

Interfaith Educational Collaboration Enhances Cultural Adaptation in Lombok and Bali

Fathurrahman Muhtar^{1✉}, Mohamad Abdun Nasir², Sudarsono³, Hasniza Nordin⁴

^{1,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia

²Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Denpasar Bali, Denpasar, Indonesia

⁴Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study explores the collaborative role of religious educators in fostering interfaith harmony in Lombok and Bali, regions with diverse religious demographics.

Design/methods/approach – A mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative case studies and quantitative analysis. Data were collected through interviews, observations, document analysis, and a Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 170 students. Structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) assessed relationships between perception, interaction experience, attitude, and understanding.

Findings – Perception significantly influences interaction experience (0.930) and understanding (0.464), while interaction experience directly enhances understanding (0.505). Attitude had minimal impact (0.013). The model showed high predictive accuracy, with R² values of 90.2% for understanding and 84.9% for interaction experience, highlighting the importance of fostering positive perceptions and engagement.

Research implications/limitations – The study focuses on two regions, limiting generalizability. Further research should explore long-term impacts and broader applications in multicultural settings.

Originality/value – This study provides empirical evidence of interfaith collaboration's effectiveness in education, contributing valuable insights into religious inclusivity and social integration. Future research could expand this framework to other cultural contexts.

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CONTACT: ✉ fathurrahmanmuhtar@uinmataram.ac.id.

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Introduction

The historical relationship between Lombok and Bali is characterized by a dynamic interplay of religious and cultural diversity, significantly shaping interactions between the predominantly Muslim Sasak population of Lombok and the Hindu Balinese community. This relationship has evolved through conflict and peaceful coexistence, mirroring broader socio-political dynamics within Indonesia. Previous studies highlight that interfaith marriages in Lombok and Bali are shaped by historical, legal, and cultural considerations, revealing how religious and ethnic interactions present challenges and opportunities for fostering social cohesion (Hamim et al., 2022; Mas'ud et al., 2022).

In contemporary Indonesian society, maintaining religious harmony is crucial, particularly in multi-religious educational institutions where students from diverse backgrounds engage in daily interactions. Religious education is a critical platform for fostering interfaith understanding and inclusivity, providing a structured framework for dialogue that mitigates tensions and cultivates a sense of shared community among students of different faiths. Despite growing scholarly attention to interfaith dialogue, research remains limited regarding the specific role of educational institutions in shaping interreligious engagement in Lombok and Bali (Hamim et al., 2022; Jamaluddin, 2017). Historical and religious landscapes underscore the necessity of integrating educational strategies that actively promote respect, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence. Without structured efforts to instill these values in formal educational settings, the potential for interreligious discord may persist, impeding broader social cohesion initiatives.

In response to this need, and to address various incidents of potential interreligious discord, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia issued Government Regulation Number 58 of 2023 on the Strengthening of Religious Moderation. This regulation outlines ten key indicators, one of which is *tasamuh* (tolerance) a core value that Indonesian Muslims are expected to embody. The ten characteristics include *tawasuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice), *islah* (reform-mindedness), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), *shura* (consultation), *muwathanah* (patriotism), *musawah* (equality), *qudwah* (exemplary conduct), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). These values reflect the foundational principles of *wasathiyah* Islam (moderate Islam), which continues to be promoted as part of the nation's religious and civic life (Azra, 2020).

Cultural traditions in Lombok and Bali further highlight the importance of community engagement in fostering inclusivity. The oral and written traditions of the Sasak community in Lombok, for instance, reflect a history of cultural exchange shaped by diverse religious and ethnic influences (Jamaluddin, 2017). This rich culture significantly contributes to identity formation within these communities and offers valuable insights into mechanisms for promoting interfaith dialogue in modern educational contexts. The principle of *tasamuh* in Islam, which advocates for tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect, aligns closely with the Hindu philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes harmonious relations among humans, the divine, and the environment. These doctrinal frameworks provide a robust foundation for interfaith education, reinforcing communal harmony and

mutual respect among adherents of different religions (Zaki, 2021). Integrating these values into educational curricula is essential, as educational institutions serve as key sites for shaping students' perspectives on cultural and religious diversity (Tarman, 2022).

Furthermore, cultural traditions such as *Ngejot*, *Magibung*, and *Perang Topat* illustrate the application of religious values in fostering social cohesion. *Perang Topat*, in particular, symbolizes Islamic and Hindu values, promoting tolerance and mutual respect among participants from different religious backgrounds (Saharuddin, 2024). Empirical research suggests that such traditions function as social mechanisms for reinforcing communal harmony, particularly in regions where Islamic and Hindu communities coexist (Sudarsana et al., 2020). The enactment of *Perang Topat* serves as a tool that instills values of honesty and tolerance within local communities, demonstrating how cultural practices can be leveraged to advance interfaith understanding (Saharuddin, 2024).

