




Typologies of congregational hospitality to strangers: A Q methodology study in Indonesian churches



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Christian congregations in Indonesia have been receiving more and more migrants, religious others and socially marginal people, but there was little empirical knowledge of how church leadership has conceived of the concept of hospitality to strangers. Hospitality has profound theological meaning and social danger in a pluralistic and precarious environment. This study aimed to establish and define typologies of congregational hospitality to strangers among leaders of the *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa* (GMIM) in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, and determine its theological and missional implications. This study used Q methodology to develop a 48-statement Q-sample of hospitality based on biblical, ecclesial and ecclesiological material. Forty-eight GMIM leaders were asked to complete Q-sorts on a -5 +5 grid and were interviewed briefly post-sort. Shared viewpoints were derived and interpreted by using a by-person factor analysis with Varimax rotation. Three coherent factors were identified: inclusive, cautious and boundary-keeping and discipleship-oriented transformative hospitality. These typologies revealed divergent patterns of welcome, selectivity and boundary-shaping, as well as tensions between compassion and protection, charity and reciprocity, and programme continuity and structural change. The article reveals that the leaders of GMIM have worked with an implicit and opposite theology of hospitality, which informed the posture of their mission in a Muslim-majority democracy.

Contribution: The mapping of these typologies and their application to world and African theological discourse has made this study an addition to empirical practical theology and a model for creating and training leaders, ecclesial self-reflection and the creation of more coherent and hospitable practices in Indonesian churches.

Keywords: congregational hospitality; Indonesia; missional ecclesiology; practical theology; Q methodology.

Introduction

Migration, urbanisation and social polarisation are accelerating worldwide and changing how societies come across strangers, who are viewed as different as a result of ethnicity, religion, social status or mobility. It is a common situation in the Global South, such as Indonesia, that local churches are faced with increasing diversity and a resurgence of security, identity and belonging anxieties (Offutt 2010). In Christian theology, such forces have reinstated the ancient biblical theme of hospitality to strangers as an essential prism for redefining ecclesial life and witnessing to the world (Franklin 2025).

Theologically speaking, hospitality is not a social virtue or civility of grace it is based on the welcoming initiative of God. In the classic literature, for example, Genesis 18, Leviticus 19:34, Matthew 25:35 and Hebrews 13:2, God is presented as one who is received by the stranger, the sojourner and the marginalised as the divine presence. In the modern theology of migration and hospitality, these motifs have been rediscovered to believe that the church should practise radical hospitality that upsets the practice of exclusion and reworks the relationship between hosts and guests (Soloviy 2020).

Recent efforts in practical theology and missiology have demonstrated how congregations can be a kind of homing device for migrants and other vulnerable strangers by collaborating in liturgical welcome, social support and advocacy. Meanwhile, empirical studies also indicate the presence of ambivalence and seeming congregational hospitality, in which theological accounts of welcome coexist with implicit boundary work, paranoia of otherness and institutional restraint. For example, in the context of South Africa, research on hospitable and inclusive congregations has shown that churches can be verbally proclaimed to welcome without

necessarily practising racial, class and cultural inclusion (Scott, Wepener & Van Wyk 2019). The same kind of tension is also witnessed in Indonesian discussions on hospitality as a theological tool to achieve interreligious harmony and social cohesion.

Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM) is a long-established denomination with firm traditions of diakonia, education and popular involvement in North Sulawesi in the Indonesian Protestant world. GMIM congregations regularly encounter diverse types of strangers: internal migrants, people from other islands or denominations, religious minorities in mixed neighbourhoods and socially marginalised people such as the urban poor or informal workers. In this context, hospitality is not a formal doctrine but a tangible congregational practice informed by histories, cultural practices and ecclesial patterns. However, there is a lack of systematic understanding of how GMIM congregational leaders make sense of the meaning of hospitality to strangers, its theological understanding, its limits and its perceived dangers. Indonesian theological thinking on hospitality is dominated by conceptual or document analysis-based studies, but the number of empirical studies that map lived congregational views is minimal.

This is a scientific gap at the intersection of the theology of hospitality and congregational studies. Globally, the literature on migration, hospitality and church life has increasingly been accompanied by empirical studies although these studies have tended to use qualitative interviews, ethnography or case studies without systematically comparing patterns of subjective perspectives within a broader range of congregational actors. In the religious and spirituality studies field, Q methodology has been a strong tool for determining typologies of subjectivity through the combination of qualitative richness and person-by-person factor analysis. The methodology has been applied, among others, to draw prototypes of faith, map personal worldviews and evaluate various types of religiosity in different countries. However, the best that is currently known is that Q methodology has not been used to develop empirically supported typologies of congregational hospitality to strangers within Indonesian Protestant churches.

The social and scientific utility of this research is that it will provide a subtle empirical map of how GMIM congregational leaders perceive and devalue various theological and practical aspects of hospitality. This study attempts to transcend idealistic rhetoric by evoking and examining the subjective configurations of congruence and dissent of a precisely structured set of statements on hospitality to identify the particular patterns or typologies of congregational hospitality in a given Indonesian setting. The study methodologically adds to practical theology by showing how the Q methodology is appropriate for the study of the subjectivity of a theologically charged nature in the life of congregations, which supplements more familiar forms of qualitative study.

The study hypothesis is to discover and explain typologies of congregational hospitality to strangers among congregation leaders in sampled GMIM congregations in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, using the Q methodology. The research questions used to guide this study were as follows:

- *What do the theological meaning, practical expressions and perceived limits of hospitality to strangers mean to congregational leaders in GMIM?*
- *What are the empirically observable typologies of congregational hospitality that result from Q-sorting of statements concerning hospitality?*
- *What are the implications of these typologies for the tensions and possibilities in the congregational praxis of hospitality to strangers in the GMIM?*

To answer these questions, this study constructs a theoretical and practical model of questioning that has the potential to direct ecclesial thinking on how to address strangers in Indonesian churches and proposes a generalisable methodological template on how to implement the same in the Global South.

