualitative design using a case study approach. Data were collected through in depth semi structured interviews with ten purposively selected informants, including customary leaders, religious leaders, community members, youth figures, representatives of the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), and local government actors, supplemented by participant observation and an analysis of relevant policy documents. The data were analyzed thematically using an interpretative approach through coding, iterative theme development, and source triangulation. The findings indicate that sustainable peace in Mamasa is produced through a hybrid configuration that integrates the cultural legitimacy of customary institutions, the moral authority of religious actors, and the procedural support of state institutions in conflict resolution. The implication of this research is that strengthening institutional collaboration that connects restorative justice procedures with customary mediation and interfaith moral leadership is crucial for making reconciliation more durable.

Keywords: Post Conflict Peacebuilding; Customary Institutions; Religious Authority; Interfaith Coexistence; Hybrid Governance

Masyarakat pascakonflik menghadapi tantangan besar untuk membangun kembali kesatuan sosial, terutama di wilayah yang memiliki sejarah ketegangan komunal dan keagamaan seperti Mamasa, Sulawesi Barat. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana otoritas adat dan institusi keagamaan berinteraksi dengan institusi negara dalam mempertahankan perdamaian pascakonflik di Mamasa. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus intrinsik. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam semi terstruktur dengan 10 informan yang dipilih secara purposif, yakni pemimpin adat, pemimpin agama, anggota masyarakat, tokoh pemuda, perwakilan FKUB, dan aktor pemerintah daerah, serta dilengkapi observasi partisipatif dan analisis dokumen kebijakan terkait. Data dianalisis secara tematik dengan pendekatan interpretatif melalui pengodean, pengembangan tema secara iteratif, dan triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perdamaian berkelanjutan di Mamasa terbentuk melalui konfigurasi hibrida yang mengintegrasikan legitimasi budaya lembaga adat, otoritas moral aktor agama, dan dukungan prosedural institusi negara dalam resolusi konflik. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah pentingnya penguatan kolaborasi kelembagaan yang menghubungkan prosedur restorative justice dengan mediasi adat dan kepemimpinan moral lintas agama agar rekonsiliasi lebih tahan lama.

A. INTRODUCTION

Post-conflict societies often face difficult challenges in rebuilding social unity, especially in areas with long histories of communal and religious tension (Schulze 2019). Social fragmentation remains a serious issue in contemporary multicultural societies, particularly with the rise of identity-based conflicts (Wilson 2018). Conflicts rooted in religious and ethnic identities have become major threats to peace and social stability (Atabay et al. 2024). These conditions highlight the urgent need for more grounded approaches to rebuilding trust and sustaining long-term peace.

In many plural societies, especially in Indonesia, social conflicts are rarely caused by a single factor. Instead, they are shaped by a combination of religious, ethnic, and political dynamics that deeply affect social relations (Mazya, Ridho and Irfani 2024; Ristanti 2022). Mamasa, a post-conflict region in West Sulawesi, reflects this complexity, where historical tensions between Muslim and Christian communities disrupted social unity. The escalation of conflict was driven by polarized responses to the formation of new districts in the post-Reform era, which later spread into broader ethnic and religious sentiments (Abdullah 2016; Subhan 2023). While formal government interventions have helped create short-term stability, long-term peace depends largely on how local authorities are negotiated and re-legitimized at the community level (Mahyuddin et al. 2025).

Modern peacebuilding literature increasingly recognizes that sustainable peace cannot be achieved only through top-down government frameworks. Instead, it requires the involvement of local authorities that hold cultural legitimacy and social influence. Interfaith engagement and community-based reconciliation are central pillars of peacebuilding, especially in societies with diverse identities and collective trauma. Comparative evidence from various post-conflict settings such as South Africa (Driessen 2025), Northern Ireland (McCormack 2015), Rwanda, and the Balkans (Russell 2019), shows that lasting reconciliation cannot be

secured by state mechanisms alone. Instead, sustainable peace depends on the active participation of local communities and religious actors.

In the Indonesian context, customary and religious entities represent two fundamental conduits of local authority. Customary bodies draw upon traditional legitimacy and kinship networks to regulate social norms and arbitrate local disputes, at the same time, religious institutions provide the moral and spiritual scaffolding that shapes social ethics and collective belonging. Nevertheless, the coexistence of these distinct authoritative spheres necessitates a deeper examination of their interactional dynamics and their integrated role in sustaining peace in societies recovering from conflict.

