



Social Identity and Altruism during Crisis Situations: Social Groups Solidarity

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Abstract

This study investigates how social identity influences altruistic behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, drawing on Social Identity. It examines how individuals and groups activate social identities that motivate pro-social behaviors during a global health crisis. Three key figures from civil society organizations illustrate how identities rooted in shared values of humanitarianism drive actions prioritizing collective welfare, through advocating for equitable healthcare and vaccine access. Through interviews and qualitative analysis, this research reveals that social identity fosters altruism beyond national boundaries, promoting shared well-being for Indonesian people. These findings contribute to the literature on social identity by highlighting how global crises can enhance collective empathy and encourage actions that social entrepreneurs could leverage during periods of widespread crisis to mobilize support and engagement for their initiatives. While the study draws from a small, purposive sample of civil society leaders during the early COVID-19 period, which limits generalizability, its value lies in uncovering the social identity-based motivations that drive cooperation in times of crisis. By highlighting why individuals engage in collective action—not only because it is morally commendable but also because it reflects identity commitments—the research offers insights for strengthening civic engagement, inclusive crisis responses, and supporting grassroots as well as high-profile forms of altruism in future humanitarian contexts.

Keywords: *Social Identity Theory, Sociology, Pro-social, Social Group*

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed critical gaps in global healthcare access, social support systems, and economic resilience, especially within Indonesia (Jatmiko, 2022). Beyond the immediate health threats, the pandemic has acted as a catalyst for both hardship and solidarity, prompting numerous acts of altruism aimed at alleviating its social and economic toll (Neumann-Böhme et al., 2022). Across Indonesia, individuals and civil society organizations (CSOs) have mobilized in remarkable ways, demonstrating a commitment to public welfare through donation campaigns, advocacy for equitable healthcare, and various other forms of pro-social action. There were also initiatives to support specific vulnerable groups, such as people with diabetes. While the study in Kshanti et al. (2021) focuses on the difficulties faced by this group, it indirectly highlights the importance of maintaining support systems for chronic disease management during the pandemic.

This study explores the influence of social identity on altruistic behaviors during the pandemic, with a focus on Indonesia. Specifically, it examines how members of CSOs, such as those affiliated with the [People's Vaccine Alliance \(PVA\) \(2022\)](#), [Indonesia Global Justice \(IGJ\)](#), and the

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Rights Initiative Organization (RIO)—have activated social identities centered on humanitarian values to respond to the crisis linked to Indonesia. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical role of social identity in motivating altruistic behaviors across the world. In response to mounting social and economic challenges, civil society organizations and grassroots movements have led efforts to support public health, advocate for equitable vaccine distribution, and address the needs of vulnerable populations (Basey, 2020; Sumin, 2022). These actions reflect a collective identity rooted in solidarity, mutual aid, and a shared commitment to social justice. This study contends that altruistic responses to crises, particularly in Indonesia, may be closely tied to the salience of social identity within these communities.

According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), individuals derive a sense of self from their group memberships, which in turn influences their values and actions (Burke & Stets, 2000). During times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the activation of certain social identities can lead to pro-social behaviors by aligning individual values with group-oriented goals (Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Groep et al, 2020). Notably, members of organizations like PVA, IGJ, and RIO have demonstrated a strong commitment to altruism through their support for equitable healthcare access, vaccine justice, and global health rights. Motivated by a sense of shared identity and responsibility, these actors exemplify how social identity can inspire actions that go beyond national interests to address global needs, including those in Indonesia.

Problem Statement

During the COVID-19 pandemic, an unusual phenomenon emerged: some individuals and groups extended aid to foreign populations despite facing similar hardships at home. For example, Paul from the Netherlands supported Indonesian communities between 2020 and 2023, even as his compatriots endured acute shortages, particularly during the pandemic's peak in late 2021. Similarly, Lanz from the Philippines offered assistance while his own family in rural areas required urgent help. These cases highlight a broader puzzle of cross-border altruism in times of crisis. While existing literature frames such actions under pro-social behavior, the underlying motivations remain underexplored. This study therefore asks: What drives individuals to provide humanitarian assistance to distant communities with whom they share no direct social ties?

