

# What Determines Audiences' Willingness to Support Social Enterprises? The Role of Moral Framing and Inclusivity in Organizational Communication

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## ABSTRACT

The current study explores an important but underexplored topic in the era of corporate responsibility: the role of moral framing and inclusivity in shaping audiences' willingness to support. Building on the literature of social entrepreneurship, social identity, and organizational communication, this study suggests a positive impact of secular moral framing, compared to a religious one, and inclusivity cues in mission statements on audiences' willingness to support. Contrary to theoretical expectations, an online experiment conducted on the survey platform Testable, which yielded a final sample of 159, reveals that the type of moral framing and the presence of inclusive language in mission statements did not significantly influence audiences' willingness to support. However, audience characteristics, including religiosity and alignment with religious identity, emerged as strong predictors of willingness to support. To help understand hidden mechanisms, 12 interviewees participated in semi-structured interviews focusing on their subjective interpretations of religious moral framing and inclusive language. A qualitative thematic analysis points to the role of religious moral framing as boundary awareness and inclusive language as mere minimum expectations. The implications of the results from this mixed-methods study are further discussed in relation to communication strategies for social enterprises.

**Keywords:** Social Enterprise; Social Entrepreneurship; Willingness To Support; Moral Framing; Inclusivity Cue; Organizational Communication; Mixed-Methods Approach

## INTRODUCTION

With ever-expanding social issues in contemporary societies, social entrepreneurship is gaining significant attention both from scholars and practitioners (1). Environmental degradation, wealth inequality, racial discrimination, and political polarization are the social

issues that require a sense of urgency, but due to the complexity and interconnected nature of contemporary societies, the scope of urgent social issues is ever-expanding. As a result, enterprises are also expected to contribute to addressing social issues by diverse stakeholders, including shareholders, consumers, governments, and communities. For example, ESG investing, which aims to invest in enterprises that take environmental, social, and governance responsibilities, reduces potential risks and has both financial and social impacts, has been growing at an unprecedented pace in recent years. Fortune Business Insights (2) estimates the global market size at USD 39.08 trillion in 2025 and expects it to grow to USD 180.78 trillion by 2034,

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yielding an average annual growth rate of about 19%.

With rising social pressure to address social issues, social enterprises have emerged as organizations that proactively contribute to addressing them. These organizations are often characterized as hybrid organizations that pursue both social mission and economic profits at the same time (3). Unlike traditional enterprises, social enterprises experience a unique dilemma as the two purposes can sometimes be incompatible: when an organization maximizes profits, social mission can be compromised, and *vice versa*. Consider the case of Grameen Bank, founded by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus in 1976. To reduce extreme poverty in Bangladesh, the bank was established to provide microfinance to millions of poor people willing to invest in and start their own businesses. While providing more financing would help achieve its social mission, excessive credit may increase its default risk and ultimately damage its business viability. On the other hand, if the bank applies stricter standards to loan applications, business viability may increase, with millions of other people left behind. In this challenging situation, audience support becomes one of the most valuable resources for them. This is because broad audience support enables them to secure resources for survival while maintaining the legitimacy of their social purposes (4). Therefore, the willingness to support of audiences lies at the foundation for social enterprises' success.

To communicate their purposes and increase audiences' willingness to support them, social enterprises often strategically use their mission statements. Audiences evaluate organizations as legitimate if they act appropriately and desirably, aligning with a broad system of social norms and values (5). To evaluate, audiences require a medium through which they observe the organizations. Meyer and Rowan (6) argue that formal organizational structures or statements can serve as the medium through which audiences can judge whether the organizations are socially legitimate. For this reason, mission statements have been one of the most important communication media for social enterprises. In particular, with increasing accessibility to social enterprises' mission statements on their websites and social media, the importance of mission statements is growing for broader audience support.

However, the strategic development of mission statements that communicate the organization's core values is a challenging task. Even one small social issue can involve diverse social values, and even entrepreneurs

can be driven by diverse purposes. Furthermore, audiences' social interests constantly shift, making it hard to craft mission statements that precisely address them. For this reason, an increasing number of social enterprises often rely on religious language. This is because religion remains an important element in social life, even in contemporary societies, and can effectively communicate universal, easy-to-understand social values (7). In addition, religious organizations and communities have long acted as social enterprises in domains such as health and welfare by mobilizing their network, knowledge, and broad resources (4); thus, following their practices is perceived as an effective strategy for new social enterprises. For example, Saroglou (8) notes that religious language in mission statements can be effective for social enterprises because it can signal serious moral commitment to social values and a sense of purpose. Thus, religion is increasingly perceived as a strategic and persuasive communication tool in mission statements that increase broad audience support regardless of heterogeneous value priorities among entrepreneurs, audiences, and societies at large.

Practically and theoretically, it is important to notice the core trade-off created by religious language in mission statements. On the one hand, religion can elicit a strong sense of moral commitment and membership among those who share the organization's religious identity. Religious language can effectively communicate a social enterprise's purpose to the aligned audiences because they have a shared understanding of the purpose (9). On the other hand, the social identity theory (10) posits that when an identity boundary, here, religious identity, is made, audiences can either develop a sense of in-group favoritism or out-group exclusion. Thus, audiences with non-aligned religious identities may have difficulty understanding or empathizing with the social enterprise's values, which in turn reduces the scope of social support. This critical dilemma of religious language in mission statements prompts an important research question that warrants deep investigation: *Should social enterprises use religious language or adopt secular-universal language to maximize audiences' willingness to support?* While existing theoretical discussions outline both the benefits and downsides of religious language in organizational communication, it remains unclear how religious language in mission statements influences a broad range of audiences' willingness to support. In addition, there exists a limited attempt to empirically test whether religious framing of mission statements increases or decreases audiences' support intention.

In this regard, the current study aims to examine the effect of religious framing on willingness to support, as well as other mechanisms that interact with this effect, empirically.

While religious moral framing in mission statements may increase support intention among aligned audiences and decrease it among misaligned audiences, it can be predicted that, on average, religious moral framing in social enterprises' mission statements negatively affects willingness to support. From the perspective of social identity theory, aligned audiences may experience a strong sense of in-group favoritism, making them more willing to support the religious organization in question. However, misaligned audiences may find it exclusionary, noticing religious moral framing as a signal of exclusion to others. This sense of inclusion/exclusion emerges not only from observable rules and structures, but also from symbols such as language (11). Therefore, the net effect of religious moral framing is questionable. However, in social entrepreneurship research, it is argued that audiences often choose to support an enterprise not only by warmth or moral reasons but also by evaluating the organization's competence (12). Thus, even aligned audiences may not express a high willingness to support social enterprises with religious moral framing because they understand that such religious language can create a sense of exclusion for others and thus reduce long-term potential viability. Thus, the current study suggests the first hypothesis as follows:

**H1:** *On average, religious moral framing will produce lower willingness-to-support (WTS) than secular framing.*

However, the effect of religious moral framing may depend on the types of audiences. The current study proposes that individual religiosity is one of the key factors that determines the effect. It is worth noting the difference between religious identity and religiosity: while religious identity refers to specific religious affiliation represented by the type of religion, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, religiosity is the degree of religious commitment of an individual to religious ideology or practices (13). Thus, for example, two individuals with different religions can have the same level of religiosity. The current study argues that individuals with high religiosity tend to favor mission statements with religious moral framing over those with secular moral framing, regardless of alignment with their religious identity, whereas less religious individuals

prefer secular ones. Social identity again plays a key role in this mechanism. Edgell *et al.* (14) argue that the salience of the identity boundary between religions becomes smaller because contemporary societies are characterized as religiously pluralistic. However, the boundary between religious individuals and atheists becomes salient because they have different social locations and value orientations. Thus, for less religious people (low religiosity), religious moral framing in mission statements can be interpreted as a signal of out-group exclusion, which in turn leads to low willingness to support. But, for more religious people (high religiosity), religious moral framing may communicate that moral values are common among religions and familiar to the audiences (9). Therefore, the second hypothesis can be suggested as follows:

**H2:** *The negative effect of religious framing on WTS will attenuate or reverse as participants' religiosity increases.*

