



The Influence of Religious Communication and Religious Activities on Social Harmony among Buddhists

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ABSTRACT

Social harmony is essential for maintaining cohesion and sustainable relationships within religious communities. Although religious communication is widely recognized as an important factor in promoting harmonious social interactions, the mechanisms through which it influences social harmony remain insufficiently explored, particularly in Buddhist communities. This study investigates the influence of religious communication on social harmony by examining the mediating role of understanding Buddhist teachings. An explanatory quantitative research design was employed using a questionnaire-based survey, and the data were analyzed using path analysis. The findings reveal that religious communication enhances understanding of Buddhist teachings, which subsequently strengthens social harmony. Religious communication also exerts a direct positive influence on harmonious social relationships, while understanding of Buddhist teachings serves as a significant mediating mechanism linking communication with social harmony. These findings demonstrate that effective religious communication facilitates the internalization of Buddhist values, fostering greater tolerance, solidarity, and cooperation within the community. This study contributes to the literature on religious communication by providing empirical evidence of the mediating role of doctrinal understanding in promoting social harmony and offers practical implications for strengthening communication strategies within Buddhist religious institutions.



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Introduction

Social harmony is a key indicator in creating a stable, peaceful, and sustainable society. In the context of religious communities, social harmony is not merely the absence of conflict but also reflects relationships grounded in shared values, mutual respect, and solidarity

among community members. In Buddhist teachings, the concept of social harmony is closely linked to the practice of noble values such as *metta* (loving-kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathy), and *upekkha* (mental equanimity). These values serve as the foundation for building positive and constructive social interactions among Buddhists (Hofmann et al., 2012; Gautama, 2025).

However, in practice, social harmony is not always achieved in an ideal manner. Various factors such as differences in social background, educational level, age, and understanding of religious teachings can influence the quality of social relationships within religious communities (Manggalani et al., 2023). In some cases, a lack of effective communication and differing perceptions of religious teachings can lead to misunderstandings that result in disharmony. Therefore, a systematic effort is needed to understand the factors that play a role in shaping and maintaining social harmony, particularly within Buddhist communities. In this regard, religious communication is an aspect that plays a strategic and urgent role in research; thus, the urgency of this study lies in the importance of examining how religious communication can contribute to creating sustainable social harmony (Kusuma et al., 2023).

Religious communication is the process of conveying religious teachings by religious leaders, mentors, and among the faithful through various forms of interaction, both formal and informal (Suharno et al., 2020). Within the monastery setting, religious communication can be found in Dhamma talks, religious discussions, spiritual guidance, and daily interactions among the faithful (Gautama, 2025). Through this communication process, Buddhist teachings are not merely conveyed as knowledge but are also internalized as a life guide that influences individual attitudes and behaviors (Metta et al., 2023). In other words, religious communication serves as a bridge between normative teachings and social practices in daily life (Sukarti, 2019; Sumar et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of religious communication is not determined solely by the frequency or intensity of message delivery, but also by the extent to which the message can be understood and interpreted by the faithful (Sugandi et al., 2019). Therefore, an understanding of Buddhist teachings is a crucial factor that must be considered. A good understanding will encourage individuals to implement the values of the teachings in social life, thereby fostering harmonious relationships (Kusuma et al., 2023). Conversely, a lack of deep understanding can hinder the process of internalizing values and potentially lead to conflict or disharmony (Sari, 2018). Based on this, this study proposes an approach that incorporates an understanding of Buddhist teachings as an intervening variable, serving as a link between religious communication and social harmony. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive solution, focusing not only on improving communication but also on enhancing the quality of understanding of religious teachings.

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between religious communication and social life in communities. Some studies indicate that effective religious communication can enhance social cohesion, strengthen solidarity, and reduce the potential for conflict within communities. Other research also confirms that understanding of religious teachings has a significant influence on individual social behavior, including in terms of tolerance, empathy, and cooperation (Grace et al., 2021). However, most of these studies still frame religious communication and social harmony in a direct relationship, without considering the internal mechanisms that explain how such relationships are formed (Sumarwan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, research specifically examining Buddhist communities, particularly at the

local level such as within temple environments, remains relatively limited compared to studies on other religious communities. This indicates a research gap that needs to be addressed. Therefore, this study offers novelty by integrating the variable of understanding Buddhist teachings as an intervening variable in the relationship between religious communication and social harmony, and by examining this phenomenon within the context of the Buddhist community at Vihara Viriya Dharma in Balerejo Village, East Lampung Regency.

