



Religious Moderation of The Manager of Vipassana Kusalacita Temple in Social Interaction with The Residents of Bojong Menteng, Bekasi City

Reza Cahaya Hermawan¹, Uwes Fatoni², Cecep Suryana³

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Indonesia

Email: awanh50@gmail.com, kanguwes@uinsgd.ac.id,
Cecep.suryana@uinsgd.ac.id³

Abstract

Religious intolerance in Indonesia's urban areas, documented by the Setara Institute and the WAHID Foundation, underscores the urgency of understanding how minority religious institutions navigate interfaith relations. Despite growing scholarship on religious moderation, empirical studies examining it as a practice of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) in majority-minority religious settings remain scarce. This study aims to analyze how the management of Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara a minority Buddhist institution enacts religious moderation through daily social interaction with the predominantly Muslim community of Bojong Menteng, Bekasi City, using the ICC framework of Spitzberg and Cupach. A qualitative case study approach within an interpretive paradigm was employed. Three key informants (the head of vihara management and two senior administrators) were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected over two months via semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzed thematically according to the ICC dimensions of motivation, knowledge, and skills. Findings reveal that motivation is grounded in humanistic values and social responsibility; knowledge is reflected in contextual understanding of local norms (RT/RW structures) and interfaith sensitivities; and skills are enacted through polite interpersonal communication, conflict-preventive dialogue, and non-discriminatory social assistance. This study extends ICC scholarship to majority-minority religious relations and offers a replicable grassroots model for fostering interfaith trust in pluralistic urban communities.

Keywords: religious moderation; intercultural communication; interfaith communication; monasteries; social harmony

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society is known as a religious, cultural, and ethnically pluralistic society. On the one hand, this plurality is social wealth, but on the other hand it has the potential to cause friction if it is not managed through mutual understanding and effective communication. In this context, religious moderation is a strategic approach to maintain a balance of religious life, especially in the space of interfaith social interaction. Urban areas such as Bekasi City show a fairly high plurality dynamic. The existence of houses of worship from various religions adjacent to community settlements requires adequate social adaptability and interfaith communication. One example is the existence of Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara in the Bojong Menteng neighborhood, which is geographically adjacent to mosques and churches. Acts of intolerance in Indonesia have

been documented particularly against non-Muslim minority groups, including restrictions and social pressures on places of worship in densely populated urban settings (Intan, 2023).

This condition requires temple managers to have intercultural communication competencies in order to build harmonious social relations with the surrounding community. Studies confirm that religious diversity in Indonesian urban communities demands active social communication strategies from minority religious institutions to maintain coexistence (Daheri et al., 2023; Masruroh et al., 2022). Based on the results of interviews with the temple manager, interfaith social interaction in Bojong Menteng takes place in a relatively harmonious and tolerant atmosphere. This can be seen from the practice of mutual assistance between religious communities, such as borrowing parking facilities for religious activities, distributing takjil and basic necessities to local residents, and involvement in community social activities regardless of religious background. These practices show that religious moderation is not only understood as a normative concept, but is manifested in concrete actions through everyday social communication.

In the perspective of communication science, this phenomenon can be analyzed through the framework of Intercultural Communication Competency which emphasizes aspects of motivation, knowledge, and communication skills. These competencies allow individuals or groups to interact effectively and appropriately in the context of cultural and religious differences. Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of how the management of Vihara Vipassana Kusalacita applies intercultural communication competencies in the practice of religious moderation in social interaction with the residents of Bojong Menteng, Bekasi City. Religious moderation is a concept that emphasizes a fair, balanced, and proportionate attitude of religion in understanding and practicing religious teachings in the midst of the reality of a pluralistic society. The term religious moderation refers to a non-extreme religious perspective and practice, both towards rigid exclusivism and liberalism that ignores basic religious values.

Thus, religious moderation seeks to place religion as a source of moral values that encourage the creation of peace, justice, and social harmony. Conceptually, religious moderation is not intended to reduce beliefs or confuse religious teachings, but rather to affirm the importance of mutual respect in differences. Every religious believer continues to practice his teachings in its entirety, but at the same time is aware of the existence of adherents of other religions as fellow citizens of society who have equal rights and dignity. Therefore, religious moderation rejects the claim of a single truth that is accompanied by a condescending attitude or negating the existence of the other party.