While religious moral framing can elicit a sense of exclusion among misaligned audiences, one communication tool that can reduce such identity friction is inclusive language. Across cultures, inclusivity has become one of the most central social values that corporate and legal practices are committed to. With the rising interest in racial and gender equality, contemporary enterprises and their audiences proactively adopt the value of inclusivity and attempt to act on it. This provides a clear reason why social enterprises may include inclusive language in their mission statements. Audience support largely depends on whether audiences perceive an organization as appropriate and acceptable in a given system of social norms and values (15). Inclusive language in mission statements can be a signal of this legitimacy to broad audiences. At the same time, even in mission statements framed with religious moral language, an inclusivity cue can significantly reduce perceived threat and thus identity friction because inclusive language can allow for the interpretative possibility of religious moral framing just as moral value communication, not as exclusion (16). Therefore, on average, inclusive language in mission statements can enhance audiences' willingness to support. Thus, the third hypothesis is presented as follows:

**H3:** *Mission statements that include an explicit inclusivity cue will elicit higher WTS than those without the cue.*

It can also be argued that the effect of inclusive language depends on the audience's profile, particularly religiosity. While inclusivity cues in mission statements can increase willingness to support by signaling openness to broader audiences, this signal works more effectively for those who are unsure whether they would support. For highly religious people (high religiosity), supporting social enterprises aligns with their high consequential religiosity (13); thus, even without inclusive language, they are likely to express their willingness to support them. However, for less religious people (low religiosity), support intentions can vary greatly depending on whether they can identify with the values communicated by the enterprise (16). Thus, an inclusivity cue should influence the support intentions of less religious audiences more than more religious ones. This mechanism should be more pronounced when mission statements are framed religiously than universally. This is because, as discussed, religious moral framing tends to elicit more support for the intentions of highly religious people than for those of less religious ones. Thus, the significance of inclusivity cues becomes greater when less religious audiences are presented with religious moral framing. This logic suggests the fourth and fifth hypotheses of the current study as follows:

**H4:** *The positive effect of inclusivity cues on WTS will be stronger among individuals with low to moderate religiosity than among highly religious participants.*

**H5:** *Inclusivity cues will mitigate the negative effect of religious framing on WTS, particularly among participants with low religiosity.*

Testing these hypotheses helps answer the central question of whether social enterprises use religious language or adopt secular language to maximize audiences' willingness to support. To answer the question, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach. On the one hand, an experiment was designed to directly manipulate variables, including moral framing and inclusivity cues, and to generate data to test their influence on willingness to support. On the other hand, interviews were conducted to get insights about the audience's subjective interpretations of mission statements with moral framing and inclusive language. The interviews revealed hidden mechanisms that underlie statistical patterns found in the experiment. Overall, the current study aims to examine how moral framing and inclusive language influence audiences' willingness to

support and thus contribute to the literature of social entrepreneurship and organizational communication.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Overall Study Design

The current study aims to test the effect of moral framing and inclusive language in mission statements on audiences' willingness to support. With the widespread attention to social values reflected in business practices such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ESG (Environment, Social, and Governance), an increasing number of organizations pursue both financial and social objectives and thus seek to communicate their intentions through organizational messages, particularly mission statements. Thus, it is necessary to test the causal relationship between moral framing, inclusive language, and audience support intention.

To address this issue, this study employed a mixed-methods research design that combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This mixed-methods design allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. While the quantitative analysis enables the test of causal relationships between the variables of interest, the qualitative analysis can help explain the underlying mechanisms of the relationships that quantitative analysis cannot fully reveal (17).

For the quantitative analysis, this study conducted an online experiment in which moral framing and inclusive language were directly manipulated, allowing testing whether changes in moral framing, the presence of inclusive language, and their interaction influenced participants' willingness to support. Data from the survey items on the dependent variables and other controls were used in statistical analyses to test the hypothesized relationships.

For the qualitative part, the current study conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 interviewees who were not experimental participants and were asked to read organizational mission statements with both religious and secular framing and inclusive language. They were then asked to answer some questions that helped explain the underlying mechanisms of the findings from the quantitative analysis. The purpose of the interviews and subsequent thematic analysis (18) was not to test the hypotheses separately; instead, it was to listen to potential organizational audiences' subjective interpretations of the mission statements and their reasoning. By analyzing qualitative materials, thematic analysis allows for the identification of patterns across

data and meaningful themes that provide insights into how and why theoretical and empirical relationships can be established (19).

### Experiment Participants and Procedure

The online experiment used a between-subjects factorial design, with the two factors: moral framing and inclusivity cues. Moral framing was either *religious* or *secular*, where participants read organizational mission statements with religious or universal moral language, respectively. The inclusivity condition was either *present* or *absent*, where the mission statements included an explicit inclusivity cue or did not, respectively. The  $2 \times 2$  design resulted in four experimental conditions to which participants were randomly assigned.

Participants were recruited on the online experiment and survey platform, Testable, and provided with a small monetary reward. While the participants volunteered for the experiment, the experiment imposed minimal requirements for participation. Only those who were 18 years old or older at the time of participation were eligible to participate, as the study aims to investigate whether an organizational audience is willing to support a social enterprise in different ways. While children or adolescents can also support an organization by speaking well of it or recommending it, they may not be able to go further by actively purchasing or engaging more deeply, such as through resource sharing or partnering. Thus, adults with possibilities of engaging in diverse support activities were only included in the experiment. Also, only candidates who perceived themselves as proficient in English were eligible to participate, as self-confidence in English may indicate familiarity with and the ability to understand complex moral language in the organizational mission statement. Other requirements were not applied for the maximum generalizability of the study. As social enterprises become more widespread and they seek support from diverse audiences across ages, regions, and other backgrounds, this study necessitated as heterogeneous a sample as possible. Thus, the only two requirements were introduced at the beginning of the experiments. In total, 162 qualified participants joined the experiment and completed all the tasks on December 5th, 2025. However, as some participants may submit random answers to the survey items without paying attention to the experiment details, the experiment included a simple attention check question near the end (“Please choose ‘disagree’ in the following options”). After excluding three participants who chose the wrong options, the analysis was conducted with the data from

159 participants. The final sample is well balanced in terms of age, gender, region, and education level, which increases the external validity of the experiment. Detailed characteristics of the final sample are well summarized in Table 1 and explained in the results section.

As soon as the participants joined the experiment, they were randomly assigned to one of the four groups, read brief instructions, and were asked to provide informed consent. This was followed by a survey of background information that enabled the collection of key covariates to understand sample characteristics and contextualize the results. This section included questions on gender, age, region, English proficiency, education, and religious background. Then the participants read three mission statements from three hypothetical organizations. These mission statements were designed for experimental manipulation by adopting either a religious or a secular moral framing and including an explicit inclusivity cue or none, resulting in four versions of the mission statement for one specific organization. The participants remained in the same group condition (e.g., reading three mission statements with religious moral framing and the inclusivity cue) throughout the experiment because shifting group conditions may reveal what is being manipulated and thus induce demand characteristics in participants. After reading each mission statement, the participants received a set of survey items that aimed to measure their willingness to support (WTS) and perceptions about the organization, including inclusivity, legitimacy, authenticity, warmth, and competence. While the items of WTS were only used for constructing the dependent variable, other perception measures were collected for potential secondary analyses that may help understand the mechanisms behind the findings. After three mission statements and corresponding surveys, the participants were asked to complete another set of survey items designed to measure each participant’s level of religiosity, which served as a moderator in the hypotheses. Finally, the participants underwent the debriefing, where the real purpose of the experiment was explained in detail, and completed the experiment.

### Experiment Materials

The three mission statements, provided as experiment stimuli, pertained to three hypothetical organizations in three different markets: healthcare, education, and food & beverage. This variation was intentional because this study sought to generalize the results to diverse social enterprise contexts. Each mission statement included the organization’s name, purpose, main activities, operating

rules, and a team description. Then, the next paragraph was dedicated to explaining the organization's social value, framed either in religious or secular moral terms. For example, a statement with *religious* moral framing went, "Our mission is guided by Christian principles of compassion, stewardship, and service to our neighbors. We were founded on the belief that caring for others can be a meaningful expression of faith in action..." In contrast, *secular* moral framing used general moral language, like "Our mission is grounded in shared human values of care, dignity, and mutual responsibility. We believe communities flourish when people look after one another and when essential services are delivered with fairness, empathy, and respect..." For *religious* moral framing, this study only employed one specific religion's language, Christianity, because the study aimed to examine how participants with different religious backgrounds reacted to Christian language in different ways and thus explore the role of religious identity alignment between audiences and organizations. For inclusivity, the *present* condition included an explicit inclusivity cue at the end of the mission statement: "We welcome individuals and families of all backgrounds and beliefs, and our services are intentionally designed to offer respectful and inclusive care to every member of the community." However, the *absent* condition did not include such an inclusivity cue. The full experimental stimuli are reported in Appendix 1.