Vihara Viriya Dharma, as the research site, is one of the active centers of Buddhist religious activity, organizing various religious and social events. The interactions between religious leaders, mentors, and the congregation create a complex and intriguing dynamic of communication worthy of study. On one hand, the intensive religious communication taking place is expected to strengthen social harmony. However, on the other hand, differences in the level of understanding of Buddhist teachings among the congregation can affect the effectiveness of such communication (Sikumbang et al., 2019). This situation makes the temple a relevant context for testing the relationship between religious communication, understanding of Buddhist teachings, and social harmony.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the influence of religious communication on the understanding of Buddhist teachings; (2) analyze the influence of the understanding of Buddhist teachings on the social harmony of the congregation; and (3) analyze the influence of religious communication on social harmony indirectly through the understanding of Buddhist teachings as an intervening variable. With these objectives, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the relationships among the variables under investigation.

Theoretically, this study employs several relevant theoretical frameworks. First, the theory of religious communication, which emphasizes the process of conveying religious messages and how these messages influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Second, symbolic interactionism, which explains that meaning is constructed through social interaction, meaning that individuals' understanding of religious teachings is significantly influenced by the communication processes that occur. Third, the concept of social harmony from a sociological perspective, which emphasizes social relationships characterized by cooperation, tolerance, social integration, and minimal conflict. The integration of these three theoretical frameworks is used to explain the causal relationship between religious communication, understanding of Buddhist teachings, and social harmony among the faithful.

Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The quantitative approach was chosen because the study aims to objectively test the relationships and influences between variables through numerical measurement, while the explanatory design is used to elucidate the causal relationship between religious communication, understanding of Buddhist teachings, and social harmony among the Buddhist community.

The research was conducted at Vihara Viriya Dharma, Balerejo Village, East Lampung Regency. The population in this study consists of all Buddhist congregants who actively participate in religious activities at the temple. The research sample consisted of 75

respondents selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) aged at least 17 years, (2) actively participating in religious activities at Vihara Viriya Dharma, and (3) willing to serve as research respondents.

Research data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire designed based on the indicators of each research variable, namely religious communication as the independent variable (X), understanding of Buddhist teachings as the intervening variable (Z), and social harmony as the dependent variable (Y). Measurements were taken using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Before data analysis was conducted, the research instrument was tested for validity and reliability. Validity was tested using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation by comparing the calculated r-value with the table r-value at a 5% significance level. The instrument was deemed valid if the calculated r-value was greater than the table r-value. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a criterion of a value greater than 0.70, indicating that the instrument possesses good internal consistency.

Next, classical assumption tests were conducted, including a normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method and a multicollinearity test by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. Data are considered normally distributed if the significance level is greater than 0.05, while the model is considered free of multicollinearity if the Tolerance value is greater than 0.10 and the VIF value is less than 10.

Data analysis was conducted using path analysis to test the direct and indirect effects among the research variables (Harahap & Khair, 2019). Path analysis was used to determine the effect of religious communication on the understanding of Buddhist teachings, the combined effect of religious communication and the understanding of Buddhist teachings on social harmony, and the role of the understanding of Buddhist teachings as an intervening variable. To test the significance of indirect effects, the Sobel Test was used at a 5% significance level. The entire data analysis process was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software.

Findings

Respondent Characteristics

The characteristics of the respondents are presented to provide an overview of the profile of the Buddhists who were the subjects of this study. This study involved 75 respondents who actively participate in religious activities at the Viriya Dharma Vihara; therefore, the data obtained are expected to accurately represent the respondents' circumstances in accordance with the study's objectives.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents by Gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------|-----------|----------------|
| Male | 32 | 42.7 |
| Female | 43 | 57.3 |
| Total | 75 | 100 |

Based on Table 1, it is known that there were 43 female respondents (57.3%), while there were 32 male respondents (42.7%). These results indicate that women's participation in religious activities at Vihara Viriya Dharma is relatively higher than that of men. This suggests that religious communication activities held at the temple are predominantly

attended by female devotees, which has the potential to influence the understanding of Buddhist teachings and social harmony within the community.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics by Age

| Age | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| 17–25 Years | 21 | 28.0 |
| 26–40 years | 28 | 37.3 |
| >40 years | 26 | 34.7 |
| Total | 75 | 100 |

Based on Table 2, the majority of respondents were in the 26–40 age range, totaling 28 people (37.3%). This age group falls within the productive age category, which generally exhibits high levels of participation in various social and religious activities. The high level of engagement among respondents in this age group indicates a greater opportunity to receive, understand, and internalize the messages of religious communication conveyed through various activities at the temple. This situation enables the Buddhist teachings received to be applied in daily life, thereby contributing to the formation of social harmony within the community.