Islamic *tasamuh*, which includes coexistence, pluralism, and tolerance, is one crucial idea (Yunus Gilani & Islam, 2014 ; Monjur, 2011 ; Sachedina, 2006). *Tasamuh* highlights the value of respecting differences and is based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Sya'bani, 2021). As seen by *Surah Al-Baqarah:256*, which declares, "There is no compulsion in religion," the Qur'an expressly encourages tolerance. Through the Medina Charter, the Prophet established a pluralistic community in Medina, serving as an example of fairness during the Meccan era. In contrast, the Balinese Hindu tradition of *Tri Hita Karana* is a universal ideal that aims to bring people, God, and nature into harmony (*Parhyangan*, *Pawongan*, *Palemahan*). This idea serves as the foundation for character education and the early development of tolerance (Gunada & Sutajaya, 2023) As a life philosophy, *Tri Hita Karana* is used in various contexts, such as society, the workplace, and education, and it is essential to preserving harmony and social cohesiveness in today's multicultural world (Ermiana et al., 2023).

Schools play a fundamental role in fostering tolerance and social cohesion, yet they often struggle with issues of discrimination and exclusion. Research suggests that educational environments can inadvertently reinforce social segregation, as minority students frequently face structural barriers that hinder their full participation and integration (Rapp & Granados, 2021). Addressing these challenges necessitates structured intervention strategies that actively promote inclusivity and foster interfaith understanding among diverse student populations (Narwana & Gill, 2020). Given the socio-religious complexities in Lombok and Bali, the role of religious educators in mitigating interreligious tensions and supporting minority students in their adaptation process is of particular significance.

Religious majorities significantly shape educational and social environments, often leading to the marginalization of minority students. (Suprpto, 2017) This dynamic can result in feelings of alienation and exclusion, negatively affecting students' educational experiences and overall well-being (Elmore, 2014; Klaasen, 2023). Furthermore, while *Tri Hita Karana* has been extensively examined within Hindu educational contexts, its application in interfaith educational frameworks remains underexplored (Devi, 2023). Addressing this gap requires empirical research that assesses the efficacy of interfaith

pedagogical collaboration in fostering social integration and religious inclusivity (Villegas & Aberman, 2019).

Several studies and writings relevant to the theme of this research include the work of Kusuma and Susilo, findings highlight the importance of interfaith encounters in fostering communication competence and empathy across religious identities (Hadi Kusuma & Susilo, 2020). In a different study, Ghufroon, in His research emphasizes the need to develop critical thinking and open education to prevent religious exclusivism (Ghufroon et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Arif and Lessy explored the local wisdom of the Muslim community in Gelgel Village, Klungkung, Bali, which has maintained interreligious harmony by upholding local values that respect the presence of Hindu temples, traditions, and culture (Arif & Lessy, 2022). Another study examined the transformation of Islamic education in a multicultural context through an inclusive approach. Given the high level of religious and cultural diversity in schools, inclusive and non-exclusive strategies for teaching Islam are essential for fostering tolerance. Islamic education supports the identity of Muslim minorities through an inclusive approach that instills tolerance, supported by a harmonious interfaith school environment.

This study investigates the collaborative role of Islamic and Hindu religious educators in implementing *Tasamuh* and *Tri Hita Karana* values to mitigate interreligious tensions within school environments. While existing research has highlighted the importance of religious education in promoting interfaith tolerance, there remains a lack of empirical studies examining the impact of cross-religious pedagogical collaboration on the adaptation of minority students. To address this gap, the study sets out two main objectives: (1) to analyze how interfaith collaboration among religious educators fosters inclusive educational environments, and (2) to examine how students' perceptions, attitudes, and intergroup interaction experiences influence their adaptation within religiously diverse school settings. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the practical implementation of interreligious educational collaboration as a proactive approach to protecting and empowering minority students. By linking interfaith pedagogy with student adaptation, this study contributes to the development of contextually grounded educational models that support religious inclusivity in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) with an embedded design to analyze teacher collaboration in protecting minority students in Bali and Lombok from the impacts of religious social conflicts. The qualitative approach follows a case study design, examining strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers and Hindu Religion teachers in implementing the values of *Tri Hita Karana* in schools. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with Islamic education and Hindu Religion teachers, field observations to assess teacher-student interactions, and document analysis, including school policies, activity reports, and

photographic/video records. Thematic analysis with triangulation was applied to ensure data validity.

The quantitative approach involved 170 student participants, consisting of 100 Hindu students in Mataram and 70 Muslim students in Denpasar, selected through stratified random sampling. A Likert-scale questionnaire was used to measure students' adaptive attitudes toward diversity. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to identify the relationships between the role of teachers, school policies, and students' adaptive attitudes. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, data confidentiality, and participant comfort during interviews and observations, were also ensured. For the analysis of dimensions and indicators affecting the cultural adaptation variable, Smart-PLS software was utilized. Table 1: presents the variable, four key parameters (dimensions), and their respective indicators. The description in this table refers to W. Lawrence Neuman's view (Neuman, 2002)

Table 1. Variables, Parameters, and Indicators

Variable	Parameter	Indicator
Cultural Adaptation	Student Attitude (SK)	Understanding local traditions (SK1)
		Participation in traditional ceremonies (SK2)
		Maintaining interfaith harmony (SK3)
		Balancing relationships (SK4)
		Preserving local traditions (SK5)
		Harmonizing religion and local traditions (SK6)
	Student Perception (PR)	Acceptance by society despite religious differences (PR1)
		Participation in traditional ceremonies (PR2)
		Engagement in interfaith dialogue (PR3)
		Inspiration from other traditions to do good deeds (PR4)
		Student contributions to preserving traditions in schools (PR5)
		The role of the community in preserving traditions and tolerance (PR6)
	Student Interaction Experience (PNG)	Interaction with people of different beliefs (PNG1)
Community support in understanding other religious traditions (PNG2)		
Appreciation for contributions to interfaith harmony (PNG3)		
Religious values encouraging adaptation to other traditions (PNG4)		
Student Understanding (PMH)	Openness to learning the philosophy of other traditions (PMH1)	