Literature review

Theological perspectives on hospitality to strangers

Hospitality has always been a central concept in the Bible and theological tradition, as God owes covenantal care to the weak. The Old Testament directs Israel to love the stranger in the same way that Israel loves itself, Israel once existed as a stranger in Egypt (Lv 19:34), and literary examples of hospitality, such as Abraham receiving three visitors at Mamre (Gn 18), have been viewed as paradigmatic acts of hospitality mediating unexpectedly in divine presence (Youngblood 2019). The hospitality of the New Testament is presented in the context in which Jesus refers to the hungry, thirsty, and stranger in Matthew 25:35–40 and urges people to be hospitable to strangers, as by receiving visitors, angels have entertained them without knowing it (Heb 13:2) (Shirley 2023).

Contemporary theological responses to migration have gone beyond these tropes and made mobility and displacement the locus theologicus, the place where God can be found and His purposes debated in the lives of migrants and their recipients (Groody 2022). In this sense, hospitality is not a personal value but a communal and structural agenda that interferes with boundary lines and privileges (Chamberlain 2020; Sidhu & Rossi-Sackey 2022; Zare & Ye 2025). Hospitality theologies reveal the conflict between protection and openness, fear and trust, and power inequality between hosts and guests. They also emphasise the defencelessness of the hosts, who are threatened by the invasion of strangers, and have their expectations, routines and identities broken.

Recent theological literature has utilised hospitality as a tool to establish intra- and interreligious harmony in plural societies in Indonesia. Local cultural studies of Christian hospitality within practices, such as Javanese *bancaan*,

demonstrate how hospitality can be expressed by sharing meals, celebrating and including everyone regardless of their social and religious status (Panuntun & Susanta 2021). Other reflections in Indonesia make the connection between Christian hospitality and *moderasi beragama* and between Christian hospitality and the protection of the rights of minorities in multicultural contexts clear and evident, with particular emphasis on the fact that receiving the religious other is a matter of both theological imperative and political sensitivity (Tembang 2023). These responses lead to the idea that hospitality to strangers must be discerning of levels, reciprocity and long-term relations, particularly when Christians themselves are in the minority or in vulnerable situations. These thoughts lead to the conclusion that the concept of hospitality to strangers is not only a theological obligation but also a politically delicate practice that must exercise discretion concerning boundaries, reciprocity and long-term relationships.

Hospitality of the congregation and practical theology

Congregations have become one of the main venues of practical theology, wherein congregations either play out or role-play hospitality. Research on African and Western societies has explored the reactions of congregations towards migrants, refugees and other outsiders through worship, pastoral care and social ministries (Louw 2016). There is a general direction in these studies, indicating that churches are a potential source of essential belonging, material aid and narrative acknowledgement, but they also signify profound ambivalence: hospitality can be projected selectively on the basis of moral performance or constrained by implicit racial, class and gender standards.

Recent discussions of welcoming and inclusive congregations suggest that biblical texts about hospitality must be intertwined with organisational cultures (Shirley, Nel & Meyer 2024), spatial design and leadership development, so that churches can look beyond mere gestures of hospitality to become hospitable communities (Hovland 2016). Hospitality is a multi-tiered congregational practice that entails liturgical practices (how worship services recognise and integrate strangers), patterns of relations (who is invited to small groups and other leadership positions in congregations) and institutional policies (how membership, welfare and security are handled). In Indonesia, a new case study also suggests the potential and vulnerability of congregational hospitality to migrants and other vulnerable parties, and more empirical typologies of congregational reactions are required.

Typologies and Q methodology in researching subjectivity in religious research

Q methodology can provide a unique approach to these drawbacks, with its emphasis on the systematic exploration of subjectivity. This methodology created by William Stephenson is a qualitative technique that integrates factor-analytic methods with qualitative depth to determine common patterns of opinion among

participants (Stephenson 2024). Q methodology does not correlate variables in a sample of respondents but rather correlates persons in a collection of statements (the Q-sample) to form factors that identify groups of individuals who rank the statements in the same way. Both factors can then be construed as a coherent structure of beliefs, values or attitudes, in other words, a typology of subjectivity (Stokes, Baker & Lichy 2016).

Q methodology has been able to elicit prototypes of faith, map personal worldviews and discuss various manifestations of religiosity in different cultural contexts in the study of religion, spirituality and worldview. The methodology has also been used in practical theology and pastoral ministry to assess coaching and mentoring in ministry, analyse religious education and explore sensitive issues in which the interlocutors might find it more comfortable to state their positions by sorting statements instead of answering direct questions (Nynäs 2022; Stokes et al. 2016; Wulff 2019). Recent methodology input highlights the benefits of Q methodology in its ability to represent complexity, subtlety and minority perspectives while resulting in empirically robust factor structures. Nevertheless, no published Q methodology study has specifically addressed congregational hospitality to strangers in Indonesian churches. The available literature on the topic of hospitality is more inclined to use narrative, ethnographic or survey-based designs, but Q-based studies on religion are generally more interested in faith, spirituality or worldviews in general, as opposed to definitive congregational practices of welcoming strangers.

Research methods and design

Design

This study used Q methodology to establish the typologies of congregational hospitality to strangers among church leaders in GMIM. Q methodology refers to a mixed methodology that unites the statistical rigour of factor analysis with the qualitative richness of interpretive interviewing to map common subjectivities, instead of estimating the relationship of variables in a population (Ramlo 2015, 2025). The Q methodology was applied in this research to understand and analyse on a systematic scale the repertoire of ways in which GMIM leaders perceive and act on hospitality to various types of strangers to congregational life and to cluster participants into factors that define different configurations of belief and practice.

