

The implications of Christian aid reception by Muslims on Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Christian aid in Kenya has also been both a tool of hope and a point of tension in intra-faith relations, as some of the society welcomed it with open arms, others in doubt, while others received it conditionally on terms negotiated. The central objective of the study was to examine the effects of reception styles of Christian Aid on Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County with the following specific research objectives: to examine the effect of grateful acceptance of Christian Aid on Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County, to examine the effect of suspicion of Christian Aid on Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County, and to examine the effect of conditional acceptance of Christian Aid on Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County. Two theories (Social Identity Theory and Theory of Intergroup Contact), which are most relevant to the dynamics of Christian aid among Muslim communities, guided this study. A qualitative descriptive case study in Osmer's Practical Theology Model was used in the research. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, and binary logistic regression were used for the data, and qualitative data were coded thematically to bring contextual depth and triangulation. Study sampling design qualifications that were sampled in an attempt to attain an equal and representative study respondents' sample of the target population that consisted of 2,230 members of Isiolo County's local Muslim population. The target population was stratified into six Christian humanitarian organizations that run activities in Isiolo County and offer aid. Stratification was conducted to make sure the sample reflected members of the Muslim community and, by default, are beneficiaries of aid from Christian organizations in Isiolo County. Questionnaires were the principal tools in data collection, which was quantitative. Three common reception patterns of aid were found. The first was acceptance with gratitude, and respondents and leaders both came out openly and mentioned the benefits of Christian relief, particularly during times of crisis such as drought and famine. Gratitude also had a strong association with improved Christian-Muslim relations because it prompted cooperation, trust, and the community's participation in development projects. Suspicion and fearfulness were the usual problems, according to memories of relief associated with missionaries, fear of religious conversion, and shared rumors. Such stereotypes once discouraged the community from joining aid programs, and they preferred receiving the assistance anonymously, thereby eroding interfaith trust. Conditional acceptance was a reaction that mirrored the realist response in the sense that the community demanded firmly, negotiated with relief agencies, and oversaw the relief distribution with the purpose of providing cultural and religious legitimacy. The study recommends greater transparency in aid provision, open forums for interfaith dialogue, compliance with community terms, and institution-building for participatory monitoring.

Keywords: Christian Relief, Interfaith Relations, Isiolo County, Acceptance, Wariness and Suspicion

I. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, Christian relief has generally encountered ambivalent responses depending on historical, cultural, and religious contexts. In Europe and North America, organizations such as World Vision, Caritas, and Catholic Relief Services are commonly accepted as legitimate humanitarian organizations. Their conduct has been broadly perceived as a show of Christian social responsibility and not proselytism, and that has allowed them to engage closely with governments, multilateral bodies, and civic groups (De Lauri & Turunen, 2022, p. 44).

In other parts of Asia, however, such as India and Pakistan, Christian relief is occasionally confronted with suspicion owing to concerns about conversion and legacy of colonialism. Even in the Middle East, where religious affiliations are politicized, Christian relief organizations have at times struggled to live down suspicion despite performing simplest of services. Yet, internationally, Christian Non-Governmental Organizations [NGOs] are accorded respect as pivotal players in humanitarian intervention and development with their reputation grounded on professionalism, impartiality, and serving the poorest (Kemp, 2023, p. 312).

In Somalia, to name one example, Christian humanitarian work has sometimes been seen as being forced upon them and accused of having hidden religious agendas. However, despite such hindrances, Christian NGOs are much valued for trying to address needs such as famine, war, and displacement, and have effectively crossed religious lines by meeting human needs. There exists a dynamic Christian relief tradition in Kenya dating back to missionary days when hospitals and schools were established in the spirit of evangelization as well as social action. Today, the likes of Caritas Kenya, World Vision, and Anglican Church of Kenya Development Services remain main providers in the areas of health, education, disaster relief, and livelihood. While at times religious motives for aid are questioned, the general level of tolerance has been good. Christian organizations are generally regarded as reliable partners for gap-filling by government, particularly in far-flung and periphery areas (Ager et al., 2019, p. 72)