The main principle in religious moderation is balance (*tawazun*), which is the ability to place religious interests and social interests in balance. This principle encourages religious believers to not only focus on ritual and doctrinal aspects, but also to pay attention to the social dimension of humanity in community life. In this context, religion does not stop at the personal realm but is manifested in ethical and civilized social behavior. In addition to balance, religious moderation also emphasizes the principle of tolerance (*tasamuh*), which is the attitude of respecting differences in religious beliefs and practices without having to sacrifice their respective faith identities. Tolerance is not interpreted as a relativism of truth, but as a willingness to coexist

peacefully in differences. This principle is an important foundation in a multireligious society so that differences do not develop into social conflicts. Empirical studies on Indonesian Muslim communities confirm that the dimensions of national commitment, rejection of violence, and cultural accommodation constitute the key operative dimensions of religious moderation in practice (Subchi et al., 2022). Research demonstrates that local wisdom and religious moderation principles such as tolerance serve as core mechanisms for sustaining interreligious harmony in pluralistic communities (Pajarianto et al., 2022).

The next principle is non-violence, both in physical and symbolic form. Religious moderation rejects the use of violence in the name of religion, including hate speech, intimidation, and the coercion of beliefs. In this perspective, religion is understood as a source of peace that teaches compassion, empathy, and respect for life. Therefore, all forms of religious expression that have the potential to damage social harmony are seen as contrary to the spirit of moderation. The principle of being accommodating to local culture and wisdom is also an important part of religious moderation. The understanding of religion is not detached from the social and cultural context in which it is practiced. This accommodating attitude allows religious teachings to be present in a contextual and grounded manner, so that they can be accepted by the wider community without causing resistance. Research on multireligious communities in Indonesia demonstrates that local wisdom functions as cultural capital enabling interfaith communities to coexist harmoniously through shared communicative practices and inherited social norms (Gede, et al., 2024). In this case, religious moderation encourages a constructive dialogue between religious values and social reality. Thus, religious moderation can be understood as a religious paradigm that emphasizes balance, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for differences.

This paradigm is an important foundation in building a harmonious social life in a pluralistic society, as well as a normative framework for ethical and civilized interfaith communication practices. Interpersonal communication has been shown to serve as a practical vehicle through which religious moderation is enacted in everyday interfaith relations (Fitriani et al., 2023). Religious moderation in the context of interfaith social interaction is not only related to theological attitudes but is also reflected in everyday social practices involving individuals or groups from different faith backgrounds. In a multireligious society, interfaith interaction is a social necessity that requires the ability to build harmonious, equal, and respectful relationships. Therefore, religious moderation is an important foundation in managing differences so that they do not develop into social conflicts.

Interfaith social interaction includes various forms of relationships, ranging from simple interpersonal communication such as greetings, social cooperation, to involvement in community activities. In this context, religious moderation is manifested through an attitude of openness, a willingness to dialogue, and the ability to refrain from exclusive attitudes that have the potential to create social distance. A moderate attitude allows religious believers to hold fast to their beliefs, but does not use them as a tool to dominate or eliminate others. Religious moderation also plays a role as a social mechanism in preventing prejudice and stereotypes between religious communities.

Prejudice often arises due to a lack of communication and understanding of the other party. Through intense and communicative social interaction, individuals can build a more objective understanding of the religious values, customs, and practices of other groups. Interreligious literacy the capacity to understand and engage respectfully with other religious traditions — has been identified as a critical counter-radicalization resource in multireligious educational and community settings (Ali et al., 2021). Thus, religious moderation serves as a social bridge that brings together differences in the space for dialogue and cooperation. Intercultural communication has been empirically shown to be central in building such bridges and constructing religious moderation across Hindu-Muslim and other interfaith communities in Indonesia (Dasih et al., 2023). In practice, religious moderation in interfaith interactions requires awareness of social norms and sensitivity to environmental contexts. Every religious activity carried out in public spaces needs to consider the comfort and social acceptance of the surrounding community. This attitude of mutual respect is an important indicator of the success of religious moderation, because it shows a willingness to coexist peacefully without negating each other's identities.

In addition, religious moderation is also closely related to the ethical dimension of communication. Speech, body posture, word choice, and interaction patterns are important elements in building harmonious interfaith communication. Friendly, courteous, and non-provocative communication reflects the internalization of the values of religious moderation in social practice. In this context, religious moderation does not only exist as a normative discourse, but as a real communicative practice. Thus, religious moderation in the context of interfaith social interaction can be understood as an ongoing social process, in which the values of tolerance, balance, and non-violence are translated into everyday acts of communication. This framework becomes relevant to be analyzed through the Intercultural Communication Competency approach, because the success of religious moderation is largely determined by the ability of individuals or groups to communicate effectively and appropriately in the midst of religious and cultural differences.