## Measures

To test the influence of moral framing and inclusive language in mission statements on audiences' willingness to support (WTS), the experiment measured WTS on three dimensions: purchase/financial support, advocacy/word-of-mouth support, and volunteer/time support. A unified set of survey items for WTS did not exist in the literature; thus, rigorous research of the literature was necessary to identify several dimensions of WTS and develop survey items. After a comprehensive review of audience support for organizations, the three theoretical concepts of audience support emerged. In examining the influence of religiosity and values on corporate social responsibility (CSR) support, Ramasamy *et al.* (20) mainly measured financial support and purchase intention. While they developed five items, to remove redundancy, this study integrated them into three items and asked the following questions: "I would be willing to financially support this organization (e.g., donate or pay for its services)", "I would consider purchasing products or services from this organization, and assuming that

another organization offers similar products or services at the same prices", "I would prefer this one". In addition, Carangan *et al.* (21) explored the relationship between CSR engagement and consumer word-of-mouth, validating the importance of the advocacy/word-of-mouth dimension to overall audience support for social enterprises. Although there were some multi-item scales of word-of-mouth in the literature (22), this study utilized only two items that represent two core concepts, recommendation intention and positive speaking, and were suitable for the study's context: "I would recommend this organization to others" and "I would speak positively about this organization's mission." Revised from Bang *et al.* (23), who examined the influence of organizational experiences on intention to volunteer, this study employed two items to measure the volunteer/time support dimension: "I would be willing to volunteer or contribute my time to help this organization" and "I would consider engaging more deeply with this organization (e.g., sharing resources, participating in activities, or partnering with it)." All seven items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated strong disagreement, and 7 indicated strong agreement. For analysis, the WTS scores from the three mission statements were averaged to calculate each participant's total WTS score. The Cronbach's alpha of WTS items was 0.97, suggesting strong internal consistency between the WTS items. Thus, the entire analysis focused on the influence of moral framing and inclusivity on the composite WTS score, consisting of 7 items, instead of three separate WTS dimensions.

As theoretical predictions suggested a moderating role of audiences' religiosity in the relationship among framing, inclusivity, and WTS, this study used a seven-item religiosity scale conceptually adapted from Faulkner and De Jong (13). While the original study measured religiosity in five dimensions, this study used only three dimensions relevant to the study context, in which participants read mission statements and connected them to their support intentions: ideological, ritualistic, and consequential religiosity. The scale included such items as "religion is important in my daily life" and "how often do you attend religious services or group religious meetings (e.g., church, mosque, temple, synagogue)?" These items were also measured on a 7-point Likert scale, yielding high internal consistency among participants (Cronbach's alpha = 0.95).

## Quantitative Analysis

Then, to statistically test the relationships among

framing, inclusivity, and WTS, a two-way ANOVA was used. The ANOVA analysis was suitable for testing the main effects of framing and inclusivity on WTS separately, enabling the testing of the first and second hypotheses. As the third, fourth, and fifth hypotheses involved the moderating roles of religiosity, it was necessary to test the influence of interaction terms between framing, inclusivity, and religiosity on WTS using mean-centered religiosity scores: (1) framing  $\times$  religiosity, (2) inclusivity  $\times$  religiosity, and (3) framing  $\times$  inclusivity  $\times$  religiosity. Thus, three regression models were established that yielded the size and statistical significance of the relationships. No additional demographic control variables were included in the main regression models. This is because the analyses were designed to test the theoretically predicted relationships among the experimentally manipulated factors (moral framing and inclusivity), religiosity, and willingness to support. Because participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions, the main inferential focus was on the manipulated variables and moderator rather than on adjustment for demographic controls.

In addition, supplementary subgroup regression analyses were conducted to examine whether the hypothesized relationships differed by religious affiliation, as it was plausible that the current religious framing in Christian language may elicit different reactions and levels of willingness to support among Christians and non-Christians. For this purpose, the participants were grouped into two groups: Christian and Non-Christian / None. The latter group included participants, in their demographic survey, identified as Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, other religions, no religion, or spiritual but not religious, which yielded 79 and 77 participants in each group. Participants who answered “prefer not to say” were excluded from the subgroup analyses, resulting in a reduced sample size from 159 to 156 in the subgroup analyses. The same full regression specification used in the main model was estimated separately for each subgroup.

This study did not apply any formal correction for multiple comparisons because the statistical analyses were conducted to test theory-driven hypotheses rather than to search for significant associations among broad exploratory variables. However, the subgroup regressions by religious affiliation were treated as supplementary analyses and only intended to clarify the main findings. Therefore, their results were interpreted cautiously without allowing them to change the conclusion of hypothesis testing with main analyses.

All data analyses were conducted in the statistical software R.

### **Qualitative Interview and Analysis**

After completing the statistical analysis, some questions emerged regarding the mechanisms of the relationships. To better understand audiences’ subjective interpretations of mission statements with moral framing and inclusive language, 12 individuals were contacted through the interviewer’s personal social networks. However, the interviewees were selected using several criteria. First, the interviewees were also 18 years old or older at the time of the interview and proficient in English. Second, they were not participants in the experiment because the participants already knew the purpose of the study, which may have introduced bias into their responses. Third, the interview aimed for balanced religious profiles among the interviewees so that the role of religious identity alignment could be explored. As a result, six Christians and six non-Christians agreed to participate in the interviews.

The interviews were conducted in synchronous online meetings from January 13th to February 8th, 2026, in a semi-structured way. At the beginning, the interviewer explained the general purpose of the research project and the interview, and then presented the interviewees with two mission statements: one with a religious moral framing and the other with a secular moral framing. Both included the inclusivity cue to understand how the interviewees compared the two moral framings and interpreted the inclusive message. The interview was semi-structured, with the interviewer preparing key questions to help explain the hidden mechanisms of the relationships identified in the statistical analysis and creating follow-up questions as interesting perspectives emerged during the interview. Each interview lasted 20 minutes on average, and all interviews were transcribed using an automated transcription tool for thematic analysis. The coding procedure of the thematic analysis followed the widely accepted convention suggested by Braun and Clarke (18) in qualitative research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study involved human subjects both in the online experiment and interviews and thus necessitated strong compliance with research ethics. While the experiment and interviews did not manipulate participants’ psychological status or trigger trauma, it was necessary to minimize any potential impacts of the study. In particular, as this study collected basic demographic

information, including age, gender, and religion, and asked questions on religious subjects, it was essential to ensure subjects' voluntary participation and responses, and full confidentiality. Thus, at the very beginning of the experiment and interview, the general purpose of the study was explained by mentioning that this study involved questions about personal religious profile and life. Then the participants' rights were explained: they could skip any question or drop out of the study at any time. Also, at the end of the study, a full debriefing was provided to explain the study's purpose and experimental manipulations. Then, the participants were also given the right to withdraw from the study and their responses after fully understanding the study. Full confidentiality was also guaranteed by using only random identifiers of the participants in the data collection and analysis processes. The adult-only participation requirement also allowed participants to fully understand the potential consequences of the study and their rights, thereby ensuring ethical compliance.

## RESULTS

### Quantitative Results

To reveal how the framing of mission statements and the inclusivity cue influence audiences' willingness to support, the current study presents the following. First, the descriptive statistics of the background information outline the demographic characteristics of the sample, enabling a better understanding of the sample and confirming the generalizability of the study. Second, a descriptive comparison across the four experimental conditions shows whether there is a significant difference

in willingness-to-support scores across conditions, providing descriptive evidence of the influence of framing and the inclusivity cue. Third, an ANOVA is reported to assess the statistical significance of these influences. Next, the inferential results from regression analyses are presented to determine whether the framing, the inclusivity cue, and individual religiosity interact to influence willingness-to-support. Finally, the inferential results from the same regression analyses for Christian vs. Non-Christian groups are reported to assess whether congruence between the audience's religiosity and the framing alters the influence of the framing, the inclusivity cue, and their interaction on willingness to support.