In Isiolo County, Christian aid takes on eerie significance. The county, with a population of about 268,000 people, is composed mainly of Muslims (69%) and is ethnically diverse, comprising Borana, Somali, Turkana, Rendille, Samburu, and Meru communities (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019, p. 45). The county is a previously marginalised and socio-economically disadvantaged region whose economy is mainly pastoralism and whose principal cause of long-term food insecurity, negative health outcomes, and limited access to education is cyclic drought. Ever since the 1990s, Christian organizations such as Caritas Isiolo have attempted to deal with such issues by providing food aid, water projects, medical care, and livelihood schemes. While many Muslims in Isiolo have appreciated such assistance, especially if it is directed towards the weaker sections of society such as women, children, and the elderly, religious difference has provided the motivation for a sub-surface suspicion. Received in bulk, Christian reception of aid in Isiolo mirrors the broader international and continental patterns: valued for its material assistance to human welfare but sometimes controversial through suspicion of religious activity and identity. This study hence sought to explore how Christian reception of aid by Muslims in Isiolo influences Christian–Muslim relations, and what this implies for building trust, living together, and development in the region.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Isiolo County in Kenya's semi-arid northern region provides a complex environment for Christian NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance in the predominantly Muslim environment. The demographic configuration of the region, which is marked by Muslim prevalence and presence of sizable Borana ethnic groups, brings religious and cultural factors that tremendously influence how humanitarian assistance is received. One of the most obvious issues is twinned reception of assistance, which is usually characterised by suspicion and mistrust fuelled by past grievances, theological conflicts, and apprehensions about proselytization. Such perceptions have the potential to undermine participation in the community and the success of aid interventions.

Assistance is also usually received on the understanding that it can be delivered only through local Muslim groups or guarantees of non-religious engagement, thereby inhibiting the capacity of Christian non-governmental organisations to implement it. Even where assistance is willingly and gratuitously extended, reaction is ambiguous in the community; whereas a few see it as a true expression of solidarity, others do so suspiciously or politically. Such challenges highlight the need for culturally sensitive, trust-building approaches. This study will examine these trends to optimize the benefit of faith-based relief response and foster Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo and globally.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To examine the effect of grateful acceptance of Christian Aid on Christian-Muslim Relations in Isiolo County.
- ii. To assess the effect of suspicion and wariness towards Christian Aid on Christian-Muslim Relations in Isiolo County.
- iii. To investigate the effect of conditional acceptance of Christian Aid on Christian-Muslim Relations in Isiolo County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s supposes that individuals construct a part of their identity through group membership and that these group memberships influence their attitudes and behaviors towards other individuals (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Forming an "in-group" (us) and an "out-group" (them), SIT demonstrates how in-group solidarity can be the origin of suspicion or prejudicing towards individuals who are not in the same group.

In Christian relief in Isiolo, SIT illuminates why Muslims sometimes distrust Christian organizational relief suspiciously. Since donors of aid belong to an out-group stereotype, everything that they do shall have agenda motives like proselytizing or intrusiveness into culture. SIT also describes how positive experience seeps through such barriers

and creates new knowledge of the out-group. Strength of SIT is that it can be used to explain how identity affects delivery of aid and is therefore very useful in religiously diverse settings. Weakness is that it focuses too much on conflict and division and falls short of explaining the challenge of getting over the divisions.

2.1.2 The Theory of Intergroup Contact

The Intergroup Contact Theory, initially founded by Gordon Allport in 1954, suggests that in the best circumstances of equal standing, common aims, collaboration, and support for institutions, contact would bring together various groups by lowering prejudice and enhancing the relations between them. This hypothesis relies on the fact that where Muslim aid recipients and Christian aid workers work together in such community activities as water projects, health projects, or education projects, they develop trust and stereotypes are alleviated.

In being a source of shared experience, aid is not only an exercise of humanity but a source of further inter-faith encounter. Strength of theory is that it is so positioned in scope: it addresses circumstances under which constructive contact will take place. Weakness is that these circumstances may not exist in vulnerable or marginal environments where power inequalities and distrust prevail. Contact itself, under the specified circumstances, may fail to eliminate prejudice.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Grateful Acceptance

Dickens (2017, p. 200) wrote about verbal description of gratitude and its effect on Christians-Muslim relations. The results were that communities that thanked the donors always had better Christian-Muslim relations. The positive effect was described in how verbal gratitude led to religious bridging as well as orientations towards cooperation. Involvement of communities in activity that involves aid has been researched extensively. Dickens (2017, p. 202) reiterated that extremely high levels of engagement in aid activity, volunteering, and distribution would be needed to improve interfaith relations. Dickens required in his research that increased Muslim community engagement in these activities of aid were linked with improved relations with Christian NGOs. This level of interaction facilitated greater cooperation and understanding. Ekezie (2022, p. 15) also explored the latent meaning of expressed gratitude toward the Nigeria long-term aid relationships

Experiments had proven that long-term expressed gratitude was related to longer and more collaborative relations between Christian agencies and whom they were serving. Long-term appreciation allowed long-term partnership and trust. Ekezie (2022, p. 16) also explored the effect of involvement of individuals on long-term aid impact. The study recognized that active participation of community members in relief work would produce long-term partnership projects between Christian NGOs and target local communities. Proximity promoted short-term relief provision but also enhanced longer-term collaboration. Popular support by local leaders also remained a dominant feature in Christian-Muslim relations. Ssetuba (2024, p. 118) did research on the acceptance role of the local Muslim leaders in the Christian aid acceptance on people with HIV/AIDS in Uganda. It was revealed in the study that if the local leader accepted and appreciated the aid openly, it was equivalent to goodwill in Christian agencies' contexts. Endorsements, in such a manner, helped towards having started establishing trust as well as having facilitated interaction between the donor and the community to become easier.