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to analyze how social identity interaction influences altruistic behaviors within CSOs across the Global South during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this study aims to examine the cognitive, evaluative, and affective dimensions of social identity that contribute to pro-social behaviors in response to a global crisis. By focusing on the collective identity of individuals and groups involved in these organizations, this research seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which social identity motivates actions that transcend personal or local interests for the benefit of global welfare. Additionally, the study aspires to extend the application of Social Identity Theory to the context of the Global South's crisis response, contributing to the broader literature on social identity and pro-social behavior during humanitarian crises. Researchers recognize the objectives limitations inherent in this study, which does not assess the outcomes of advocacy and altruistic activities conducted by civil society organizations (CSOs) in Indonesia as direct, tangible impacts. Instead, the study emphasizes the collaborative processes among individuals within CSOs, who operate as a social movement to alleviate the challenges faced by the Indonesian population during the pandemic. This is achieved through the provision of medicine and the advocacy for improved public policy, irrespective of whether the Indonesian government adopts the recommendations from CSOs. Ultimately, CSOs lack the legal authority (at least in Indonesia) to compel policymakers to implement changes in public

policy.

Research Significance

In the context of research and practical gap, while Social Identity Theory (SIT) offers a useful lens for examining resilience in crisis contexts, two distinct gaps remain. Theoretically, limited work has clarified how identity salience translates into resilience-building behaviors across complex or prolonged crises. Practically, few interventions explicitly apply these insights to strengthen cooperation, collective coping, or recovery in affected communities. Addressing both gaps—refining the conceptual link between SIT and resilience, and operationalizing identity-based strategies in practice—would advance scholarship and build more effective crisis management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores relevant concepts and research on social identity theory, altruism in crisis contexts, and the role of CSOs in humanity crisis. The aim is to establish a foundation for understanding how social identity influences altruistic behaviors, particularly in response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Key sections will examine the origins and core concepts of Social Identity Theory (SIT), the psychological and sociological underpinnings of altruism, and prior research on CSOs' roles in crisis response. By integrating these domains, this review provides a framework background for analyzing how collective identity can drive pro-social actions, community development, and community resilience in times of crisis.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT), as developed by Henri Tajfel and later expanded by [Burke and Stets \(2000\)](#), is a foundational theory in social psychology that examines how group memberships shape individual identity and influence behavior. According to SIT, individuals categorize themselves and others into various social groups, forming identities that include shared beliefs, values, and norms. These social identities offer a sense of belonging and purpose, impacting not only self-perception but also attitudes and behaviors toward others, especially those perceived as part of an "in-group" or "out-group" ([Tajfel & Turner, 2004](#)). SIT posits that social identities are dynamic, often becoming more or less salient based on context, such as crises, where identities may be activated to foster collective resilience and cooperation ([Burke & Stets, 2000](#)).

Interestingly, while the theories have grown in popularity and application, some researchers argue that their full theoretical and empirical richness has not been fully incorporated in certain areas, such as relational demography ([Chattopadhyay et al., 2004](#)). This suggests that there is still potential for further development and integration of these theories in various fields. In recent years, the social identity approach has evolved to address developmental aspects of social identities. For instance, a four-stage model has been proposed to explain how multiple social identities develop intraindividually and become integrated within the self over time ([Amiot et al., 2007](#)). Additionally, researchers have begun applying the social identity perspective to understand children's ingroup biases, emphasizing the importance of considering social reality, epistemic motivation, and moral considerations in this context ([Verkuyten, 2021](#)).

The development of Social Identity Theories has been characterized by continuous expansion and refinement. From its origins in intergroup relations, it has grown into a versatile framework applicable to various social phenomena. Current research and theoretical developments suggest that these theories are likely to continue evolving, offering novel insights into group dynamics, identity formation, and social behavior across diverse contexts and life stages. This is particularly intriguing in the context of crises experienced in dangerous social environments.

Social Identity Theory has been widely used to understand behaviors within groups, especially those related to solidarity and collective action. Research suggests that in-group identification strengthens cohesion and altruism within the group, motivating actions that benefit the collective over the individual (Friggin et al., 2024). Additionally, SIT highlights three key dimensions—cognitive, evaluative, and affective—that influence how individuals view and act based on their group membership. The cognitive dimension involves recognizing oneself as part of a group, while the evaluative dimension involves assigning value to this membership, and the affective dimension concerns the emotional significance of being part of the group (Burke & Stets, 2000). This study draws on these dimensions to understand how social identities in the Global South have influenced altruistic behaviors in response to COVID-19.

Civil Society and Community Resilience

Civil society organizations in Indonesia and beyond have played pivotal roles in enhancing community resilience, particularly through justice-based advocacy, health equity, and rights-centered capacity building. Indonesia Global Justice (IGJ), active in environmental and human rights advocacy, aligns with broader patterns of litigation-driven civic action—such as the successful air quality lawsuit in Jakarta in 2021 and legal pressure against the Cirebon coal-fired plant—demonstrating how sustained advocacy can yield systemic change (Seriawan & Tomsa, 2023) (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023). The [People's Vaccine Alliance \(PVA\) \(2022\)](#), comprising hundreds of civil society actors across Asia, has mobilized extensively—230 digital campaigns and case-study documentation—to challenge global vaccine inequity and support community-centered COVID-19 responses, reinforcing resilience through health justice ([People's Medicine Alliance, 2025](#)). These actions resonate with qualitative findings highlighting the importance of communication strategies, cross-sectoral collaboration (including with NGOs), and culturally-informed outreach (“picking up the ball” systems) to bolster vaccination efforts in Indonesia ([Gunawan et al., 2022](#)).