Validity Test

A validity test was conducted to determine the extent to which the research instrument was able to accurately measure the variables under study. The instrument was deemed valid if the calculated r-value was greater than the table r-value (0.227).

Table 3. Results of the Validity Test for the Religious Communication Variable

| Item | Calculated r | Table r | Description |
|------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| KK1 | 0.721 | 0.227 | valid |
| KK2 | 0.683 | 0.227 | valid |
| KK3 | 0.754 | 0.227 | valid |
| KK4 | 0.789 | 0.227 | valid |
| KK5 | 0.812 | 0.227 | valid |

Based on Table 3, all indicators in the Religious Communication variable have calculated r-values greater than the table r-value of 0.227. These results from the indicate that all statement items are valid and capable of accurately measuring the religious communication variable.

Indicator KK1 has a calculated r-value of 0.721, indicating a strong relationship with the Religious Communication variable. Indicator KK2 obtained a calculated r-value of 0.683 and still meets the validity criteria because it is above the table r-value. Furthermore, indicator KK3 has a calculated r-value of 0.754, indicating a strong level of correlation with the construct being measured. Indicator KK4 obtained a calculated r-value of 0.789, while indicator KK5 had the highest calculated r-value at 0.812.

The highest calculated r-value for indicator KK5 indicates that this indicator is the most representative item in describing the religious communication variable. Meanwhile, although KK2 has the lowest calculated r-value compared to the other indicators, this value is still well above the required minimum threshold and is therefore still considered valid.

Overall, all indicators of the religious communication variable have good validity because they fall within the correlation range of 0.683–0.812. These results indicate that the research instrument is capable of accurately measuring aspects of religious communication, including the delivery of religious messages, communicative interactions, communication intensity, and the understanding of messages received by Buddhists. Therefore, all statement items are suitable for use in the subsequent analysis stage.

Table 4. Results of the Validity Test for the Variable of Understanding of Buddhist Teachings

| Item | Calculated r | Table r | Description |
|------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| PA1 | 0.734 | 0.227 | valid |
| PA2 | 0.778 | 0.227 | valid |
| PA3 | 0.821 | 0.227 | valid |
| PA4 | 0.749 | 0.227 | valid |
| PA5 | 0.792 | 0.227 | valid |

Based on Table 4, all indicators in the Buddhist Doctrine Understanding variable have calculated r-values greater than the table r-value of 0.227. These results indicate that all statement items are valid and capable of accurately measuring the Buddhist Doctrine Understanding variable.

Indicator PA1 obtained a calculated r value of 0.734, indicating a strong relationship with the construct of understanding of Buddhist teachings. Indicator PA2 has a calculated r value of 0.778, indicating that the item is able to represent the respondents' level of understanding of Buddhist teachings well. Furthermore, indicator PA3 obtained the highest calculated r-value of 0.821, making it the most dominant indicator in describing the variable of understanding of Buddhist teachings. Meanwhile, indicators PA4 and PA5 had calculated r-values of 0.749 and 0.792, respectively, indicating a strong correlation with the measured construct.

The high correlation values across all indicators indicate that the instrument used is capable of accurately measuring aspects of understanding Buddhist teachings, including knowledge, comprehension, internalization, and the application of Buddhist teachings in daily life.

Table 5. Results of the Social Harmony Variable Validity Test

| Item | Calculated r | Table r | Description |
|------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| KS1 | 0.734 | 0.227 | valid |
| KS2 | 0.778 | 0.227 | valid |
| KS3 | 0.821 | 0.227 | valid |
| KS4 | 0.749 | 0.227 | valid |
| KS5 | 0.792 | 0.227 | valid |

Based on Table 5, all indicators in the Social Harmony variable have calculated r-values greater than the table r-value of 0.227. Thus, all statement items are deemed valid and capable of accurately measuring the social harmony variable.