In Kenya, Alio (2015, p. 299) had previously shown that support from local Muslim leaders positively affected the embrace of Christian aid in Tana River County. Popular consent and acceptance by appreciation leaders, their study found, helped in upholding positive relations and successful activities of aid. Nyongesa (2019, p. 309) focused on Kenya and analyzed the role that appreciation played in an attempt to spur long-run cooperation. The research proved that appreciative communities would also develop long-run projects with community organizations. The long-run commitment was a result of the positive effect of appreciation in creating cooperation and respectfulness towards each other.

2.2.2 Suspicion and Wariness

Gutkowski and Larkin (2021, p. 1060) so vividly captures this dynamic and illustrates that a supermajority, well over 65% of Syrian Muslim aid recipients, were "very concerned" that the provision of aid would be tied to proselytism attempts. That suspicion is especially corrosive where religious conservatism is strong and Islamic identity purity is jealously protected. The degree of fear has been enough to make individuals open to guarded engagement with Christian relief organizations, with some going out of their way to use Muslim-owned or state-owned facilities even where the latter is not the custom.

In Indonesia, Nur Syam and Ahida (2025, p. 50) reports that as many as 50% of individuals in parts of Aceh were "somewhat concerned" that Christian aid was a covert effort at religious conversion. Suspicion is not unwarranted, however, since the presence of foreign Christian NGOs in predominantly Muslim populations has sometimes been linked to heterodox religious teachings. Assumptions are again intermingled with local memory of missionary incursion

into the region, one which puts a discrediting taint on its humanitarian work until today. Likewise, in Indonesia's Aceh in rural Indonesia, there is reciprocal restraint. Most recipients do not want to be helped anonymously or confidentially so that they will not be openly stigmatized as having any connection with Christian relief agencies and thereby boycotted or blamed for apostasy Gutkowski and Larkin (2021, p. 1060). Individuals do not wish to be identified as being part of Christians in the public sphere, and it will stigmatize them, especially with the surrounding rural local communities since there is strong social solidarity.

The same suspicion was raised in Ethiopia, and even more so in the Somali province. Weldu and Nyanhoga, (2024, P. 223) quotes that at best 45% of Muslims were "somewhat concerned" about Christian aid motives. This is because they are aware that the Christian agencies are using human development aid as a tool of proselytism and are fearful because Christian mission history in the country has done just that. Christian-Muslim polarisation has to an exceedingly large extent shaped the nature of aid in Nigeria. Among the Christians, who are predominant in the north, Afolaranmi (2020, p. 242) observed that Christian assistance is openly shown as a way of trying to convert individuals to Christianity. The individuals are so wary about this, and 52% of the interviewees had already stated that they were already "very concerned" about religious elements of receiving Christian agency assistance.

This is also a suspicion that is corroborated by the fact that the sectarian tensions within the region religious sensitivities, were running high. Christian relief agencies have been under suspicion in Kenya, particularly in Kenya's coastal regions that are predominantly Muslim. Green, (2020, p. 34) also demonstrates how Kenyan Muslims did not want to be given Christian relief as an adjunct to religious conversion programs. This is the legacy of the missionaries' activities in the area and combined with the prevailing socio-economic challenges of the country. Even among the northern parts of Kenya where there is Islamic predominance, the same has been seen. Ager et al. (2019, p. 72) confirms that 50% of Muslims indicated they were "somewhat concerned" about Christian aid's agenda. These are motivated by the belief that Christian agencies can use humanitarian aid as a means of proselytization and have had reason for this based on historical Christian missions in the country.

2.3.3 Conditional Acceptance

Most at risk is the political climate in Myanmar, the Rohingya crisis notwithstanding, where Muslim communities have been forcibly repressed. Christian relief organizations, in the massively competitive provision of relief, are regularly confronted with suspicion and distrust. Muslim society and the Rohingya specifically, have made relief conditional. Conditions typically require that Christian relief workers avoid religious symbols and relief provided is not requested by religious trappings (Kipgen, 2020, p. 55). Conditional tolerance is a term used to describe natural suspicion on the part of the community towards religious intervention or activity within humanitarian agendas of conversion process. Record and documentation of such incidents within community covenant is actually a documentation of levels of religious sensibility within relief intervention.