Meanwhile, the Right Initiative Organization (RIO)—established in 2021 as a social enterprise to strengthen organizations advocating for economic, social, and political rights ([Rights Initiative, 2024](#))—reflects a growing scholarly emphasis on civil society's proactive role in public governance. Studies argue that civic actors must *“take fate into their own hands”* to counter bureaucratic inertia and enhance policy implementation in Indonesia ([Syamsir, 2020](#)). Collectively, IGJ, PVA, and RIO exemplify complementary pathways to resilience: IGJ through judicial advocacy and environmental accountability; PVA through equitable health action and global solidarity; and RIO through capacity-building and rights-driven institutional engagement. Their efforts are anchored in broader literature emphasizing multi-stakeholder collaboration and the indispensable function of civil society in sustaining resilient, inclusive communities amid overlapping crises.

RESEARCH METHOD

We conducted a descriptive phenomenological study with a purposive sample of three key informants (Agung of IGJ, Paul of RIO, and Lanz of PVA). Although small, this sample size is appropriate for phenomenological inquiry: qualitative studies often use very small, information-rich. Such purposive sampling targets “information-rich” cases – individuals deeply knowledgeable about the phenomenon ([Bartholomew et al., 2021](#)). We acknowledge that this design limits statistical generalizability, but it allows in-depth insight. We emphasize transferability of insights (thick contextual description) so readers can judge applicability to other contexts ([Drisko, 2024](#)). Participants were identified through professional networks of the CSOs. We invited each individual via email, explaining the study’s purpose, and arranged one-on-one in-depth interviews. Interviews were semi-structured, following a topic guide that was iteratively refined. The guide covered background, motivations, identity, and altruistic actions, with open-ended questions and follow-

ups. Each participant was interviewed in a single session (approximately 60–90 minutes each). Due to COVID-19 restrictions and geographic distance, One interview was conducted directly at their home base, while two interviews were conducted via video calls. Sessions were audio-video-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

This primary data was enriched by secondary sources, including relevant media coverage, policy briefs, and reports on global vaccine distribution efforts. The second step is make an interview transcript in Bahasa and English from every participant, involving bilingual researchers, and verifying meaning contextually to minimize bias in interpretation. The third step is make horizontalization table with bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing (Greening, 2019). Bracketing is a process used to isolate research phenomena from beliefs and opinions, so that assumptions do not arise. Intuiting is when the researcher focuses on the same points of the phenomenon that previous researchers have studied to identify what makes the research different. Analyzing involves categorizing and gaining a deeper understanding of the significant meanings of how a phenomenon can occur, and describing is producing a comprehensive description and definition of the phenomenon based on the researcher's analysis, so it can be described verbally.

Data triangulation was selected to ensure credibility, as its strength lies in utilizing multiple sources to analyze the situation. A sufficiently large and relevant dataset, which may not be obtainable from a single data source, was thus acquired. This approach provided a comprehensive and expansive perspective on the chosen situation. Furthermore, in this study, source triangulation was applied to the previously collected primary data. The triangulation process was then specifically concentrated on research subjects, who were posed similar or comparable questions related to closely associated themes (Moelong, 2009).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Due to the small, purposive sample, the following findings are presented as exploratory insights. We illustrate the participants' perspectives with direct quotes and then interpret them through Social Identity Theory (SIT) and related literature. We avoid broad claims, focusing on what these cases reveal about identity-driven altruism.

Activation and Salience of Social Identity in Crisis Contexts

All three leaders described the pandemic as heightening their sense of shared identity and moral responsibility. Agung (IGJ) explained, "When I saw Indonesia and global south countries were struggling to get vaccines, I felt we had to stand together. It wasn't just a national issue – it was a human issue" (full interview transcripts are presented in Transcript). Paul (RIO) echoed this global view: "It's always about the social contract between the people and the state, how it defaults and how it works. That basically defines how many people get vaccinated and how fast, and then because your government needs to be strong to negotiate with those pharmaceutical companies for vaccines for the populations, that's what I mean by the people have more demands for themselves when negotiating individually with the vaccine companies." Lanz (PVA) similarly noted, "In this crisis, the global community would share their experiences, like this colleague from Africa that mentioning a lot about vaccine equality, poverty, and exclusion. The meeting is really helpful, and then when I meet the people in person, like Agung from IGJ, talk about works I feel we have something shared, we have something to sharing to jest about, about the work, about the lack of immediate results, all of this frustration about the work."