Recent studies on peacebuilding in post-conflict and plural societies increasingly show that sustainable peace cannot rely solely on state-centered intervention, but must also be supported by locally legitimate institutions. Scholarship on religious institutions and leaders highlights their preventive, mediating, and transformative roles in shaping moral narratives, facilitating interfaith dialogue, reducing mistrust, and fostering reconciliation in divided communities (Al Qurtuby 2022; Driessen 2025; Martin and Sol 2021; Simangan 2020; Naz, Qadri and Ali 2018). At the same time, studies on customary and traditional institutions emphasize that culturally embedded mechanisms of dispute resolution, ritual reconciliation, and communal deliberation remain crucial for maintaining social cohesion, especially where formal governance is weak or contested (Bräuchler 2022; Karaeng and Kudubun, 2024; Monama and Mokoеле, 2024; Stepanus et al. 2019). In the Indonesian and Southeast Asian context, this body of work consistently indicates that religious pluralism, *adat*-based authority, and local reconciliation practices are not residual traditions, but active social resources for peacebuilding.

Despite this progress, the literature remains marked by a significant analytical gap. Existing studies still tend to examine religious institutions,

customary authorities, and formal state mechanisms as separate domains rather than as interacting sources of authority within the same peacebuilding process. Much of the scholarship is also leader-centered, institution-specific, or oriented toward short-term conflict management, interfaith dialogue, or customary sanctions in isolation. As a result, the long-term sustainability of peace, especially the way moral authority, traditional legitimacy, and legal-rational structures are negotiated together in practice, remains insufficiently theorized. This fragmentation is particularly visible in studies on Mamasa, where governance, *adat* sanctions, peace agreements, and religious representation have been discussed, but mostly in partial rather than integrative ways (Arsyad and Sari 2020; Hidayat 2024; Mahyuddin et al. 2026; Mahyuddin and Febry 2023; Stepanus et al. 2019).

This study addresses that gap by examining how customary and religious authorities in Mamasa interact with formal state institutions in sustaining post-conflict peace. The significance of this study lies in its effort to move the discussion beyond episodic reconciliation toward the institutional, cultural, and moral conditions that make peace socially durable in plural settings. By focusing on the interplay among *adat* institutions, religious actors, and state facilitation, this article contributes to the literature on peacebuilding by offering an integrative model rooted in local experience. Sociologically, this contribution is important because it shows that peace is not merely the absence of violence or the product of formal governance, but an ongoing social achievement produced through legitimacy, negotiated authority, and everyday practices of coexistence.

B. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative design using an intrinsic case study approach to examine how customary and religious institutions negotiate authority, mediate tensions, and sustain post-conflict peace in Mamasa,

West Sulawesi. This method was selected because the research objective is not to measure variables statistically, but to understand the meanings, interactions, and socially embedded practices through which peace is continuously produced in a plural post-conflict setting (Creswell and Poth 2016). By focusing on Mamasa as a bounded and contextually rich case, the study can analyze in depth how *adat* institutions, religious actors, and formal governance structures interact within a hybrid configuration of peacebuilding. In this sense, the intrinsic case study is methodologically aligned with the aim of the study, namely to explain the integrative dynamics of authority that underpin long-term social cohesion (Yin 2017).

Data were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with purposively selected informants who possessed direct knowledge and experience of interinstitutional collaboration, including customary leaders, religious leaders, community members, youth figures, representatives of the Interfaith Harmony Forum, and local government actors. To complement the interviews, participant observation was conducted in cultural and interreligious settings relevant to local peacebuilding practices, including the *Merendeng Tedong* ritual, Maulid Nabi celebrations in predominantly Christian school environments, the distribution of sacrificial meat to Christian communities during Eid al-Adha, and deliberative meetings organized by FKUB. Secondary data, including local government regulations, policy documents on customary institutions, and records related to restorative justice practices, were also used to contextualize and deepen the empirical analysis through document-based interpretation of formal and informal institutional arrangements (Bowen 2009).

The data were analyzed thematically using an interpretative approach. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials were coded and organized into recurring patterns related to authority, collaboration, conflict resolution, and social cohesion, following

the logic of thematic analysis (Terry et al. 2017). These initial codes were then refined into broader themes through iterative comparison and analytical abstraction to explain how customary and religious institutions are revitalised and integrated in peacebuilding practice. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study applied triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents. It used member checking with selected informants to ensure that the interpretations remained grounded in the participants' experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Max Weber's sociological analysis of authority to examine how customary and religious institutions operate as legitimate sources of leadership in post-conflict reconciliation. Weber defines authority (*Herrschaft*) as a form of power grounded in legitimacy rather than coercion, emphasizing that social order is sustained when domination is perceived as rightful and meaningful (Ritzer 2012). In contexts where formal state institutions struggle to restore trust after conflict fully, alternative forms of authority rooted in culture and belief systems often assume a central role. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding sustainable peacebuilding processes in Mamasa, where local actors rely on socially embedded forms of legitimacy to rebuild fractured relationships.

