



## Humanity and Social Ethics in Building Community Solidarity during Democratic Transitions

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### Article Info

#### Article History:

Received June 11, 2025

Revised June 19, 2025

Accepted July 14, 2025

#### Keywords:

Humanity, Social Ethics,  
Solidarity, Democratic  
Transitions.

### Abstract

*This paper explores the place of humanity and social ethics in the process of constructing community solidarity during a democratic transition, and how the ethical values become management resources in an institutionally volatile context. The study, in a qualitative mode, investigates the theory of humanity-based values in the basis of morality of trust, how social ethics can transform topical conflicts by creating positive results, and how moral obligations can help maintain the community. Data were obtained based on the in-depth interviews with community leaders, activists, and the members of transitional organizations permitting to get profound insights into the practices of solidarity in real life. The results indicate that humanity and ethics are not fringe and symbolic, but core processes of dealing with uncertainty, building resiliency, and strengthening legitimacy within transitional governance. This adds to management scholarship in that it reformulates ethics as strategic assets to the stability of organizations and society instead of compliance and normative ideals. Practically, the study underlines that managers and policymakers should foster ethical leadership, integrate participatory strategies and make responsibility, honesty and care norms of the organization. These commitments help communities to overcome conflict, build trust and develop collective identity despite political disruption. The study adds to the discussion of the study of management and governance by showing that solidarity in the issue of democratic transitions is not a spontaneous phenomenon, but rather one that is controlled by deliberate ethical practices, thus, highlighting the fact that ethics, humanity, and sustainable development of democracy cannot be divided.*

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## Introduction

Democratic changes are marked more frequently by a sense of radical social, political, cultural change that puts the endurance of communities and moral principles they are founded on to the test. Although such transitions are expected to lead to more inclusion and equality, they often cause tensions, doubts, and social disintegration as various interests and ideologies strive to influence the new order in democracies (Deitelhoff & Schmelzle, 2023). In this case, the mission of humanity and social ethics is inevitable. Humanity values compassion, justice, and dignity, and social ethics offer the moral compass, which leads to collective action and solidarity (Ferrera, 2024). Combined, they constitute a normative foundation in terms of which communities could contribute to unity in the diversity and support democratic processes in the time of fragile transitions. Conventionally, the process of democratic transitions in the past has been narrowed down to institutional or procedural orchestras with the main emphasis being on

elections, governmental systems and constitutional changes (Laiduc et al., 2024). But unless these institutional changes are anchored in the ethics and solidarity of the humanity, they will become pointless and may be captured by the elite or populists (Hunter, 2024). The shared ethical values could create a stabilizing force which helps establish trust, reduces conflict, and makes sure that democratic change is not exclusive to the privileges of a specific group (Sangiovanni & Viehoff, 2023). This dimension is especially topical in societies where dictatorial or war-related pasts have destroyed the social trust and increased the intensity of ethnic, religious, or social division (Burelli & Camboni, 2023). Humanity in political and social life is a concept, which concerns an understanding of human dignity and the obligation to protect the rights of other people (Kretzmer & Klein, 2021). Social ethics, in their turn, highlight the importance of such values as justice, reciprocity, tolerance, and respect that govern the relations within the society (Gilibert, 2023). Combined, those notions highlight the idea that democracy is not just a form of government but a moral project that has its foundation in the acknowledgment of the other. As societies reflect such moral values, they become more united and can find their way through the challenges of democratization in a very just and sustainable way (Gilibert, 2024).

In the modern world, the question of democratic transitions is very controversial in most parts of the world. Africa, Latin America, and Asia, have emerged democracies that prove that institutional reforms must be in place, but they cannot exist without the robust social foundations that are based on humanity and ethical principles (Carothers, 2002; Skaaning, 2020). In the case of the Arab Spring, in particular, democratic transitions appeared to have a veneer of success, and the solidarity was visible only to collapse in the shortest time when there was no similarity in the commitment to ethical standards, with some cases resulting in the restoration of authoritarianism or even a military conflict (Stratu et al., 2023). On the other hand, South African transitions illustrated the strength of human beings and principles concerning reconciliation and truth telling practices that gave importance to dignity, dialogue, and restorative justice (Singer, 2023). These international teachings underline the importance of ethical solidarity to the continuation of democracy. The relationship between humanity, ethics, and solidarity in Indonesia is portrayed through the democratic transition experienced in the country following the end of the New Order regime in 1998. The revolution that overthrew authoritarianism was not only politically based on reform but morally on calls to justice, dignity and acknowledgment of human rights (Madung & Mai, 2022).