Similarly, the same patterns of conditional acceptance are observed where Christian organizations have been involved for decades. There is aid that is given with the promise that it would be dispensed on a non-sectarian basis, and even in some, there is Islamic local leadership that has some role to play in the distribution process of the delivery (Khafagy, 2020, p. 9). Such intervention by the local religious leaders is regarded as a prevention of the risk of religious conversion and an effort to Islamize the relief being offered. The conditions under which those types of communities, substantiated at large in interview and testimony with such community leaders, would accept Christian relief pass some qualitative threshold of suspicion that can be far below givers and takers of relief.

Christian relief in Yemen, where war has ravaged much of the country, is provided for the most part on the condition that any such-so-called religious symbols or markers are not used. Where territory is controlled by Islamic extremist groups, strict stipulations are put in place that aid is provided in a manner that will not undermine the group's religious ideology (Elayah & Al-Awami, 2024, p. 2271). The needs are pushed to their limits by contract conditions and with respect to the type of religious conversion that is taken into account. The prevalence of the diseases, as witnessed in the history of conformity of the community and through interviews, are indicators of the greatest challenge Christian relief agencies face in providing their services without evident religious strife.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Approach

The study employed qualitative descriptive case study design supported by the Osmer's Practical Theology Model. Qualitative research was adopted because the study critically sought to investigate Muslim societies in everyday life, meaning, and response to Christian aid. Unlike number-counting quantitative research designs, the qualitative research provided room for the researcher to have wiser attitude, meaning, and relational dynamics to receive aid and interfaith. This was the suitable design because the research was confined to one geographical area (Isiolo County) and examined the precise same dynamics among Muslim societies and Christian relief agencies therein. Selecting Isiolo

alone enabled the research to come up with highly precise and context-specific results that were not otherwise easily available through more expansive survey methods.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

Study sampling design qualifications that were sampled in an attempt to attain an equal and representative study respondents' sample of the target population that consisted of 2,230 members of Isiolo County's local Muslim population. Target population was stratified into six Christian humanitarian organizations that run activities in Isiolo County offering Aid. Stratification was conducted to make sure the sample reflected members of the Muslim community and by default are beneficiaries of aid from Christian organizations in Isiolo County. The following are some of the organizations used in the present study: Caritas Isiolo, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision, Merti Integrated Development Programme (MID-P), Christian Aid, and Pastoralist Women for Health and Education (PWHE). Muslim beneficiaries were identified in all the strata who were being assisted by one of the said Christian NGOs. In this manner, it was possible to conduct chosen sampling from the ones who directly feel the impact of the assistance and who have some perceptions and opinions on the assistance that they directly encountered.

The representatives from each stratum were selected in proportion to the respondents in the recipient population of the aid. This made it certain that the recipients of every organization were selected in proportion to their frequency in the population. Where, for example, Caritas Isiolo had more recipients than organizations, its recipients were represented proportionally in the sample in relation to the other organizations. Having defined the strata and the strata ratios, then simple random sampling was conducted where within each stratum individuals were sampled. This was either through the use of a random number generator or through random picking of names from an aid beneficiary list such that every individual who was eligible had an equal chance of being included in the sample. The sampling frame was the registered Muslim beneficiaries of the aid by all the Christian organizations serving in Isiolo County. The roll was constructed from the respective six organizations and verified for completeness and accuracy in an attempt to cover the beneficiaries' population. The verified total of 2,230 beneficiaries of the aid and estimated sample size of 340, the sample was distributed proportionally to the respective strata. Sample size per stratum was established as a percentage of the target population of the aid beneficiaries.

3.3 Data Collection

Questionnaires were the principal tools in data collection which was quantitative. Close-ended questionnaire was applied in the administration of questionnaires on the target audience of the target population. The questionnaire contained open and close-ended questions with a view of gathering diverse responses on the attitude and perception of the community towards Christian aid. The questionnaire touched on sensitive topics such as: General impressions of Christian aid, under what circumstances the aid was being provided, and probable effect of aid on Christian-Muslim relations. Questionnaires were handed out personally and this allowed the possibility of easy collection of data from masses, and generality and reliability for numbers were ensured.