Traditional authority, in Weber's formulation, is anchored in the sanctity of long-established customs and the continuity of inherited social norms (Weber 2019). Its legitimacy rests on collective acceptance of tradition as a binding moral order. In Mamasa, customary institutions embody this form of authority by functioning as guardians of communal memory and social balance. Customary leaders derive their influence not from legal-rational mandates, but from their position within genealogical hierarchies and their role in maintaining customary law and ritual practice.

Through these mechanisms, traditional authority provides culturally resonant pathways for reconciliation by framing conflict resolution as a return to shared norms and collective harmony.

Complementarily, charismatic authority offers a complementary lens for understanding the influence of religious leaders in post-conflict settings. Weber describes charismatic authority as emerging from devotion to the perceived extraordinary qualities of an individual (Weber 2014). In Mamasa, religious figures often acquire such authority through moral credibility, spiritual knowledge, and personal integrity, enabling them to articulate ethical narratives that transcend institutional boundaries. This form of authority enables religious leaders to build trust, foster emotional engagement, and promote values of forgiveness and coexistence that are critical to sustainable peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the integration of legal-rational authority provides the formal-institutional framework within which these reconciliation processes are situated. Weber defines legal-rational authority as a mode of domination grounded in a system of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (Damsar 2015). In post-conflict Mamasa, this authority is embodied by state institutions, formal judicial systems, and administrative bureaucracies responsible for maintaining public order. While traditional and charismatic authorities derive legitimacy from cultural continuity and personal sanctity, legal-rational authority operates through impersonal norms and procedural justice. The effectiveness of peacebuilding in Mamasa often hinges on the hybridization of these authority types, in which legal-rational structures rely on the social mediation of customary and religious institutions to secure local compliance and moral depth.

Theoretically, these three forms of authority do not operate as isolated or competing entities. Instead, they frequently intersect and reinforce one another within local peacebuilding practices. Traditional

authority provides a stable normative framework rooted in collective history, charismatic authority introduces moral persuasion and adaptability to contemporary challenges. In contrast, legal-rational authority offers the necessary administrative support and legal certainty for institutional sustainability (Turner 1984). By applying Weber's typology of authority, this study advances an analytical perspective that foregrounds legitimacy and leadership as key elements of reconciliation. This framework facilitates an understanding of how customary and religious institutions in Mamasa mobilize culturally grounded authority to negotiate peace and restore social cohesion.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings and interpretative discussion on how Customary institutions, religious institutions, and formal state actors contribute to sustaining post-conflict peace in Mamasa. The discussion is organized into three interrelated dimensions, namely the strengthening of customary institutions, the role of religious institutions in maintaining coexistence, and the synergy between local authorities and government actors in building a durable peace framework. Through this structure, the findings show that peace in Mamasa is not sustained by a single institution, but by the continuous interaction of cultural legitimacy, moral authority, and formal governance.

1. Strengthening the Role of Customary Institution in Post-Conflict Mamasa

The building of sustainable peace in post-conflict Mamasa cannot be separated from the dynamic role of the customary institution as a locally legitimate authority. Rather than functioning in isolation, this institution operates within an interconnected framework that integrates cultural values, spiritual norms, and social obligations. The findings derive directly from in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis,

revealing the everyday dynamics through which customary and religious institutions sustain coexistence and negotiate peace in post-conflict Mamasa. These empirical accounts highlight how local actors continuously engage in processes of mediation, adaptation, and collaboration in response to latent tensions, identity-based sensitivities, and shifting sociopolitical contexts. Through these narratives, the voices of customary leaders, religious figures, and community members emerge as central evidence, demonstrating how institutional authority is not static but actively reproduced through culturally embedded practices and interreligious engagements that reinforce mutual trust and social cohesion.

In an interview, the informant emphasized the importance of *adat* institutions in maintaining harmony, stating:

Mamasa residents lies in upholding attitudes of mutual respect, mutual appreciation, and placing *adat* as the guiding framework of community life, in which all problems are resolved properly through customary deliberation without harming others or passing judgment. (Personal Interview, Informant-1, 2025).