Intercultural communication is the process of exchanging messages between individuals or groups who have different cultural backgrounds, both in terms of values, norms, language, and meaning systems. These cultural differences affect the way individuals interpret messages, express thoughts, and interpret the communication behavior of others (Gudykunst, 2005). Therefore, intercultural communication is not only concerned with the delivery of messages, but also involves the process of negotiating meaning in the context of differences. In the study of communication, intercultural communication is understood as social interaction that requires cultural awareness. This awareness includes the understanding that the way a person thinks, behaves, and communicates is greatly influenced by the cultural background he or she adheres to. Without this awareness, cultural differences have the potential to cause misunderstandings, prejudices, and even conflicts in social interactions.

Intercultural communication also emphasizes the importance of the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication. Effectiveness is related to the achievement of communication goals, while appropriateness is related to the suitability of communication behavior with the

cultural norms and values of other parties. Thus, intercultural communication requires adaptability, empathy, and openness in dealing with differences, so that interactions can take place in harmony. In the context of a pluralistic society, intercultural communication is an essential social skill. Interactions between individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds are an unavoidable social reality. Therefore, the ability to communicate intercultural is an important prerequisite in building social cohesion and maintaining the stability of community life. Studies confirm that both knowledge of and positive attitudes toward religious diversity significantly shape the intention to practice moderation among members of multireligious communities (Latifa et al., 2022). A systematic review of 45 studies in WoS and Scopus-indexed journals confirms that ICC is one of the core requirements of human social life in the 21st century, particularly in multicultural settings (Sarwari et al., 2024).

Interfaith communication is a special form of intercultural communication, where differences in beliefs and religious value systems are the main background in the interaction process (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). Religion is not only understood as a system of spiritual beliefs, but also as a cultural system that shapes the way of view, behavior, and communication patterns of its adherents (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, interfaith communication involves both theological and socio-cultural dimensions. As a socio-cultural practice, interfaith communication takes place in various forms of daily interaction, such as social cooperation, community activities, informal dialogue, and neighborly relations. In practice, interfaith communication does not always take the form of formal dialogue about religious teachings, but is often present in social actions that reflect mutual respect and tolerance.

Interfaith communication serves as a means of building understanding and trust between religious communities. Through continuous interaction, individuals can get to know the universal human values taught by each religion, such as compassion, honesty, and social care. Thus, interfaith communication plays an important role in eroding negative prejudices and stereotypes that often arise due to lack of interaction. In the context of a multireligious society, interfaith communication also serves as a social mechanism to maintain harmony and prevent conflict. Mutual respect, the ability to adapt to social norms, and the use of polite language are important elements in the practice of interfaith communication.

These practices reflect the internalization of the value of religious moderation in social life. Therefore, interfaith communication can be understood as a socio-cultural practice that is inseparable from efforts to build a peaceful and inclusive social life. Research on multicultural societies demonstrates that socio-cultural foundations of interfaith harmony rest on such communicative practices enacted at the grassroots community level (Ardianto et al., 2025). The success of interfaith communication is largely determined by the ability of individuals or groups to manage differences communicatively. This emphasizes the importance of the Intercultural Communication Competency approach as an analytical framework to understand the dynamics of interfaith communication in the context of religious moderation.

Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) is a concept that describes the ability of individuals or groups to communicate effectively and appropriately with other parties who have

different cultural backgrounds. Spitzberg and Cupach view communication competence as an integration of knowledge, motivation, and skills that allows a person to constructively manage cultural differences in the process of social interaction. In the context of multicultural and multireligious societies, intercultural communication competence is an important prerequisite for the creation of harmonious social relations. Differences in values, norms, and beliefs can be a source of misunderstanding if not managed through competent communication. Therefore, ICC is not only concerned with technical speaking skills, but also includes the dimensions of attitude, awareness, and ethics in interacting. Empirical studies further extend ICC frameworks by integrating religiosity as a moderating variable that significantly shapes intercultural communication outcomes in culturally diverse societies (Nadeem, 2022).

Spitzberg and Cupach stated that intercultural communication competence consists of three main components, namely motivation, knowledge, and skills. These three components are interrelated and form a unity that determines the quality of cross-cultural and inter-religious interactions. Motivation in intercultural communication competencies refers to an individual's internal drive to engage in cross-cultural interactions openly and positively. Motivation includes an attitude of openness, curiosity, and a willingness to build relationships with others from different cultural or religious backgrounds. Without strong motivation, cross-cultural interactions tend to be avoided or lived in meaningless formalities.