Table 1 reports the background information of the sample, which consists of 159 individuals. The mean age is 35.65 (S.D. = 10.50), indicating that the sample well represents the general audience that may have an interest in rising social entrepreneurship. Although 33.96% of participants (54 out of 159) do not use English as their first language, the average score on English comfort ( $M = 6.86$  on a 7-point Likert scale) indicates that participants have sufficient language proficiency to decode nuanced value communication in organizational mission statements. The well-balanced distributions of region and education confirm that the results of the current study can be generalized to the broad population. In terms of religiosity, while Christians constitute the largest proportion of the sample (49.69%, 79 out of 159), other religions also make up half, allowing for a deeper analysis of whether religious alignment between the audience and the organizational message alters the predictions this study suggests.

*Table 1. Participant demographics and background characteristics (N = 159).*

|                 | Mean                      | S.D.                          | Min.              | Max.            |             |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Age             | 35.65                     | 10.50                         | 20                | 70              |             |
| English_Comport | 6.86                      | 0.43                          | 5                 | 7               |             |
| Gender          | Man                       | Woman                         | Others            | Total           |             |
|                 | 79 (49.70%)               | 79 (49.70%)                   | 1 (0.60%)         | 159 (100 %)     |             |
| Region          | Africa                    | Asia                          | Europe            | North America   | Total       |
|                 | 37 (23.27%)               | 29 (18.24%)                   | 75 (47.17%)       | 18 (11.32%)     | 159 (100 %) |
| Education       | High school or equivalent | Some postsecondary/vocational | Bachelor's degree | Graduate degree | Total       |
|                 | 12 (7.55%)                | 21 (13.21%)                   | 85 (53.46%)       | 41 (25.79%)     | 159 (100 %) |

*Continued Table 1. Participant demographics and background characteristics (N = 159).*

|                             |                                               |                                                         |               |                                                          |                      |                                                    |               |                          |                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| <b>English_First</b>        | <b>Yes</b>                                    |                                                         |               |                                                          | <b>No</b>            |                                                    |               | <b>Total</b>             |                |
|                             | 105 (66.04%)                                  |                                                         |               |                                                          | 54 (33.96%)          |                                                    |               | 159 (100 %)              |                |
| <b>Religion</b>             | <b>Christian</b>                              | <b>Hindu</b>                                            | <b>Muslim</b> | <b>Buddhist</b>                                          | <b>No Religion</b>   | <b>Spiritual but not religious</b>                 | <b>Others</b> | <b>Prefer not to say</b> | <b>Total</b>   |
|                             | 79<br>(49.69%)                                | 20<br>(12.58%)                                          | 10<br>(6.29%) | 2<br>(1.26%)                                             | 34<br>(21.38%)       | 10<br>(6.29%)                                      | 1<br>(0.63%)  | 3<br>(1.89%)             | 159<br>(100 %) |
| <b>Religion (Binary)</b>    | <b>Christian</b>                              |                                                         |               |                                                          | <b>Non-Christian</b> |                                                    |               | <b>Total</b>             |                |
|                             | 79 (49.69%)                                   |                                                         |               |                                                          | 80 (50.31%)          |                                                    |               | 159 (100 %)              |                |
| <b>Religious Upbringing</b> | <b>Raised mainly in a Christian tradition</b> | <b>Raised mainly in a different religious tradition</b> |               | <b>Raised in a mixed or multiple-tradition household</b> |                      | <b>Raised in a nonreligious/ secular household</b> |               | <b>Prefer not to say</b> | <b>Total</b>   |
|                             | 94<br>(59.12%)                                | 25<br>(15.72%)                                          |               | 10<br>(6.29%)                                            |                      | 28<br>(17.61%)                                     |               | 2<br>(1.26%)             | 159<br>(100 %) |

*Table 2. Mean willingness-to-support (WTS) scores by framing and inclusivity condition. WTS was calculated as the average of seven support-related items.*

| <b>Framing</b> | <b>Inclusivity</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>Willingness-To-Support Mean</b> | <b>Willingness-To-Support S.D.</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|----------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Religious      | Absent             | 40       | 4.93                               | 1.35                               |
| Religious      | Present            | 41       | 4.93                               | 1.35                               |
| Secular        | Absent             | 40       | 5.29                               | 1.21                               |
| Secular        | Present            | 38       | 5.42                               | 1.08                               |

The descriptive statistics of the main dependent variable in Table 2 show how experimental conditions—*religious* vs. *secular* framing and inclusivity cue *absent* vs. *present*—are associated with audiences' willingness to support. The two secular framing conditions exhibit higher levels of support than the religious conditions, suggesting potential advantages of secular framing in audience support overall. In the meantime, while the inclusivity cue makes no difference under the religious framing conditions (the average value is equally 4.93), the highest level of support ( $M=5.42$ ,  $S.D. = 1.08$ ) is observed in the secular framing + inclusivity present condition. This also suggests potential advantages of inclusive messages in organizational communication for audience support. The descriptive patterns of the dependent variable are consistent with the predictions in the first and second hypotheses; however, further inferential analysis is required to determine whether these differences are statistically significant.

A two-way ANOVA, reported in Table 3, reveals the influence of the framing of the organizational message and the inclusivity cue on participants' willingness to support. The third hypothesis predicted that mission statements with an explicit inclusivity cue would elicit higher levels of support than those without the cue. Contrary to the expectation, the main effect of inclusivity is not statistically significant ( $F(1, 155) = 0.00$ ,  $p = .995$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .001$ ). In particular, the effect size is nearly zero, indicating that explicit inclusivity cues in the mission statements had no impact on participants' support intentions. While the manipulation check shows that participants clearly noticed the inclusive nature of the statements, the cues did not affect participants' willingness to support organizations that communicate social purposes.

The same analysis indicates that the type of moral framing did not significantly change support intentions either. While the theoretical reasoning underlying the

first hypothesis predicted that the secular framing would elicit higher willingness to support, the inferential statistics indicate a statistically insignificant effect of the framing ( $F(1, 155) = 1.64$ ,  $p = .202$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .028$ ). This result suggests that the effect of framing was not uniform across all participants, although the average willingness-to-support score is higher for the secular framing than for the religious one. The result points to potential sources of large variance among participants under religious framing conditions, as evidenced by larger standard deviations (S.D. = 1.35 for religious framing conditions; S.D. = 1.21 and 1.08 for secular framing conditions), warranting further discussion.

**Table 3.** Two-way ANOVA examining the effects of moral framing and inclusivity on willingness-to-support (WTS).

| Effect                       | df1 | df2 | F      | p     | $\eta^2_p$ |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|--------|-------|------------|
| (Intercept)                  | 1   | 155 | 617.27 | <.001 |            |
| framing                      | 1   | 155 | 1.643  | 0.202 | 0.028      |
| inclusivity                  | 1   | 155 | 0      | 0.995 | 0.001      |
| framing $\times$ inclusivity | 1   | 155 | 0.102  | 0.749 | 0.001      |
| Residuals                    | 155 | 155 |        |       |            |

The results of three regression models, summarized in Table 4, confirm whether the third, fourth, and fifth hypotheses are statistically supported. The first column (Model 1) shows whether secular framing, participants' religiosity, and their interaction have statistically significant effects on participants' willingness to support. The regression analysis was conducted to see whether the data support the second hypothesis, which predicted that the negative effect of religious framing on support intention would attenuate as participants' religiosity increases. Analytically, this expected the interaction term between framing and inclusivity to have a negative and statistically significant effect on willingness to support. The result shows the interaction between framing and religiosity is negative and statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.173$ ,  $SE = 0.079$ ,  $t = -2.18$ ,  $p = .031$ ), meaning the effect of framing depends on the participant's religiosity. Specifically, the secular framing's advantage in support intention over the religious one decreases as participants' religiosity increases. In other words, the secular framing was preferred among those with low religiosity, while highly religious participants favored

the religious framing. Thus, the third hypothesis is supported. Interestingly, the positive coefficient with strong statistical significance of religiosity ( $\beta = 0.423$ ,  $SE = 0.053$ ,  $t = 7.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicates that an audience's religiosity is a strong positive predictor of support intention for organizations with social purposes.