This statement indicates that customary institutions continue to function as a central normative framework in regulating social life in Mamasa, where values of mutual respect and collective deliberation serve as the primary mechanisms for resolving conflict. It suggests that peace is sustained not through coercive measures, but through culturally embedded practices that prioritize consensus, social harmony, and the avoidance of judgment, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of *adat* as a foundation for coexistence.

Customary institutions in Mamasa occupy a central position in the mechanisms for resolving social conflict. When disputes arise within the community, stakeholders have consistently sought to resolve such cases through customary processes. Within Mamasa society, *adat* functions not only as a system of values but also as a framework of authority that regulates social relations and guides conflict resolution practices. The

principle of *ada' tuho (ada' tuo)* serves as a foundational norm in organizing social life, emphasizing mutual respect, deliberative problem-solving, and the rejection of violence and mutual judgment (Al Yakin 2016).

In another interview, the informant-5 described customary institutions established across various sub-districts in Mamasa as forums for resolving conflicts, including cases with criminal dimensions at the grassroots level. As Informant emphasized:

In Mamasa, customary institutions have been established in every sub-district, even down to the village level. Whenever a problem arises in Mamasa, it is usually resolved first through *adat*; even in criminal cases, the settlement process still involves customary institutions. (Personal Interview, Informant-5, 2025).

This finding underscores the strong social legitimacy of customary authority in Mamasa, even when it intersects with the state's formal legal system.

Figure 1

Strengthening the Existence of Traditional Institutions in Mamasa



Source: Researcher's personal documentation (2026)

The Mamasa Regency Government has Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Empowerment and Development of Customary

Institutions (Mamasa Regency Government 2021). Currently, customary institutions in Mamasa operate at the village level, with customary leaders or stakeholders collaborating with the Village Government. Sustainable peacebuilding in Mamasa has been facilitated through culturally embedded mechanisms, particularly the customary institutions. This institutional support has reinforced the continuity of the *Merendeng Tedong* ritual as a customary sanction, which remains actively practiced in Mamasa. *Merendeng Tedong*, often rendered as *Ma'rendeng Tedong*, is a traditional ritual practiced by the Mamasa community in West Sulawesi, that serves as a culturally embedded mechanism for peaceful conflict resolution. Etymologically, the term means 'bringing the buffalo', symbolizing a process of reconciliation and the restoration of disrupted social relations (Karaeng and Kudubun 2024). *Merendeng Tedong* is a symbolic act of collective acknowledgment, moral restoration, and social reintegration (Syam and Aisyah 2021). The ritual serves as a customary sanction while simultaneously operating as a restorative mechanism through which the community addresses wrongdoing and maintains social cohesion. As one interviewee explained:

One of the customary mechanisms used to resolve community issues is the Merenden Tedong ritual. When someone is found guilty, they are required to bring a buffalo as a punishment, depending on the severity of the offense. This customary sanction still plays a vital role in supporting peace in Mamasa after the conflict. (Personal Interview, Informant-6, 2025)

This statement illustrates how the proportional application of customary sanctions has been perceived as effective in resolving social conflicts, as it emphasizes accountability while simultaneously facilitating the restoration of fractured social relationships. In the post-conflict context of Mamasa, customary institutions have served as a primary pillar of social stability (Yosbekasa 2023). Customary leaders have operated not merely as mediators, but also as custodians of collective memory and interpreters of local normative frameworks that emphasize dialogue and deliberative

processes in addressing societal issues. Their authority derives from collective trust rather than coercive power, as communities have continuously cultivated and sustained this legitimacy across generations.

The construction of customary legitimacy in Mamasa can be sociologically understood as a process of reproducing traditional authority rooted in collective values, historical memory, and enduring kinship structures. Customary authority derives its strength from being perceived as a representation of ancestral values that safeguard social balance and communal harmony (Al Yakin 2016; Yosbekasa 2023). When customary decisions are formulated through deliberative processes involving key traditional actors and collective considerations, community members tend to comply because such decisions are regarded as expressions of justice aligned with local norms. Thus, customary legitimacy should not be viewed as static; rather, it is dynamically reproduced through social interactions that sustain public trust in the capacity of customary institutions to maintain social order.

From a Max Weberian perspective, the role of customary leaders in Mamasa reflects traditional authority, understood as a form of legitimacy grounded in the community's belief in the sanctity of inherited traditions and enduring customs. Community compliance with customary decisions emerges from deeply embedded cultural legitimacy rather than from codified regulations or the threat of formal sanctions. This configuration of traditional authority enhances the effectiveness of customary leaders conflict reconciliation processes in Mamasa. As these leaders are perceived as embodiments of collective values, customary institutions serve as both normative frameworks and sources of legitimate authority, playing a pivotal role in sustaining social harmony in everyday life.