The study design was based on the conventional steps of Q methodology: (1) building a concourse on congregational hospitality; (2) creating and narrowing a Q-sample of statements; (3) selecting a purposive P-set of subjects; (4) Q-sorting the statements individually on a quasi-normal grid; (5) conducting post-sort interviews; and (6) conducting by-person factor analysis and interpretation reconstruction of the emergent typologies.

Setting and participants

The research was conducted in some GMIM congregations in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa* is a major Protestant denomination that has been present in the area long enough and has a vibrant congregational life that commonly encounters various types of 'strangers', such as newcomers from the other islands, returning migrants, religious minorities, and individuals on the edges of the church and society. The target population for the research was ordained and lay leaders who held formal responsibilities within GMIM congregations. The criteria for inclusion in the study were as follows: (1) they had to be at least 21 years old; (2) they had to have been a leader (e.g. congregational pastor, elder, deacon or chairperson of a congregational board or ministry) for at least 3 years; and (3) they were to be actively involved in congregational activities that might require hospitality to visitors or newcomers.

A purposive maximum-diversity sampling plan was used to obtain as comprehensive a spectrum of points of view as possible, rather than attempting to attain statistical representativeness. Congregations were chosen to have differences in geographical location (urban, peri-urban and rural), socio-economic profile, and size. Leaders of varying ages, genders and positions were invited to these congregations. The objective of the study was to attract a number of 40–60 leaders, which is in line with the recommended sample size of the Q methodology with regard to attaining stable factors with a breakdown of depth during interpretation. In the last P-set, a Q-sort and consecutive interviews were conducted with 48 leaders of 10 GMIM congregations.

Developing concurring and Q-sample construction

The concourse, which is the entire spectrum of potential communicability regarding the congregational hospitality to strangers, was formed from a number of supplementary sources. Firstly, a textual corpus was compiled with Bible passages that are commonly taught and preached in GMIM on the topic of hospitality and neighbour love, denominational documents, liturgical materials and theological texts pertaining to migration and hospitality. Secondly, informal interviews with GMIM pastors and lay leaders, sermons, Bible study resources and congregational guidelines were the sources of empirical content that overtly or obliquely discussed receiving outsiders, migrants or marginalised individuals. These readings were carefully read and summarised into brief and succinct statements of various standpoints and contradictions (e.g. openness versus caution, inclusion versus protection, spiritual versus social priorities).

Based on this concourse, a preliminary pool of approximately 120 statements was developed. Unnecessary, overly parallel or vague statements were eliminated or combined through a series of steps. Great caution was observed in maintaining the

breadth of theological and practical stands, such as affirmation and reservation and critical commentary on hospitality. The pool of emerging themes was then modelled on the following dimensions: theological grounding (biblical and creedal, contextual and pragmatic), perceived risks and boundaries, target groups of hospitality and congregational practices.

To represent such structured diversity in a balanced manner, a final Q-sample of 48 statements was identified. All statements were drafted in Bahasa Indonesian, which GMIM leaders understood well, and were validated by two bilingual theologians to determine whether the statements were clear and theologically sound. Where convenient, an English gloss of the statements was also produced although the actual Q-sorting in the field was all performed in Bahasa Indonesia.

Q-sorting procedure

The subjects were given an individual Q-sort, which was administered in a face-to-face session by the researcher or a trained assistant. Early in the session, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the Q-sorting process and reminded that there were no correct or incorrect answers, but only their opinions. The participants received a pack of 48 statement cards and were asked to read them thoroughly. Sorting was performed in three steps. Firstly, the participants conducted a preliminary crude sorting, breaking the statements into three piles: those that they perceived as describing their own understanding and practice of congregational hospitality as more or less like themselves or as uncertain or neutral. Secondly, they polished this crude sort by laying the statements on a standard quasi-normal distribution scale of 0, which was the neutral position, to most disagree or least like my view (–5) and most agree or most like my view (+5). The grid demanded that the participants make a sequence of forceful choices, whereby there were fewer spaces at the extreme ends and more in the centre, thus forcing the participants to give the statements that were most salient or most objectionable to them.

The participants were advised to wait and align the position of the statements until they perceived that the general assembly of the statement was relevant to their own view. After the participant was completely satisfied with the Q-sort, the eventual placement of each statement was recorded on a coding sheet and input into a data matrix for analysis.

Post-sort interviews

Each participant was immediately surveyed in a semi-structured post-sort interview after the Q-sort, the duration of which was about 20–30 min. The interview was centred on the statements that were at the far ends of the distribution (–5 and +5) and any other statements that were quite challenging for the participant to put. The participants were questioned about what made them put such statements where they did, and how such statements were connected to their understanding of the gospel, the tradition of GMIM and

the practicalities of congregational life that they thought had not been captured by the Q-sample.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted according to the norms of Q methodology. The resulting Q-sorts were recorded in a data matrix, in which the configuration of statements of each participant made one Q-sort (Cadman, Diamond & Fearon 2018). A Pearson correlation matrix was calculated to show the level of similarity between each pairing of participants in a general pattern of responses. Using this correlation matrix, a centroid factor analysis was performed to extract the factors. Other solutions of factors were first considered, some of which considered eigenvalues of more than 1.00, the percentage of variance explained and the interpretability of a factor. Varimax rotation was used to obtain a simple structure with easy interpretation. Only factors with two or more significant loading Q-sorts ($p < 0.01$) were kept in the interpretation; a value of 0.40 was taken as the statistical significance level, as the number of statements was too large.