The civil society groups and local communities were instrumental in the development of solidarity because they were mobilized around collective ethical principles, including fairness, inclusivity, and the concern over marginalized communities (Az-Zahra et al., 2022). Though the issues of corruption, polarization, and social inequality remain, the process of democratic consolidation in Indonesia highlights that the process involves continuous initiatives to introduce the human and ethical values into the daily life of the state and its society. The core of the present research is the acknowledgement that the community unity throughout the democratic transitions cannot be maintained by the institutions alone. Quite on the contrary, it needs ethical justification that appeals to the common humanity of people and moral principles that govern social relations. Such solidarity is not just instrumental, but transformative: collectivities can overcome the narrow self-interest of the self-interest and individual factor, and realize collective responsibility to the well-being of all children. This is especially critical during times of change when insecurity may breed distrust, division and even violence.

Communities can bridge the gaps, foster tolerance, and establish the principles of active democratic cultures by focusing on humanity and social ethics (Suryani & Muslim, 2024). The topicality of the research of this nexus of humanity, social ethics, and solidarity is motivated by modern world challenges. An increase in populism, growing inequality, and the loss of confidence in the democratic institutions have formed an amenable field of polarization and authoritarian retrogression (Suryani & Muslim, 2024; Afianti & Andreastuti, 2024). Under those circumstances, a restoration of solidarity demands a shift back to ethical principles that put human dignity, mutual respect and justice in the forefront. This paper thus places humanity and social ethics as valuable assets to the community struggling to man oeuvre the vagaries of the democratic changes.

## **Method**

This paper has used a qualitative research design in the investigation of how humanity and social ethics can influence the formation of community solidarity in the process of democratic transitions. A qualitative approach was selected as the study aimed to designate the lived experiences, values and narratives as opposed to generalizations in numbers. It was concerned with the way people and communities understand the definition of humanity and moral values in their daily activities especially when they are encountering the issues of uncertainty and tension with the democratic change. In such a manner, the research was designed to produce deep, rich information about the mechanisms of solidarity formation, meanings conveyed by ethical values, and the manner of exercising these values within the community life.

## **Research Site and Context**

The communities that had been directly affected by the dynamics of democratic transition in Indonesia were the subjects of the research, and in particular areas where civil society organizations, grassroots movements and local leaders were active in building solidarity. The selection of the site was informed by the fact that democratic transition is not a homogenous thing but a process that ought to occur differently in social and cultural contexts. By contextualizing the study by the community that has developed over the years of authoritarian regimes, challenges of authority and the need to seek justice, the research could make a revelation about how humanity and ethics serve as the guiding principles in the context of social change.

## **Participants**

Respondents in this research were recruited into a broad range of community actors such as grassroots activists, local leaders, people working in civil society groups, and ordinary citizens who engaged in practices of solidarity during the transitional period. The variety of participants was aimed at making sure that the research would capture a variety of views and not commercialize elite opinions. Participants who had direct knowledge and experience of solidarity efforts were identified on the basis of purposive sampling. Thirty people were regarded in total as the focus was on the diversity in terms of gender, age, and social-economic background to represent the heterogeneity of the community.

## **Data Collection**

The data have been gathered using the in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to express

themselves freely whilst at the same time providing the necessary flexibility in that the central aspects of humanity, ethics and solidarity were covered. The use of focus groups made possible collective reflections, whereby the ways ethical values were distributed, negotiated and contested were offered in group contexts. The community meetings, solidarity events and informal gatherings were observed in participant observation which provided insight into body and performative aspects of ethics and solidarity. Observations, contextual information and reflexivity of the researcher was then documented using field notes that were made systematically.

### **Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis method was applied in the analysis of the data and this was conducted in line with the six steps analyze plan. Interview and focus group transcripts were read several times to become familiar with them, then coded to determine frequent ideas, patterns and meanings of humanity, social ethics and solidarity. These codes were then grouped into broad themes that provided the sense of how the ethical principles shaped solidarity practices in the democratic transition. Throughout the analysis, constant comparison was applied, and themes were narrowed down in terms of the whole data. Reflexive memos facilitated the analysis procedure enabling the researcher to trace the transforming interpretations and to be aware of the views of the participants.