Customary leaders in Mamasa have played a strategic role in reconciling social conflicts through culturally grounded approaches based on local values, deliberation, and respect for human dignity (Stepanus et al.

2020). The consistent involvement of customary leaders as mediators whenever conflicts emerge demonstrates that the strengthening of customary institutions in Mamasa has not merely aimed empower, preserve, or develop local wisdom, but has also positioned these institutions as functional arenas for resolving social conflicts grounded in customary norms. For instance, various social problems such as the spread of hoaxes, interpersonal conflicts, prolonged disputes, and even divorce are consistently addressed through customary law. In cases where these issues intersect with religious sensitivities and carry the potential to fragment social groups, customary institutions actively intervene to facilitate mediation and ensure resolution. The presence of customary leaders has created a safe space for conflicting groups to articulate their aspirations and grievances. Through customary deliberative processes, all parties experience recognition and respect, thereby enabling the containment of potential conflict escalation at an early stage.

2. Maintaining Coexistence and Peace through Religious Institutions

This section presents the empirical findings on the role of religious institutions in maintaining coexistence and peace in Mamasa, based on interview narratives and field observations. Rather than merely responding to the legacy of past socio-religious conflict, religious leaders, both Muslim and Christian, actively engage in shaping a climate of tolerance and preventing the escalation of religion-based tensions. As a region that has previously experienced episodes of violence, the moral authority of religious figures has become a critical factor in guiding community attitudes, fostering mutual respect, and sustaining peaceful coexistence.

In one interview, Informant-3 highlighted the collaborative role of religious leaders in maintaining social harmony, stating:

Religious leaders here consistently work together with various stakeholders to prevent open conflicts in the name of religion. We have the FKUB forum, which remains active in creating spaces for interfaith dialogue. (Personal Interview, Informant-3, 2025).

This statement demonstrates that religious leaders do not operate in isolation, but instead engage in structured cooperation through formal platforms such as the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB). Their involvement in such institutional spaces indicates a proactive approach to conflict prevention, fostering dialogue, coordination, and mutual understanding among different religious communities.

In another interview, Informant-10 described how everyday religious practices have been transformed into inclusive social actions, stating:

During major religious celebrations such as Idul Adha, we also distribute sacrificial meat to our non-Muslim brothers and sisters, and we celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*) in schools with predominantly Christian students. (Personal Interview, Informant-10, 2025).

This account shows that religious observances are not confined to intra-faith rituals, but extend into shared social experiences involving diverse community members. Such practices go beyond symbolic gestures, creating tangible expressions of interfaith solidarity, strengthening mutual trust, and reinforcing the foundations of peaceful coexistence. The commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*) in Mamasa has become a routine and institutionalized practice, particularly within schools and government offices, where it is held annually despite the region's predominantly non-Muslim demographic composition. This recurring practice has evolved into a widely accepted social phenomenon, supported by various stakeholders. These most notably educational leaders collaborate closely with the Kementerian Agama (the Ministry of Religious Affairs) and the Interfaith Harmony Forum of Mamasa.

In addition, the implementation of these celebrations involves the active participation of security forces, including the police and the military, alongside prominent religious leaders from diverse faith backgrounds, ensuring the events are conducted in a safe, orderly, and inclusive manner. The organization of Maulid celebrations in such plural settings reflects a deliberate effort to embed inclusive religious expressions within public institutions, thereby fostering mutual recognition and respect among diverse communities. Importantly, these activities have never been a source of contestation or tension; rather, they are collectively understood as part of a broader strategy to sustain long-term peacebuilding. As such, the normalization of Prophet's birthday (Maulid Nabi) celebrations across religious boundaries demonstrates how shared cultural-religious practices can function as effective instruments for reinforcing social cohesion and advancing sustainable peace in Mamasa.

According to these accounts, the role of religious leaders in Mamasa is not limited to individual religious guidance. However, it is institutionalized through collaborative mechanisms such as the Interfaith Harmony Forum, where they actively engage with multiple stakeholders to prevent the emergence of open religion-based conflict. In addition, religious practices are extended into inclusive social actions, such as the distribution of sacrificial meat during Eid al-Adha to non-Muslim communities and the celebration of Maulid Nabi in predominantly Christian school environments. This indicates that religious activities are no longer confined within exclusive doctrinal boundaries, but are carried out in ways that integrate devotional practices with interfaith social engagement, thereby fostering shared experiences, strengthening mutual trust, and reinforcing sustainable peaceful coexistence within a plural society such as Mamasa.