An array of factor scores representing defining Q-sorts was calculated by the weight of each score based on a factor array, an idealised composite Q-sort, corresponding to each retained factor. These arrays of factors describe the typical composition of statements of every type of congregational hospitality in the study. The arrays were then qualitatively interpreted in conversation with the post-sort interview data, with specific attention to the statements made at the ends, points of contrast between factors and the theme of narration by which participants attempted to make sense of their sorting. Based on this, the descriptive labels of each factor were assigned based on their theological and practical emphases.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the Research Ethics Committee, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Tomohon, and ethics consent was received on 20 Nov 2025. The ethics waiver number is 32/LPPM-UKIT/XI/2025. The Research Ethics Committee, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Tomohon, issued an ethics waiver for the study because of minimal-risk social and educational research.

Results

Finding

This section reports the empirical results in a manner that offers a direct response to these three research questions: (1) how GMIM leaders construct a sense of meaning and the boundaries of congregational hospitality towards strangers; (2) what typologies of hospitality arise as a result of the factor analysis of the Q-sorts; and (3) how these typologies diverge and converge in their focal points. The findings are grouped and presented in three sections: extraction of structures and overview, description of the three typologies, and salient distinguishing and consensus statements.

Extracting and overview of factors

The 48 Q-sorts that GMIM leaders answered were intercorrelated and analysed by using a by-person factor analysis. Analysis of eigenvalues, the scree plot and interpretability of the arrays of factors suggested that the three-factor solution was the most parsimonious and theologically relevant form of data analysis. The three factors retained were with eigenvalues of 27.96, 4.16 and 1.43, which explained 58.3%, 8.7% and 3.0% of the total variance, respectively. A combination of these accounted for approximately 70.0% of the variance in the Q-sorts (Table 1). A coherent cluster of leaders defined each factor, with 18, 16 and 14 defining the Q-sorts, respectively. The three factors satisfied the condition of at least two Q-sorts with significant loading ($p < 0.01$, loading 0.40).

Figure 1 provides a graphical overview of the three-factor arrays across all 48 statements (Q1–Q48). Each line represents how an ideal-typical leader on that factor positions the statements on the –5 to +5 scale.

To make the presentation easier, Table 2 provides only a list of some of the salient statements (usually at ± 4 or ± 5) that are most informative for each factor.

Typology 1: Inclusive hospitality

Factor 1 is characterised by 18 leaders whose Q-sorts approach a pattern of warm, proactive and structurally engaged hospitality to strangers. Practical acts of welcome, treating outsiders equally and being willing to forego comfort to host them are highly affirmed by these leaders, neglecting fright-related and appearance-related exclusion.

Table 2 presents the trend that is highlighted by the interview data. One of the pastors who loaded heavily on Factor 1 remarked the following:

‘When we save our comfort alone, we are false to the Gospel. Christ entered our world as a foreigner; therefore, when a migrant, Muslim neighbour, or homeless person enters our church, we need to realise that Christ is coming to us.’ (Participant 07, male, age 45 years, pastor)

Another elder reflected on Q44 as follows:

‘It is not enough to wait in the church building. Hospitality implies going out, visiting their houses, and hearing their stories. Otherwise, they are strangers to us.’ (Participant 12, male, 59 years old, pastor)

Combined, the array and the interviews indicate that inclusive hospitality is a broad, theologically inspired position: strangers are to be embraced as representatives of the presence of Christ, the church is supposed to be proactive and comfort is viewed as something that perhaps should be relinquished rather than maintained.

TABLE 1: Eigenvalues, explained variance and number of defining Q-sorts.

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cumulative %	Number of defining Q-sorts
1	27.96	58.3	58.3	18
2	4.16	8.7	67.0	16
3	1.43	3.0	70.0	14

Typology 2: Cautious and boundary-keeping hospitality

Factor 2, which is defined by 16 leaders, is characterised by a very different configuration. In this case, hospitality to strangers is defined with reference to doctrinal vigilance, moral order and the protection of congregational identity and comfort. Leaders belonging to this group do

not object to the invitation of strangers but attach great importance to strict boundaries and stipulations.

In the interviews, several Factor 2 leaders voiced (see Table 3) concern that hospitality might unintentionally open the door to doctrinal confusion or moral compromise:

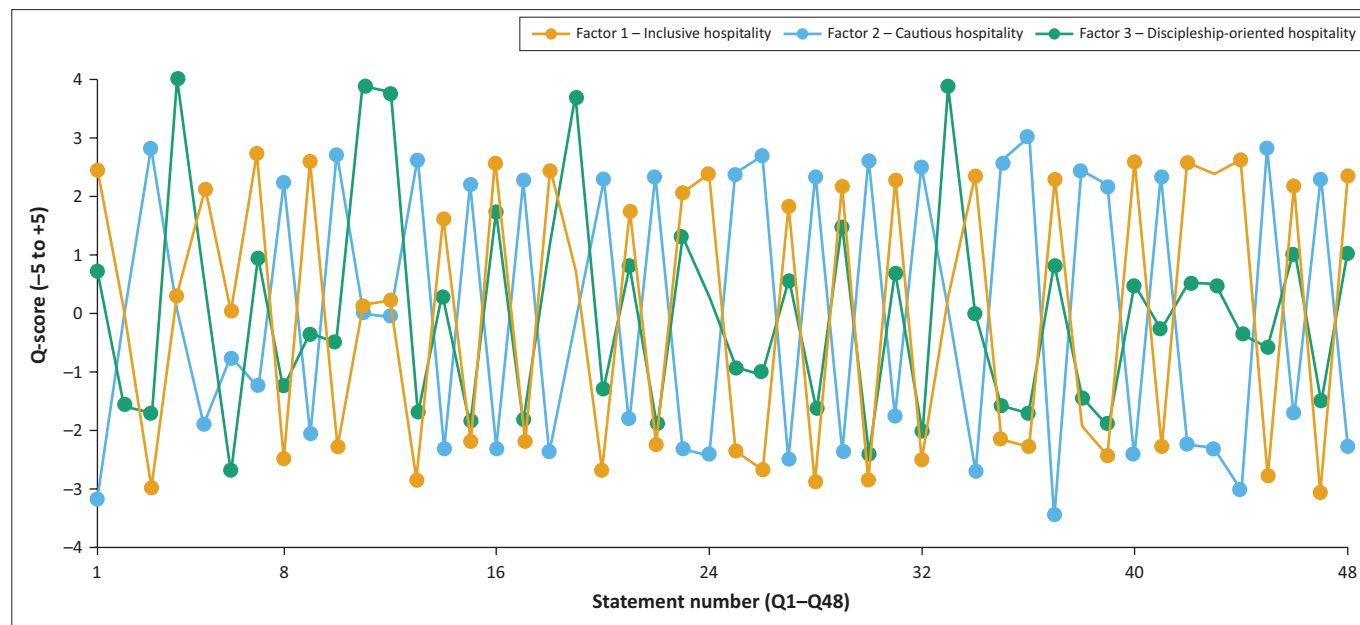


FIGURE 1: Factor arrays for three typologies of congregational hospitality to strangers.

TABLE 2: Selected salient statements for Factor 1 (inclusive hospitality).

Number	Statement (shortened) – Hospitality to strangers	F1	F2	F3
Q7	Giving a proper seat to strangers in worship is an important form of hospitality.	+3	-1	+1
Q9	Receiving strangers of different faiths is a concrete expression of Christ’s love.	+3	-2	0
Q16	Hospitality towards the poor and homeless is a real test of our congregation’s faith.	+3	-2	+2
Q34	The church should be the first place that comes to mind when strangers seek help.	+2	-3	0
Q40	True hospitality requires the congregation to relinquish some comfort and established habits.	+3	-2	0
Q44	The congregation needs to visit the homes of strangers around the church, not just wait for them.	+3	-3	0
Q1	The congregation is called to receive every stranger as if receiving Christ himself.	+2	-3	+1
Q20	Receiving too many strangers can disrupt comfort and order in worship.	-3	+2	-1
Q28	My congregation tends to judge strangers by outward appearance.	-3	+2	-2
Q30	If the congregation is too open to everyone, the quality of our internal fellowship will decline.	-3	+3	-2
Q41	In our congregation, strangers who come alone are rarely invited into conversation after worship.	-2	+1	-1
Q47	I fear that opening up to strangers will require major changes in the way we do church.	-3	+2	-2

F, factor.

TABLE 3: Selected salient statements for Factor 2 (cautious and boundary-keeping hospitality).

Number	Statement (shortened) – Hospitality to strangers	F1	F2	F3
Q3	The congregation must be cautious with strangers because they may bring deviant teaching.	-3	+3	-2
Q8	Hospitality must have clear boundaries to protect children and youth from harmful influences.	0	+3	0
Q10	The congregation should assist only strangers who genuinely want to be actively involved in church.	-2	+3	0
Q13	The congregation must admonish strangers whose behaviour violates moral norms.	-3	+3	-2
Q15	If the budget is limited, long-standing members must always be prioritised over strangers.	-2	+2	-2
Q26	Hospitality does not mean allowing doctrine and identity to become blurred.	-3	+3	-1
Q35	There is a fear that receiving too many strangers could create internal conflict.	-1	+3	0
Q36	Church regulations sometimes make it difficult for strangers to feel fully accepted.	-2	+3	-2
Q45	The church’s programme agenda is so full that it is difficult to give special attention to strangers.	-3	+3	-1
Q1	The congregation is called to receive every stranger as if receiving Christ himself.	+2	-3	+1
Q34	The church should be the first place that comes to mind when strangers seek help.	+2	-3	0
Q37	Allowing strangers to share testimonies in worship enriches the congregation.	+2	-4	+1

F, factor.

'We welcome visitors, but we cannot be naïve. Some people come with hidden agendas. As shepherds, we must guard the flock.' (Participant 03, male, 57 years old, pastor)

Another deacon explained the positive loading on Q10:

'We are ready to help, but there must be commitment. If a person refuses any responsibility or discipline, we cannot keep giving unlimited assistance' (Participant 09, male, 58 years old, pastor)

At the same time, these leaders recognise structural constraints. One noted:

'Our schedule is packed; we move from one programme to another. Sometimes we see strangers at the gate, but we honestly do not know who can accompany them' (Participant 14, female, 58 years old, pastor)

In general, Factor 2 is a mode of hospitality that is part of boundary-keeping: strangers are always welcome although under controlled conditions that preserve the doctrine, moral norms and order in the congregation.

Typology 3: Discipleship-based transformative hospitality

Factor 3, comprising 14 leaders, shows a third pattern wherein hospitality to strangers is understood primarily in the context of mission and discipleship. The main question these leaders ask is not whether strangers are welcome, but whether they will be transformed through the welcome – the transformation of the spirit and community.

In the interviews, leaders loading on Factor 3 frequently linked hospitality to evangelism and to formation. One pastor remarked:

'Hospitality is not just about giving rice or a seat. If we do not walk with the person spiritually, pray with them, teach them, they remain visitors, not disciples.' (Participant 02, female, 49 years old, pastor)

Another emphasised the need to change worship patterns:

'Our liturgy is beautiful for insiders, but a stranger can feel lost. To be hospitable, we must be ready to adjust the way we worship so that newcomers can understand and participate.' (Participant 10, male, 67 years old, pastor)

These leaders are also self-critical of current practice, particularly regarding people with disabilities and the influence of politics and social media on attitudes to strangers:

'We talk about loving the marginalised, but in reality people with disabilities struggle to enter the building or follow the service. That is a failure of hospitality.' (Participant 13, male, 55 years old, pastor).