These statements show that each participant's cognitive identity with broader communities (e.g., global health or human rights advocates) was strongly activated by the crisis. Agung's reference to "standing together" and Lanz's colleagues indicate heightened identity salience (seeing the crisis as a group concern). The evaluative dimension also appeared: Paul's

emphasis on “social contract” and “social awareness” reflects valuing his group’s norms (justice, equity). Lanz’s quote “lacks of the immediate result” reveals an affective commitment – caring deeply about group goals.

These narratives align with Social Identity Theory: individuals in crisis environments often intensify identification with valued groups (Abrams & Hogg, 2010) to make sense of events. Each leader construed the pandemic as a social identity crisis, which triggered solidarity. For example, Agung’s focus on global unity suggests that his identity as an advocate for the marginalized made him see vaccine equity as a civil society goal. Paul’s language of social contract and government-people reflects group norms of accountability. This fits prior findings that when a salient social identity is linked to collective values (e.g., humanitarianism, health equity), people engage in prosocial action for the group’s benefit. In short, the crisis amplified their group memberships and motivated them to act beyond narrow self-interest (Ellemers et al., 1997; Burke & Stets, 2000).

The leaders’ social identities were central in motivating a variety of pro-social behaviors that addressed healthcare inequities (Simon et al, 1998). These behaviors ranged from grassroots initiatives to international advocacy efforts (Tse et al., 2021), demonstrating the versatility of their roles in bridging local and global concerns (Gualda, 2022). Their actions reflect what Social Identity Theory describes as the intersection between personal commitment and collective action (Ellemers et al., 1997), particularly in response to systemic challenges during global crises. Through interviews, there are different pro-social advocacies from those three groups such as;

1. Agung and IGJ: Agung’s pro-social actions included organizing community workshops and campaigns aimed at educating local populations about the importance of vaccine equity (Indonesia for Global Justice, 2022). His efforts also involved mobilizing grassroots pressure on national policymakers to advocate for waivers on vaccine patents and greater investment in local healthcare infrastructure. The evaluative dimension of Agung’s social identity was reflected in his ability to align community-driven efforts with broader global advocacy goals (Moran et al., 2022).
2. Paul and RIO: Paul’s work focused on amplifying marginalized voices through policy briefs, media campaigns, and direct engagement with international organizations. His pro-social behaviors included drafting reports on the impact of inequitable vaccine distribution and presenting these findings to global forums, such as the World Health Organization. The affective dimension of Paul’s identity was critical in sustaining his commitment to these initiatives, despite political and logistical challenges (Moran et al., 2022)
3. Lanz and PVA: Lanz’s advocacy extended beyond national contexts, as he spearheaded global campaigns for the transfer of vaccine technology and knowledge to the Global South, including Indonesia (Health Justice Initiative, 2023). His leadership in PVA emphasized building coalitions with international NGOs and leveraging public opinion to push for equitable vaccine production and distribution (Health Justice Initiative, 2023). Lanz’s cognitive dimension was evident in his strategic framing of vaccines as a public good, which resonated with diverse stakeholders and galvanized global support for the cause (Moran et al., 2022).

Analysis of various pro-social advocacy efforts reveals that the shared values of solidarity, empathy, and justice among these leaders’ organizations facilitated their pro-social actions. This underscores the role of social identity in promoting behaviors that prioritize collective well-being over individual gain (Mangone, 2022; Kay, Keller, & Lehmann, 2020). Their collaborative approach demonstrated how social movements can effectively mobilize resources and public opinion to address systemic inequities in healthcare access (Tse et al., 2021). Through their organizational initiatives and advocacy work, these leaders exemplified how collective identity can drive sustained engagement in crisis response, particularly when addressing complex global challenges that

require coordinated action across borders ([Simon et al., 1998](#)). This alignment of personal values with organizational missions created a powerful foundation for pro-social behavior that extended beyond immediate crisis response to address longer-term systemic changes in global health equity ([Gualda, 2022](#)).