Variable	Parameter	Indicator
		Understanding other traditions enriches life perspectives (PMH2)
		Traditional values as a common ground between cultures (PMH3)
		Similarities between religious concepts and local traditions (PMH4)
		Building harmonious relationships with the community (PMH5)

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research instrument, both validity and reliability tests were conducted using SmartPLS with the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Validity analysis involves assessing the convergent and discriminant validity of each construct, while reliability is evaluated through internal consistency measures. A commonly accepted threshold for reliability is a Cronbach's Alpha value of ≥ 0.70 , indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2: The classification of reliability and validity levels is detailed as follows.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Values

Cronbach's Alpha Value	Reliability Level
0.0 – 0.20	Not reliable
>0.20 – 0.40	Slightly reliable
>0.40 – 0.60	Moderately reliable
>0.60 – 0.80	Reliable
>0.80 – 1.00	Highly reliable

Result and Discussion

1. Collaboration Among Islamic and Hindu Religious Educators in Mitigating Conflict in Schools in Denpasar and Mataram City

Collaboration among religious education teachers plays a crucial role in conflict mitigation within schools, including the prevention of early marriages between students of different faiths. In Mataram, interfaith marriage has been identified as one of the triggers of social conflict. To address this, high school teachers in Mataram have implemented preventive measures through inter-religious collaboration. For instance, at SMA 5, Mrs. Nur'aini, an Islamic Religious Education teacher, and Mr. Ketut, a Hindu Religion teacher, work together to prevent early interfaith marriages. One key principle of Tri Hita Karana, pawongan (human relationships), is enacted through collaborative activities among students of different religions, such as communal service projects and social initiatives, aimed at building harmonious social relationships.

An interview with the Islamic Religious Education teacher at SMA Negeri 9 Mataram revealed that although the term *kafir* (infidel) is occasionally used jokingly by students, no serious conflicts have occurred at school. Students have been provided with interfaith

understanding, enabling them to interact more wisely and respectfully. Despite past tensions in the communities of Monjok and Taliwang—where many students reside—the school environment has remained safe and harmonious. Relationships among students and collaboration between Islamic and Hindu religious teachers are well-maintained in a supportive and relaxed atmosphere.

Similarly, in Bali, the principal of SMKN 3 stated that *Tri Hita Karana* serves as a central framework for fostering interreligious harmony. This value is integrated into classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and school-wide programs, involving both teachers and students to ensure its internalization in daily life. According to the principal of SMA Negeri 12 Denpasar, Putu Eka Yasdika, the school actively develops values derived from *Tri Hita Karana* to prevent conflicts among students. The principle of *pawongan* is applied through interfaith student collaboration, including joint service work and social projects, to nurture harmonious social interactions. The Islamic Religious Education teacher at SMA Negeri 12 Denpasar emphasizes the importance of cultivating a culture of peace by teaching students to embrace tolerance in accordance with Islamic teachings. Muslim students are taught to respect religious differences and maintain unity within a multi-religious school environment.

Contemporary social conflicts in Mataram City persist, often stemming from non-religious issues but exacerbated by religious differences. For instance, clashes between youth groups in Monjok and Karang Taliwang in 2023 highlight ongoing tensions, alongside past incidents such as church burnings and intercommunal conflicts in various areas (Suripto et al., 2021). Despite these tensions, local traditions such as *Ngejot* and *Perang Topat* are cultural mechanisms for fostering interfaith harmony. *Ngejot* symbolizes mutual sharing between Hindu and Muslim communities, particularly among the Sasak and Balinese populations, reinforcing social cohesion (Dewi et al., 2022). Likewise, *Perang Topat* is recognized as a symbolic representation of peaceful coexistence between Islam and Hinduism in Lombok, serving as a platform for interreligious dialogue and cultural exchange (Widari, 2024).

2. The Role of Religious Educators in Promoting Interfaith Harmony

According to an interview with Putu Eka Yasdika, Principal of SMA 12 Denpasar, the school integrates the values of *Tri Hita Karana* a traditional Balinese philosophy that emphasizes harmony among humans (*pawongan*), with nature (*palemahan*), and with the divine (*parahyangan*) as a strategic framework to mitigate potential conflicts among students. Recognizing the dynamic interplay between peace and conflict in diverse educational settings, the school implements proactive measures to promote interreligious and intercultural understanding. For example, during religious events, Muslim students are encouraged and permitted to wear traditional Balinese attire, with female students donning the *kebaya* alongside the *hijab*. This inclusive practice has become normalized within the school environment, serving not only as a symbol of mutual respect but also as an expression of cultural and religious synergy. Such initiatives underscore the school's

commitment to fostering a harmonious learning environment where cultural diversity and religious identity are mutually enriching.