Within the Interfaith Harmony Forum, Muslim and Christian leaders are followed due to their capacity to mediate tensions and maintain social stability. When religious authorities diverge, tensions are managed through

deliberation and mutual adjustment rather than open conflict. The outcome depends on actors' influence and the need to sustain social harmony, indicating that authority operates as a negotiated, relational process. Religious institutions function as sources of normative legitimacy that reinforce the meanings of peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence in society (Naz et al. 2018). This moral authority is cultivated through religious practices such as sermons, religious education, and collective rituals that emphasize social harmony and coexistence. When religious leaders interpret doctrinal teachings within a framework that promotes unity and discourages violence, community members are inclined to accept such guidance as a moral obligation. In relation to customary institutions, religious moral authority does not operate in isolation; rather, it interacts and mutually reinforces customary norms through shared narratives of peace and social order, thereby creating a dual foundation of legitimacy that supports long-term social stability in Mamasa.

From a sociological perspective, the reconstruction of religious legitimacy and moral authority in post-conflict Mamasa is closely tied to the negotiation of religious identities within public life. The Interfaith Harmony Forum serves as a key institutional arena where Muslim and Christian leaders collectively articulate shared norms of coexistence. Through regular dialogue, mediation, and joint initiatives, religious authority is reoriented from exclusive and boundary-marking tendencies toward inclusive and peace-oriented roles. In this process, religious identity is maintained while being strategically negotiated to align with broader commitments to social harmony and stability. As a result, moral authority is constructed through doctrinal legitimacy alongside the demonstrated capacity of religious actors to foster trust, manage differences, and sustain peaceful intergroup relations in the public sphere.

In a further interview, a youth figure emphasized the active role of youth in sustaining interfaith harmony in Mamasa, stating:

On every major religious holiday, for example Eid al-Fitr, young people from Christian circles play a role in maintaining security and visiting each other. Conversely, during Christmas celebrations among Christians, youth groups also participate in maintaining a conducive atmosphere during the Christmas celebrations. (Personal Interview, Informant-9, 2025).

Complementing this, previous accounts from Informants 4 and 5 highlighted how religious leaders institutionalize interfaith cooperation through forums such as FKUB and inclusive practices during religious celebrations. Field observations during major religious events further documented the presence of cross-religious youth groups involved in maintaining order and participating in reciprocal visits, creating a visible atmosphere of mutual care and solidarity. Taken together, these accounts indicate that interfaith coexistence in Mamasa is not only maintained through formal religious institutions, but is also reinforced through everyday social practices and youth participation, linking institutional collaboration with grassroots expressions of tolerance and shared responsibility for peace.

Figure 2

Prophet's Birthday and Qurban Sharing with Toraja Clergy



Source: Data processed by the authors from national news (2026)

According to several informants, practices such as joint Mawlid celebrations, maintaining public order during religious events, and distributing *qurban* meat to non-Muslim communities in Mamasa are closely linked to the region's history of conflict. These practices are not merely religious expressions but represent deliberate social efforts to prevent renewed tensions and strengthen intergroup trust. They reflect a collective commitment among community leaders, religious actors, and local authorities to institutionalize everyday forms of inclusion and reciprocity as part of a broader strategy for sustaining long-term peace.

Interreligious dialogue forums have served as communicative spaces for clarifying issues, of the preventing misunderstandings, and reinforcing solidarity among religious communities. Within these spaces, religious leaders have acted as peace brokers by promoting inclusive religious values and rejecting the politicization of religion in social conflicts. Religious leaders in Mamasa have been served as contextual interpreters of religious teachings. Through sermons and religious instruction, they have emphasized messages of peace and universal humanity, ensuring that religion does not become a source of conflict but rather a foundation for reconciliation. In post-conflict contexts, the authority of religious leaders has been decisive in shaping public narratives (Ludovic 2021; Simangan, 2020). When religious leaders consistently articulate messages of peace and tolerance, the potential for mass mobilization based on religious sentiment has been significantly reduced.

The role of religious leaders in Mamasa reflects charismatic authority within a Weberian framework. Followers' obedience stems from trust in leaders' moral integrity, exemplary conduct, and spiritual capacity. This charismatic character has constituted the primary source of religious leaders' influence in reframing conflict narratives into narratives of peace. Accordingly, the charismatic authority of religious leaders has functioned as a form of social capital in peacebuilding efforts in Mamasa.