In the context of interfaith communication, motivation plays an important role in building mutual respect and the desire to coexist peacefully. Individuals who have good intercultural communication motivations do not view religious differences as a threat, but rather as a social reality that needs to be managed through humanistic communication. This motivation is reflected in the intention to establish social relationships, do good to others, and maintain environmental harmony. The motivation for intercultural communication is also related to the awareness of social responsibility as part of a pluralistic society. The encouragement to contribute to maintaining social harmony and stability is an important foundation for the practice of religious moderation in interfaith interactions. Religious beliefs and their social practice have been shown to significantly influence social cohesion, as internally motivated religious values promote prosocial behavior and community solidarity across different faith backgrounds (Judijanto et al., 2024).

Knowledge in intercultural communication competencies refers to an individual's understanding of other parties' cultures, values, norms, and belief systems. This knowledge includes awareness of the differences in views, social customs, and religious practices that develop in multicultural societies. This understanding helps individuals to adjust communication behavior so as not to offend or violate applicable social norms. In interfaith communication, knowledge is an important factor in preventing misunderstandings and prejudices. An understanding of the basic values of other religions, as well as sensitivity to religious symbols and practices, allows for more empathetic and respectful communication. This knowledge is not necessarily deeply theological, but it is sufficient to establish appropriate and ethical social interactions.

In addition, knowledge of intercultural communication also includes an understanding of social and structural contexts, such as community rules, the role of local figures, and applicable

social mechanisms. This contextual knowledge helps individuals or groups to place themselves appropriately in a pluralistic social environment. Skills in intercultural communication competencies relate to the practical ability of individuals to manage cross-cultural interactions effectively. These skills include the ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally, empathic listening, adjust communication styles, and resolve potential conflicts peacefully. Communication skills allow individuals to translate motivation and knowledge into real action.

In the context of interfaith communication, communication skills are reflected in how to convey messages politely, build equal dialogue, and maintain social relationships through daily interactions. These skills also involve the ability to read social situations, understand the other party's feelings, and respond to differences thoughtfully. Intercultural communication skills are a key element in the practice of religious moderation, because it is through these skills that the values of tolerance, balance, and anti-violence are embodied in concrete communication actions. Without adequate skills, motivation and knowledge will not be able to produce harmonious social interactions.

Thus, intercultural communication competencies are a relevant analytical framework for understanding interfaith communication practices in multireligious societies. Through the integration of motivation, knowledge, and communication skills, individuals or groups can build effective, appropriate, and harmony-oriented social interactions. This framework is the conceptual basis for analyzing the practice of religious moderation of the management of Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara in social interaction with the residents of Bojong Menteng, Bekasi City. Studies on religious moderation have been conducted by many researchers in various perspectives, especially in the context of religious policy, multicultural education, and social harmony. Azyumardi Azra emphasized that religious moderation in Indonesia is a strategic approach to maintain a balance between religious commitment and the reality of social diversity, so that religion functions as a source of public ethics that promotes peace and social justice.

This perspective places religious moderation as an important normative paradigm in a pluralistic society. Another study conducted by Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy highlights the role of religious moderation in building harmony and peace through a multicultural education approach. The study emphasizes that religious moderation contributes significantly to forming tolerant and inclusive attitudes, but still focuses on the institutional and pedagogical realms, not specifically examining the practice of social communication at the community level. Related scholarship further affirms that promoting moderate Islamic curricula within educational institutions can serve as a strategic vehicle for advancing peaceful interfaith coexistence, particularly in institutionally diverse settings. In the context of cross-cultural communication and interaction, Darla K. Deardorff developed the concept of *Intercultural Communication Competence* (ICC) which emphasizes the integration of attitudes, knowledge, and skills as the main prerequisites for effective and appropriate communication in multicultural situations (Deardorff, 2006). Although this concept is widely used in the study of education and international relations, its application in the context of religious moderation and interfaith communication is still relatively limited.

Spitzberg and Changnon study expands understanding *Intercultural Communication Competence* as a dynamic process that allows individuals or groups to manage cultural differences constructively. This framework is relevant for analyzing interfaith interactions, as differences in beliefs are understood not only as theological differences, but also as cultural differences that affect communication patterns and social relations. Meanwhile, the research of Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel confirms that intercultural communication plays an important role in building trust and preventing conflict in multicultural societies. However, the study is still conceptual in general nature and has not specifically linked intercultural communication with the practice of religious moderation to social relations between majority groups and religious minorities at the local level. Based on the previous research, it can be concluded that although the study on religious moderation and *Intercultural Communication* has been done a lot, there are still *Research gap* on aspects of interfaith social communication practice that are empirically analyzed through a framework *Intercultural Communication Competence*. Therefore, this study is here to fill this void by examining the practice of religious moderation of the management of Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara in social interaction with the surrounding community in Bekasi City.