Religious educators in Mataram City play a crucial role in mitigating potential religious conflicts by fostering an inclusive and tolerant educational environment. Teachers recognize the importance of early intervention in preventing sectarian tensions and have implemented various strategies to cultivate harmony among students. Research indicates that culturally responsive classroom management is essential in diverse educational settings, as it helps teachers acknowledge their biases and understand their students' cultural backgrounds, thereby promoting a more inclusive atmosphere (Milner & Tenore, 2010).

3. Student-Led Initiatives for Conflict Resolution

Students themselves play an active role in promoting interfaith harmony.. Based on an interview with teachers At SMA 7 and 9 Negeri Mataram, the Tolerance Discussion Group, composed of representatives from diverse religious backgrounds, serves as a platform for addressing social issues and potential conflicts. Activities such as conflict resolution simulations help students develop critical listening and problem-solving skills. Research indicates that such student-led initiatives can significantly enhance intergroup relations and foster a culture of peace within educational settings (Larson, 2022). A Muslim student highlighted that these sessions enhanced his ability to communicate effectively with peers of different faiths, emphasizing that religious diversity should be considered a strength rather than a barrier. At SMA Negeri 9 Mataram, Hindu religious teacher Ni Made Ayu Mahendriani applies *Tri Hita Karana* to instill interfaith brotherhood, encouraging students to participate in temple visits while fostering open communication across religious lines. This approach aligns with the idea that integrating cultural and religious education can enhance mutual understanding and respect among students from various cultural and faith-based affiliations.

Meanwhile, Islamic religious teacher M. Irzam ensures that external conflicts do not disrupt school harmony by maintaining constructive dialogues between Muslim and Hindu students, reflecting the importance of dialogue in conflict resolution. The implementation of such interfaith initiatives is consistent with the principles of peace education, which advocate for the development of empathy and understanding among students. Moreover, the role of teachers in facilitating interfaith dialogue is crucial, as they can create supportive environments that encourage students to engage with one another across religious divides (Essomba, 2023).

4. Implications of Teacher Collaboration on the Cultural Adaptation of Minority Muslim Students in Denpasar, Bali, and Hindu Students in Mataram, Lombok

Based on the results of questionnaires distributed to students in the research locations of Bali and Lombok, two PLS-SEM analyses were conducted, revealing significantly different outcomes.

4.1 Denpasar, Bali

Figure 1 presents the structural model comprising four latent variables: Perception, Interaction Experience, Attitude, and Understanding, each supported by valid indicators with strong outer loadings (>0.800), except Attitude indicators SK2 and SK3, which were excluded. Perception strongly influences Interaction Experience (0.930) and moderately affects Understanding (0.464), while Interaction Experience significantly contributes to Understanding (0.505). Attitude demonstrates minimal impact on Understanding (0.013) and a weak negative effect on Interaction Experience (-0.096). With R^2 values of 0.902 (Understanding) and 0.849 (Interaction Experience), the model confirms high predictive accuracy, emphasizing Perception's pivotal role in promoting cultural adaptation and learning outcomes.

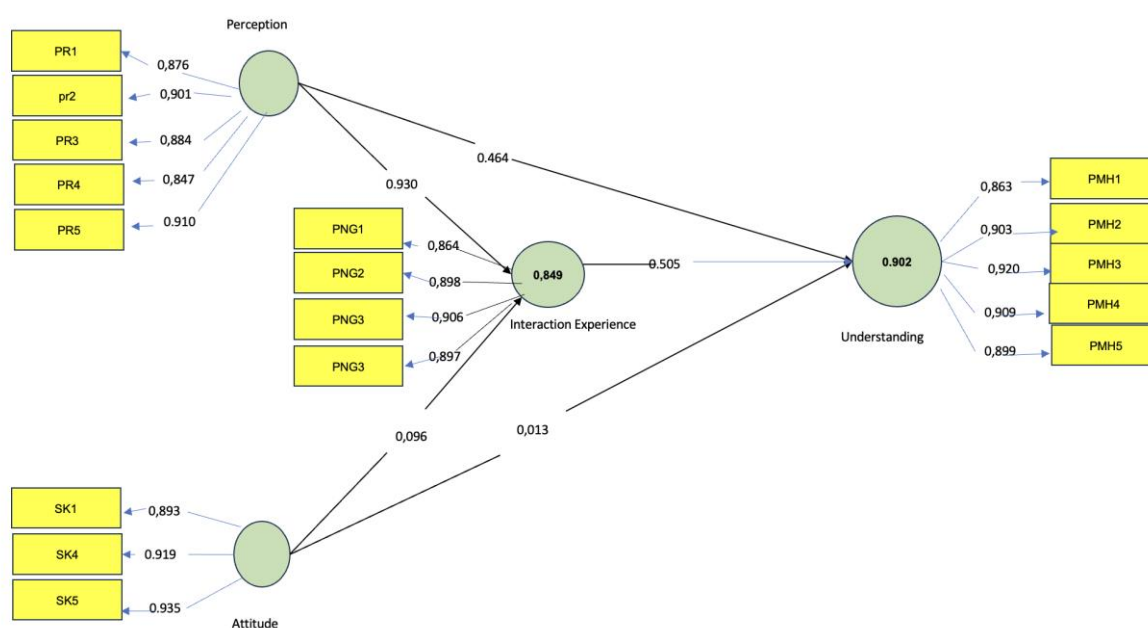


Figure 1. Relationships Among the Four Parameters and Indicators (Denpasar, Bali)