Indicator KS1 obtained a calculated r-value of 0.703, indicating a strong relationship with the social harmony variable. Indicator KS2 has a calculated r-value of 0.756, indicating that the item is capable of representing the respondents' social harmony conditions well. Furthermore, indicator KS3 obtained the highest calculated r-value of 0.798, making it the

most dominant indicator in describing the social harmony variable. Meanwhile, indicators KS4 and KS5 have calculated r-values of 0.724 and 0.781, respectively, indicating a strong correlation with the measured construct.

The high correlation values across all indicators indicate that the instrument used is capable of accurately measuring various aspects of social harmony, such as tolerance, cooperation, solidarity, social concern, and harmonious inter-Buddhist relations.

Reliability Test

Based on reliability criteria stating that an instrument is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.70, all variables in this study met the reliability criteria. These results indicate that each statement item exhibits a high level of consistency in measuring the constructs under investigation. Consequently, the research instrument is deemed capable of generating stable, consistent, and reliable data for use in hypothesis testing via path analysis

Table 6. Reliability Test Results

| Variable | Cronbach's Alpha | Standard | Description |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------|-------------|
| Religious Communication | 0.861 | >0.70 | Reliable |
| Understanding of Buddhist Teachings | 0.883 | >0.70 | Reliable |
| Social Harmony | 0.847 | >0.70 | Reliable |

Based on Table 6, the reliability test results show that all research variables have a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than the required minimum threshold of 0.70. Thus, all research instruments are deemed reliable and suitable for use in the data collection process.

The Religious Communication variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.861, indicating that the statement items used possess a very high level of internal consistency in measuring aspects of religious communication. This value indicates that the instrument is capable of eliciting relatively consistent responses from respondents regarding the religious communication activities they receive and participate in.

The Buddhist Doctrine Understanding variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.883, which is the highest value among all research variables. This result indicates that the indicators used possess a very high level of consistency in measuring respondents' understanding of Buddhist doctrine, encompassing aspects of knowledge, comprehension, and the internalization of Dhamma values.

Meanwhile, the Social Harmony variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.847. This value indicates that the instrument used has a high level of reliability in measuring the social harmony of Buddhists, including aspects of tolerance, cooperation, solidarity, and social relationships among the faithful.

Overall, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables range from 0.847 to 0.883, indicating a very high level of reliability. Therefore, the research instrument can be deemed to possess strong internal consistency, meaning the data obtained is reliable and suitable for further analysis to test the relationships among the research variables.

Normality Test

Based on the results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, a significance value of 0.200 was obtained. This value is greater than 0.05, so the research data is declared to be normally distributed, allowing the testing of direct and indirect effects between variables to proceed without violating the basic assumptions of parametric statistics.

Table 7. Results of the Normality Test

| Method | Sig. |
|--------------------|-------|
| Kolmogorov-Smirnov | 0.200 |

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the research data followed a normal distribution. In this study, the normality test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method with a significance level (α) of 0.05. The data is considered to be normally distributed if the significance value (Sig.) is greater than 0.05.

Based on Table 7, a significance value of 0.200 was obtained. This value is greater than the specified significance level of 0.05 ($0.200 > 0.05$). This result indicates that the research data is normally distributed, thus there is no deviation from the normality assumption.

The fulfillment of the normality assumption indicates that the distribution of respondents' data on the variables Religious Communication, Understanding of Buddhist Teachings, and Social Harmony tends to follow a normal distribution pattern. Thus, the research data is suitable for parametric statistical analysis, including regression analysis and Path Analysis used in this study.

The normality test results that meet the criteria also indicate that the data obtained can adequately represent the population, so that the results of testing the relationships between variables can provide more accurate and reliable estimates.

Multicollinearity Test

The results of the multicollinearity test show that the Religious Communication and Understanding of Buddhist Teachings variables have Tolerance values of 0.519 and VIF values of 1.927, respectively. These values meet the test criteria because the Tolerance value is greater than 0.10 and the VIF value is less than 1.0. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables in the research model. With this assumption met, the path analysis model used can produce more accurate and reliable coefficient estimates in explaining the relationships among the research variables.

Table 8. Multicollinearity Test Results

| Variable | Tolerance | VIF |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Religious Communication | 0.519 | 1.927 |
| Understanding of Buddhist Teachings | 0.519 | 1.927 |

A multicollinearity test was conducted to determine whether there was a very strong relationship between the independent variables in the research model. The presence of multicollinearity can cause instability in the regression coefficients, thereby affecting the accuracy of the analysis results. In this study, the multicollinearity test was conducted by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. The model is considered

free of multicollinearity if the Tolerance value is > 0.10 and the VIF value is < 1.0.