3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

Percentages, frequencies, and medians were computed for reporting demographic information summaries and on Christian aid community attitudes. Since the dependent variable (Christian-Muslim relations) was also recoded into two attributes, inferential statistics, i.e., binomial-logistic model of regression, were used to ascertain the effect of independent variables (mode of reception of aid i.e., gratitude, suspicion, or conditional acceptance) on dependent variable (Christian-Muslim relations). Results were calculated from frequency tables endeavoring to make them readable and comparable with ease.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The information was provided fully and in non-technical terms as a means of facilitating the participants in making an informed decision to participate. There was care to seek permission of all the subjects to facilitate complete voluntary participation and that they were informed that they had a right to withdraw at any point without negative consequence. There was privacy at all levels of the research. Anonymity of participant and response was maintained in such a way that there was no means whatsoever to trace data back to individuals. The information was also kept securely and to the individuals only who needed to do so, hence safeguarding secret information. Confidentiality was also considered; the interview and questionnaire were conducted in private rooms to enable participants to be free and safe in providing their experiences.

The personal information acquired from the participants was respected, and they were not forced to provide matters that injured them. They also honored the participants' health by treating them well whenever they required it and being polite during transactions. Transparency and honesty were used in the reporting of study findings. Study findings were reported transparently as the ones obtained, and conflict of interest disclosed for the sake of preventing

bias in the study. Second, the research proposal was prepared for review and approval before an institutional ethics review board for adherence to human-subject study ethical standards. Following such ethical standards, the research would conduct a study that would be respectful, responsible, and dedicated to the highest potential ethical standards.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Grateful Acceptance of Christian Aid

The research was interested in finding out the influence that welcomes Christian aid with gratitude has on Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County. They were also asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 5, from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree", how much they disagreed or agreed with a series of statements about how the community reacted in relation to Christian relief. The result, as presented in Table 1, shows attitude and community reaction towards Christian relief tendencies.

Table 1

Grateful acceptance of Christian Aid

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Median
The community often expresses gratitude for the Christian aid provided	26%	30%	21%	13%	10%	2
Local leaders publicly endorse the aid provided by Christian organizations	32%	27%	24%	12%	5%	2
There is active community participation in initiatives associated with Christian aid	28%	28%	22%	15%	7%	2
The community is willing to engage in long-term projects with Christian aid providers	31%	26%	14%	18%	11%	2

Table 1, 56% shows that the respondents agreed (30%) or else strongly agreed (26%) that the community frequently appreciates Christian assistance. This is a normally taken to be a positive attitude towards Christian humanitarian assistance. The median value of 2 shows that the community leans towards agreement, and therefore, thankfulness is the frequent response pattern among Muslim recipients.

Also documented was strong public support for local leaders, where 59% strongly agreed (32%) or agreed (27%) that Christian aid programs are endorsed by public leaders. Public support is crucial because Muslim leadership acceptability will put legitimacy seal on engagement with external actors Alio (2015, p. 301). This agrees with Nyongesa (2019, p. 312), who testified that the public mobilization by local leaders enhances trust, program legitimacy, and religious group collaboration in faith-based development programs.

Moreover, 56% of the respondents affirmed positively involvement in Christian relief schemes, i.e., beneficiaries are not just passive recipients but also play an active role in the implementation process. This is at the heart of facilitating ownership and sustainability of the relief program. Ekezie (2022, p. 15) also found in Nigeria that participatory involvement in interfaith schemes has the ability to create mutual respect and sustainable engagement among people of different faiths.

57% of them agreed or strongly agreed when they were asked whether they would be willing to work in long-term collaborations with Christian relief agencies. The implication is extremely high trust and openness to further cooperation. Safapour et al. (2021, p. 15) got the same response on the study on the frequency with which natural disasters occurs in places of interfaith conflict, where gratitude by Christian relief agencies meant they were open to forming long-term alliances, hence promoting peaceful coexistence and respect among faiths. Overall, the study recognizes that appreciation is a good facilitator of good Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County. Appreciation, expression of appreciation, public appreciation, community involvement, and willingness for long-term collaboration in general portray positive Christian assistance attitude. Appreciation not only guarantees social cohesion but also forms the foundation of interfaith interaction and building confidence.

This is also consistent with Dickens (2017, p. 204), which predicts that appreciation of interreligious humanitarian activity lowers prejudice and boosts affective reciprocity. It is also consistent with Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis requiring friendly contact in the form of equality and respect lowers intergroup hostility. The Isiolo case therefore illustrates global broader tendencies whereby religiously identified aid organizations appreciation contributes to bridging religious divides and achieving peaceful coexistence (De Lauri & Turunen, 2022, p. 44).

In short, appreciative acceptance of Christian aid in Isiolo County favors Christian-Muslim relations positively by fostering gratitude, respect, and hope for further interaction. It can be argued that gratitude serves as a social and moral bridge, making interaction in aid exchanges into interfaith relationships of understanding and shared long-term devotion.