The validity analysis confirms that most indicators fulfill the established statistical standards, except for SK2 and SK3 among the six evaluated within the Attitude construct: Understanding local tradition (SK1), Participation in traditional ceremonies (SK2), Maintaining interfaith harmony (SK3), Balancing relationships (SK4), Preserving local traditions (SK5), and Harmonizing religion and local traditions (SK6). While SK2 and SK3 demonstrated lower loading values, all other indicators displayed satisfactory construct validity. Moreover, the reliability assessment indicates that all constructs meet the recommended criteria, with Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding the thresholds ($CA > 0.70$, $CR > 0.70$, $AVE > 0.50$). Cross-loading results confirm that the majority of indicators load more significantly on their intended constructs than on others. The lower performance of SK2 and SK3 may reflect the sensitivity of Muslim students—who form a minority group—in expressing interfaith views due to experienced or perceived social tensions.

The cross-loading values in Table 1 further verify that indicators align more strongly with their respective latent variables than with others, except for SK2 and SK3, which do not meet this criterion

Table 1. Cross-Loading Values

Indicator	Interaction Experience (PNG)	Understanding (PMH)	Perception (PR)	Attitude (SK)
SK1	-0.017	0.041	0.055	0.893
SK4	0.044	0.092	0.12	0.919
SK5	0.042	0.104	0.167	0.935
PR1	0.824	0.818	0.876	0.125
PR2	0.837	0.814	0.901	0.067
PR3	0.748	0.836	0.884	0.181
PR4	0.781	0.797	0.847	0.092
PR5	0.856	0.839	0.91	0.169
PNG1	0.864	0.783	0.746	-0.069
PNG2	0.898	0.885	0.865	0.065
PNG3	0.906	0.841	0.82	0.121
PNG4	0.897	0.804	0.831	0.008
PMH1	0.808	0.863	0.777	0.202
PMH2	0.822	0.903	0.862	0.14
PMH3	0.862	0.92	0.872	-0.017
PMH4	0.863	0.909	0.82	0.019
PMH5	0.83	0.899	0.841	0.108

Table 1 above indicates that the cultural adaptation of Muslim students in Bali demonstrates a significant degree of integration between religious principles and local traditions, evident in several key aspects:

Students demonstrate a strong appreciation and engagement with local traditions, marked by active participation, interfaith collaboration, and cultural openness across four key constructs. The Attitude (SK) construct reflects high factor loadings (0.893–0.935), particularly in students’ comprehension and preservation of local traditions. The Perception (PR) construct indicates that students feel socially accepted despite religious differences and actively engage in interfaith dialogue, with significant loadings (0.847–0.910). The Interaction Experience (PNG) construct illustrates students’ adaptability in navigating interreligious relationships, supported by community involvement and recognition of diverse traditions (loading 0.864–0.897). Finally, the Understanding (PMH) construct demonstrates students’ cognitive insight and openness to learning about the philosophical foundations of various traditions, recognizing shared values between religion and culture, with the highest construct loading (0.863–0.920), underscoring their role in fostering harmony within a multicultural society.

Bali students exhibit robust and positive cultural adaptation, marked by integrating local traditions, harmonious engagement with interfaith groups, and a profound comprehension of cultural and religious values. This underscores the critical role of multicultural and interreligious education in fostering tolerant, culturally competent youth capable of peaceful coexistence within diverse societies.

4.2 Mataram, Lombok

Figure 2 displays the structural model linking four latent variables: Perception, Interaction Experience, Attitude, and Comprehension. Each construct is supported by valid indicators with outer loading values above 0.800. Perception (PR1–PR6) and Interaction Experience (PNG1–PNG4) demonstrate high validity. Attitude is measured by three indicators (SK1–SK6) with loadings between 0.821 and 0.832, while Comprehension (PMH1–PMH5) also shows strong alignment. Path coefficients reveal that Perception moderately influences Attitude (0.495) and Comprehension (0.374); Attitude modestly affects Comprehension (0.375); and Interaction Experience has a moderate effect on Attitude (0.484) and a weaker effect on Comprehension (0.211).