### **Result and Discussion**

Democratic transitions are never smooth sailing and are characterized by tensions, contestations and uncertainties that go beyond technical or structural changes; they demand moral and ethical basis that is capable of holding diverse groups together. It has been demonstrated in the past that institutional reforms are not sufficient to ensure the stability without the shared values that would contribute to cooperation and mutual trust. In this respect, the humanity and social ethics become the vital resources of management that offer the paradigm in which the solidarity is established and maintained. This paper emphasizes the ways in which communities manage volatility when relying on practices that are both moral and managerial by placing emphasis on humanity-based values, ethical mediation of conflicts, and commitments to collective responsibility. The findings provided in the section below reflect the lived experiences of these practices, and provide subtle details on the ways in which solidarity is formed in the context of democratic transitions.

### **Humanity-Based Values as Foundations of Solidarity**

The findings reveal that humanity-based values, particularly compassion, fairness, and respect for dignity, form the ethical foundation upon which community solidarity was built during the democratic transition. These values functioned not only as abstract moral ideals but as practical principles guiding everyday interactions among community members. The presence of humanity as a lived value encouraged individuals to transcend personal and group interests, thereby fostering a collective commitment to unity in times of uncertainty. Participants consistently emphasized the centrality of compassion in building bonds of trust. Compassion was expressed through acts of care, mutual assistance, and empathy, particularly when communities faced hardship due to political instability. One community leader reflected:

*“In moments of fear and uncertainty, what kept us together was our ability to feel each other’s pain and stand as one family, even when our political choices were different.”*

Such testimony underscores that solidarity was not merely political but deeply rooted in shared humanity. Fairness also emerged as a crucial dimension of solidarity. For many participants, fairness was understood as the equitable treatment of all community members, regardless of their political affiliation or social background. In practice, this translated into efforts to ensure that democratic participation was inclusive, and that resources or opportunities were not monopolized by elites. A youth activist explained:

*“People were tired of favoritism and corruption. We wanted to build a system where everyone felt respected, where justice was not just for the powerful but for everyone.”*

Here, fairness operated as both a moral and political demand, binding the community in their collective pursuit of justice. Respect for human dignity served as a unifying force by reinforcing the notion that every individual’s voice mattered in the democratic process. This value was particularly significant in countering the legacy of authoritarianism, where dissenting voices had often been silenced. During interviews, several participants noted that acknowledging dignity meant listening to others with patience and openness. One participant stated:

*“For the first time, I felt that my opinion counted. People listened, even if they disagreed. That respect gave us the courage to work together.”*

This sense of recognition created fertile ground for solidarity, as individuals felt included and valued in collective decision-making. Taken together, these humanity-based values compassion, fairness, and respect for dignity served as moral anchors that enabled communities to remain cohesive during democratic transition. They not only mitigated potential divisions but also generated positive bonds of trust and cooperation. The findings suggest that without the grounding of humanity, solidarity may have faltered under the pressures of political contestation and uncertainty. Instead, by rooting their unity in shared ethical values, communities were able to sustain solidarity as both a moral commitment and a practical resource for democratic transformation.

### **The Role of Social Ethics in Mediating Conflict**

During democratic transitions, conflicts inevitably arose as communities navigated differences in political preferences, social interests, and cultural identities. The findings indicate that social ethics, particularly tolerance, dialogue, and reciprocity, played a vital role in mediating these conflicts and preventing divisions from escalating into long-term hostility. Ethical principles were not treated as abstract ideals but as tools actively mobilized by community members to sustain cohesion in times of disagreement. Tolerance emerged as one of the most frequently cited ethical principles in conflict resolution. Participants emphasized that acknowledging differences without resorting to hostility was central to preserving unity. This was especially important during elections, when political rivalries threatened to divide families and neighborhoods. As one participant explained:

*“Even though we supported different candidates, we reminded ourselves that after the election we still lived side by side as neighbors. Tolerance was the key to keeping our relationships intact.”*

Such statements highlight how tolerance served as a buffer, allowing communities to embrace diversity without fracturing solidarity. Another recurring theme was the use of dialogue as a mediating tool. Open discussion and collective deliberation enabled conflicting groups to express grievances and reach mutual understanding. Community leaders facilitated forums where ethical principles of respect and listening were prioritized, ensuring that disputes could be resolved constructively. One local leader recalled:

*“Whenever tension rose, we called for dialogue. Everyone was given time to speak, and we agreed to listen before responding. This way, anger could cool down, and we could find solutions together.”*