The fourth hypothesis stated that the positive effect of inclusivity cues would be stronger among participants with low levels of religiosity than among highly religious participants. Analytically, in Model 2 of Table 4, this hypothesis expected a negative and statistically significant coefficient of the interaction term between inclusivity and religiosity. As shown, the regression analysis exhibited a negative coefficient; however, it is not statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.060$ ,  $SE = 0.081$ ,  $t = -0.74$ ,  $p = .461$ ). Thus, the fourth hypothesis is not supported. This result reveals that inclusivity cues in the mission statements were not more effective among participants with low religiosity. Instead, the effect of inclusivity remained weak across levels of religiosity. Reinforcing this result, the main effect of inclusivity is not significant ( $\beta = 0.084$ ,  $SE = 0.166$ ,  $t = 0.51$ ,  $p = .611$ ), indicating a weak or negligible effect of inclusivity cues regardless of participants' religiosity. Again, the main effect of religiosity is positive and statistically significant in this model ( $\beta = 0.380$ ,  $SE = 0.058$ ,  $t = 6.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The full model, reported in the Model 3 column of Table 4, tested the theoretical predictions formulated in the fifth hypothesis, which stated that inclusivity cues would mitigate the negative effect of religious framing on willingness to support, especially among participants with low religiosity. Analytically, this hypothesis expected that the three-way interaction between framing, inclusivity, and religiosity would have a positive and statistically significant effect on support intention. Contrary to the prediction, however, the regression result shows that the effect is not statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.121$ ,  $SE = 0.162$ ,  $t = -0.75$ ,  $p = .456$ ), not supporting the fifth hypothesis. This result again confirms the minimal effect of inclusivity cues across various conditions. While inclusivity might soften the negative effect of religious framing among participants with low religiosity, the main effect of inclusivity itself is too weak ( $\beta = 0.277$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ ,  $t = 1.21$ ,  $p = .227$ ) to make a statistically meaningful attenuating effect. Interestingly, while the ANOVA result shows a non-significant effect of framing, the main effect of framing is statistically significant in this regression model for support intention. This result implies that the secular framing may elicit higher levels of support intentions than the religious framing does,

although the effect may be small. Thus, the second hypothesis on the effect of framing can be interpreted as marginally supported. Again, religiosity is a strong positive predictor of willingness to support ( $\beta = 0.464$ ,  $SE = 0.081$ ,  $t = 5.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in this model.

Although the majority of hypotheses were not clearly supported in the ANOVA and regression analyses, it can reasonably be assumed that the alignment between participants' and mission statements' religious identities can play a significant role. In other words, because the mission statements with religious framing in the experiments were framed with Christian language, it is possible that the theoretically predicted relationships can be more pronounced among Christian participants than among non-Christian ones. To test this assumption, the full regression analysis was conducted with the two sub-samples separately: Christian and non-Christian. Contrary to the assumption, no significant difference

in the relational patterns among the variables was found between the two samples, as seen in Table 5. Only secular framing was more preferred than the religious one among non-Christians ( $\beta = 0.872$ ,  $SE = 0.37$ ,  $t = 2.39$ ,  $p = 0.020$ ), implying that religiously misaligned value communication can backfire. While participants with high religiosity tended to express higher support intentions than those with low religiosity ( $\beta = 0.373$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $t = 3.2$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), regardless of religious misalignment, Christian value communication can be perceived less positively than secular value communication among non-Christians.

Overall, the ANOVA and regression analyses indicate the significant effect of religiosity, the marginal effect of framing, and no effect of inclusivity. Furthermore, while most two- and three-way interactions among these terms do not significantly influence participants' willingness to support, the interaction between framing and religiosity

**Table 4.** Regression models predicting willingness-to-support (WTS) from moral framing, inclusivity, religiosity, and their interactions. Note. Entries are unstandardized coefficients (B) with standard errors in parentheses. 95% confidence interval on the right column in each model; \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

| Predictor                                                               | Model 1:<br>H2 Framing $\times$ Religiosity |                  | Model 2:<br>H4 Inclusivity $\times$ Religiosity |                  | Model 3:<br>H5 Full Model |                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Intercept                                                               | 4.968***<br>(0.11)                          | [4.744, 5.191]   | 5.090***<br>(0.12)                              | [4.861, 5.323]   | 4.820***<br>(0.16)        | [4.500, 5.140]  |
| Secular framing                                                         | 0.358*<br>(0.16)                            | [0.039, 0.677]   | —                                               |                  | 0.516*<br>(0.23)          | [0.065, 0.968]  |
| Inclusivity present                                                     | —                                           | —                | 0.084<br>(0.17)                                 | [-0.243, 0.4119] | 0.277<br>(0.23)           | [-0.175, 0.729] |
| Religiosity (centered)                                                  | 0.423***<br>(0.05)                          | [0.318, 0.528]   | 0.380***<br>(0.06)                              | [0.266, 0.494]   | 0.464***<br>(0.08)        | [0.303, 0.625]  |
| Secular framing $\times$<br>Religiosity                                 | -0.173*<br>(0.08)                           | [-0.330, -0.016] | —                                               |                  | -0.139<br>(0.11)          | [-0.362, 0.084] |
| Inclusivity present $\times$<br>Religiosity                             | —                                           | —                | -0.060<br>(0.08)                                | [-0.220, 0.100]  | -0.055<br>(0.11)          | [-0.270, 0.160] |
| Secular framing $\times$<br>Inclusivity present                         | —                                           | —                | —                                               | —                | -0.251<br>(0.33)          | [-0.896, 0.394] |
| Secular framing $\times$<br>Inclusivity present $\times$<br>Religiosity | —                                           | —                | —                                               | —                | -0.121<br>(0.16)          | [-0.441, 0.199] |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                                          | .363                                        | .330             | .379                                            |                  |                           |                 |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>                                                 | .350                                        | .310             | .350                                            |                  |                           |                 |
| N                                                                       | 159                                         | 159              | 159                                             |                  |                           |                 |

**Table 5.** Regression models predicting willingness-to-support (WTS) among Christian and non-Christian participants. Note. Entries are unstandardized coefficients (B) with standard errors in parentheses. 95% confidence intervals on the right column in each model; \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

| Predictor                                                      | Christians       |                 | Non-Christian / None |                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Intercept                                                      | 5.187*** (0.246) | [4.697, 5.677]  | 4.480*** (0.257)     | [3.968, 4.992]  |
| Secular framing                                                | -0.435 (0.438)   | [-1.308, 0.438] | 0.872* (0.365)       | [0.1440, 1.601] |
| Inclusivity present                                            | -0.166 (0.393)   | [-0.947, 0.615] | 0.196 (0.429)        | [-0.660, 1.052] |
| Religiosity (centered)                                         | 0.458** (0.136)  | [0.186, 0.730]  | 0.373** (0.117)      | [0.140, 0.606]  |
| Secular framing × Inclusivity present                          | 0.653 (0.562)    | [-0.472, 1.777] | -0.038 (0.625)       | [-1.276, 1.199] |
| Secular framing × Religiosity (centered)                       | 0.218 (0.242)    | [-0.267, 0.702] | -0.085 (0.167)       | [-0.416, 0.247] |
| Inclusivity present × Religiosity (centered)                   | 0.106 (0.214)    | [-0.321, 0.533] | -0.134 (0.179)       | [-0.488, 0.220] |
| Secular framing × Inclusivity present × Religiosity (centered) | -0.544 (0.313)   | [-1.169, 0.080] | -0.083 (0.267)       | [-0.617, 0.451] |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                                 | .369             | .319            |                      |                 |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>                                        | .306             | .250            |                      |                 |
| N                                                              | 79               | 77              |                      |                 |

is significant, indicating that the negative effect of religious framing on support intention attenuates as participants' religiosity increases. The inferential results collectively suggest that the audience's religiosity is a strong predictor of willingness to support social enterprises, and that inclusivity cues in an organization's mission statement may have a limited impact on support intentions.

### Interview Results

The follow-up interviews were conducted to better understand audiences' subjective interpretations of organizational mission statements with religious and inclusive language, and to clarify the mechanisms that underpin the quantitative results. The purpose of the interviews was not to test hypotheses, as the experimental data analysis could already reveal the causal relationship between the variables of interest. Instead, the purpose was to help interpret the statistical results through audiences' subjective perceptions, rather than solely relying on existing theories and empirical studies. After thematic content analysis of 12 interview transcripts was carefully conducted, five themes emerged: religious framing as identity-dependent communication; inclusivity as reassurance rather than a motivator; secular framing as low-friction but less distinctive; religious framing as memorable and distinctive moral communication; and practical credibility as reinforcement of moral framing

in shaping support. The following briefly summarizes key findings from the analysis that help understand the results of the experiment (the full coding results are reported in Appendix 2).