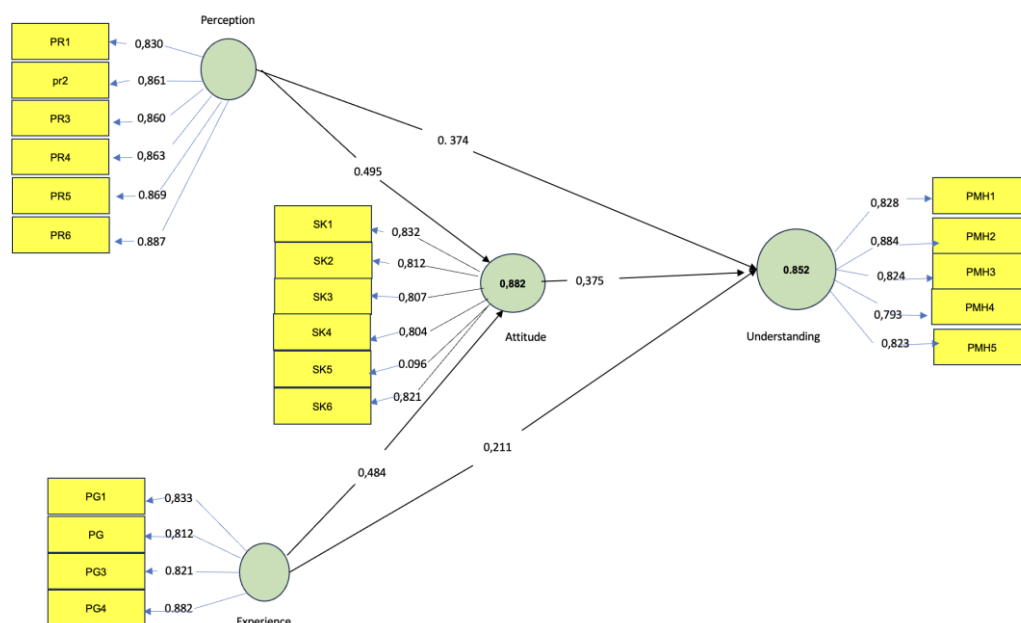


Figure 2. Relationships Among the Four Parameters and Indicators (Mataram, Lombok)

The indicator validity analysis demonstrates that all outer loadings exceed the 0.70 threshold, confirming the validity of each measurement item. Although the loadings for Comprehension (0.793), Attitude (0.812), and one Attitude item (0.807) fall slightly below the preferred 0.800 benchmark, they remain above the minimum acceptable value (>0.600), thereby validating their inclusion. These results confirm that the instrument reliably represents the intended constructs. Reliability testing further substantiates these findings, with all latent variables achieving Cronbach's Alpha (CA) values above 0.70, Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

values surpassing 0.50. CA values range from 0.858 to 0.931, reflecting strong internal consistency across constructs. For example, the Attitude variable reports CA = 0.902, CR = 0.924, and AVE = 0.670, while Understanding achieves CA = 0.888, CR = 0.918, and AVE = 0.691. These findings confirm the instrument's reliability and align with established psychometric standards in social science research. (Ayu, 2023; Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2 supports the discriminant validity of the model by showing that cross-loading values for each indicator are higher with their respective latent variables compared to others.

Table 2. Cross-Loading Values

Indicator	Interaction Experience (PNG)	Understanding (PMH)	Perception (PR)	Attitude (SK)
SK1	0.725	0.716	0.775	0.832
SK2	0.761	0.735	0.705	0.812
SK3	0.686	0.722	0.774	0.807
SK4	0.759	0.749	0.692	0.804
SK5	0.78	0.745	0.689	0.815
SK6	0.713	0.764	0.798	0.842
PR1	0.686	0.763	0.829	0.733
PR2	0.714	0.744	0.861	0.773
PR3	0.673	0.737	0.86	0.732
PR4	0.761	0.788	0.863	0.83
PR5	0.757	0.786	0.869	0.792
PR6	0.756	0.779	0.887	0.799
PNG1	0.833	0.719	0.665	0.721
PNG2	0.813	0.727	0.797	0.798
PNG3	0.821	0.715	0.657	0.725
PNG4	0.882	0.727	0.695	0.768
PMH1	0.751	0.828	0.774	0.775
PMH2	0.736	0.884	0.814	0.793
PMH3	0.723	0.824	0.658	0.712
PMH4	0.664	0.793	0.769	0.725
PMH5	0.709	0.823	0.668	0.737

Tabel 2: Cross-loading analysis was conducted to evaluate the discriminant validity of each indicator about the studied designs: Interaction Experience (PNG), Student Understanding (PMH), Student Perception (PR), and Student Attitude (SK). The results indicated that all indicators exhibited the highest result, thus satisfying the criterion for discriminant validity.

The measurement indicators across all four constructs demonstrate strong validity and reliability in assessing students' intercultural competencies. The Student Attitude (SK) indicators (SK1–SK6) exhibit high loading values ranging from 0.832 to 0.842, confirming

their effectiveness in measuring students' perspectives on diversity and cross-cultural engagement. Similarly, the Student Perception (PR) indicators (PR1–PR6) show the highest loading values (0.829–0.887), indicating a clear reflection of students' perceptions of social acceptance and openness to religious diversity. In the Interaction Experience (PNG) construct, indicators such as PNG1 (0.833), PNG3 (0.821), and PNG4 (0.882) validate students' real-life experiences in interfaith interactions. Lastly, the Student Understanding (PMH) indicators (PMH1–PMH5) align strongly with the construct (0.828–0.823), with PMH2 (0.884) and PMH1 (0.828) standing out, underscoring their effectiveness in capturing students' comprehension of multicultural values and interreligious principles.

These results indicate that each indicator possesses sufficient discriminative ability and does not substantially overlap with other constructs. Consequently, the measurement methodology is deemed valid for assessing intercultural adaptation and student tolerance within the framework of multicultural education.

5. Path Coefficient Analysis

5.1 Path Coefficient Significance (Mataram, Lombok)

The structural path analysis conducted for the Lombok location reveals statistically significant relationships among the latent variables, as evidenced by the Path Coefficient (P-values). The study employs a significance threshold of $P < 0.05$, where values below this threshold indicate that the relationships between variables are statistically significant, while those above suggest no meaningful interaction. Table 3: shows a concise summary of the path coefficients, statistical values, and significance levels for the model.

