



Digital Narratives of Religious Contestation: Social Media Responses to Buddhist Monks' Prayer in a Mosque

This study investigates the event of a group of Buddhist monks praying during the Vesak holiday in 2024 at the Baiturrahman Mosque in Bengkulu, Temanggung, and the subsequent public responses on social media. In Indonesia, where Islam is the predominant religion, there are sometimes interfaith encounters that transcend conventional borders. The monks' prayer, which was recorded and extensively shared on social media sites including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, provoked a range of responses, from appreciation for religious tolerance to concerns about the sanctity of sacred space. Using mediatization and framing theories, the study explores how the incident was portrayed and how it shaped public perception. A mixed-method approach, combining sentiment and thematic analyses of social media comments, identifies themes of societal harmony, religious identity, and tolerance. Positive sentiments celebrating interfaith tolerance predominated, though some saw it as overstepping religious boundaries. This case highlights social media's role in framing religious discourse and influencing opinions, emphasizing its impact on interfaith relations and societal tolerance in Indonesia. The study sheds light on how digital media shapes views on interreligious engagement and coexistence.

Keywords: Buddhist Monk, Mosque, Interreligious, Social media, Tolerance.

Studi ini mengamati kejadian rombongan biksu Buddha yang sedang berdoa selama hari raya Waisak pada tahun 2024 di Masjid Baiturrahman di Bengkulu, Temanggung, dan tanggapan masyarakat di media sosial. Di Indonesia, di mana Islam adalah agama yang dominan, terkadang ada pertemuan lintas agama yang melampaui batas-batas konvensional. Doa biksu tersebut, yang direkam dan dibagikan secara luas di situs media sosial termasuk Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, dan TikTok, memicu berbagai tanggapan, mulai dari penghargaan atas toleransi beragama hingga kekhawatiran tentang kesakralan. Dengan menggunakan mediatisasi dan framing, studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana peristiwa tersebut dipresentasikan dan membentuk persepsi publik. Pendekatan metode campuran yang menggabungkan analisis sentimen dan analisis tematik pada komentar media sosial mengidentifikasi tema-tema seperti harmoni sosial, identitas keagamaan, dan toleransi. Sentimen positif yang merayakan toleransi mendominasi, meskipun sebagian pihak menganggapnya sebagai pelanggaran batasan agama. Kasus ini menyoroti peran media sosial dalam membingkai wacana keagamaan dan memengaruhi opini, serta menekankan dampaknya terhadap hubungan antaragama dan toleransi sosial di Indonesia. Studi ini memberikan pemahaman tentang bagaimana media digital membentuk pandangan terkait keterlibatan dan koeksistensi antar agama.

Kata Kunci: Biksu Buddha, Masjid, Interreligius, Media Sosial, Toleransi.

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Introduction

Indonesia represents various ethnicities, languages, values, practices, beliefs, and religions. Consequently, the daily encounters of each other from diverse backgrounds lead to a dynamic and changing landscape of society. From all aspects of it, religion is one of the most important in influencing the state and citizen's life. It is mainly because religion plays a significant role in managing and functioning the details of the practice of life, especially Islam, as the religion which is embraced by majority people approximately 86,88%, while others such as Protestantism 7,49%, Catholicism 3,09%, Hinduism 1,71%, Buddhism 0,75%, Indigenous 0,04%, and Confucianism 0,03%.¹ Moreover, religion also serves as a long-lasting basis of legal, civil, and social spheres and as a philosophical foundation embedded in Pancasila, the ideological basis of the constitution and most laws.²

It can be seen that religion intersects with different aspects of society's life. Since the emergence of digital technologies, religion also adapts to it. For example, religious life has also migrated to its new form of technologies, one of its social media. Social media usage in Indonesia has steadily increased, reaching 260.23 million users over the past nine years. This number is expected to rise to 46.7 million new users between 2024 and 2029.³ Social media has become a pivotal tool of various kinds of

communication, has the ability to share information, opinions and even connect individuals and communities, as an interactive platform where people can engage, create, and exchange information or ideas virtually.⁴ Religious people also respond to its new model of communication and social interaction as well as used for sharing religious discourses or identities. Campbell said, "In an era marked by social media we see that religious self-expression and representation has become an accepted part of religious identity and practice".⁵ The fields of both "religion" and "the media" are themselves transforming and being transformed.⁶ Religious discourses on social media are shaped through the process of mediatization. The mediatization process demonstrates the importance of mass media for societal and cultural advancement.⁷ Through the process of mediatization, religion is progressively being assimilated into media logic in terms of institutional regulation, symbolic substance, and personal practice.⁸ By repeating and disseminating ideological information, the media uses mediatization to promote changes in social ties in modernity.