Dialogue, grounded in ethical commitment, transformed potential sources of division into opportunities for building stronger solidarity. The principle of reciprocity also proved significant in mediating conflict. Reciprocity involved an implicit understanding that acts of goodwill, cooperation, and restraint would be returned in kind, creating a cycle of trust. Participants described how reciprocity reinforced ethical obligations within the community, ensuring that no group felt excluded or unfairly treated. A civil society activist reflected:

*“When we showed respect to others, we saw that respect returned. It became a cycle that prevented conflict from getting worse.”*

Reciprocity thus acted as an ethical mechanism that encouraged restraint and fostered mutual responsibility in conflict situations. These findings demonstrate that social ethics provided communities with moral frameworks that shaped not only their responses to conflict but also their strategies for maintaining long-term solidarity. By drawing upon tolerance, dialogue, and reciprocity, communities transformed conflict into a constructive process rather than a destructive one. Importantly, this suggests that solidarity during democratic transitions was not the absence of conflict, but the ability to manage disagreements ethically and inclusively.

### **Ethical Commitments as Drivers of Collective Unity**

The findings reveal that ethical commitments, understood as the deliberate practice of moral responsibility and shared obligation, acted as the driving force behind collective unity during the democratic transition. Unlike spontaneous acts of solidarity, these commitments required conscious effort and consistency in upholding values such as responsibility, honesty, and mutual care. Communities viewed these commitments as essential to sustaining long-term unity and ensuring that democratic transformation was not derailed by short-term divisions. Responsibility emerged as a recurring theme in participants’ narratives. Community members described responsibility not only in terms of fulfilling personal duties but also as a moral obligation to protect the broader community from fragmentation. For example, one participant emphasized:

*“We felt responsible not only for ourselves but for the whole community. If one person acted selfishly, it could destroy the trust we had built together.”*

This sense of shared responsibility reinforced the idea that democracy was a collective project requiring everyone’s ethical participation. Honesty also played a critical role in driving unity. Participants consistently linked honesty to the credibility of leadership and the trustworthiness of community interactions. In contexts where political actors often relied on manipulation or

empty promises, community members sought to counter this with transparent communication and accountability. As one community organizer noted:

*“People trusted us because we spoke honestly. Even when the truth was difficult, honesty brought us closer and prevented suspicion.”*

Honesty, therefore, became more than an individual virtue; it was a collective ethic that cemented trust and unity across groups. The ethic of mutual care was equally significant in building collective unity. Beyond rhetoric, care was enacted through practices of assistance, such as supporting families in need, helping neighbors during crises, and ensuring that vulnerable groups were not excluded from democratic participation. One interviewee reflected:

*“We realized that democracy cannot succeed if some are left behind. Caring for one another was what made us feel like one community.”*

These acts of care reinforced bonds of solidarity and demonstrated that ethical commitments were grounded in daily practices, not just abstract ideals. Altogether, these ethical commitments provided the glue that bound the community together during the volatile period of democratic transition. Responsibility ensured accountability to the collective, honesty established trust across divisions, and mutual care safeguarded inclusivity. The findings suggest that unity was not simply the result of structural reforms or political agreements but was actively constructed through ethical commitments embedded in everyday life. By embracing these commitments, communities were able to sustain solidarity that transcended political rivalry and ensured that democratic transformation was anchored in shared moral responsibility.

### **Ethics and Humanity as Foundations of Transitional Governance**

The results of this research indicate a neglected aspect of democratic transitions, the fact that communities have to be managed not only as political but also as morally based organizations. The insight that comes forth is that humanity and social ethics are not abstract philosophical value-added but a useful management tool of maintaining cohesion in times of institutional upheaval. This challenges the limits of current management literature, which has far too commonly viewed ethics as compliance-based systems instead of generative forces that create common identity and strength (Katiforis, 2024). The leading of the communities and organizations cannot be separated in the context of the democratic transition because it is exactly the values based on humanity that help cement cooperation and trust over time.