*Religious framing as identity-dependent communication.* The first theme reveals that the effectiveness of religious framing is contingent on the audience's religious identity. Christian framing often triggered momentary alertness or suspicion among some participants, particularly non-Christians. For example, the first interviewee noted: "*Whenever I see something religious, there's a part of me that goes on alert—like, 'Is this some kind of religious push?'*" In contrast, Christian interviewees interpreted Christian moral framing as signals of sincerity and morality, reinforcing the identity-dependent effect of moral framing. The sixth interviewee expressed, "*I think...I feel like it gives, it earns more of my trust.*" The effectiveness of Christian moral framing further depended on whether the interviewees interpreted it as religious culture rather than as religious coercion, as evidenced by the third interviewee, saying: "*As long as they're not forcing religion on me, I react positively overall.*"

*Inclusivity as reassurance rather than a motivator.* While religious framing was identity-dependent, interpretations of inclusive messages were often uniform among interviewees with different religious identities. Many interviewees treated inclusive messages as mere

social norms or legally expected rather than genuinely distinctive. In other words, the inclusion of inclusivity cues in organizational mission statements did not elicit highly positive reactions. For example, the eighth interviewee mentioned, "I would say in this modern era, it's just somewhat given that...the door is open to people of all backgrounds." In addition, inclusivity cues were often perceived as an extension of religious framing rather than competing with it, which also may have reduced the distinctive effectiveness of inclusive messages. This is evidenced by the fifth interviewee, who said: *"I think that does also align with Christian values, but I don't think it's necessarily exclusive to Christian values."* However, it does not imply that inclusive messages do not play any role. In particular, when the mission statements were religious, the messages helped reduce the interviewees' suspicion that the mission statements might be a religious push. The first interviewee clearly noted: "I do think... does a lot of work in removing suspicion that this is some kind of religious push."

*Secular framing as low-friction but less distinctive.* The third theme reveals that, contrary to religious framing, the mission statements framed with secular moral language did not elicit emotional friction that came from identity incongruence. However, they were also perceived as less distinctive compared to religious ones, resulting in low enthusiasm among the interviewees. Admittedly, some participants noted that secular moral language reduced identity friction and the organizations felt more accessible. The tenth interviewee expressed: *"It's not specifying a specific group, so it may allow people to be more included."* However, some interviewees perceived the secular moral language as standard and vague, which may cause mission statements to fail to gain the audience's attention and interest. The first interviewee clearly described such secular moral framing as *"positive"* but not as *"very eye-popping."* Overall, while secular moral framing involves less risk of exclusion, it may fail to address specific audience groups by communicating unique values.

*Religious framing as memorable and distinctive moral communication.* The fourth theme reveals a sharp contrast between religious and secular framing in organizational mission statements. As discussed, secular framing was generally perceived as less frictionous but less distinct. On the contrary, many interviewees noted that religious framing was more memorable and distinctive. This interpretation was found even among non-Christians who read Christian moral framing, as evidenced by the first interviewee: *"If you asked me a*

*month from now, I'd remember, 'Oh yeah, that Christian grill place.'"* However, this result should be interpreted cautiously because memorization does not necessarily lead to support intention. Some interviewees even expressed that communicating Christian values made the organization feel more unique and trustworthy compared to general secular language, as shown by the sixth interviewee: "It made me definitely garner some more trust in their language." The result points to the clear advantages of religious framing over secular ones, which contradicts the theoretical predictions that underlie the second hypothesis.

*Practical credibility as reinforcement of moral framing in shaping support.* Lastly, the fifth theme presents an important practical insight into how moral framing should actually be reflected in organizational mission statements. Interviewees often emphasized that specific plans of business activities that aligned with moral language made the organization more credible. In other words, if an organization communicates moral values in its mission statements but fails to clarify how these values are manifested and implemented in concrete organizational structures or activities, audiences may not genuinely trust those mission statements. For example, the twelfth interviewee saw the mission statements in a positive light because, as noted, *"It seemed like they had more of a plan and addressed real community issues."* However, some interviewees also mentioned that if the business does not look viable enough, they may not be likely to support the organization, reemphasizing the importance of concrete structures and activities in mission statements. For example, the sixth interviewee evaluated the feasibility of the business based on background knowledge and asked, for example, *"So how are you gonna get doctors to work for you?"* This result clearly shows that communicating concrete structure and activities reinforces the credibility of the moral framing of mission statements.

Overall, the interview results clearly provide how audiences interpreted the two types of moral framing and inclusivity cues, and what role individual religious identity plays in interpreting religiously framed organizational mission statements. The results help clarify how to interpret the experimental findings and better understand the cognitive mechanisms that underlie the relationships among moral framing, inclusivity, religious identity, religiosity, and willingness to support social enterprises. The following discussion section presents possible interpretations of experimental results based on the interviews as well as existing theories.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, both quantitative and qualitative results demonstrated that the religious moral framing of organizational mission statements did not significantly reduce audiences' willingness to support. Instead, the effect of framing depended on personal identity characteristics, particularly religious background. While Christian participants did not necessarily respond to Christian moral framing in a positive or negative way, non-Christians clearly showed a preference toward secular framing over religious framing. In addition, explicit inclusive language in mission statements did not create a significant effect on willingness to support, contrary to theoretical expectations. However, audiences' religiosity, regardless of religious affiliation and identity alignment between them and the organizations, did increase willingness to support social enterprises, indicating higher moral sensitivity to social purposes among highly religious participants than that of less religious ones. Religiosity also interacted with framing in the way that the negative effect of religious framing on support intention attenuated as participants' religiosity increased. Taken together, the results suggest the importance of audiences' individual characteristics in determining their support intention towards social enterprises rather than the content of organizational mission statements.

It is necessary to interpret the impact of religious moral framing with nuance. Although the inferential statistics indicate a non-significant effect on the audience's support intention, it may not simply suggest that religious moral framing has limited impact on audiences' willingness to support. While the mission statements were framed only with Christian language, this language may not carry the same meaning to all audiences. For some audiences, particularly those who were raised or have lived in Christian culture, or believe in Christianity, the mission statements may be familiar and more serious. For others, the same statements can be perceived as exclusionary and irrelevant. Thus, the main effect of religious moral language may be weakened due to these heterogeneous reactions to the Christian-language-framed mission statements. This is the inherent limitation of the study, as the experiment only used Christian language for the vignettes. However, this single religious framing was intentional to observe what role religious identity alignment plays in shaping one's willingness to support. In other words, the supplementary subgroup analyses and the interviews helped reveal the

role of religious identity alignment within the overall mechanism. The subgroup analyses indeed reveal that Christian language had heterogeneous reactions between Christian and non-Christian groups. While the Christian group had no significant difference in support intention between religious and secular moral framing conditions, the non-Christian group exhibited significantly higher support intention in secular moral framing compared to the religious one. This result suggests that religious identity alignment matters when audiences face mission statements with religious moral framing.

The interview results provide rich insights into how such alignment works and influences support intention. The results suggest that religious language may trigger identity awareness, but identity awareness does not necessarily lead to behavioral intention favoring or discriminating against organizations with aligned or misaligned identities, respectively. This nuanced result aligns with empirical evidence in the social identity theory literature, suggesting that exposure to religious language or symbols can trigger a clear cognitive boundary between the in-group and the out-group based on religious affiliation (24). The social identity theory posits that even this mere awareness of boundaries can lead to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, particularly when group membership is hard to change, such as race or religion (10). However, as some interviewees noted, religious language can put religiously misaligned people on alert, but this alertness did not always lead to the feeling of exclusion or religious coercion, provided the religious messages did not explicitly do so. Interestingly, some interviewees also noted that religious moral framing felt easier to memorize and more distinctive than secular ones, although this perception did not directly increase their willingness to support. This result underscores the importance of optimal distinctiveness in social life, in which humans have two opposing needs: on the one hand, assimilation and inclusion, and on the other, differentiation (25). While Christians may have placed greater emphasis on assimilation and inclusion when faced with Christian organizations with social purposes, non-Christians were motivated to differentiate in the same situations.