As presented in Table 4, Factor 3 thus characterises hospitality as a transformative journey in which strangers are intentionally accompanied, taught and integrated through adjustments in worship and congregational structures.

Distinguishing and consensus statements

Beyond the internal logic of each factor, several statements function as strongly distinguishing items between typologies, while only a small number approach a consensus.

Using a difference of approximately two or more scale points between one factor and the other two as a heuristic, the following patterns emerge.

Inclusive versus cautious

- Statements such as Q7, Q9, Q16, Q34, Q40, and Q44 were placed at the positive end in Factor 1 but at the centre or negative end in Factor 2. These items emphasise visible, costly and outward-moving hospitality to strangers.
- Conversely, Q3, Q10, Q20, Q26, Q28, Q30, and Q35 received positive scores in Factor 2 but negative scores in Factor 1, marking a divide in risk perception and boundary-setting.

Cautious versus the other two factors

- Q3, Q8, Q10, Q13, Q15, Q26, Q36, and Q45 sharply distinguish Factor 2 from Factors 1 and 3, highlighting the weight given to doctrinal clarity, moral surveillance and programme overload.
- Universal and outreach-oriented statements such as Q1, Q34, Q37, and Q44 were rated lower by Factor 2 leaders but relatively higher by those on Factors 1 and 3.

Discipleship-oriented versus others

- Q4, Q11, Q12, Q19, and Q33 are extreme positives for Factor 3 but remain close to the neutral centre in Factors 1 and 2, indicating Factor 3's distinctive emphasis on spiritual accompaniment, evangelistic focus and willingness to reform worship for the sake of strangers (Table 4).
- Negative scores on Q6, Q22, Q32, and Q39 reveal a sharper critique of insider bias, rule-based exclusion and socio-political influences than those expressed in the other factors (Table 4).

TABLE 4: Selected salient statements for Factor 3 (discipleship-oriented transformative hospitality).

Number	Statement (shortened) – Hospitality to strangers	F1	F2	F3
Q4	Welcoming strangers mainly means providing spiritual accompaniment and prayer rather than material help.	0	0	+4
Q11	In our congregation, strangers often feel that worship is too 'closed' and difficult to enter.	0	0	+4
Q12	Welcoming strangers also means being willing to change worship practices to make them more accessible.	0	0	+4
Q19	Hospitality should be directed primarily towards people who do not yet know Christ.	+1	0	+4
Q33	Hospitality towards strangers must always be accompanied by discipleship and spiritual growth.	0	0	+4
Q16	Hospitality towards the poor and homeless is a real test of our congregation's faith.	+3	-2	+2
Q6	My congregation tends to be more friendly to strangers who are 'similar' to us.	0	-1	-3
Q22	Strangers who often attend but refuse to follow church rules should not be given ministry roles.	-2	+2	-2
Q32	We often neglect strangers with disabilities or special needs in planning church activities.	-2	+2	-2
Q39	Congregational attitudes to strangers are often influenced by politics and social media.	-2	+2	-2

F, factor.

These differences are visually apparent from the array of three factors shown in Figure 1; in that figure, the three-factor arrays are significantly separated at the points corresponding to these statements. In contrast, there were very few statements with near-consensus tendencies. Some items describing very general aspirations (for example, the importance of hospitality for the witness of the church) are clustered around moderately positive scores in all three arrays, and none are unanimously positioned at the extreme ends by all factors. This implies that while there is broad agreement among GMIM leaders on the importance of hospitality to strangers, there is much less consensus on how it is to be understood, prioritised and practised.

Discussion

Hospitality as participation in *missio Dei*

Although its simplest form moves towards the moral self-giving of hospitality, at its deepest level, Christian hospitality is participation in the *missio Dei*, the pouring of self to the world in Christ and the Spirit. Inclusive hospitality, in the factor array, resonates well with such a vision. Leaders in this group emphasise welcoming the stranger as a welcome to Christ (cf. Mt 25:35–40; Heb 13:2), the opening of their homes, provision of diaconal care and willingness to sacrifice the comfort of their congregations for the sake of others. This pattern is reminiscent of recent HTS endeavours to recover early church practice as a model for contemporary missions. Salu and colleagues interpret early church hospitality as a Pentecostal missional paradigm for Indonesia and claim that hospitality may serve as a praxis of religious moderation that may protect the identity of Christianity and forge peaceful relations with other religious groups (Salu et al. 2023).

In this light, the inclusive typology may be seen as a local expression of a global theological trend: the movement away from understanding the mission as one-way communication (i.e. proclamation) towards mutual presence, shared meals and solidarity with the vulnerable. In HTS, Klaasen's theology of migration also describes the church as a pilgrim community that walks with migrants and their journey for identity rather than 'helping' them at arm's length (Klaasen 2021). The inclusive factor's focus on visiting strangers in their homes and seeing the poor and homeless as a 'test' of congregational faith suggests that at least some GMIM leaders are internalising this missional ecclesiology.

By contrast, in the cautious and boundary-keeping typology, other biblical items dominate the foreground: discernment and protection. Leaders in this cluster emphasise doctrine guarding, children and youth protection, a preference for long-term members (in case of limited resources) and order in worship. Their point of emphasis reflects the Old and New Testament warnings about false teaching, idolatry and moral laxity. Recent HTS work on refugees and migrants by Louw points out how fear of loss and perceived threat easily creates

a 'spiritual crisis of meaning and habitus', resulting in xenophobic reactions and a breakdown of diaconal compassion (Louw 2016). The cautious clusters empirically capture this tension: leaders value the role of hospitality in principle but express great ambivalence about its potential negative, unintended consequences.

Finally, the discipleship-oriented transformative typology has hospitality at its core in continued formation. Here, leaders insist that hospitality to strangers, according to the Bible, should always be accompanied by spiritual accompaniment, evangelisation and structured discipleship.