4.1.2 Suspicion and Wariness towards Christian Aid

The questionnaire aimed to explore how suspicion and mistrust of Christian aid envelop Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County. Respondents provided scores from 1-5 for four statements regarding their behavior and attitude towards Christian aid and their willingness to accept them. How the results were phrased can be seen from Table 2.

Table 2

Suspicion and Wariness towards Christian Aid

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Median
There is a concern in the community that accepting Christian aid might lead to religious conversion.	29%	31%	10%	20%	10%	2
Many people prefer to accept Christian aid privately rather than publicly.	37%	29%	15%	13%	6%	2
Negative rumors about the intentions behind Christian aid are common in the community.	15%	7%	20%	28%	30%	4
The community shows reduced participation in programs associated with Christian aid.	40%	29%	12%	15%	4%	2

The results in Table 2 show the widespread fear among Isiolo County Muslims regarding Christian aid intentions. A total of 60% of the respondents (31% agreed and 29% strongly agreed) were concerned that the acceptance of Christian aid would mean religious conversion. The median value of 2 shows that this fear does exist and is common. This is in accordance with, Gutkowski and Larkin (2021, p. 1069) whose findings established that over 65% of Syrian Muslim aid recipients were apprehensive that Christian humanitarian assistance might have proselytization motives. Similarly, Nur Syam and Ahida (2025, p. 52) revealed that almost half of the respondents in Aceh, Indonesia, were of the opinion that Christian aid might be a disguise for conversion work.

The findings also reveal that 66% of the respondents (37% strongly agreed and 29% agreed) would prefer receiving Christian aid privately as compared to publicly. This finding means a fear of stigma based on social understanding of receiving aid from a Christian agency. This type of privacy-driven prudence is consistent with Gutkowski and Larkin (2021, p. 1061), wherein rural Syrian Muslims would not openly identify themselves with Christian groups in order to escape communal reprisal or accusations of apostasy.

On the other hand, 43% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was pervasive, in addition to 35% agreed or strongly agreed. This polarized reaction (median 4) indicates polarization some in the community are highly distrustful of Christian motives for assistance, whereas others can maybe perceive them as innocuous. This aligns with (Weldu & Nyanchoga, 2024, P. 219), who identified similar divisions amongst Ethiopian Muslims, concluding that suspicion was consistent with prior exposure to Christian agencies and local religious leaders' attitudes.

The noteworthy 69% of interview respondents (40% strongly agreed, and 29% agreed) ensured that participation of the community in Christian relief programs is lower due to suspicion. That low rate of participation goes a long way to show how suspicion directly affects the effectiveness and provision of humanitarian interventions. The same findings were reported by Afolaranmi (2020, p. 249) in Nigeria, whereby over half of Muslim respondents associated Christian relief activity with the goal of conversion, leading to low program participation.

These results confirm the theoretical expectations of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which asserts that group identity influences perception and interrelation with out-groups. In this case, the religious "in-group" designation (Muslim) is likely to stimulate suspicion of the "out-group" (Christian organizations), especially in settings dominated by historical and theological competition. Intergroup Contact Theory is also applicable here: where there is no meaningful intergroup contact, suspicion and prejudice prevail. In Isiolo, limited interfaith interaction and asymmetrical power relations can prevent the constructive contact conditions for attaining mutual trust.

Therefore, wariness and distrust of Christian assistance in Isiolo County are socially entrenched as well as historically founded. These disaffection and skepticism deplete community involvement, undermine credibility, and complicate interfaith collaboration. But these outcomes also offer a chance: by confronting fears through transparent, non-proselytizing means and participatory local alliances, Christian NGOs have the potential to restore trust over time and foster healthier Christian-Muslim relations.

4.1.3 Conditional Acceptance of Christian Aid

The study deliberated on the impact of the conditional acceptance of Christian aid on Christian-Muslim relations in Isiolo County. The respondents had to score their level of agreement with four statements on the community's method of accepting Christian aid, from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). The findings, as seen in Table 3, highlight the calculated and cautious nature of the community's method of accepting foreign aid.

Table 3*Conditional Acceptance of Christian Aid*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Median
The community often sets specific conditions before accepting Christian aid.	35%	31%	12%	15%	7%	2
Only certain types of Christian aid are accepted by the community.	38%	30%	14%	12%	6%	2
There is negotiation between the community and aid providers to clarify the terms of the aid.	36%	31%	14%	12%	7%	2
The community monitors the use of Christian aid to ensure it meets the agreed-upon conditions.	40%	31%	11%	11%	7%	2

According to Table 3, one would be intrigued to find that an interesting percentage of respondents said that the community places conditions on receiving Christian aid. Exactly, 35% of the respondents completely agreed and 31% agreed that the community often places certain conditions before taking the aid. This means the community is not a mere recipient and rather shapes the conditions under which the aid is received so that it fits religious and cultural norms. Also, 38% of the people strongly agreed and 30% agreed that certain types of Christian aid are only acceptable. This selectivity indicates careful examination of the type of aid, with the community having a predisposition for those that are for immediate social and economic needs and avoiding those that would in any way compromise their religious or cultural unity. Negotiations also emerged as important, with 36% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing that discussions with aid providers help clarify terms.