One of the most recent religious discourses on social media is the contentious debate over a group of Buddhist monks' prayer in a mosque. The story began in the heart of Central Java, Indonesia, on the morning of Sunday, May 19, 2024. During Visak (Vesak), an important Buddhist holiday commemorating the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha, a group of

¹ Viva Budy Kusnandar, "Sebanyak 86,88% Penduduk Indonesia Beragama Islam," last modified 2021, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2021/09/30/sebanyak-8688-penduduk-indonesia-beragama-islam>.

² Ben K. C. Laksana and Bronwyn E Wood, "Navigating Religious Diversity: Exploring Young People's Lived Religious Citizenship in Indonesia," *Journal of Youth Studies* 22, no. 6 (2019): 5.

³ J Dagenhard, "Social Media Users in Indonesia 2020-2029," *Statista*, last modified 2024, <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1144743/social-media-users-in-indonesia>.

⁴ Kiran Bala, "Social Media and Changing Communication Patterns," *Global Media Journal: Indian Edition* 5, no. 1 (2014): 2.

⁵ Heidi A. Campbell, "Introduction: The Rise of Study of Digital Religion," in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell (London: Routledge, 2012), 10.

⁶ Stewart M. Hoover, "Introduction: The Cultural Construction of Religion in the Media Age," in *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn S. Clark (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 1–6.

⁷ Stig Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Culture and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 6–7.

⁸ Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011): 119–135.





Buddhist monks prayed at the Baiturrahman mosque in Bengkulu, Temanggung.⁹ This phenomenon quickly went viral, sparking a heated debate on social media. The event was surprising not only in its occurrence but also in how it was recorded and shared. Many videos of the monk's prayer session at the mosque were taken by attendees and local citizens, who then shared these moments on various social media platforms.

The sharing of this phenomenon on social media shows the powerful role these platforms play in shaping public views about religious and cultural practices. It led to many different reactions and opinions from the netizens. Some people saw it as a beautiful example of interreligious respect and unity, showing the harmony between different religious communities. Others, however, viewed it as a violation of religious sanctity and expressed concern about the appropriateness of such interreligious interactions in sacred spaces. Additionally, many social media users had a neutral stance, reflecting on what this event might mean for religious tolerance and coexistence in a diverse society. In light of this case, this research aims to analyze social media portrayal and public reactions to the event and explore the role of social media in shaping perceptions of such incidence. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the dominant themes and sentiments in social media discussions about the event and examine how the mediatization of the Buddhist monks' prayer at the mosque's influences public perceptions of interreligious relations in Indonesia.

This study employs the theory of framing and mediatization. Moreover, to examine video

content categorized as interreligious relation, interreligious engagement theory is also applied to this phenomenon. Regarding framing, Entman argues that "Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described".¹⁰ Using this theory, the framing of social media accounts on the issue can be portrayed and interpreted in terms of themes and topics.

In the context of mediatization theory, it typically follows media logic, which means that "media logic reflexively shapes interaction processes, routines, and institutional orders"¹¹ and emphasizes the interplay and interaction between actors and structures. Mediatization entails the transformation of three aspects of religion; media have become a crucial source of religious issues, religious information and experiences are shaped to fit popular media genres, and media have taken over many of the cultural and social functions of institutionalized religions.¹² Through this theory, the authors aim first to examine the adaptation process of religious discourses on social media. Furthermore, it is also used to analyze how social media influences interreligious discourses.

Considering the interreligious dimensions of the phenomenon, this research also incorporates the theory of interreligious engagement. This differs from interreligious dialogue, which tends to be formal, organizational, institution or communities based¹³ and the discussions in it mostly discuss the doctrines of text.¹⁴ In

⁹ Surya Aditiya, "Viral Rombongan Biku Thudong Berdoa Di Masjid Bengkulu Temanggung," *VIVA*, last modified 2024, <https://www.viva.co.id/trending/1716326-viral-rombongan-biksu-thudong-berdoa-di-masjid-bengkai-temanggung>.

¹⁰ Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52.

¹¹ David L. Altheide, "Media Logic, Social Control, and Fear," *Communication Theory* 23, no. 3 (2013): 224.