They are self-critical of the 'closed' feeling of worship to newcomers and call for liturgical and structural changes to make the congregation more accessible. This call seems to resonate with Klaasen's argument that the church needs to help migrants find a new identity in Christ and community and with wider HTS arguments about the church as 'home' for those in transit. Taken together, the three typologies demonstrate that GMIM leaders are already operating with implicit missional theologies of hospitality: one emphasising being self-giving participants in God's welcome, one emphasising God's call to guard the flock and one emphasising God's desire to transform both host and guest via discipleship. None of these is simply 'wrong', but they pull in different directions when they are concretised in practice.

Indonesian pluralism, religious moderation and the ambivalence of hospitality

Indonesia's plural and often fragile religious landscape creates a crucible in which these theologies are developed. *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa* leaders minister as a Protestant minority in a Muslim-majority nation characterised by Pancasila, *moderasi beragama* policies and internal migration, as well as local memories of communal conflict. In this context, hospitality to strangers is simultaneously a theological commandment and a political act. The inclusive typology resonates closely with how Indonesians have tried to formulate a moderate Christian public presence. Salu et al. (2023) demonstrate the role of early church hospitality as a 'frame of religious moderation' in Indonesian Pentecostal mission, whereby guests of other religions are received not as a source of potential threat but as neighbours to be honoured (Salu et al. 2023). Similarly, Panuntun and Susanta's (2021) work on *bancaan* as part of Javanese culture is telling the testimony of Christian hospitality inhabiting local forms of sharing meals and thanking in a dialogical rather than an adversarial way in Muslim-majority contexts (Panuntun & Susanta 2021). *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa* leaders who prioritise home visits, diaconal solidarity and receiving religious others as part of Christ's body participate in this larger trend of dialogical, inculturated hospitality: Christian testimony is borne not by discourse of boundary-making but by embodied activities, visitors, shared meals and mutual care, which provide interreligious neighbourliness in the Muslim-majority context.

Indonesian search for an ecumenical and interreligious ethic of hospitality

However, the data also show that hospitality in GMIM is experienced in a way that is ambivalent and risky, particularly in the cautious cluster. Concerns about 'hidden agendas', the influence of strangers on young people and the problems of internal conflict were to arise whether some outsiders were welcomed. This concern mirrors not only Indonesian Christians' preoccupations with concerns about proselytisation and radicalisation but also broader concerns in Africa over migration movements and in the region during times of tension with radicalisation and xenophobia. Studies of South African congregations show similar patterns, with churches preaching love of neighbour, but members expressing fear that migrants will 'take over' scarce jobs, housing or cultural space (Mashau 2019).

Louw's reflection on the refugee crisis describes xenophobia as a 'crisis of compassion' that demands a theology of hospitality as being-with compassionately, a displacement of fear of the stranger by philoxenia – a mutual, brotherly love that knows no social boundaries. The GMIM cautious typology may be read as representing a place where such a shift has been initiated, instead of in principle (hospitality is affirmed) but is still limited by what Louw (2016) calls systemic paranoia: the sense that outsiders necessarily pose a danger to the host community. This observation suggests that theological work within GMIM will not be able to command more hospitality but will have to work with collective memories of threat, institutional vulnerabilities and the necessity for safe but not exclusionary boundaries.

The discipleship-oriented cluster provides further nuance to Indonesian pluralism. Here, leaders are not so concerned with doctrinal invasion as they are with whether there is something more to hospitality than a superficial welcome. Their insistence on changing worship patterns, paying attention to people with disabilities and combining hospitality and spiritual accompaniment are themes in African discussions of Ubuntu and African hospitality. Such discussions include the argument that true hospitality is not paternalistic charity but an acknowledgement that 'I am because you are' – identity is created in relation to the other (Mashau 2019). In a country where Christian communities sometimes focus on safe internal programmes in the interests of religious harmony, this typology is suggestive of a missional ecclesiology of mutual transformation, in which both GMIM and the strangers in its midst are invited into greater levels of discipleship.

Hospitality, power and critique of selective welcome

One of the most striking findings across the factors is hospitality selectivity. Leaders in the cautious cluster are open to helping strangers who 'show commitment' or are

willing to submit to congregational norms. Leaders in all three clusters know that people who are socially or physically different (e.g. people with disabilities) are often neglected in the workplace. This finding validates the global criticism that, despite much praise, Christian hospitality is often inequitably distributed: given generously to 'familiar strangers' but withheld from those who are religiously, ethnically or morally troubling (Dervin & Layne 2013; Solevåg & Marcondes Alves 2025).

It is instructive here in recent HTS work on 'dispassionate hospitality'. Kimpinde's narrative study of a Methodist congregation in Cape Town makes the case for a kind of hospitality that is driven not by emotional affinity or ethnic preference but by a cool and principled commitment to justice, inclusion and pastoral presence (Kimpinde 2024). Dispassionate hospitality is neither sentimental nor naive but refuses to instrumentalise and/or pre-screen guests based on utility or similarity. When read against the GMIM data, this concept presents a problem both for the cautious cluster's conditionality ('we help only those who fit') and for the possible blind spots of the inclusive cluster (such as assuming that good intentions automatically result in the equitable inclusion of all strangers, including those with disabilities).

Likewise, Rathbone's analysis of Old Testament hospitality in terms of reciprocity nuances Western individualised perspectives on hospitality and guest or host encounters as often mutual obligations rather than charity on one side. Rathbone's consideration of hospitality in the Old Testament as a reciprocity problematises the Western individualistic understanding of hospitality and guest or host encounters as often mutual obligations rather than charity on one side. This view is especially true in Minahasan culture, in which communal mutuality and visiting one another are traditional virtues. The question GMIM faces is whether its hospitality practices are genuine gestures of reciprocal recognition – recognising strangers for what they have to give and becoming partners in the life of the congregation – or whether its practices are mostly top-down and position outsiders as mere recipients of GMIM's benevolence.