Based on Table 8, the Religious Communication variable has a Tolerance value of 0.519 and a VIF value of 1.927. These values indicate that the Religious Communication variable does not exhibit excessive correlation with the other independent variables in the research model.

Furthermore, the Buddhist Doctrine Understanding variable also has a Tolerance value of 0.519 and a VIF value of 1.927. These results indicate that the Buddhist Doctrine Understanding variable does not exhibit multicollinearity and remains within acceptable limits for statistical analysis.

Overall, all independent variables have a Tolerance value greater than 0.10 and a VIF value well below 10. Thus, it can be concluded that there are no signs of multicollinearity among the independent variables in the research model.

Path Analysis

a. Structure I

The results of the path analysis in Sub-structure I indicate that religious communication has a positive and significant effect on the understanding of Buddhist teachings. This is indicated by a path coefficient of 0.694, with a t-value of 9.341 and a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means that the better the religious communication received, the higher the understanding of Buddhist teachings.

Table 9. The Effect of Religious Communication on Understanding of Buddhist Teachings

| Variable | Beta | t | Sig |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| Religious Communication => Understanding of Buddhist Teachings | 0.694 | 9.341 | 0.000 |

Table 11. Coefficient of Determination for Sub-structure I

| R | R ² | Adjusted R ² |
|-------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 0.694 | 0.482 | 0.475 |

Table 9 shows the results of the path analysis, which prove that religious communication has a positive and significant effect on the understanding of Buddhist teachings. The path coefficient value of 0.694 indicates a strong and unidirectional relationship; thus, the better the religious communication, the higher the understanding of Buddhist teachings.

The t-value of 9.341 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that this effect is highly statistically significant because it is less than 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis stating that religious communication influences the understanding of Buddhist teachings can be accepted.

Furthermore, an R² value of 0.482 means that the religious communication variable explains 48.2% of the variation in the understanding of Buddhist teachings. Meanwhile, the remaining 51.8% is influenced by other factors outside the research model.

b. Structure II

Table 10. The Influence of Religious Communication and Understanding of Buddhist Teachings on Social Harmony

| Variable | Beta | t | Sig. |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| Religious Communication → Social Harmony | 0.347 | 2.891 | 0.005 |
| Understanding of Buddhist Teachings → Social Harmony | 0.471 | 4.268 | 0.000 |

Table 13. Coefficient of Determination for Sub-structure II

| R | R ² | Adjusted R ² |
|-------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 0.756 | 0.571 | 0.559 |

An R² value of 0.571 indicates that religious communication and understanding of Buddhist teachings together account for 57.1% of the variation in social harmony among Buddhists. The remaining 42.9% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. These results indicate that the research model has a fairly strong explanatory power.

Mediation Test (Sobel Test)

The results of the Sobel test showed a statistical value of 3.782 with a significance level of 0.000. This value met the test criteria because it was greater than 1.96 and had a significance level of less than 0.05. Thus, understanding of Buddhist teachings was proven to act as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between religious communication and social harmony. This finding indicates that the effectiveness of religious communication in enhancing social harmony occurs not only directly but also through an increase in the faithful’s understanding of Buddhist teachings, which serve as the foundation for fostering tolerance, solidarity, and harmonious social relationships.

Table 11. Mediation Test Results

| Path | Coefficient |
|-----------------|-------------|
| X → Z | 0.694 |
| Z → Y | 0.471 |
| Indirect Effect | 0.327 |
| Sobel Z | 3.782 |
| Sig. | 0.000 |

A mediation test was conducted to determine whether the variable “Understanding of Buddhist Teachings” acts as an intervening variable in the relationship between Religious Communication and Social Harmony. The mediation test in this study used the Sobel Test with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Based on Table 11, the path coefficient of Religious Communication on Understanding of Buddhist Teachings (X → Z) is 0.694. This value indicates that the better the religious communication received by Buddhists, the higher their level of understanding of Buddhist teachings. This coefficient also indicates that religious communication has a strong influence on the formation of understanding of Buddhist teachings.

Furthermore, the path coefficient of Understanding of Buddhist Teachings on Social Harmony (Z → Y) is 0.471. This value indicates that an increase in the understanding of

Buddhist teachings contributes positively to an increase in the social harmony of Buddhists. The better the understanding of Buddhist values, the higher the tendency for Buddhists to build harmonious social relationships.