Table 3. Concisely summarizes the path coefficients, statistical values, and significance levels for the model

Description	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P-Values
Interaction Experience → Understanding	0,211	0,216	0,073	2,878	0,0048
Interaction Experience → Attitude	0,484	0,489	0,065	7,456	0,0000
Perception → Understanding	0,370	0,382	0,081	4,648	0,0000
Perception → Attitude	0,495	0,492	0,062	7,988	0,0000
Attitude → Understanding	0,375	0,360	0,109	3,449	0,0008

Key findings from Table 3: reveal that Interaction Experience (Pengalaman) positively influences Understanding (Pemahaman) with a modest yet significant path coefficient of 0.211 ($P = 0.0048$). Interaction Experience also strongly and significantly impacts Attitude with a path coefficient of 0.484 ($P = 0.0000$), underscoring its critical role in shaping Attitude. The relationship between Perception (Persepsi) and Understanding is positive and significant, with a path coefficient of 0.370 ($P = 0.0000$), highlighting Perception as an essential factor in fostering Understanding. Similarly, Perception strongly influences Attitude, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.495 ($P = 0.0000$), further emphasizing its importance. Additionally, Attitude exhibits a significant positive effect on

Understanding, with a path coefficient of 0.375 ($P = 0.0008$), although its contribution is less pronounced compared to Perception and Interaction Experience.

From Table 4: an R-square analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which independent variables explain the variance of dependent variables. Table 10 presents the R-square and adjusted R-square values, where Understanding and Attitude are the dependent variables, while Perception and Interaction Experience act as independent variables. The adjusted R-square value for the latent variable Understanding is 0.848, indicating a model accuracy of 84.80%. Similarly, for Attitude, the adjusted R-square value is 0.880, signifying an accuracy of 88.02%.

Table 4. R-Square and Adjusted R-Square Values

Description	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Understanding	0.852	0.848
Attitude	0.882	0.88

After confirming high model accuracy (above 80%) through R-square and adjusted R-square tests, the path coefficients for the structural model are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Path Coefficients

Description	Understanding	Attitude
Interaction Experience	0.211	0.484
Perception	0.374	0.495
Attitude	0.375	0

Based on the indicators, the path coefficients derived from Table 5 are as follows: interaction experience has a moderate effect on students' attitudes (0.484) but a smaller effect on their understanding (0.211), indicating that direct intercultural interactions primarily influence attitude formation rather than immediate comprehension. Perception strongly influences understanding (0.374) and attitude (0.495), highlighting that students' perceptions of social acceptance and engagement in local traditions significantly shape their positive attitudes and intercultural understanding. Additionally, attitude significantly impacts understanding (0.375) but, as expected, does not affect itself. Overall, perception and interaction experience are critical in forming students' attitudes, enhancing their cultural understanding. Therefore, fostering positive perceptions and providing authentic intercultural experiences are essential strategies to develop constructive attitudes and deepen students' intercultural comprehension.

5.2 Path Coefficient Significance (Denpasar, Bali)

The P-Values from the research conducted in Bali are presented in Table 6 which shows the path coefficient (original sample):

Table 6. Path Coefficient Significance (P-Value Testing)

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Interaction → Understanding	0,505	0,520	0,094	5,369	0,000
Perception → Understanding	0,464	0,453	0,095	4,867	0,000
Perception → Interaction	0,930	0,923	0,033	28,550	0,000
Attitude → Understanding	0,013	0,010	0,039	0,320	0,750
Attitude → Interaction	-0,096	-0,085	0,050	1,905	0,061

The path analysis shows that students' perceptions of social acceptance and participation in local traditions significantly impact both interfaith interaction ($\beta = 0.930$, $p = 0.000$) and intercultural understanding ($\beta = 0.464$, $p = 0.000$). Positive perceptions—such as being accepted despite religious differences and engaging in interfaith dialogue—encourage interactions with people of diverse beliefs, enriching students' understanding of cultural and religious values. Interaction experiences further enhance students' understanding of shared traditions and community harmony ($\beta = 0.505$, $p = 0.000$). In contrast, student attitudes toward cultural adaptation, such as maintaining interfaith harmony or preserving traditions, do not significantly affect interaction ($\beta = -0.096$, $p = 0.061$) or understanding ($\beta = 0.013$, $p = 0.750$). These results suggest that attitudes alone are not sufficient without positive perceptions and real intercultural experiences. Educational institutions must therefore focus on strengthening student perceptions and creating meaningful intercultural opportunities to foster religious harmony and cultural adaptation.

The use of R-square and adjusted R-square values (Table 7) is a standard practice in structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the explanatory power of the model.

Table 7. R-Square and Adjusted R-Square Values

Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Understanding	0.902	0.898
Interaction Experience	0.849	0.845

The table shows that the research model effectively explains the variance in understanding ($R^2 = 0.902$) and interaction experience ($R^2 = 0.849$). Students' perceptions of social acceptance and involvement in local traditions significantly contribute to shaping their intercultural understanding and interactions. In contrast, students' attitudes toward cultural adaptation have no significant effect. This indicates that a positive attitude alone is insufficient; constructive perceptions and real-life intercultural experiences play a more crucial role. Therefore, educational programs should focus on strengthening students' perceptions and providing opportunities for practical intercultural engagement to effectively support cultural adaptation and interreligious harmony.