The limited effect of inclusivity cues in the mission statements also requires special attention. In both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the current study could not find evidence that inclusive language itself increased participants' willingness to support. Thus, further discussion on the qualitative interpretations of interviewees is necessary. In fact, during the interview

sessions, very few interviewees brought up the inclusivity cues as a topic of discussion or paid them significant attention. Even when asked about it, they described inclusivity as given, legally expected, and unsurprising, as shown in the thematic analysis. These patterns suggest that inclusivity may serve as a baseline expectation in modern organizational communication, with a prevalent moral and legal emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion across industries, markets, and cultures (26). Indeed, the mission statements included only a simple inclusivity cue rather than reflecting it in specific action plans or organizational structure. As a result, the experiment participants and interviewees did not attribute any significance to the inclusive language, but simply interpreted it as a symbolic or reputational signal. This reinforces the idea that inclusivity may alter perceptions but does not, on its own, generate behavioral intention. This failure can be attributed not only to the inherent limitations of an inclusivity cue but also to a perception-behavior gap in the theory of planned behavior (27). Although the theory indicates a strong link between belief, intention, and behavior in the behavioral model, mounting empirical evidence shows that there can be a significant gap between intention and behavior, and individual responsibility and morality may bridge the gap (28). This result also reinforces the theoretical mechanism of out-group rejection, suggested by the social identity theory (10). Once audiences notice a clear boundary between the in-group and out-group from organizational communication, the mere existence of inclusive language cannot reduce the out-group exclusion felt by the audiences, because they may believe the proposed values of the organization may not be compatible with inclusion, particularly due to its structural nature (29).

While the moral framing and inclusive language in organizational communication alone may not influence support intentions significantly, the audience's religiosity serves as a strong predictor of support intentions. In the American context, Edgell *et al.* (14) argue that the salience of group boundaries among religious groups is declining. However, they also contend that there still exists a boundary between believers and atheists because religious people are less likely to accept atheists due to their distant social locations and value orientations. This discussion provides an important insight into why audiences with higher religiosity tend to support social-purpose organizations more, regardless of identity alignment, than less religious audiences do. Even if an organization promotes misaligned religious values from a religious audience's perspective, the religious moral

framing elicits a sense of in-group identity in more religiously pluralistic societies, such as the U.S. While religiosity may increase behavioral commitment to social values, particularly among those with high consequential religiosity (13), this explanation provides an alternative idea that the boundary between in-group and out-group is being reshaped by pluralistic modern culture. In other words, religious people increasingly perceive others with different religious identities as part of an in-group because they focus more on common values across religions than on doctrinal differences or formal affiliation. However, whether this change can be applied to different cultural contexts remains a question to be answered empirically.

The practical implications for social enterprises clearly emerge from the results. First, religiously-driven social enterprises should recognize the trade-off between religious and secular moral framing in organizational communication. While religious framing may augment authenticity to their core values and distinctiveness among others, secular framing can be more beneficial to a broad public appeal (30). Particularly, secular framing may enhance support intention among those with misaligned religious identities. The communication strategy must consider the nature of activities, the scope of audiences, and the cultural contexts that may change the dynamics between moral framing and audience support. Second, organizations must recognize the limited role of inclusive language in organizational communication. As inclusive values become increasingly taken for granted both socially and legally, the mere presentation of inclusive messages does not guarantee increased audience support. While inclusivity as a social value remains important, it should be recognized that contemporary audiences expect more: clear actions and organizational structures that are tightly linked to the promised inclusive value. Thus, organizations must demonstrate their authentic commitment to inclusivity by clearly communicating what they do and how they do it to promote their values. Third, organizational communication strategy must rely not only on what they communicate but also on who they communicate with. In other words, targeting the right audiences and the right choice of medium are crucial to forming a communication strategy (31). As shown in the empirical analyses, audiences' religiosity mattered more than framing and inclusivity cues. This result suggests that the effectiveness of organizational communication is largely dependent on the characteristics of audiences. Thus, organizations must define and analyze their audiences before building their messages.

The study aimed to examine how moral framing and inclusive language influence audiences' support intentions through a mixed-methods approach. Despite its complementary role in research design, it still has several limitations that warrant further research. First, this study was unable to test the effects of different types of religious framing beyond the Christian one. Although choosing one religious framing was necessary to assess whether religious identity alignment influenced support intention, increasing religious pluralism in contemporary societies calls for scholarly investigation into whether different types of religious framing shape audiences' support intention differently. Therefore, future research can contribute by using religious moral framing with different religions or conducting comparative studies. Particularly, the result cannot be generalized to other types of religious moral framing because different religions may have different levels of identity awareness and inclusionary/exclusionary sentiment towards other religions. Thus, to fully understand whether the current results can be generalized or religion-specific effects arise, similar studies can be done with other religious moral framings. Second, while social entrepreneurs seek real-world support for their entrepreneurial endeavors, this study was able to measure only behavioral intention, operationalized by willingness to support (WTS). Although the theory of planned behavior suggests a strong link between intention and behavior, a growing number of empirical studies also suggest a potential intention-behavior gap. In addition, the inherent lack of ecological validity in experimental research can also create a wider gap between intention and behavior. While experiment participants can easily express their intention to support in an experimental setting, this intention may not easily translate into real support behaviors. To address this issue, future research can attempt to investigate real-world cases where social enterprises communicate their religious purposes. By observing real-world outcomes, such as sales, volunteering, or social media advocacy, future research can directly investigate the relationship between religious moral framing and support behaviors. Third, this study did not focus on specific cultural contexts in recruiting experiment participants. This may have increased the generalizability of the findings, but the implications can be limited in that the findings do not reveal what religious and social contexts may play a role in the relationship between moral framing, inclusivity, and willingness to support. Thus, future research can focus on specific cultural contexts and aim to empirically uncover their roles.

## CONCLUSION

Social enterprises driven by social purposes are often primarily concerned with their internal operations, whether sustaining productivity, refining processes, or managing resources. This is mainly because, unlike profit-driven organizations, social enterprises must bear the burden of survival to achieve long-term social purposes. Yet, organizations do not exist in a vacuum where only internal workings dictate their survival of organizations. Social enterprises also depend on public support, making communication strategically important. In particular, in the era of social media and online communication, the significance of organizational communication is increasing as the spread of organizational messages becomes wider and faster than ever.

The current study attempted to investigate only a small part of the ever-growing communication sphere: the role of moral framing and inclusive language. While this study provides concrete evidence on the narrowly defined topic, scholars and practitioners alike must further investigate how to strategically frame their communication and what strategies can improve the likelihood of long-term survival. All contemporary organizations are now faced with a dual challenge of achieving financial success and social values because ever-expanding social issues, including environmental degradation, inequality, political instability, and more, put enormous pressure on them. Therefore, organizational communication remains an important pursuit for organizations to survive, prosper, and make a lasting impact.

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## APPENDIX 1. EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI

The experiment presented three mission statements of three hypothetical social enterprises in different markets. Each mission statement had four versions, depending on the experimental condition (*religious* vs. *secular* moral framing and inclusivity cue *present* vs. *absent*). Here, four versions of one organization, named ArcLight Community Health, are reported as follows. The other mission statements of the two other organizations, BrightPath Learning and SaborCasa Fresh Grill, were similarly structured.

### 1. Religious Framing — Inclusivity Cue Absent

ArcLight Community Health provides evening mobile clinics across several neighborhoods where families often struggle to access regular daytime medical services. We offer preventive checkups, basic diagnostic testing, women's health consultations, and chronic-care monitoring. To stay affordable while maintaining high-quality care, we operate through a sustainable fee-based model that blends modest service charges with partnerships from local employers and community health contracts. Our interdisciplinary team—including nurses, physicians, nutrition counselors, and health educators—focuses on both immediate care and long-term well-being.

Our mission is guided by Christian principles of compassion, stewardship, and service to our neighbors. We were founded on the belief that caring for others can be a meaningful expression of faith in action, shaping how we design programs, train staff, and allocate resources when community needs are high. These values encourage us to offer care with attentiveness and dignity, and to treat each interaction as an opportunity to live out our commitment to serving others.

### 2. Religious Framing — Inclusivity Present

ArcLight Community Health provides evening mobile clinics across several neighborhoods where families often struggle to access regular daytime medical services. We offer preventive checkups, basic diagnostic testing, women's health consultations, and chronic-care monitoring. To stay affordable while maintaining high-quality care, we rely on a hybrid financial model that combines modest fees with employer partnerships and community health contracts. Our clinical and educational team works to support both immediate needs and long-term patient wellness.

Our mission is guided by Christian principles of compassion, stewardship, and service to our neighbors. We believe that caring for people with respect and

attentiveness is an expression of faith in action, shaping everything from our communication practices to the way we prioritize patient needs.

We welcome individuals and families of all backgrounds and beliefs, and our services are intentionally designed to provide respectful and inclusive care to everyone we serve.