¹² Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change," 124.

¹³ J.B. Banawiratma et al., *Dialog Antarumat Beragama: Gagasan Dan Praktik Di Indonesia*. (Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM, 2010), 6.

¹⁴ Izak Y. M. Lattu, "Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue: Orality, Collective Memory, and Christian-





interreligious engagement, any member, not only elites, is welcome to join. Everyday interreligious engagement opens space for women and children who have long been excluded from official, male-dominated discourse, as it encompasses multiple layers and individuals. Thus, everyone can share, speak, perform, listen, and understand in daily conversation.¹⁵ As explained by Lattu, interreligious engagement is “as a form of public interaction and common action aimed toward connecting people from different religions who remain members of their communities”.¹⁶ Using this theory, the authors examine the relevance of the event, how it can be categorized as interreligious engagement, and its implications are.

In order to thoroughly examine the Buddhist monks Mosque prayer and public responses on

social media, this study will use a mixed method, integrating qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Data will be collected from social media platforms where the event was shared, portraying the monk's prayer at the mosque. This includes posts, comments, and reaction on Facebook, X, Instagram, Tiktok, and Youtube. Regarding the social media accounts, the author chooses several accounts based on the virality of the content as represented by the video post with high number of viewers, likes, shares, and comments on social media; TikTok, Facebook, X, Instagram, and Youtube. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the selected accounts, the authors present the data collected on May, 31 2024 and explanations below.

User/Account Name	Platform	Title	Posting Date	Viewers	Like	Comment	Share
@pikiranrakyat	TikTok	Thudong Monks group stopped at Temanggung Mosque to rest	20/5/2024	1.000.000	40.000	5.318	1.929
@republikaonline	TikTok	Mosque Takmir Denies Monks Worshipping at Bengkal Mosque	21/5/2024	24.300	252	252	67
BuddhaZine	Facebook	Stopping at the Baiturrohman Mosque Emphasizing Religious Tolerance, Bikkhu Thudong Was Welcomed Enthusiastically by Residents and Mosque Congregants	19/5/2024	722.000	4.800	5.600	498
Joko Cer	Facebook	Infidels Worship at the NU Mosque x Bengkal Mosque, Kranggan Temanggung, Central Java	21/5/2024	10.200	413	199	52
@tribunnews	Instagram	Monk Thudong stops at the Temanggung Mosque, rests for a moment and prays for the residents	21/5/2024	78.300	-	182	78

Muslim Engagements in Indonesia,” in *Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023), xix.

¹⁵ Izak Y. M. Lattu, “A Sociological Breakthrough of Interreligious Engagement in Everyday-Symbolic

Interaction Perspectives,” *Religió: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama* 6, no. 2 (2016): 171–176.

¹⁶ Lattu, “Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue: Orality, Collective Memory, and Christian-Muslim Engagements in Indonesia,” 155.





@magelang_info	Instagram	Excited MUI Chairman Criticizes Thudong Monk Hosted at Temanggung Mosque: Not at Place of Worship! This is outrageous	25/5/2024	128.000	-	339	163
Info Jateng	X	The Bhantes (Thudong Monks) Stopped at the Mosque Before Continuing their Journey to Borobudur Temple	19/5/2024	443.000	4.200	211	885
VIVA.CO.ID	YouTube	VIRAL! Thudong Monk Resting at Tuai Mosque Pros and Cons	22/5/2024	10.000	96	723	-

Table 1. Social Media Accounts Overview and Post Engagements Metrics

Using the selected accounts, the authors will analyze the content of the video itself through a descriptive approach in to depict the phenomenon as it is framed and recorded. Subsequently, sentiment analysis will be employed to quantify the dominant emotional tone of netizens' reactions—whether positive, negative, or neutral—by collecting 100 comments as samples from each social media account. The collected comments will then be coded and categorized using word cloud and word frequency analysis software to identify dominant expressions or themes, which will be visualized for clarity. Furthermore, thematic analysis will be conducted to integrate the findings from the content and sentiment analyses. This approach will identify key themes and patterns and interpret the results within the frameworks of interreligious relations, framing, and mediatization theories.