PVA, IGJ, and RIO responded to the challenges of healthcare inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic through various advocacy initiatives, campaigns, and policy actions. These organizations played crucial roles in addressing systemic disparities that disproportionately impacted the Global South, focusing on equitable access to vaccines, treatments, and healthcare systems. Their collective actions reflect a commitment to pro-social behavior, driven by shared social identities and values of global justice, solidarity, and human rights. PVA emerged as a key advocate for "Vaksin Rakyat" (Vaccines for the People), centering its campaigns on making COVID-19 vaccines accessible as a global public good at G20 2022 and Civil20 ([People's Vaccine Alliance \(PVA\), 2022](#)). The organization pushed for the suspension of intellectual property rights under the TRIPS agreement, arguing that such monopolies restricted affordable mass production of vaccines and treatments. PVA also advocated for significant public investment in research and development (R&D), aiming to strengthen healthcare systems in low- and middle-income countries. Recognizing challenges like vaccine hesitancy, PVA addressed misinformation through public awareness campaigns and coordinated smaller NGOs, including IGJ and RIO, to unify their resources. By leveraging global coalitions and public petitions, PVA amplified its message that healthcare access must prioritize people over profit, reinforcing healthcare as a fundamental human right.

Indonesia Global Justice (IGJ), under the leadership of Agung Prakoso, focused on trade-related healthcare inequities, particularly criticizing the TRIPS patent system for limiting access to affordable medicines, vaccines, and healthcare supplies. IGJ highlighted how pharmaceutical monopolies exacerbated the delays in vaccine distribution to Indonesia, leaving resource-limited nations vulnerable. In response, IGJ led national and international campaigns, including symbolic protests during major events like the G20 Summit and WTO Ministerial Conferences ([Indonesia for Global Justice, 2022](#)). These campaigns urged policymakers to reform trade agreements to prioritize public health over corporate profit. Domestically, IGJ collaborated with organizations like Indonesia AIDS Coalition and *Solidaritas Perempuan* (Female Solidarity) to build awareness, educate the public, and advocate for broader systemic changes. The organization also emphasized how the pandemic disrupted funding and healthcare programs for other diseases, such as tuberculosis (TBC) and HIV/AIDS, highlighting the long-term consequences of inequitable healthcare systems.

The Rights Initiative Organization (RIO), founded by Paul from the Netherlands, adopted a policy-driven approach to address systemic healthcare and economic disparities in the Global South. Paul's experience working in European institutions and international NGOs informed his advocacy for public financing as a measure of equitable healthcare access. During the pandemic, RIO focused on empowering CSOs in Africa and Asia through PVA to advocate for increased healthcare budgets and reduced dependency on international aid. Through policy consultations, fundraising initiatives, and knowledge-sharing platforms, RIO provided critical support for grassroots organizations to access donor resources, particularly from the EU and international foundations. Paul emphasized that lessons from stable governance systems, such as Dutch policies on public accountability, could inspire systemic changes in healthcare financing for the Global South, including Indonesia. Although physical engagement with communities was restricted due to pandemic-related travel limitations, RIO leveraged digital platforms to sustain dialogue and collaboration, reinforcing its commitment to amplifying marginalized voices in healthcare advocacy through PVA actions.

Collectively, the responses of PVA, IGJ, and RIO highlight a shared strategy of challenging global inequities in healthcare access while addressing local needs through advocacy, education, and policy reforms. PVA's global coalition-building, IGJ's trade and health justice campaigns, and RIO's financial and policy interventions demonstrate the versatility of pro-social behaviors driven by social identities aligned with humanitarian values.

These findings underscore how CSOs in the Global South, and those supporting their efforts, can play a pivotal role in mobilizing collective action to confront systemic disparities during global crises. As [Bhambra and Santos \(2017\)](#) argue, addressing global inequalities requires collaborative efforts that bridge local advocacy with international policy reforms ([Bhambra and Santos, 2017](#)). Similarly, [Cockerham \(2017\)](#) emphasizes that structural changes in healthcare systems will be essential in mitigating future crises, particularly by ensuring equitable access to medical resources ([Cockerham, 2017](#)).

International cooperation, resource sharing, and public accountability serve as fundamental pillars in building resilient and responsive healthcare frameworks capable of addressing future pandemics. In the interview, Agung experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia's leadership under President Jokowi faced sharp criticism for its slow, inconsistent, and paternalistic crisis response—marked by delayed lockdowns, opaque data practices, and a politicized communication strategy that prioritized economic stability over transparency. Institutional shortcomings—including ministerial contradictions and reliance on symbolic gestures—undermined public trust and hindered effective engagement with civil society actors. In contrast, European governments, while not without bureaucratic challenges, generally demonstrated more structured collaboration with scientific advisory bodies, such as Germany's Leopoldina and Ethics Council, and Sweden's Public Health Agency, creating clearer channels for civil society and expert input in shaping public health policy ([Hanson et al., 2021](#)). This divergence underscores how Indonesia's ad hoc and insular governance limited CSO influence, whereas European institutional frameworks allowed CSOs and experts to meaningfully inform policy, enhancing responsiveness and legitimacy.