### 3. Secular Framing — No Inclusivity Cue

ArcLight Community Health provides evening mobile clinics across several neighborhoods where families often struggle to access regular daytime medical services. Our mobile units offer preventive screenings, diagnostic testing, women's health consultations, and chronic-care support. We maintain affordability through a hybrid business model combining modest service fees with employer partnerships and community care contracts. Our team of nurses, physicians, nutrition specialists, and health educators works collaboratively to support both immediate medical needs and long-term wellness.

Our mission is grounded in shared human values of care, dignity, and mutual responsibility. We believe communities flourish when people look after one another and when essential services are delivered with fairness, empathy, and respect. These values guide our service decisions, staff training, and resource allocation, and shape our commitment to providing healthcare that strengthens the well-being of the neighborhoods we serve.

### 4. Secular Framing — Inclusivity Cue Absent

ArcLight Community Health provides evening mobile clinics across several neighborhoods where families often struggle to access regular daytime medical services. Our mobile units offer preventive screenings, diagnostic testing, women's health consultations, and chronic-care support. We maintain affordability through a hybrid business model combining modest service fees with employer partnerships and community care contracts. Our interdisciplinary team focuses on both immediate medical needs and long-term community wellness.

Our mission is grounded in shared human values of care, dignity, and mutual responsibility. We believe that communities thrive when people support one another and when essential services are delivered with fairness and respect. These values guide how we design programs, train staff, and communicate with patients.

We welcome individuals and families of all backgrounds and beliefs, and our services are intentionally designed to offer respectful and inclusive care to every member of the community.

## APPENDIX 2. RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS ON INTERVIEWS

### *Theme 1. Religious Framing as Identity-Dependent Communication.*

| Sub-theme                                                                        | Mechanism Explanation                                                                                              | Quote                                                                                                                                                                                        | Interviewee # |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Religious language activates boundary awareness                                  | Christian wording can trigger momentary alertness or suspicion among some participants, especially non-Christians. | “Whenever I see something religious, there’s a part of me that goes on alert—like, ‘Is this some kind of religious push?’”                                                                   | 1             |
|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    | “With the first one, I connected more because it’s a restaurant and I have kids. But the Christian mention did put me on guard for a second—just briefly—until I realized it wasn’t a push.” | 1             |
|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    | “It might be negative, because some people might think you’re selling the religion.”                                                                                                         | 11            |
|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    | “It definitely felt out of place and not aligned.”                                                                                                                                           | 11            |
| Religious framing is acceptable when interpreted as culture rather than coercion | Participants often distinguish between religious values and religious imposition.                                  | “But when I read through it, it’s clearly not trying to convince me to become Christian.”                                                                                                    | 1             |
|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    | “As long as they’re not forcing religion on me, I react positively overall.”                                                                                                                 | 3             |
| Religious framing increases authenticity and trust among aligned audiences       | Christian participants frequently interpret Christian language as signals of sincerity and morality.               | “Yes, I did. I did like it. I like the fact that they revealed their Christianity.”                                                                                                          | 5             |
|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    | “But then when they added their Christian principles, I thought that was actually pretty unique, more unique, and it made me definitely garner some more trust in their language.”           | 6             |
|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    | “I think, like I said, I feel like it gives, it earns more of my trust.”                                                                                                                     | 6             |

*Theme 2. Inclusivity as Reassurance Rather Than a Motivator.*

| Sub-theme                                                              | Mechanism Explanation                                                                                        | Quote                                                                                                                                       | Interviewee # |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Inclusivity is interpreted as a baseline expectation                   | Many participants treat inclusive messages as a social norm or legally required rather than distinctive.     | “Well, most of the time I assume that all restaurants are pretty much welcoming of everyone from different backgrounds.”                    | 7             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                              | “Well, I mean, I would say in this modern era, it’s just somewhat given that, I mean, the door is open to people of all backgrounds.”       | 8             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                              | “By law, you have to be.”                                                                                                                   | 8             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                              | “You know, the third paragraph doesn’t really jump out.”                                                                                    | 8             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                              | “So, you know, the fact that you’re welcoming people of all background beliefs—that’s great.”                                               | 8             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                              | “But again, not surprising based on the strong points already raised in the first two paragraphs.”                                          | 8             |
| Inclusivity reduces suspicion in religiously framed mission statements | Inclusive messages ensure that the organization is not discriminatory.                                       | “But reviewing it again, I do think that last paragraph does a lot of work in removing suspicion that this is some kind of religious push.” | 1             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                              | “Especially since they explicitly say they welcome people from all backgrounds.”                                                            | 3             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                              | “To me, that last paragraph signals how they approach staffing and customers—that they wouldn’t only hire Christians, for example.”         | 3             |
| Inclusivity aligns with Christian values but is not exclusive to them  | Some Christian participants see inclusivity as consistent with their religious values rather than competing. | “I think that does also align with Christian values, but I don’t think it’s necessarily exclusive to Christian values.”                     | 5             |

*Theme 3. Secular Framing as Low-Friction but Less Distinctive.*

| Sub-theme                                                             | Mechanism Explanation                                                          | Quote                                                                                                                          | Interviewee # |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Secular framing feels more comfortable for non-Christian participants | Secular moral language reduces identity friction and feels more accessible.    | “Since I’m not Christian, I felt a bit more comfortable with mission statement number two.”                                    | 3             |
|                                                                       |                                                                                | “Mission statement number two. It feels more neutral for someone like me.”                                                     | 3             |
|                                                                       |                                                                                | “It’s more diversified.”                                                                                                       | 10            |
|                                                                       |                                                                                | “Like, it’s not specifying a specific group, so it may allow people to be more included.”                                      | 10            |
|                                                                       |                                                                                | “I think this really is just more inclusive than directly saying Christianity values.”                                         | 10            |
| Secular moral language is positive but generic or non-distinctive     | While accessible, secular framing is sometimes perceived as standard or vague. | “Phrases like ‘shared human values,’ ‘dignity,’ and ‘mutual responsibility’ sound positive, but they’re not very eye-popping.” | 1             |
|                                                                       |                                                                                | “So I’d say it’s positive, but in a non-specific way.”                                                                         | 1             |
|                                                                       |                                                                                | “I think this is a very normal mission statement that we can see.”                                                             | 4             |

*Theme 4. Religious Framing as Memorable and Distinctive Moral Communication.*

| Sub-theme                                                 | Mechanism Explanation                                                                                                                                                        | Quote                                                                                             | Interviewee # |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Religious framing increases memorability                  | Even participants who were not religious sometimes reported that the Christian messages made the organizational mission statements stand out and create an impact in memory. | “Interestingly, though, the Christian aspect in the first one actually made it more memorable.”   | 1             |
|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                              | “If you asked me a month from now, I’d remember, ‘Oh yeah, that Christian grill place.’”          | 1             |
| Religious principles create a distinctive identity signal | For some participants, communicating Christian values made the organization feel more unique compared to general secular language.                                           | “But then when they added their Christian principles, I thought that was actually pretty unique.” | 6             |
|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                              | “It made me definitely garner some more trust in their language.”                                 | 6             |

*Theme 5. Practical Credibility as Reinforcement of Moral Framing in Shaping Support.*

| Sub-theme                                                    | Mechanism Explanation                                                                                                                                         | Quote                                                                                                                    | Interviewee # |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Operational detail increases trust                           | Participants often emphasized that specific plans in business activities made the organization more credible.                                                 | “It gives a really positive influence.”                                                                                  | 2             |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “It makes them trust the company.”                                                                                       | 2             |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “It focused on more realistic and grounded ideals that related better to the community.”                                 | 12            |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “That felt more concrete and feasible.”                                                                                  | 12            |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “It seemed like they had more of a plan and addressed real community issues.”                                            | 12            |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “It contains what it does and how.”                                                                                      | 8             |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “What it’s trying to achieve, and also how you’re trying to keep the pricing down.”                                      | 8             |
| Skepticism about business viability limits support intention | Some participants questioned whether the organization’s plans were realistic or financially viable, which reduced their interest regardless of moral framing. | “But I don’t get how it’s profitable.”                                                                                   | 11            |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “And medical fees are high because the U.S. doesn’t have that many doctors.”                                             | 11            |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “So how are you gonna get doctors to work for you?”                                                                      | 11            |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “Physicians don’t like to work in the evenings because they have families and they also have a life outside of working.” | 6             |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “So I don’t know how they’re doing that.”                                                                                | 6             |
|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               | “Both statements are good, but they’re vague about real actions.”                                                        | 12            |