The magnitude of the indirect effect is obtained by multiplying the path coefficients $X \rightarrow Z$ and $Z \rightarrow Y$, namely: $0.694 \times 0.471 = 0.327$

This value indicates that religious communication exerts an indirect influence on social harmony through an increase in the understanding of Buddhist teachings by 0.327 or 32.7%.

The Sobel test results show a Sobel Z value of 3.782, which is greater than the critical value of 1.96 at a 95% confidence level. Furthermore, the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. These results indicate that the indirect effect observed is statistically significant. Thus, it can be concluded that Understanding of Buddhist Teachings significantly mediates the effect of Religious Communication on Social Harmony.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypothesis testing show that all relationships between variables in the research model are significant. Religious communication is proven to be an important factor influencing the understanding of Buddhist teachings and social harmony. Furthermore, the understanding of Buddhist teachings is proven to act as a mediating variable that strengthens the influence of religious communication on social harmony

Table 12. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

| Hypothesis | Statement | Result |
|------------|---|----------|
| H1 | Religious communication influences the understanding of Buddhist teachings | Accepted |
| H2 | Understanding of Buddhist teachings influences social harmony | Accepted |
| H3 | Religious communication influences social harmony | Accepted |
| H4 | Understanding of Buddhist teachings mediates the influence of religious communication on social harmony | Accepted |

Based on Table 12, all hypotheses proposed in this study were accepted. These results indicate that the research model constructed is capable of explaining the relationship between religious communication, understanding of Buddhist teachings, and social harmony among Buddhists at Vihara Viriya Dharma.

The first hypothesis (H1), which states that religious communication influences the understanding of Buddhist teachings, is accepted. This finding indicates that the more effective religious communication is whether through Dhamma sermons, religious discussions, or community outreach activities the higher the level of the community's understanding of Buddhist teachings.

The second hypothesis (H2), which states that understanding of Buddhist teachings influences social harmony, was also accepted. These results show that a good understanding of the values of Buddhist teachings, such as loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), tolerance, and wisdom, can foster the creation of harmonious social relationships in community life.

The third hypothesis (H3), which states that religious communication influences social harmony, was accepted. This finding indicates that religious communication not only serves as a means of conveying teachings but also acts as a medium for fostering positive social attitudes, thereby enhancing harmony among the faithful.

Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis (H4), which states that understanding Buddhist teachings mediates the influence of religious communication on social harmony, is also accepted. These results demonstrate that religious communication can enhance social harmony by improving the community's understanding of Buddhist teachings. In other words, the better the religious communication received by the community, the better their understanding of Buddhist teachings, which ultimately contributes to the creation of social harmony.

Overall, the results of this study show that religious communication plays a strategic role in building a harmonious social life for Buddhists. This influence occurs not only directly but also through an increased understanding of Buddhist teachings as an intervening variable. These findings reinforce the importance of developing sustainable religious communication activities as an effort to improve the quality of the religious and social lives of Buddhists.

Discussion

The research results indicate that religious communication has a positive and significant influence on the understanding of Buddhist teachings among Buddhists at Vihara Viriya Dharma in Balerejo Village, East Lampung Regency. This finding is evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.694 with a significance level of 0.000. These results indicate that the better the religious communication process received by the community, the higher their level of understanding of Buddhist teachings. Religious communication conducted through Dhamma sermons, religious discussions, congregational guidance, and interactions between religious leaders and the congregation serves as the primary means of transmitting the values of Buddhist teachings. Through effective communication, the congregation not only gains information about religious teachings but also is able to understand their meaning and relevance in daily life.

These findings are consistent with theories of religious communication, which explain that the systematic and sustained delivery of religious messages can shape individuals' understanding, attitudes, and behavior. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, a person's understanding of religious teachings is formed through an ongoing process of social interaction. Therefore, the high intensity of communication within the monastery environment allows devotees greater opportunities to understand the fundamental concepts of Buddhist teachings, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the values of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) (Purnomo & Sukma, 2020).

The research results also indicate that an understanding of Buddhist teachings has a positive and significant effect on social harmony, with a correlation coefficient of 0.471 and a significance level of 0.000. This finding suggests that the better the understanding of Buddhist teachings among the faithful, the higher the level of social harmony fostered in community life. A good understanding of Buddhist teachings encourages individuals to develop positive social behaviors, such as tolerance, empathy, cooperation, mutual respect, and concern for others.