This research differs from previous studies because it places religious moderation not only as a normative concept or religious policy, but as a practice of social communication that takes place in people's daily interactions. In contrast to previous studies that generally focused on theological, educational, or public policy aspects, this study specifically analyzes religious moderation through the framework of *Intercultural Communication Competence* (ICC) which emphasizes the integration of motivation, knowledge, and communication skills in the context of religious and cultural differences. The novelty of this research also lies in its empirical context, namely the social interaction between the managers of minority religious houses of worship and the majority community at the local level. By making the manager of Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara the subject of the study, this study presents a micro-perspective on how intercultural communication competencies play a role in building trust, preventing potential conflicts, and strengthening interfaith social harmony. Therefore, this research contributes to enriching the study of interfaith communication with a more contextual and social practice-based approach.

Based on the description of the phenomenon, the analysis of previous research, and the research gaps that have been presented, this study aims to analyze how the managers of Vihara Vipassana Kusalacita apply *Intercultural Communication Competence* in building religious moderation through interfaith social interaction with the people of Bojong Menteng, Bekasi City. In particular, this study focuses on analyzing aspects of motivation, knowledge, and communication skills of temple managers in establishing harmonious social relations in the context of a multireligious society. Thus, this study places religious moderation as a contextual and dynamic practice of social communication, which can be understood more deeply through a qualitative-based approach *Intercultural Communication Competence*. This framework of thought becomes the conceptual and methodological foundation in examining the interfaith communication practices of the Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara managers, which will then be described through the research method in the next section.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the practice of religious moderation in interfaith social interaction. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on meaning, experience, and communication processes that take place in a specific social context, rather than on quantitative measurements. The research paradigm used is the *Interpretive*, which views social reality as the result of the construction of meaning formed through the interaction and experience of the research subject. This paradigm allows researchers to interpret interfaith communication practices from the perspective of the social actors directly involved.

The research method used is a case study, focusing on the management of Vihara Vipassana Kusalacita and its interaction with the people of Bojong Menteng, Bekasi City. The case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and contextual exploration of phenomena in one particular social setting, so that the practice of religious moderation can be comprehensively understood. The research informant consists of the manager of Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara as a key informant. The temple manager was chosen because it has a strategic role in managing religious activities, social relations, and communication with the surrounding multireligious community.

The data collection technique was carried out through in-depth interviews (*in-depth interview*) with the main informant to explore the experiences and practices of interfaith communication. In addition, data collection is supported by non-participatory observations of the social environment of the monastery as well as documentation relevant to social and religious activities. The data analysis technique is carried out qualitatively through several stages, namely data reduction, thematic categorization, and data interpretation.

The data obtained is analyzed with reference to the framework *Intercultural Communication Competence*, especially in the aspects of motivation, knowledge, and communication skills, in order to uncover the practice of religious moderation in interfaith social interaction. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources, by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, clarification was made to the informant (*member checking*) to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the experience and meaning intended by the informant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective Conditions of Research Locations and Analytical Framework

Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara is located in the Bojong Menteng neighborhood, Bekasi City, which is inhabited by people with diverse religious backgrounds. Spatially, this temple is adjacent to other religious houses of worship and residential areas, so that interfaith social interaction becomes part of people's daily lives. This objective condition forms a communication space that requires an attitude of openness, social sensitivity, and adaptability in building relationships between religious communities. To analyze the practice of religious moderation in this context, this study uses a framework *Intercultural Communication Competence* (ICC) submitted by Brian

H. Spitzberg and William R. Cupach. This framework views communication competence as an integration of motivation, knowledge, and skills that enables individuals or groups to communicate effectively and appropriately in situations of cultural and religious differences (Spitzberg et al., 1984).

Patterns of Interfaith Social Interaction in the Vihara Environment. The results of the interviews showed that the social interaction between the manager of Vihara Vipassana Kusalacita and the residents of Bojong Menteng took place in a harmonious and mutually supportive atmosphere. The temple environment is in the midst of a multireligious community, even physically adjacent to other religious houses of worship, such as mosques and churches. This condition forms a space for social interaction that requires an attitude of openness and adaptability between religious communities.