This proactive involvement highlights agency within the community, echoing Green (2020, p. 18) argument that African faith communities often “renegotiate the meaning and function of aid” to preserve local religious identity while engaging external support. Finally, 40% of the participants strongly agreed and 31% agreed that they monitor use of aid to maintain agreed terms. This level of alertness shows community determination to safeguard its values, a discovery in line with Ng’etich (2024, p. 4), who added that Muslim communities in East Africa approach Christian NGOs cautiously, often putting boundaries on projects to prevent perceived proselytization. This aligns with Weldu and Nyanhoga (2024, p. 222), who described in Ethiopia that conditional acceptance was a pragmatic approach: communities embraced humanitarian assistance but insisted on limiting Christian visibility to reduce tension. At the same time, some researchers caution that overregulation of assistance gets in the way of long-term partnerships. For instance, Kemp (2023, p. 315) argues that undue conditionality or suspicion will dissipate the power of transformation of interfaith alliances, fixing communities in transactional as opposed to trust-based relationships.

4.2 Inferential Studies**4.2.1 Parameter Estimates on the Implications of the Patterns on Christian and Muslim Relations**

Table 4 presents a detailed description of the parameter estimates of the binomial logistic regression model, which shows the role played by various determinants on the likelihood of having good relationships between the Christian and Muslim worlds.

Table 4*Model Parameter Estimates*

Model		B	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
1	Grateful acceptance	1.567	1	.002	4.792
	Suspicion and wariness	1.487	1	.011	4.424
	Conditional acceptance	1.381	1	.013	3.979
	Constant	1.193	1	.010	3.297

Statistical modeling of Table 5 indicates the strongest positive predictor to be grateful acceptance ($\text{Exp}(B) = 4.792$, $p = .002$). That is, five times more acceptable are the possibilities for good interfaith relations due to gratitude by one unit. The finding was supplemented by qualitative interviews. A Muslim youth leader said, “When we thank them openly for the boreholes or schools, they also respect us more.” It clears tension. Thankfulness, yet another of our interviewees proposed, also helped make it drawing reciprocal support from relief agencies and, by implication, sustaining cooperation. Appreciation of religious aid in African contexts makes Wilkinson and Tomalin (2023, p. 204) say it rejuvenates trust and creates avenues for interfaith collaboration. They further shows that expression of gratitude, even in a situation where there are convergently disparate relief relations, helps towards speaking and an avenue towards peace-building.

Suspicion was also a significant negative predictor ($\text{Exp}(B) = 4.424$, $p = .011$). The greater the suspicion of the respondents, the over four times higher opportunities existed for dissidence with cordial relationships between religions. Suspicion that the respondents witnessed on a day-to-day basis. For instance, one of the elderly respondents was quoted

to have said, "Sometimes the help comes with hidden teachings. We fear if our children get affected." They responded, "We take the food but are not actually certain what they really want from us." Such signs illustrate how distrust destroys cooperation. This is further corroborated by Ng'etich (2024, p. 4), who also factored in the aspect that Muslim communities do not trust Christian relief to be a tool of proselytism. Conditioned acceptance was also significant ($\text{Exp}(B) = 3.979$, $p = .013$). This verifies conditionality is not rejectionist behavior but one that even builds relationships as long as Muslim sensitivities are not offended. One of the originators of such a women's group described it as, "We say we're taking food, but no preaching." When they negotiate first with our leaders, then we get the aid in total. Another of the respondents responded, "When they agree, things are better." Green (2020, p. 22) describe how conditionality in negotiated aid agreements makes people independent and enables greater inter-faith engagement. Also, Morse et al. (2023, p. 12) concludes that conditionality brings greater dignity, agency, and respect to more dominant recipient groups through more religion-based relationships for assistance.

The persistence ($B = 1.193$, $p = .010$; $\text{Exp}(B) = 3.297$) indicates that there are other determinants that influence Christian-Muslim relations. Evidence gathered using interviews attributed political bias, economic inequality, and interlocal leadership rivalries as determinants that influenced. One of the interviewees detailed as, 'Sometimes the problem isn't aid, but politics politicians use it to divide us.' Kemp (2023, p. 317) agree as well by asserting that socio-political motivations hold equal potential to generate interfaith experience as do religious motivations.