Social Media Content Description

The the video posted by TikTok account @pikiranrakyat, the Facebook account Joko Cer, the Instagram accounts @tribunnews and @magelang_info, the X account Info Jateng, and the YouTube account VIVA.CO.ID share the same core content, despite minor differences in

captions, graphic elements, and other additions. In the video, the monks are seen praying with their hands raised in a gesture resembling asceticism, wearing orange monk robes (*kasaya*) on the mosque terrace, on top of prayer mats typically used by Muslims. Additionally, the footage shows several men in the background wearing skull caps (*peci* or *songkok*), batik clothing, and white koko shirts. Behind them, several women wearing headscarves are seated. The video also captures a variety of food and drinks served in front of the monks.

The TikTok account @pikiranrakyat provides an explanation through written graphics, stating that the 40 monks were resting and, according to the information provided, were praying before proceeding to Borobudur Temple for the 2024 Vesak holiday celebration.¹⁷ In contrast, Joko Cer's Facebook account expressed sadness in its caption, criticizing what it described as excessive tolerance, "Sad, seeing you, brother—our Muslim brothers who follow the infidels (*kāfir*) under the pretext of religious tolerance. Is it not clear that Allah Almighty has reminded us in the Qur'an: 'For you is your religion, and for me, my religion'" (QS. al-Kāfirūn [109]:6). Meanwhile, the Instagram account @tribunnews while the local community, in turn, prayed for them explained in its caption that the monks were

¹⁷ "Rombongan Biku Thudong Singgah Di Masjid Temanggung Untuk Beristirahat," last modified 2024,

https://www.tiktok.com/@pikiranrakyat/video/7371014561429736705?_r=1&t=8mkDB2Pc2NN.





resting and praying for the local community.¹⁸ On the other hand, the Instagram account @magelang_info described criticism of the activity by the Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), stating it went too far. The video also includes a segment featuring MUI Chairman Cholil Nafis, who criticized the monks praying in the mosque.¹⁹

The X Info Jateng account provides a detailed explanation of the prayers recited by the monks. In the caption, it is stated that the Bhantes recited the *Jaya Paritta*, which essentially means the prayer is, “hopefully, after doing good through actions, words, and thoughts, good rewards will be obtained.” The account also expressed surprise at the many negative responses, asking, “Actually, that’s all it means. Why are so many people upset when the Bhante chants this prayer?” The account further shares a personal experience, stating, “There are many monasteries in my area that have also been used for Muslim prayers, and in fact, all the Buddhists around here don’t have a problem with it. PEACE MY INDONESIA Sabbe Satta Bhavantu Sukhitatta (May all living creatures be happy).”²⁰ Meanwhile, the VIVA.CO.ID YouTube account focuses solely on the pros and cons that this phenomenon has generated on social media.²¹

Unlike before, the TikTok video uploaded by @republikaonline includes an explanation from the local mosque administrator regarding the viral video. A man named Anwari, wearing a white *koko* with a *songkok* cap, explained in the video caption: “What looks like an offering or ritual from them (the monks) is not a form of

ritual but just a prayer for the community in their language. We also pray for them so that they can be safe on their journey to their destination. Perhaps that is our way of confirming our welcome as a form of tolerance toward our Buddhist brothers and sisters”.²²

The video uploaded by the BuddhaZine account on Facebook depicts the monks sitting on the mosque terrace, with several residents seen offering them food. It also shows the bustling atmosphere around the mosque, with traffic and security from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Banser, identifiable by their uniforms. In the caption, it is explained that Bhante Kamsai Sumano thanked the people in Bengkulu for their warm welcome. Additionally, the *takmir* (chairman of the mosque management committee), Fatkhurrohman, viewed this as an opportunity to strengthen solidarity and cooperation between religious communities in Temanggung.²³

Themes and Sentiments in Public Response

There are certain themes that dominate the public debate and discussions surrounding the viral video of monks praying in the mosque. Likewise, there are varying sentiments about the video, which tend to be positive, negative, or neutral. Based on the results of the analysis, the theme of tolerance is one of the most dominant discussions among netizens on social media in response to the phenomenon of monks praying in the mosque. Below is a visualization of the results from the analysis of 800 comments,

¹⁸ “Biksu Thudong Singgah Di Masjid Temanggung, Rehat Sejenak Dan Doakan Warga,” last modified 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7OmiqdS9so/?igsh=MX Y5cDkwM3Zvd2g4ZA%3D%3D>.

¹⁹ “Heboh Ketua MUI Kritik Biksu Thudong Dijamu Di Masjid Temanggung: Jangan Di Tempat Ibadah! Ini Kebablasan,” last modified 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7Yd35MPsLE/?igsh=dH lpZjZra2IyNjU%3D>.