The interaction pattern that is built is not formal or ceremonial, but is present in daily practices, such as reprimanding greetings, helping each other with social needs, and cooperation in the use of environmental facilities. One of the tangible forms of this interaction is the borrowing of the monastery's parking lot for religious activities of other religions, as well as the provision of social assistance to local residents regardless of religious background. This practice reflects the existence of social relations that are inclusive and oriented towards common interests. These findings show that interfaith interactions in Bojong Menteng are not dominated by theological discourse, but by social practices that emphasize human values. This kind of interaction pattern is an important foundation for the creation of religious moderation in social life.

Motivation in Interfaith Interaction

Motivation is an initial component in *Intercultural Communication Competence* which relates to the internal drive of individuals to engage positively in cross-cultural and interreligious interactions. Spitzberg and Cupach emphasized that motivation includes an attitude of openness, a desire to build relationships, and psychological readiness to face differences as a social reality (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The results of the study show that the motivation of the Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara management in establishing interfaith social interaction is based on awareness of human equality and the importance of peaceful coexistence. The encouragement to maintain social harmony and do good to others is the main foundation in building communication with local residents of different religions.

This finding is in line with Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy's view that religious moderation requires psychological readiness and an inclusive attitude from religious believers in building harmonious social relations in a multicultural society. Thus, the motivation of intercultural communication is an important prerequisite for the realization of religious moderation as a social practice, not just a normative discourse. The motivation of the monastery manager in establishing interfaith communication is based on the awareness of human equality and the importance of doing good to others. The informant emphasized that in social life, no party feels superior to the other, but all are positioned as fellow humans who coexist. This principle is a moral foundation in building social relations with local residents.

This motivation is reflected in the desire to maintain good relationships through a friendly, open, and non-exclusive attitude. The encouragement to do good is believed to result in mutual goodness in social relations. In the ICC's perspective, this motivation shows psychological readiness and a positive attitude in the face of religious differences, which are the main prerequisites for effective interfaith communication. The motivation of the temple manager is also related to social responsibility as part of the Bojong Menteng community. The desire to live in harmony and contribute to the surrounding environment shows that the practice of religious moderation is not only individual, but also collective and contextual. This pattern aligns with broader findings showing that the key factors driving religious moderation in multireligious Indonesian communities include acceptance of differences, communal togetherness, and a shared orientation toward social harmony (Daheri et al., 2023).

Intercultural Knowledge in Interfaith Social Interaction

The intercultural knowledge of the temple manager is reflected in the understanding of the social norms and religious diversity of the majority community in the Bojong Menteng environment. The informant showed awareness that every religious activity carried out needed to pay attention to the social sensitivity of local residents. Therefore, before carrying out large-scale religious activities, the temple always coordinates and notifies the head of RT, RW, and local security forces.

This understanding of the local social structure indicates good contextual knowledge. The monastery manager realizes that maintaining harmony is not enough just with good intentions, but also requires an understanding of the rules, customs, and social expectations of the surrounding community. This knowledge serves as a guide in adjusting communication behavior so as not to cause discomfort or misunderstanding. Contextual cultural knowledge, defined as awareness of local norms, community roles, and social expectations, is consistently identified as a foundational element for effective intercultural interaction in pluralistic environments (Sarwari et al., 2024). Within the framework of the ICC, this intercultural knowledge plays an important role in preventing conflict and building mutual trust. An understanding of religious and cultural diversity allows the monastery manager to interact more empathically and appreciate differences as part of social life. Empirical studies on Hindu-Muslim interfaith interaction in Indonesia similarly show that intercultural knowledge and awareness of the other's religious context are essential for building inclusive communicative practices (Dasih et al., 2023).

Communication Skills

The communication skills of the monastery manager are reflected in the practice of simple but meaningful interpersonal communication, such as greetings, informal dialogue, and willingness to help the social needs of the residents. The form of communication used is relaxed, not rigid, and prioritizes politeness. This approach facilitates the creation of social closeness and reduces the distance between religious people.

In addition, communication skills are also seen in the ability to manage potential misunderstandings. Even though there have been issues or misunderstandings from some parties, the situation can be mitigated through internal communication from the community without developing into an open conflict. This shows the existence of conflict resolution skills that are preventive and based on social trust. In the context of religious moderation, these communication skills are the main means of translating the values of tolerance and anti-violence into real practice. The monastery manager not only understands the importance of living in harmony, but is also able to realize it through proper and ethical communication actions.