Lastly, regression and qualitative findings are congruent to presume that: Appreciation fosters cooperation and good will. Suspicion demolishes trust and engenders tension. Conditional acceptance is the realistic middle path that promises respect and dignity. Triangulated awareness here also tells us that aid will fill or create gaps based on reception and management. In seizing control of the relations between Christians and Muslims, aid agencies must create openness, accept realities on grassroots level, and assure each side's appreciation.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Grateful Acceptance as a Driver of Positive Relations: Both quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed that acts of appreciation, public expression by leaders, and people's participation in aid programs instilled goodwill and fostered a culture of cooperation. Logistic regression analysis confirmed that appreciation is the strongest predictor of harmonious Christian-Muslim relations with the odds being nearly five times higher for consensus than cooperation. It means wherever recipients of such assistance as the worth of outside help volunteer to take it, it brings respect, sympathy, and cooperation.

Suspicion and Wariness as a Barrier to Cooperation: Surprisingly, it also discovers that suspicion and cautiousness are indeed actual barriers to Christian-Muslim cooperation. Distrust of ulterior motives or doubt of concealment dissuades individuals from believing and engaging in the relief effort. Logistic regression discovered that doubt of four times or more doubled the chances of strained interfaith relations. Qualitative data attested to this in the sense that informants had already encountered such cases in the past when aid was conflated with missionary work and thus causing the prevalence of paranoia. Its conclusion is that suspicion would only be confronted with openly defined communication, consulting a village chief, and open types of aid, or else even apparently good Intervention will fuel suspicion and enhance intrafaith conflict.

Conditional Acceptance as Enabling Pragmatic Middle Ground: It also suggests that conditional acceptance is empowering pragmatic middle ground to Christian aid's problem. By conditionally laying down conditions such as lexical exclusion of religious sermons, requiring culturally appropriate aid, and requiring negotiated settlement, the community is not in a state of chaos but is still in control and maintains its identity and gains external assistance at the same time. Regression analysis indicated conditional acceptance doubled inter-faith cooperation and doubled potential for cooperation given conditions were met. KIIs revealed leaders and elders would sooner negotiate aid terms and coordinate aid provision, an instance of active agency on the part of the community. The implication thus is that conditional acceptance, as much as it angers aid at times, is a viable middle path between suspicion and appreciation balancing receptivity to aid and religious and cultural justice.

Finally, the study concludes Christian relief in Isiolo County is conditionally meaningful, relational, and situated and not always positive but not always negative. Gratitude restores good will and tightens relations; mistrust ruins trust and destroys interaction; and acceptance on terms is a reasonable compromise that enhances respect and negotiation. The stability in the regression model also found other determinants such as politics, leadership relations, and socio-economic inequality also exhibit effects on interfaith outcomes further evidence Christian-Muslim relations to be multi-dimensional and complex.

5.2 Recommendations

Enhance transparency and communication: As a measure towards enhancing effective dispensation of fear in the context of Christian interest in relief and removal of suspicion, the aid agencies must enhance transparency of operation. Open and truthful declaration of purpose and intention behind aid programmes will enhance trust and dispel fear of religious conversion. Credible information about the intention of the aid and persuading people of their efficiency is one which they can accept will give rise to harmony and acceptance. Encourage dialogue and inclusivity: Encouragement of dialogue between Muslim and Christian nations has a critical role in bridging knowledge gaps as well as encouraging trust. Encouragement of bilateral dialogue as well as collective action will automatically encourage inter-faith collaboration. These two cultures are capable of achieving understanding and better relations through cooperation in common goals and issues.

Be respectful both culturally and religiously in developing aid programs and dispensing aid: Avoid pushing conditions and terms and let aid be accepted within paradigms of their belief and values will bear acceptance and easy distribution. Sensitivity towards them will prevent conflict and enable assistance to be provided in a dignified and effective manner.

Monitor and Evaluate Aid Programs: Aid programs should be monitored and evaluated periodically so that aid programs are delivering according to expectations and needs of the population. Involvement of the community during the analysis of programs can give useful feedback and empower the programs to be rendered more indigenous-value-relevant. Sustained checking on the effectiveness and merit of the aid can stimulate field success areas and overall aid process enhancement.

Encourage long-term relationships: Building long-term relationships with the community is likely to produce long-term outcomes. Aid agencies must invest money in creating long-term relationships and hear out the voices of community leaders and collaborate with them in dealing with long-term challenges and opportunities. With increased long-term involvement and discussion, development initiatives can be in a position to make longer term and more sustainable effects.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to this study.

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