²⁰ “Para Bhante (Biksu Thudong) Singgah Di Masjid Sebelum Melanjutkan Perjalanan Ke Candi Borobudur,” last modified 2024,

https://x.com/jateng_twit/status/1792220400216313946?s=46 &mx=2.

²¹ “VIRAL! Biksu Thudong Istirahat Di Masjid Tuai Pro-Kontra,” last modified 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lg79w5FDDDA>.

²² “Takmir Masjid Bantah Biksu Ibadah Di Masjid Bengkulu,” last modified 2024, https://www.tiktok.com/@republikaonline/video/73713960 90907659525?_r=1&_t=8mkDYYtDDTE.

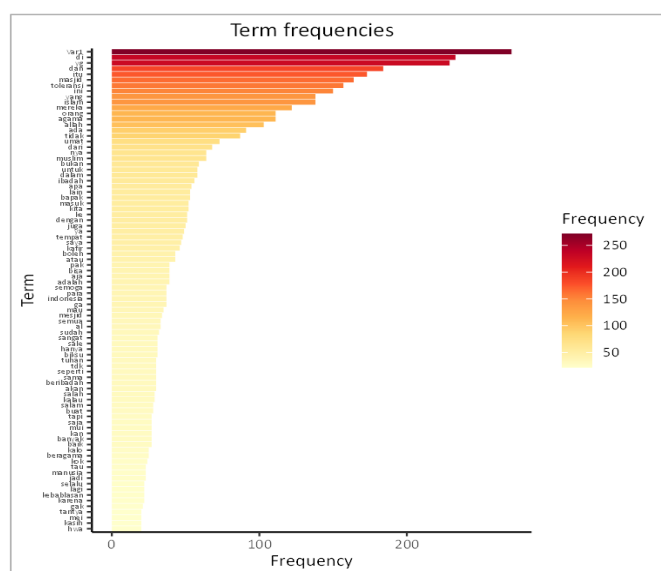
²³ “Singgah Di Masjid Baiturrohman Tekankan Toleransi Umat Beragama, Bikkhu Thudong Disambut Antusias Oleh Warga Dan Jemaah Masjid,” last modified 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/reel/985382313193958>.



conducted using Microsoft Excel with the help of XLSTAT:



Picture 1. Word Cloud of Major Themes on Buddhist Monk's Prayer at Mosque in Indonesia



Picture 2. Word Frequency of Buddhist Monk's Prayer at Mosque in Indonesia

The results show that the word “tolerance” was mentioned frequently in the comments across all account posts in Table 1. Of the approximately 800 comments, the word “tolerance” appeared 157 times. Additionally, the most common words included “mosque” (164 mentions), “Islam” (138 mentions), and “religion” (111 mentions). Words with a negative connotation, such as “going too far” (*kebablasan*), appeared 22 times.

Although the word “tolerance” is the most dominant and carries a positive connotation, the authors conducted a semantic analysis to further explore the context and connotation in which the word is used. The results revealed that netizens primarily use the word “tolerance” in positive contexts, such as in the phrases “*indahnyanya toleransi*” (the beauty of tolerance) and “*salam toleransi*” (greetings for tolerance), or with other words that convey positivity, such as peace, tranquility, calm, and others. However, a small number of instances use the word “tolerance” in a negative context, as seen in the phrase “*toleransi yang kebablasan*” (“tolerance that goes too far”).

In regard to public sentiment, the results of sentiment analysis explain that positive sentiment is the most dominant, followed by neutral sentiment, with negative sentiment being the least common. The following data presents the results of the sentiment analysis:

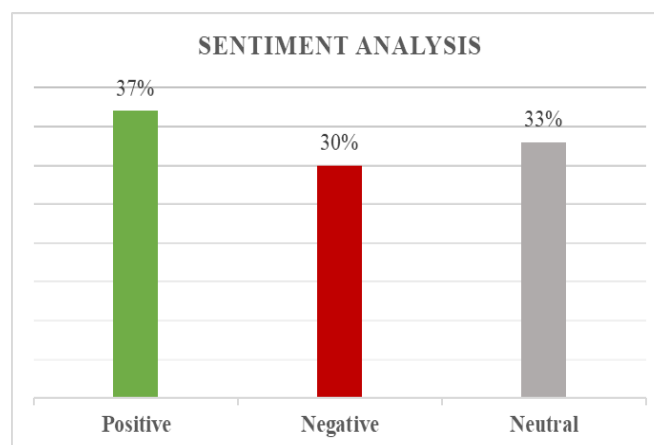


Table 2. Sentiment Analysis Result of Buddhist Monk's Prayer at Mosque in Indonesia