The path coefficients (Table 8) obtained in this analysis are consistent with findings from other studies that utilize SEM to explore relationships among latent variables.

Table 8. Path Coefficients

Path	Understanding	Interaction Experience
Interaction Experience	0.505	0
Perception	0.464	0.93
Attitude	0.013	-0.096

The path coefficients indicate that interaction experience has a strong positive effect on understanding (0.505), while perception contributes positively to understanding (0.464) and has a very strong influence on interaction experience (0.930). Attitude shows a negligible effect on understanding (0.013) and a small negative effect on interaction experience (−0.096). These results emphasize that positive perceptions and real interaction experiences are more critical in shaping intercultural understanding than attitude alone.

The comparative analysis of path coefficients for Mataram, Lombok, and Denpasar, Bali, reveals significant regional differences and commonalities in the relationships among Interaction Experience, Perception, Attitude, and Understanding, are shown in Table 9

Table 9. Path Coefficient Comparison

Path	Location	Original Sample (O)	P-Values	Significance
Interaction Experience → Understanding	Mataram, Lombok	0.211	0.0048	Significant
Interaction Experience → Attitude	Mataram, Lombok	0.484	0.0	Significant
Perception → Understanding	Mataram, Lombok	0.37	0.0	Significant
Perception → Attitude	Mataram, Lombok	0.495	0.0	Significant
Attitude → Understanding	Mataram, Lombok	0.375	0.0008	Significant
Interaction → Understanding	Denpasar, Bali	0.505	0.0	Significant
Perception → Understanding	Denpasar, Bali	0.464	0.0	Significant
Perception → Interaction	Denpasar, Bali	0.93	0.0	Significant
Attitude → Understanding	Denpasar, Bali	0.013	0.75	Not Significant
Attitude → Interaction	Denpasar, Bali	-0.096	0.061	Not Significant

Table 9. Location-specific path analyses reveal a consistent pattern across Mataram and Denpasar: both Interaction Experience and Student Perception exert significant effects on Student Understanding. In Mataram, the standardized path coefficients for Interaction Experience ($\beta = 0.211$, $p = 0.0048$) and Student Perception ($\beta = 0.370$, $p < 0.001$) underscore their respective contributions to comprehension. These effects are amplified in Denpasar, where Interaction Experience ($\beta = 0.505$, $p < 0.001$) and Student Perception ($\beta = 0.464$, $p < 0.001$) account for even greater variance in interfaith understanding.

However, the role of Student Attitude diverges markedly between the two sites. In Mataram, Attitude significantly predicts both Understanding ($\beta = 0.375$, $p = 0.0008$) and Interaction Experience ($\beta = 0.484$, $p < 0.001$), affirming that the internalization of local traditions and religious values promotes both engagement and comprehension. In contrast, Attitude fails to reach significance in Denpasar for Understanding ($\beta = 0.013$, $p = 0.75$) and Interaction Experience ($\beta = -0.096$, $p = 0.061$), implying that, within a more pluralistic context, direct experiences and collective perceptions outweigh personal disposition.

Furthermore, only in Denpasar does Student Perception demonstrate an exceptionally strong influence on Interaction Experience ($\beta = 0.930$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that students' positive appraisal of societal diversity directly catalyzes their interreligious participation. Taken together, these findings indicate that while experiential and perceptual factors universally bolster interfaith understanding, attitudinal mechanisms are particularly salient in Mataram. Conversely, in Denpasar, perception-driven social engagement predominates. These location-specific dynamics should inform the design of multicultural and interreligious education programs tailored to local sociocultural conditions.

Conclusion

The study emphasizes the pivotal role of interreligious collaboration among faith-based educators in cultivating inclusive, dialogical, and culturally responsive educational settings within the pluralistic societies of Lombok and Bali. The findings reveal that Perception and Interaction Experience are the most influential factors in shaping students' cultural adaptation and interfaith understanding, with Perception strongly influencing Interaction Experience ($\beta = 0.930$) and contributing significantly to Understanding ($\beta = 0.464$). Additionally, Interaction Experience directly enhances Understanding ($\beta = 0.505$), highlighting the importance of structured interfaith engagement in education. The optimum condition for fostering interfaith harmony is achieved when positive perceptions of religious diversity are nurtured, and students are actively engaged in meaningful interfaith interactions. $R^2 = 90.2\%$ for Understanding and 84.9% for Interaction Experience reinforces the effectiveness of this approach, confirming that students' adaptation in interfaith settings is best facilitated through perception-building and direct engagement rather than attitudinal shifts alone. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on religious inclusivity in education by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of cross-religious pedagogical cooperation. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these strategies on social integration beyond the school environment and assess their applicability in other multicultural contexts. By implementing structured interfaith engagement models, educators can significantly enhance social cohesion and religious inclusivity, ensuring a more harmonious and adaptive learning environment.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Fathurrahman Muhtar: Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. Sudarsono: Investigation, Formal analysis. Mohamad Abdun Nasir: Writing – review & editing. Hasniza Nordin: Data Curation, proofreading.

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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