The discipleship-oriented typology goes one step further in the direction of reciprocity by acknowledging that strangers can and should contribute to the form of worship and community life. Yet even here, the language of 'discipleship' is part of a subtle asymmetry: To what extent is the guest formed by the host's opportunity? African theologians of the theologies of hospitality and migration have raised the alarm that the church's generous rhetoric can be simultaneously and existentially compatible with deep paternalism, in which migrants and marginalised persons are never fully recognised as co-subjects. A Q1-level theological conversation for GMIM must therefore ask not only how the church forms strangers but also how strangers are allowed to re-form the church.

Towards a hospitable ecclesiological habitus in Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa

These findings point towards a more general ecclesiological question: What sort of habitus – patterns of disposition and practice – is the GMIM cultivating concerning the stranger? Louw's concept of hospitality as habitus of compassionate presence implies that for hospitality to be authentic and effective, it must be more than occasional programmes or individual acts of hospitality; it must be built into the church's liturgy, leadership, governance and spatial arrangements. The inclusive typology lays a good foundation for such a habitus but runs the risk of being tied to the whims of specific leaders if not institutionalised. The cautious typology is a reminder to the church that there is a need for boundaries and discernment – particularly in a situation in which Christian minorities can feel vulnerable – but it is also an example of how easy it is for these concerns to excise diaconal imagination. The discipleship-oriented typology indicates a willingness to change structures but may still have difficulty with a history of ableism or class biases.

Therefore, a sustained theological response must function at several levels:

- **Doctrinal level:** *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa's* teaching on hospitality can be understood not as an optional ethic but as a central dimension of GMIM's understanding of the church as the body of Christ and pilgrims. General theological work on migration and identity offers rich conceptual resources (Klaasen 2021; Louw 2016).
- **Formational level:** Leadership training, both in seminaries and in synodical programmes, should expose future and current leaders to global and Indonesian theologies of hospitality (e.g. early church models, Javanese *bancaan*, African Ubuntu-hospitality), engaging both inclusive and cautious logics critically, not as one being right and the other wrong (Mashau 2019; Panuntun & Susanta 2021; Salu et al. 2023).
- **Structural level:** Congregations could be invited to do some hospitality audits: who really speaks in worship, in leadership and in decision-making; how well the buildings and services are accessible to people with disabilities, migrants and the poor and what are the unspoken rules that mean that strangers cannot graduate beyond visitor status? The third typology does not escape the fact that these issues exist; ecclesial structures do a lot to give voice to these intuitions or silence them.
- **Public level:** In conversation with Indonesian discourses of *moderasi beragama* and African public practical theology, GMIM was able to give voice to the idea of hospitality as a public virtue: a way of being the church that serves social cohesion and resists excessive proselytisation on the one hand and passive withdrawal on the other (Brunsdon & Magezi 2020).

Shortcomings and future trends

While the Q methodology design provides a thorough understanding of patterns of subjectivity, it does not

measure actual practices and outcomes. The three typologies describe how leaders say that they understand and prioritise hospitality; further ethnographic or mixed methods research could investigate how these orientations shape concrete congregational responses to, for example, Muslim neighbours, internal migrants and people with disabilities. A comparative study with other Indonesian denominations – or with African churches that are also negotiating migration and pluralism – may serve to test whether similar typologies are repeated as well as to test whether GMIM patterns are unique. Nevertheless, by permitting GMIM leaders to 'speak through sorting' and bring their voices into dialogue with global, especially African, theological work, this study demonstrates how empirical theology can dissolve and remake ecclesial self-understanding. These three typologies are not destinations but the beginning of GMIM and other Indonesian churches in the process of identifying how Christ, the stranger-host, is calling them to new ways of inclusive, wise and transformative hospitality in a world of movement, precarity and discovering identities.

Conclusion

This study used Q methodology to understand how GMIM leaders in North Sulawesi perceive and prioritise congregational hospitality to strangers. The analysis of 48 Q-sorts based on the 48 statements resulted in three distinct typologies: Inclusive, cautious and boundary-keeping and discipleship-oriented transformative hospitality. Together, these patterns demonstrate that hospitality in GMIM was a field of contestation in which biblical mandates, pastoral concerns and missional aspirations intermeshed in different ways. Inclusive hospitality reflects a Christocentric and diaconal vision in which welcoming the poor, migrants and religious others has been understood as participating in God's self-giving welcome. Cautious and boundary-keeping hospitality underlined leaders' perceptions of vulnerability, doctrinal responsibility and the need to protect children, resources and community identity.

Discipleship-oriented transformative hospitality turned out to be more than merely giving charity; it was a process in which hospitality needed structural adjustments to the life of the congregation in the form of worship and social life so that the stranger could be consciously drawn into greater depths of discipleship and belonging.

These typologies suggest that the GMIM has not been short of theological resources for hospitality but has struggled with how to hold together openness and discernment, inclusion and identity. The findings suggest that leadership formation in GMIM needs to be attentive to all three logics: affirming inclusive practices that operate from the gospel, reinterpreting the need for necessary vigilance in non-exclusionary ways and equipping leaders to engage in structural reforms to make congregations genuinely accessible to strangers, including people with disabilities and people on the social margins.

Future research could expand this study by observing concrete congregational practices and comparing GMIM with other Indonesian and African churches facing similar pressures of pluralism and migration. Nevertheless, the current research has given the GMIM and the broader Indonesian church a series of empirical looking glasses through which they might read how Christ, the stranger-host, might be calling them into more coherent, hospitable ecclesial identities in a fragile and mobile world.

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CRedit authorship contribution

Linda P. Ratag: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Mieke N. Sendow: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Writing – review & editing. James E. Lalira: Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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