Social Media Framing, Mediatization, and Interreligious Engagement

The dynamics of religion in the digital world particularly on social media, cannot only be seen as transcendent, institutional or substantial, but more than that but they must also be considered within the context of digital practices. Several characteristics as categorized by Epafra, include access, efficiency, and maximum performance. Without a social media account for access, one's existence will not be visible. Efficiency is also



crucial in social media, where discourse is transformed into information, often prioritizing attention rather than intention.²⁵ Similarly, religious expressions on social media not only emphasize the substance of the message but also the engagement matrix, including likes, comments, shares, hashtags, and other features. All of the above categorizations can be observed in the discourse about monks praying in mosques, which spread quickly and went viral on social media, whether in terms of access (as all commenters have social media accounts) or captions designed to persuasively attract related viewers with hashtags such as #biksudimasjid and other features.

The constructed discourse is inseparable from the framing function carried out by these accounts. One way in which this framing is evident is through the title or cover, as well as the narrative through the graphics or captions used in the video. As Entman explains, framing theory works to see how the media selects and emphasizes certain aspects to influence audience perceptions. In this process, he outlines the stages of selection, exclusion and elaboration to construct a specific narrative.²⁶ Likewise, the accounts in table 1 use this approach to frame particular narratives.

The TikTok account @pikiranrakyat frames the phenomenon of monks praying in the mosque as a peaceful interfaith interaction and emphasizes the values of tolerance. However, Joko Cer's Facebook account frames this activity negatively, explaining that it represents an excessive tolerance that violates Islamic values, thereby emphasizing religious exclusivism. In contrast, the VIVA.CO.ID Youtube account adopts a more neutral stance by simply explaining that there are pros and cons in society regarding this activity without providing a specific framing. Apart from that, the X Info Jateng account emphasizes the themes of peace

and mutual understanding, even providing examples of activities that illustrate non-exclusive religion. These varying frames demonstrate how different framings of the same activity can influence viewers in different ways.

Through this phenomenon, religious practices and perceptions in society gain influence, as is the case in mediatization theory. This phenomenon also illustrates several aspects of mediatization such as visibility and amplification, shaping religious discourses, media logic, and influence on religious identity. *First*, in terms of visibility and amplification, mediatization works by transforming what was once a local event into something with much greater visibility, reaching national and even global audiences through social media. This gives the event significance and influence, as widespread sharing and commenting elevate it to broader public awareness. *Second*, , mediatization also shapes religious discourse, as seen in various reactions and interpretations, including framing. With different framings, the media can shape viewer's behavior and perceptions in different ways. *Third*, the depiction of these activities also follows media logic with various models, such as graphics and visuals. Finally, these activities have a strong influence on individual and collective religious identity. Media representations can either reinforce or challenge existing beliefs and attitudes toward interreligious interactions. This is evident in the comments that tend to be closed, which often become more closed off when framed by the media, thus reinforcing this attitude.

Through mediatization, religious discourse is constructed and shaped, influencing societal changes as simple as shifts in perception that lead to changes in behavior. Various practices on social media are highly personal, as users are free to comment on religious discourse privately as

²⁵ Leonard Chrysostomos Epafra, "Jalan Ninja Ketujuh: Memahami Agama Digital Di Ruang Hibrida," in *Studi Antaragama: Metode Dan Praktik*, ed. Fatimah Husein

and M. Iqbal Ahnaf (Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press, 2023), 217.

²⁶ Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," 52–55.