Identity-Driven Advocacy and Pro-social Behaviors

The leaders described concrete altruistic actions rooted in their identities. Agung organized workshops and petition campaigns: "We launched a couple of local vaccine equity workshops because I feel it's part of my role at IGJ – teaching communities their rights. We also pressured policymakers to waive patents, because IGJ's values demand nobody is left behind." Paul detailed his advocacy methods: "How many a year, a project proposal that we co-created with the orgs was successful or approved by the donors? So, in January (2023), I think about 10 – 9 Million Euros was approved from 7 different donors, floating around 20 orgs mostly in Africa and Asia, and the approval rate was 60%. That's quite a success, I think, because it's very competitive in proposal writing. Around 10 M Euros for 20 orgs, I think that's very good." Lanz described building identity-driven advocacy: "I started doing this work even though I was in a management course, corporate courses, then I switched into developmental studies, which is more social development oriented. So it's really changed a lot of things in my trajectory in life, my direction. Yes, because of this experience with the farmers, I continued in the land issue when I graduated they invite me to work as campaign advocacy manager for the same organizations that invited me in my first campaign. Because someone from Ateneo de Manila University would rarely be interested in those kinds of campaigns, like from 6000 that graduated, only 10 people will work in this profession, being a campaigner, such as in PVA."

Their accounts emphasize how identity shaped actions. Agung's actions (grassroots education, patent campaigns) show his cognitive identity with IGJ's mission of social justice. Paul's

detailed reporting and engagement with global forums illustrate his evaluative alignment with RIO's accountability goals. Lanz's coalition-building and reflecting on his social identity with PVA. Notably, each leader explicitly connected their sense of self to their actions (e.g. "it's part of my role," "I felt compelled by responsibility"). These cases support SIT's claim that social identity provides a motivational framework for group-based action (Burke & Stets, 2000). The leaders' prosocial behaviors – community outreach, policy advocacy, alliance coordination – match the values of their respective groups. This echoes Ellemers et al. (1997) and Simon et al. (1998), who note that group norms drive self-sacrifice for the collective. Literature on crisis altruism finds that shared identity can extend beyond local borders to global solidarity. Indeed, Lanz's global campaigning and Paul's advocacy in international settings illustrate "social identity extending beyond national boundaries" (Groep et al., 2020). The diversity of actions (grassroots vs. policy vs. coalition) demonstrates how a strong identity can translate into varied strategies, as supported by studies of multi-level social movements.

Each leader cited empathy and justice as motivators ("I couldn't let people suffer," "felt obliged by data"). This aligns with research showing that empathy and perceived injustice (Kay, Keller, & Lehmann, 2020) often accompany identity-driven altruism. However, our participants uniquely highlight resourcefulness under constraint: Agung leveraged local trust, Paul applied European policy expertise to global problems, and Lanz used international networks. Together, these accounts suggest that in the Global South context, identity-driven advocacy often means combining local and global tactics to overcome systemic inequities

The findings strongly support SIT's assertion that social identity serves as a critical motivator for group-based action, particularly during crises. For Agung, Paul, and Lanz, their cognitive identification with their organizations' missions was central to their pro-social behaviors. Agung's grassroots-driven activism with IGJ reflected his identification with marginalized communities in the Global South, whose struggles he personally experienced. Paul's founding of RIO demonstrated his alignment with principles of justice and accountability, drawing on his professional expertise to address systemic inequities through the lens of public financial terms. Lanz's leadership in PVA exemplified his belief in global solidarity, emphasizing healthcare as a public good (Grimalda et al., 2023).

The evaluative dimension of their identities was equally significant. Each leader placed immense value on their organizational affiliations, viewing their roles as extensions of their personal values. This evaluative connection reinforced their dedication to addressing healthcare inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The affective dimension, evident in their emotional commitment to these causes, provided the resilience needed to navigate challenges such as resource constraints, political opposition, and logistical barriers. These dimensions contribute to SIT by extending its application to global health crises. It demonstrates that leaders who integrate their personal and professional identities with collective goals are more effective in mobilizing prosocial behaviors, particularly in resource-constrained environments. Furthermore, it aligns with prior research suggesting that heightened identity salience during crises can amplify collective action (Burke & Stets, 2000).