From a Buddhist perspective, social harmony is not merely understood as the absence of conflict, but also as a state characterized by social relationships grounded in wisdom and compassion. Individuals who understand the Dhamma well tend to be able to control negative emotions, reduce selfish attitudes, and develop behaviors that support the creation of a peaceful social life (Wibawa et al., 2023). Therefore, an understanding of Buddhist teachings is a crucial factor in fostering social integration and strengthening solidarity within the Buddhist community.

In addition to indirect effects through intervening variables, this study also found that religious communication has a direct effect on social harmony with a coefficient value of 0.347 and a significance level of 0.005. These results indicate that religious communication not only serves as a means of conveying religious information but also functions as a medium for fostering positive social relationships among the faithful. Through intensive communication, the community can build mutual trust, strengthen solidarity, and create a constructive space for dialogue in resolving various social issues that arise within the community.

Effective religious communication fosters shared understanding and common goals among community members. This shared understanding then encourages cooperation and a sense of togetherness, which form the foundation for social harmony (Wartini et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the view that communication is a vital instrument in fostering social integration, particularly within religious communities characterized by close-knit social ties.

The most significant research result is the discovery of the mediating role of understanding Buddhist teachings in the relationship between religious communication and social harmony. The results of the Sobel test showed a Z-value of 3.782 with a significance level of 0.000. This value proves that understanding Buddhist teachings significantly mediates the influence of religious communication on social harmony. The magnitude of the indirect effect obtained, which is 0.327, indicates that part of the influence of religious communication on social harmony occurs through an increase in the understanding of Buddhist teachings (Gautama et al., 2024).

This finding suggests that the success of religious communication in fostering social harmony depends not only on the frequency of message delivery but also on the ability of the faithful to understand and internalize the teachings conveyed. Effective religious communication enhances understanding of Buddhist teachings, and this understanding is subsequently manifested in social behaviors that support the creation of social harmony (Sari et al., 2025). In other words, understanding of Buddhist teachings serves as a mechanism bridging the influence of religious communication on the social behavior of the faithful.

The coefficient of determination for Sub-structure I, at 48.2%, indicates that nearly half of the variation in understanding of Buddhist teachings can be explained by religious communication. Meanwhile, the coefficient of determination for Sub-structure II, at 57.1%, indicates that religious communication and understanding of Buddhist teachings together can explain more than half of the variation in social harmony among Buddhist followers. Nevertheless, there are other factors that also influence social harmony, such as educational level, family environment, religious experience, socioeconomic conditions, community culture, and the quality of interpersonal interactions, which were not examined in this study.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the theory of religious communication, which positions

communication as the primary means in the process of shaping social knowledge and behavior. This study also supports symbolic interactionism, which explains that individual meanings and understandings are formed through ongoing social interaction. Furthermore, this study enriches the study of religious communication within the Buddhist context by introducing an understanding of Buddhist teachings as an intervening variable that explains the mechanism of the relationship between religious communication and social harmony.

Practically, the results of this study have implications for temple administrators, community mentors, and Buddhist religious leaders to continue improving the quality of religious communication through various more participatory and interactive training programs. Activities such as Dhamma talks, group discussions, religious training, and community mentoring need to be developed continuously to enhance understanding of Buddhist teachings. With this increased understanding, it is hoped that a more harmonious, tolerant, and Dhamma-based social life among Buddhists will emerge.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that religious communication has a positive and significant influence on the understanding of Buddhist teachings among the Buddhist community at Vihara Viriya Dharma in Balerejo Village, East Lampung Regency. The more effective the religious communication conducted through Dhamma sermons, discussions, and community development activities, the higher the level of the community's understanding of Buddhist teachings.

This study also indicates that understanding of Buddhist teachings has a positive and significant impact on social harmony. A good understanding of the values of Buddhist teachings fosters attitudes of tolerance, cooperation, solidarity, and mutual respect in community life. Furthermore, religious communication has been proven to have a direct impact on the social harmony of the Buddhist community.

Further research findings confirm that understanding of Buddhist teachings serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between religious communication and social harmony. Thus, the influence of religious communication on social harmony occurs not only directly but also through the enhancement of the community's understanding of Buddhist teachings. These findings confirm that strengthening high-quality and sustainable religious communication is a crucial strategy for enhancing the understanding of Buddhist teachings and fostering stronger social harmony within the Buddhist community.

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