The practice of interfaith dialogue, institutionalized through official forums such as the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Mamasa, has also proven effective in preventing the escalation of religious conflict, particularly in areas with a history of interfaith tensions. The existence of dialogue spaces mediated by religious leaders from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds contributes to the establishment of constructive communication mechanisms, strengthening trust between groups, and creating an early warning system for potential religious-based conflict.

According to Al Qurtuby (2022:1), in the context of interreligious peacebuilding, religious institutions function as critical normative and organizational actors that mediate relations within and across faith communities. Beyond fulfilling spiritual and moral needs, these institutions play a strategic role in cultivating narratives of coexistence, regulating intergroup boundaries, and fostering mutual recognition among religious groups (Al Qurtuby 2022). Through formal teachings, interfaith dialogues, and community-based initiatives, religious institutions contribute to preventing religious polarisation and mitigating identity-based tensions. As demonstrated by Martin and Sol, (2021), their capacity to shape collective identities and promote prosocial behavior enables religious institutions to mobilize moral authority and social capital in support of reconciliation, social cohesion, and sustainable peace in plural societies.

3. Strengthening synergy between the government and the Customary and Religious Institutions in Sustaining Post-conflict Peacebuilding

This section presents empirical findings on the strengthening of synergy between government institutions and customary and religious authorities to sustain post-conflict peacebuilding in Mamasa, drawing on interview data and field observations. Sustainable peacebuilding initiatives in Mamasa are characterized by collaborative patterns that integrate structural, cultural, and normative dimensions. Government institutions

function as formal facilitators through policy frameworks, institutional forums, and mediation mechanisms, while customary bodies provide cultural legitimacy grounded in local values such as *musyawarah* (deliberation), kinship-based reconciliation, and symbolic forms of customary peace. At the same time, religious leaders, both Muslim and Christian, play a strategic role in constructing theological narratives that emphasize compassion, justice, and coexistence, thereby reducing residual interreligious tensions in the post-conflict context. In one interview, BM, the Chair of the Mamasa Customary Council, described a concrete form of this collaboration, stating:

We collaborate with the Mamasa District Prosecutor's Office in conflict resolution; here we have a restorative justice house program implemented through cooperation between customary institutions and the government. (Personal Interview, Informant-2, 2025)

According to this account, conflict resolution mechanisms in Mamasa are not solely reliant on formal legal systems, but are integrated with customary approaches through initiatives such as the restorative justice house program. This demonstrates how state legal frameworks are adapted to incorporate culturally grounded practices, allowing disputes to be resolved through dialogue, reconciliation, and community-based consensus. These findings indicate that peacebuilding in Mamasa is sustained through a multidimensional synergy among government authorities and customary institutions, reflected in joint programs that bridge formal and informal mechanisms and reinforce an inclusive and sustainable model of post-conflict peacebuilding.

Figure 3.

Mamasa Regent Joined Restorative Justice Forum with Police



Source: The National News, 2026

One of the most tangible forms of synergy among the government, customary, and religious institutions in sustaining post-conflict peacebuilding in Mamasa is reflected in the implementation of restorative justice programs. This initiative represents a collaborative effort between the District Prosecutor's Office and local customary institutions, functioning as a dispute resolution mechanism while simultaneously serving as an integrative space where formal legal frameworks intersect with socio-cultural norms.

In practice, when conflicts or disputes arise within the community, the prosecutor's office does not immediately proceed with formal litigation. Instead, it prioritizes a non-litigation approach by facilitating resolution through customary mechanisms. This approach is grounded in the assumption that *adat*-based settlements are more effective at fostering sustainable peace, because they are deeply embedded in local values of kinship, deliberation, and social harmony (Monama and Mokoеле 2024). In this context, the prosecutor's office serves as a legal facilitator, enabling customary authorities to exercise their normative functions.

The procedural framework typically begins with the classification of the dispute. Cases involving sensitive issues, particularly those related to ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA), are systematically directed toward customary resolution forums. Within these forums, customary leaders serve as primary mediators, while religious leaders provide moral guidance and reinforce the ethical dimensions of reconciliation. The deliberative process is allowing all parties to articulate their grievances and reach a mutually agreed settlement.

The relationship between customary decisions and formal legal outcomes in Mamasa reflects a dynamic coexistence. For minor to moderate cases, customary settlements may serve as the final resolution without further legal proceedings. However, in cases classified as serious criminal offenses, both systems operate concurrently. This means that, although customary sanctions have been fulfilled, formal legal processes continue to be enforced in accordance with state law. Such a pattern illustrates the interaction between traditional authority and rational-legal authority.