The prosocial behaviors exhibited by Agung, Paul, and Lanz were diverse yet complementary, reflecting the varying contexts and strategies required to address global healthcare inequities. Agung's community-oriented campaigns focused on empowering local populations to demand equitable vaccine access, emphasizing grassroots mobilization as a critical tool for change. Paul's policy-driven initiatives leveraged his background in economic governance and EU policy to advocate for transparency and accountability, bridging the gap between global policymaking and local realities. Lanz's coalition-building efforts through PVA illustrated the importance of fostering international solidarity, particularly in addressing systemic barriers such

as intellectual property rights and profit-driven pharmaceutical practices. These actions align with the literature on pro-social behavior, which identifies empathy, moral duty, and perceived social injustice as key motivators (Kay, Keller, & Lehmann, 2020). However, this study highlights the distinct challenges faced by leaders in the Global South, where systemic inequities and resource constraints often exacerbate the need for innovative, collective solutions. As Gualda (2022) notes, solidarity and responsibility are crucial in mobilizing responses to social crises, particularly in under-resourced regions. Paul's unique position as a leader from a stable and well-resourced setting underscores the potential for cross-regional advocacy to address global disparities (Guzman & Velazco, 2024). His ability to adapt lessons from European governance to support the Global South complements Agung's and Lanz's localized approaches, demonstrating the versatility of pro-social behavior in crisis contexts (Mangone, 2022).

Backgrounds, Identity, and Community Solidarity

The leaders' personal histories clarified how their identities were formed. Agung spoke of growing up: "When I was in college, I read the book of WTO and 21st Century Trade, which was compiled by Mr. Bonnie Setiawan, the founder and first director of IGJ. The second book at that time was Globalization and the Monopoly of Knowledge, written by Ms. Lutfiyah Hanim, who to this day is actively listed as the chairperson of IGJ's board. These people motivated me and share the same perspective as IGJ—at least in these two cases—and it is from their books that I truly learned first, and then I chose to volunteer at IGJ until I permanently work here (IGJ)." Paul reflected on his professional background: "I once worked in the Dutch government, UNDP, Oxfam, and so on, seeing how public policies can help people. I've been doing this for 30 years. I'm starting to do this at 23 now, I'm 53, so especially if you work for a small NGO like me it's very dependent on personal relations, if you have good relations with some of the managers or directors of orgs in Africa and Asia, if you know them well. Also, what I explained before, I work with this big NGO called Oxfam, it's vividly different because it's very personal. You need to have a very good relationship, otherwise you going to out of business." Lanz recounted his career: "So, I had this eye opening experiences, on my second years university when group of farmers coming into the university to rest before continuing protest into capital city from really different social class background and I had this feeling of frustration to help campaigning for their cause, I had found meaning in that moment because I saw two different communities (college student and farmer) coming together for the common goal, common ideals even if the other communities didn't have the same experiences such as myself and I didn't have the same experience as the farmers, but I felt the connections. It's something eye opening that I would love to do which is campaigning basically. So ever since that time at 2014 feeling that experiences and purposes until today in PVA."

These reflections show that each leader's social identities – as an advocate for the underserved, a policy expert, or a global health champion – were rooted in biography. Agung's solidarity with marginalized Indonesians (cognitive and evaluative identity) came from personal experience; Paul's social identity connected from public official and social economy bridged contexts; Lanz's identity as a humanitarian advocate fueled his commitment. All three emphasized emotional investment: Paul been doing this for 30+ years, Lanz spoke of "frustration" driving him, and Agung conveyed moral anger at the trade monopoly. The leaders' backgrounds illustrate how social identities become salient in crises. Social Identity Theory notes that the more an event resonates with one's group history, the more likely identity is activated (Burke & Stets, 2000). Here, pre-existing identities aligned with IGJ, RIO, and PVA (centered on justice, transparency, and equity) provided a lens to interpret the pandemic. For example, Agung's narrative shows that experiencing inequality made IGJ's group goals feel personally meaningful, reinforcing his identity salience. Lanz's global perspective meant he immediately framed COVID challenges in terms of international

norms needs.

For all three leaders, the salience of their social identities—shaped by their backgrounds and aligned with their organizational missions—was central to their prosocial behaviors. The cognitive dimension of their social identities was evident in their recognition of their roles as advocates within IGJ, RIO, and PVA, viewing themselves as integral to broader efforts toward global health equity. The evaluative dimension was expressed through their shared prioritization of collective welfare, reflecting the value they placed on advancing health justice. Lastly, the affective dimension manifested in their deep emotional engagement, which sustained their resilience despite the challenges inherent in global advocacy. Research on social identity underscores its critical role in shaping responses to global crises, particularly through the interplay between personal identity, organizational alignment, and prosocial behavior. As [Mangone \(2022\)](#) discusses, altruistic relationships and social responsibility serve as foundational elements in collective advocacy efforts, enabling individuals with diverse backgrounds and values to integrate into a shared identity that drives coordinated actions across national boundaries. Similarly, [Bhambra and Santos \(2017\)](#) highlight how social identity fosters prosocial behavior, especially in contexts where structural challenges necessitate collective resilience. Furthermore, emphasizing the significance of global social movements in shaping equitable international responses, particularly within resource-constrained settings in the Global South, where such movements play a crucial role in addressing systemic disparities ([Daphi et al, 2024](#)).