Religious Moderation as a Social Communication Practice

The results of the study show that religious moderation in the Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara environment is not present as a mere normative discourse, but as a real social communication practice. Religious moderation is manifested through mutual respect, openness to differences, and rejection of exclusive and potentially divisive claims of truth. The practice of distributing social assistance in a transparent and coordinated manner with environmental officials is a concrete example of how religious moderation is applied in daily life. This action is not interpreted as an effort to convert religion, but as a form of social concern based on universal human values. This strengthens public trust and avoids the emergence of negative prejudices. Such inclusive social practices reflect what Masruroh et al., (2022) describe as the symbolic and behavioral manifestations of religious moderation in multicultural metropolitan communities, where tolerance is enacted through everyday social symbols and mutual assistance rather than formal theological statements. Thus, religious moderation in this context can be understood as a result of the intercultural communication competence possessed by the monastery manager.

The integration of positive motivation, contextual knowledge, and effective communication skills allows for the creation of harmonious and sustainable interfaith social interactions. This integration mirrors the findings of Ardianto et al., (2025), who demonstrate that interfaith harmony in multicultural Indonesian societies is constructed through the convergence of cultural, communicative, and social practices rather than through formal institutional mechanisms alone. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the religious moderation practice of the Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara management is the result of an integration between positive motivation, contextual intercultural knowledge, and adaptive communication skills. The three components *Intercultural Communication Competence* are interrelated and form harmonious and sustainable interfaith social communication practices in multireligious communities.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that religious moderation practiced by the management of Vipassana Kusalacita Vihara in Bojong Menteng, Bekasi City, is concretely enacted through three interrelated ICC dimensions. In terms of motivation, the management's interfaith engagement is grounded in genuine internalization of humanistic values specifically human equality and social responsibility rather than performative accommodation. Regarding knowledge, they demonstrate

contextual understanding of local social structures (RT/RW mechanisms), majority religious sensitivities, and the necessity of prior coordination with community leaders before large-scale activities. In terms of communication skills, religious moderation manifests through polite interpersonal communication, conflict-preventive dialogue, and non-discriminatory social assistance, collectively sustaining social trust across religious lines.

This study acknowledges its limitations as a single-case study: findings cannot be generalized to other minority institutions or contexts, community resident perspectives are absent, and researcher positionality may have shaped interpretation. Future research should conduct comparative multi-site studies, employ mixed-methods designs incorporating community perception surveys, and pursue longitudinal inquiry. Practically, minority religious institutions are encouraged to adopt proactive, culturally sensitive communication as a systematic conflict-prevention strategy. Regional governments and interfaith bodies may draw on this case as a replicable model for designing community-based interfaith dialogue programs in pluralistic urban settings.

REFERENCES

- Ali, N., Afwadzi, B., Abdullah, I., & Mukmin, M. I. (2021). Interreligious literacy learning as a counter-radicalization method: A new trend among institutions of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. *Taylor & Francis* N Ali, B Afwadzi, I Abdullah, MI Mukmin *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 2021•Taylor & Francis, 32(4), 383–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2021.1996978>
- Ardianto, H. (2025). Religious Moderation in Multicultural Societies: Unveiling the Socio-Cultural Foundations of Interfaith Harmony. *E-Jurnal.Jurnalcenter.Com* H Ardianto, IP Gelgel, B Burmansah *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal (MICJO)*, 2025•e-Jurnal.Jurnalcenter.Com, 2(3), 3848–3863. <https://doi.org/10.62567/MICJO.V2I3.1205>
- Daheri, M., Warsah, I., Morganna, R., Putri, O. A., & Adelia, P. (2023). Strengthening Religious Moderation: Learning from the Harmony of Multireligious People in Indonesia. *Academia.EduM* Daheri, I Warsah, R Morganna, OA Putri, P Adelia *Journal of Population & Social Studies*, 2023•academia.Edu, 31, 571–586. <https://doi.org/10.25133/JPSSV312023.032>
- Dasih, I. G. A. R. P., Perni, N. N., Nerawati, N. G. A. A., & Kiriana, I. N. (2023). Intercultural communication in building religious moderation. *Pdfs.Semanticscholar.Org* IGARP Dasih, NN Perni, NGAA Nerawati, IN Kiriana *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2023•pdfs.Semanticscholar.Org, 6(2), 118–129. <https://doi.org/10.21744/IJSS.V6N2.2135>
- Deardorff, D. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journals.Sagepub.Com* DK Deardorff *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 2006•journals.Sagepub.Com, 10(3), 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- Fitriani, N. E., Galih, &, Prabowo, A., Prabowo, G. A., Sunan, U., Yogyakarta, K., & Ponorogo, I. (2023). Interpersonal Communication In Realizing Religious Moderation In Trenggalek