In certain instances, disputes are resolved entirely through customary mechanisms without escalation to formal legal institutions. One prominent form of customary sanction is *Merenden Tedong* (buffalo sacrifice), which carries profound symbolic significance as a means of restoring social relations, atoning for wrongdoing, and reinforcing communal harmony. This practice functions as a punitive measure and, at the same time, as a ritual of reconciliation that strengthens social cohesion.

The collaboration among governmental institutions represented by the prosecutor's office, customary institutions, and religious leaders within the restorative justice framework in Mamasa demonstrates an adaptive context-sensitive model of synergy. This model extends beyond legal resolution by emphasizing social restoration, collective healing, and the long-term sustainability of peace in a multicultural society (Bräuchler 2022). This empirical configuration reflects the simultaneous operation of multiple

forms of authority: traditional authority is indicated by the reliance on inherited norms, the legitimacy of customary leaders, and the persistence of ritual sanctions such as *Merenden Tedong*; charismatic authority is evident in the moral influence of religious and respected local figures who shape reconciliation through persuasion and ethical narratives; while rational-legal authority is embodied in the procedural role of the prosecutor’s office, including case classification, discretionary diversion to *adat* mechanisms, and the enforcement of formal law in cases categorized as serious offenses.

In the context of Mamasa, this synergistic approach has constituted an effective strategy for preventing the recurrence of conflict. Collaborative arrangements enable early detection of potential tensions and for timely, equitable resolution processes. Consequently, peacebuilding in Mamasa has emerged as a collective endeavor across multiple actors who complement one another’s roles and sources of authority. This synergy reflects the convergence of legal-rational authority (the government), traditional authority (customary institutions), and charismatic authority (religious leaders). Within a Weberian framework, the combination of these three forms of authority has produced a balanced and effective power structure for sustaining peace.

Table 1.

The Form of Synergy Between Three Authorities In Peacebuilding

Actor	Form of Synergy	Programs/Activities	Impact
Government	Legal facilitator	Restorative Justice House	Justice of conflict resolution
Customary institutions	Cultural mediator	Customary deliberation	Social legitimacy
Religious leaders	Moral guardian	FKUB and interfaith dialogue	Social stability and harmony

The synergy between government institutions, customary law, and religious authorities in Mamasa operates through a structured yet flexible

mechanism that integrates formal legal procedures with culturally embedded and morally guided practices. In practical terms, conflict cases are often first identified at the community level and brought into a deliberative space involving customary leaders, religious figures, and representatives of the state. The government, acting as a legal facilitator, provides the institutional framework through programmes such as the Restorative Justice House, where disputes are formally registered and assessed. Within this setting, customary institutions take the lead as cultural mediators by conducting *musyawarah* (deliberation), drawing on kinship ties, local wisdom, and symbolic reconciliation practices to reach consensus-based solutions that are socially acceptable. Religious leaders simultaneously function as moral guardians, reinforcing ethical considerations through religious teachings and often participating in forums such as Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) to ensure that interfaith sensitivities are addressed and that outcomes promote harmony rather than division.

D. CONCLUSION

The This study underscores that the strengthening of customary and religious authority in post-conflict Mamasa serves as a crucial foundation for sustainable peace. Peacebuilding efforts are not solely dependent on formal legal systems but are deeply rooted in culturally embedded practices that gain broad community acceptance. With reinforcement from the Mamasa regional government, *adat* and religious leaders have enhanced their legitimacy, enabling them to act as effective mediators and stabilizing forces in managing post-conflict tensions.

The findings reveal that peace is more effectively sustained through the integration of multiple forms of authority. Customary institutions facilitate dialogue and consensus-based conflict resolution, while religious actors promote shared moral values that foster intercommunal trust. The

collaboration between these local institutions and state actors illustrates a complementary governance model, where formal and informal mechanisms work in tandem to strengthen both legitimacy and effectiveness, as reflected in partnerships with legal institutions such as the Mamasa Prosecutor's Office.

However, this study is limited by its focus on a single case and its qualitative approach, which may restrict broader generalization. Future research should explore comparative contexts and examine the role of younger generations and educational institutions in sustaining peace values. Practically, these findings highlight the importance of policy frameworks that formally recognize and integrate customary and religious institutions, suggesting that durable peace in plural societies is best achieved through institutional arrangements grounded in local legitimacy and social trust.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express sincere gratitude to the Rector of IAIN Parepare, Prof. Dr. Hannani, M.Ag, and the LP2M teams for their support through the Litabdimas Research Grant of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia. Appreciation is also extended for the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). This article is one of my thesis research paper.

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