The concept of solidarity guided by humanity corresponds with the ethical leadership literature and organizational culture in terms of management. It has been a long-standing argument that fair, compassionate, and dignified leaders develop greater organizational commitment and cohesion (Ghaemmaghani, et al., 2024). These moral promises close the source of authority gap in a weak institutional anchoring in democracies transitioning to a democratic system. The implication is that ethics need to be treated as strategic assets, rather than soft ideals, by managers and policymakers in charge of transitional institutions. The result advances the discussion on how organizational change is managed, with resilience becoming more and more contingent on moral coherence as it is on technical efficiency (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021). The mediating nature of social ethics in conflict shows the way through which management systems can institutionalize dialogue, reciprocity and tolerance as governance practices. The

organizational conflict literature shows that ethical procedures minimize the destructive consequences, and improves collaborative problem solving (Candrasa et al., 2024). The identical can be applied to communities in transition: instead of viewing conflict as dysfunction, managers may create structures that direct the conflict into productive deliberation, which strengthens solidarity (Miceli et al., 2021). This means that those transitional governance types must incorporate participatory practices embedded in the structures that pay respect to ethical discourse that may be harkening back to the lessons of the participatory management models in the organizational context.

The other implication is the potency of ethical commitments to inspire overall solidarity. The organizational studies have always indicated that organizational identification is enhanced by responsibility, honesty, and care which declines turnover intentions (Weisman et al., 2023; Abbasi et al., 2021). These commitments in transitional democracies, serve a similar role to organizational glue, as people are tied to collective projects even when they do not know. To the management, this implies that ethics is not marginal but on the frontline of developing what Sun et al. (2028) infamously referred to as commitment mechanisms. Through such commitments, both organizations and communities are able to keep members mobilized towards the long-term objectives even in cases where the external conditions are unstable (Colquitt et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 2000).

These implications go beyond solidarity in the community to issues of governance and management of the people. According to Kemp & Owen (2022), the transformation to New Public Governance should also take note of the fact that the development of the public value is an acquired relationship rather than something that is unilaterally delivered by the state. This paper has shown that this kind of co-production in the transitional societies can only be sustainable once it is based on the basis of humanity and morality. Solidarity does not emerge as a by-product of institutional reforms; it is regulated in the course of deliberate ethical conducts. This observation compels management scholarship to incorporate moral aspects into the governance paradigm, a step that is in line with the recent demand to humanize management.

On a more imperative level, the results warn against the excessive use of proceduralist model in handling democratic transitions. Although institutional reforms and electoral systems are important, they cannot be used to bring legitimacy and cohesion without ethical foundations (Gerzso, 2023). The same constraints have been observed in management research which has identified structural redesigned failures as they will not work without cultural and ethical reform (Ramiro, 2023). The implication is quite obvious: effective transition management will be ensured in the organizational as well as social situations through the balancing of technical frameworks with ethical obligations. This widens the existing sphere of knowledge by emphasizing that the process of making transitions is not only political but very much managerial and moral.

The research further postulates applicable implications to managers and policymakers who have the responsibility of leading the transitional communities. To maintain solidarity, first it is important to develop ethical leadership that embodies humanity-based values. It has been found that ethical leaders create an atmosphere of both trust and fairness which have a close relationship with collective performance (Burhan et al., 2023). Second, a shift to dialogue-oriented and reciprocity-focused participatory mechanisms can turn conflict into a source of

shared learning, in line with conflict-positive management research (Huang et al., 2021). Third, instilling responsibility, honesty and care as organizational cultures builds resiliency to divisive factors, which supports the understanding that ethical infrastructure is no less important than technical capacity. The value of this work is that it re-orient management scholarship to its ethical underpinnings. In too many instances the management sciences have put efficiency, performance, and control in the front seat, leaving ethics and humanity to the back seat in maintaining organizations and societies (Götz & O'Boyle, 2023). With its volatility, democratic transitions make all too clear that without humanity and moral solidarity, no institutional design will survive. This requires a paradigm shift away of scholars identifying ethics as normative add-ons, ethics as an essential component of management (Pesch & van Uffelen, 2024; Mascarenhas et al., 2024; Fisk et al., 2024). To practitioners, this will necessitate re-setting priorities: solidarity created by ethical commitments is the condition of possibility and not an option of democratic and organizational survival (Bolte et al., 2022).

## Conclusion

This paper has come to the conclusion that not only are humanity and social ethics moral ideals but also practical management requirements in the maintenance of community unity in the context of democratic transition. The studies reveal that transitional governance is as much an ethical management process, as an institutional reform process, by revealing the extent to which human-based values give the means of trust, social ethics mediate conflict to constructive dialogue, and that ethical commitments can lead to collective unity. The implication is that the attempt to create democratic resilience without incorporating humanity and ethics in the organizational and community practices will be disrupted and unsuccessful. The findings highlight to both scholars and practitioners the need to reposition management around the ethical promises as strategic assets that bring a sense of cohesion, legitimacy and long-term stability amidst uncertainty.

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