The findings reveal a dynamic interplay between social identity, advocacy, and crisis response. Agung, Paul, and Lanz each exemplified how the activation of social identity during the COVID-19 pandemic facilitated effective advocacy efforts. SIT's cognitive, evaluative, and affective dimensions provided a framework for understanding their motivations and strategies:

1. Cognitive dimension: Each leader recognized their membership within their respective organizations as integral to their identity. Agung saw himself as a voice for marginalized populations, Paul as a bridge between policy and public needs, and Lanz as a global advocate for vaccine justice. This recognition provided clarity and purpose in their roles.
2. Evaluative dimension: The value placed on their organizational missions reinforced their commitment to advancing health equity. For example, Paul's prioritization of justice and transparency informed his policy-focused strategies, while Lanz's emphasis on healthcare as a public good galvanized international collaboration.
3. Affective dimension: Emotional investment was crucial in sustaining their resilience. Agung's personal connection to marginalized communities, Paul's dedication to addressing inequities he encountered professionally, and Lanz's emotional drive to challenge systemic barriers highlight the importance of affective identity in overcoming obstacles.

These align with research on identity-driven collective action, suggesting that crises heighten identity salience and motivate sustained engagement. Social and behavioral science insights demonstrate that crises amplify group identity, leading to increased collective participation ([Willer et al., 2020](#)). Similarly, [Tse et al. \(2021\)](#) highlight that pro-social behaviors during global disruptions are often driven by a heightened sense of shared identity and mutual obligation. The critical role of leaders in translating personal and organizational identities into actionable strategies, offering insights into the mechanisms of effective advocacy in transnational movements.

Social identity activation plays a pivotal role in humanitarian advocacy and community development, as it transforms shared belonging into collective action. Studies show that community-led interventions, such as grassroots campaigns building local identification, can significantly enhance well-being during crises, demonstrating how identity serves as both motivation and a protective factor (e.g., neighborhood identification boosting resilience in COVID-

19 lockdowns) (Cruwys et al., 2022). Meanwhile, volunteering during the pandemic strengthened social bonds, trust, and psychological resources, reinforcing the identity-well-being link (Gray et al., 2023). In a broader framework, integrating place-based identity, disaster memory, and collective meaning-making fosters both adaptive and transformative cycles of resilience in communities facing natural hazards (Farny & Dentoni, 2025). Together, these findings illustrate how identity, advocacy through CSOs, and community development form a dynamic triad, mobilizing solidarity and adaptive capacities that sustain communities through humanitarian crises.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of social identity as the same human being with the same threat regardless of identity boundaries in shaping altruistic behaviors within CSOs into the Indonesian people and government during the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining cognitive, evaluative, and affective dimensions of identity, it highlights how collective belonging motivates actions that transcend local interests to address global welfare. While the research does not measure the direct policy outcomes of CSO advocacy in Indonesia, it demonstrates that CSOs function as vital social movements—mobilizing medicine distribution, solidarity, and policy advocacy—even without formal authority to enforce change. These findings extend Social Identity Theory into the context of humanitarian crises, emphasizing that the strength of CSOs lies less in legal power than in their capacity to transform shared identities into community resilient, altruistic responses as social solidarity to global emergencies.

Theoretical Implications

This study refines Social Identity Theory by demonstrating how, in global health crises, the alignment of personal and professional identities within CSOs drives altruistic action that transcends local contexts. By linking SIT with prosocial behavior theory, it highlights identity salience as a catalyst for community resilience as social development, extending the theory's relevance to humanitarian responses in the Global South.

Practical Implications

The findings offer actionable insights for policymakers, CSOs, and international institutions. Advocacy efforts can be strengthened by integrating civil society into governance, recognizing the unique contributions of grassroots organizations like IGJ, RIO, and PVA can inform more inclusive and equitable health policies.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study is limited by its focus on three CSO leaders, which constrains generalizability. Future research should include grassroots members and beneficiaries to capture diverse identity dynamics, and extend analysis to other crises such as climate disasters or refugee movements to test transferability. Longitudinal designs could examine how identity-driven advocacy evolves beyond the acute crisis phase. In addition, investigating the role of digital platforms and media in shaping collective identity and mobilizing transnational solidarity would enrich understanding of how CSOs harness identity processes to sustain prosocial action in complex humanitarian contexts

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