- District. *Journal.Uinmataram.Ac.Id* NE Fitriani, GA Prabowo KOMUNIKE: *Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam*, 2023 • *journal.Uinmataram.Ac.Id*, 15(1), 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.20414/JURKOM.V15I1.6196>
- Gede Agung, D. A., Nasih, A. M., Sumarmi, Idris, & Kurniawan, B. (2024). Local wisdom as a model of interfaith communication in creating religious harmony in Indonesia. *Elsevier DAG Agung, AM Nasih, B Kurniawan Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 2024 • Elsevier, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SSAHO.2024.100827>
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. https://scholar.google.co.id/scholar?hl=id&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Geertz%2C+Clifford.+%281973%29.+The+Interpretation+of+Cultures.+New+York%3A+Basic+Books.&btnG=
- Gudykunst, W. (2005). An anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) theory of strangers' intercultural adjustment. *Books.Google.Com*. [https://www.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=E12VSljBmvAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA419&dq=Gudykunst,+William+B.++\(2005\).+Anxiety/Uncertainty+Management+\(AUM\)+Theory+for+%09Intercultural+Communication.+Thousand+Oaks,+CA:+Sage+Publications.&ots=FzWBSlyX-b&sig=_9YKSTPQDyYzPW](https://www.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=E12VSljBmvAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA419&dq=Gudykunst,+William+B.++(2005).+Anxiety/Uncertainty+Management+(AUM)+Theory+for+%09Intercultural+Communication.+Thousand+Oaks,+CA:+Sage+Publications.&ots=FzWBSlyX-b&sig=_9YKSTPQDyYzPW)
- Gudykunst, W., & Kim, Y. (1992). *Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication*. <https://library.wur.nl/WebQuery/titel/566909>
- Intan. (2023). Religious pluralism, public religion, and principled pluralism in Indonesia. *Journals.Sagepub.Com* BF Intan *Transformation*, 2023 • *journals.Sagepub.Com*, 40(4), 334–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02653788231206020>
- Judijanto, L (2024). The influence of religious beliefs and religious practices on social cohesion in modern society in Indonesia. *Esj.Eastasouth-Institute.Com* L Judijanto, S Siminto, R Rahman *The Eastasouth Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 2024 • *esj.Eastasouth-Institute.Com*, 1(03), 139–150. <https://doi.org/10.58812/ESSSH.V1I03.276>
- Latifa, R., Fahri, M., Subchi, I., & Mahida, N. F. (2022). The Intention of Becoming Religiously Moderate in Indonesian Muslims: Do Knowledge and Attitude Interfere? *Religions*, 13(6), 540. <https://doi.org/10.3390/re113060540>
- Masruroh, S. A., Mutmainah, S., Juanita, V., Aziz, M. A., & Huda, S. (2022). Manifestation of Religious Moderation in Multicultural Metropolitan Community Surabaya. *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial*, 5(1), 127–148. <https://doi.org/10.37680/MUHARRIK.V5I1.1461>
- Nadeem. (2022). An extension of the integrated model of intercultural communication competence (IMICC) with religiosity: An international students' perspective. *Journals.Sagepub.Com* MU Nadeem *Sage Open*, 2022 • *journals.Sagepub.Com*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221082139>
- Pajariantanto, H., Pribadi, I., & Sari, P. (2022). Tolerance between religions through the role of local wisdom and religious moderation. *Journals.Co.Za* H Pajariantanto, I Pribadi, P Sari *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 2022 • *journals.Co.Za*, 78(4). <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V78I4.7043>

- Sarwari, A. Q., Adnan, H. M., Rahamad, M. S., & Abdul Wahab, M. N. (2024). The requirements and importance of intercultural communication competence in the 21st century. *Journals.Sagepub.Com* AQ Sarwari, HM Adnan, MS Rahamad, MN Abdul Wahab Sage Open, 2024•*journals.Sagepub.Com*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241243119>
- Spitzberg, B., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. *Cir.Nii.Ac.Jp*. <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1360294742591865984>
- Spitzberg, B., Title), W. C.-(No, & 1984, U. (1984). Interpersonal communication competence. *Cir.Nii.Ac.Jp*. <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000797469243264>
- Subchi, I., Zulkifli, Z., Latifa, R., & Sa'diyah, S. (2022). Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims. *Religions*, 13(5), 451. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451>