Hjarvard explains that 'mediatization enhances a form of 'soft individualism' ²⁷, in which autonomy as well as social integration is based on 'weak' social ties'.²⁸ However, it also becomes a collective behavior when users encounter religious discourse aligned with their values. They then share, retweet, or like the content. As Epafras explains, "Netizens mobilize collective religious feelings, thereby strengthening communal solidarity and identity".²⁹

Apart from discussions about framing and mediatization of these activities, the authors also wish to explore the aspects of interreligious relations. As depicted in the video, two religious communities (Hindu and Muslim) are shown sitting together at a Muslim place of worship, demonstrating what Lattu calls interreligious engagement. According to Lattu, these activities serve "as a form of public interaction and common action aimed toward connecting people from different religions who remain members of their communities".³⁰ Furthermore, this activity is not formally restricted or limited to a specific space, but is open to all groups, not confined to the elite. As Lattu also explains:

"Interreligious engagement or dialogue on a daily basis is based on people's ordinary activities and common relationships. Therefore, the engagement includes many people, not only the elite, but also in a given society. As it covers multiple layers and people, everyday interreligious engagement provides room for women and children, who have been excluded from the formal male-dominated dialogue. Therefore, in everyday dialogue, all people are able to share, speak, perform, listen, and understand."³¹

In the video, the individuals present are members of the general public, not set up

specifically for a discussion about religion or religious doctrines and texts. Instead, the encounter is more organically intertwined, since the monks stop in the middle of their journey to Borobudur Temple, and the public warmly welcomes them. This is undoubtedly not a formal and rigid interreligious dialogue, but rather interreligious engagement. Although this encounter generates different sentiments in the discourse on social media, the positive aspects remain dominant. According to what the *takmir* mentioned, the aim is to foster mutual concern and promote tolerance between religious communities.

This event offers a valuable lesson for all religious communities in understanding every religious phenomena that emerge through social media. The wise use of these platforms can have a constructive impact, helping users avoid being influenced by negative media framing and sentiments. Interreligious engagement in diverse spaces undoubtedly contributes to promoting mutual respect and appreciation as a reflection of genuine religious tolerance. More broadly, social cohesion amidst diversity can be fostered through informal and spontaneous interreligious encounters, as demonstrated in this event. The boundaries of formality are no longer barriers to interfaith interactions; people from various backgrounds are increasingly able to understand one another on a more personal and human level. Such interactions cultivate deeper empathy and understanding, creating opportunities not only to appreciate others' beliefs but also to uphold universal human values. Likewise, the authors share the view that this activity, while adding a layer of tolerance in its local context, also benefits from the media, enabling this encounter to be

²⁷ Stig Hjarvard, "Soft Individualism: Media and the Changing Social Character," in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. K Lundby (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 159–177.

²⁸ Mia Lövheim and Gordon Lynch, "The Mediatization of Religion Debate: An Introduction," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011): 114.

²⁹ Epafras, "Jalan Ninja Ketujuh: Memahami Agama Digital Di Ruang Hibrida," 211.

³⁰ Lattu, "Rethinking Interreligious Dialogue: Orality, Collective Memory, and Christian-Muslim Engagements in Indonesia," 155.

³¹ Lattu, "A Sociological Breakthrough of Interreligious Engagement in Everyday-Symbolic Interaction Perspectives," 180.





enjoyed and interpreted positively by Indonesian society at large, and even nationally.

Conclusion

The findings highlight the importance of social media in shaping the popular view on interreligious relations in Indonesia, channeled through the virality of a group of Buddhist monks praying in a mosque. Social media can be a powerful tool for framing religious discourse, increasing visibility, and influencing collective sentiments. By combining content and sentiment analysis through a mixed-method, this study shows that most netizens view this event positively, focusing on themes of tolerance and interfaith harmony, although there are few negative and neutral sentiments. Various social media accounts used different framing strategies, such as emphasizing the importance of peaceful connections between different religions or depicting the incident as contradicting religious values. The way viewers understood the event and developed their opinions was significantly influenced by this framing.

The findings also highlight the importance of mediatization in contemporary religious life by demonstrating how national discourses can be formed from local religious events through the use of media logic and representations. Social media plays an important role in encouraging public engagement and discourses on interreligious relations due to its ability to rapidly spread a variety of opinions. This study contributes to a better understanding of the dynamic interactions between digital media and religion in Indonesia's citizens and netizens. It illustrates how social media can strengthen religious identities and existing interfaith bonds, while also highlighting its potential to promote a more harmonious and peaceful society. The Buddhist monks' praying at the mosque provides an example of how digital platforms can facilitate interreligious engagement and understanding, which in turn promotes tolerance and mutual respect among diverse religious communities.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests or affiliations that could have influenced the outcomes of this study.

Author Contributions

All listed authors contributed meaningfully to the development and writing of this article.

Data Availability

No new data were generated or analyzed in the course of this research; therefore, data sharing is not applicable.

Ethical Considerations

This study complied with ethical standards and did not involve direct interaction with human participants or animals.

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