

## The Mediating Role of Communication in Fostering Religious Tolerance within a Diverse Society

Totok Wahyu Abadi<sup>1\*</sup>, Andrea Resha Zetira<sup>2</sup>, Ahmad Riyadh Umar Balahmar<sup>3</sup>, Kirti Dang Longani<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia; e-mail: totokwahyu@umsida.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia; e-mail: andreareshaz@umsida.ac.id

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia; e-mail: riyadh\_ub@umsida.ac.id

<sup>4</sup> Ajeenkya DY Patil University, India; e-mail: drkirtidang15@gmail.com

\* Correspondence

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the influence of social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, religious identity, and communication behaviour on religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency. It focuses on the mediating role of communication behaviour in strengthening or weakening the impact of these variables on religious tolerance. A quantitative research approach was adopted, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from respondents in the Sidoarjo Regency. The data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test the relationships between the variables and the mediating role of communication behaviour. The results show that communication behaviour plays a crucial role in mediating the influence of social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, and religious identity on religious tolerance. While social prejudice, local wisdom, and religious identity do not have direct significant effects on tolerance, their impact is enhanced through effective communication. Communication behaviour, characterised by openness, empathy, and support, positively influences religious tolerance, whereas ineffective communication diminishes the positive effects of other variables. The findings suggest that strategies to improve religious tolerance should prioritise communication behaviour. Policymakers, educators, and community leaders are encouraged to implement programmes that foster open dialogue, empathy, and respect among diverse religious groups to strengthen social harmony. This study provides new insights into the role of communication behaviour as a mediating variable in the relationship between social factors and religious tolerance, offering practical implications for enhancing tolerance in multicultural societies.

**Keywords:** Communication behaviour; local wisdom; religious tolerance; social piety.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh prasangka sosial, kearifan lokal, kesalehan sosial, identitas agama, dan perilaku komunikasi terhadap toleransi beragama di Kabupaten Sidoarjo. Fokus utamanya adalah pada peran mediasi perilaku komunikasi dalam memperkuat atau melemahkan pengaruh variabel-variabel tersebut terhadap toleransi beragama. Pendekatan penelitian kuantitatif digunakan, dengan pengumpulan data melalui kuesioner terstruktur kepada responden di Kabupaten Sidoarjo. Data dianalisis menggunakan Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) untuk menguji hubungan antar variabel serta peran mediasi perilaku komunikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perilaku komunikasi memainkan peran penting dalam memediasi pengaruh prasangka sosial, kearifan lokal, kesalehan sosial, dan identitas agama terhadap toleransi beragama. Meskipun prasangka sosial, kearifan lokal, dan identitas agama tidak memiliki pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap toleransi, dampaknya meningkat melalui komunikasi yang efektif. Perilaku komunikasi yang ditandai dengan keterbukaan, empati, dan dukungan memiliki pengaruh positif terhadap toleransi beragama, sedangkan komunikasi yang tidak efektif melemahkan dampak positif dari variabel lain. Temuan ini menyarankan bahwa strategi untuk meningkatkan toleransi beragama harus memprioritaskan perilaku komunikasi. Pembuat kebijakan, pendidik, dan pemimpin masyarakat didorong untuk menerapkan program yang mendorong dialog terbuka, empati, dan rasa hormat di antara kelompok agama yang beragam untuk memperkuat keharmonisan sosial. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan baru tentang peran perilaku komunikasi

sebagai variabel mediasi dalam hubungan antara faktor sosial dan toleransi beragama, menawarkan implikasi praktis untuk meningkatkan toleransi di masyarakat multikultural.

**Kata Kunci:** Perilaku komunikasi; kearifan lokal; toleransi beragama; kesalehan sosial.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia's identity as a multicultural nation, deeply rooted in its history and marked by dynamic cross-border and cultural exchanges within the country and with neighbouring Southeast Asian nations, is vividly reflected in its diverse tribes, religions, cultures, and races, which are both a source of great wealth and potential conflict (Lan, 2016; Muhajir, Naim, Fitri, & Safi'i, 2020; Nurjaya, 2015). This diversity contributes to a rich societal tapestry (Dharma Atmaja, 2020) but also presents significant challenges, particularly in maintaining religious harmony. Incidents of religious intolerance and conflict, such as the rejection of sermons by Ustadz Basalamah and Ustadz Hanan Attaki in Sidoarjo Regency, along with opposition to the construction of churches and religious studies, underscore the fragility of religious tolerance in the region community (Aini, 2017; Rinanda, 2023). Despite improvements in the Religious Harmony Index of East Java, these conflicts highlight that efforts to foster understanding and coexistence remain insufficient.

Previous studies have extensively examined various factors that influence religious tolerance, including social prejudice, which can both positively and negatively affect intergroup relations (Hernawan, 2017). Social prejudice, especially when conspicuously signalling religious outgroup membership, can provoke stronger intolerance, mediated by anxiety (Junaedi, Hasanah, & Hassan, 2023). The role of local wisdom in promoting harmonious coexistence has also been highlighted, with research suggesting that community-based cultural practices can foster mutual respect and tolerance (Yantos & Putriana, 2021). Additionally, societal factors play a crucial role, where sociocultural conditions and theological beliefs can either motivate or hinder tolerance; for example, Christianity's tolerance potential may be enhanced by its faith in God and the universal working of the Holy Spirit (Lubis & Sianipar, 2022). Social piety, characterised by individuals' commitment to social values and altruism, has been shown to contribute positively to religious tolerance by encouraging empathetic and supportive behaviours within diverse communities (Ulum, Sugiyarto, Wahab, & Muntafa, 2019). Furthermore, learning patterns, including cognitive, socio-affective, and practical-empirical styles, significantly influence religious tolerance, with cognitive patterns being the most dominant in shaping understanding and feelings of tolerance (Aarøe, 2012). Religious identity, on the other hand, presents a more complex dynamic; while it can reinforce group solidarity, it may also lead to exclusivity and reduced tolerance towards others (Nugroho, 2019). Interestingly, intellectual humility and cognitive flexibility have been found to mediate the influence of religiosity on religious tolerance, though the effect varies depending on the aggressiveness of religious participants (Lubis & Sianipar, 2022). Despite these insights, there is limited understanding of how these factors interact, particularly within the context of the Sidoarjo Regency, where religious tensions persist.

Despite the overall improvement in the Religious Harmony Index in East Java, which rose from 70.04 in 2017 to 77.8 in 2023, indicating a very good level of religious tolerance, Sidoarjo Regency continues to experience significant challenges in maintaining inter-religious harmony (Azmi, 2023; Kominfo, 2023). Incidents of intolerance, such as the rejection of Ustadz Basalamah's lecture by GP Ansor in Gedangan due to perceived vilification of local religious practices, as well as the widespread rejection of Ustad Hanan Attaki's sermons across various districts in East Java, highlight the persistence of sectarian tensions (Aini, 2017; Rinanda, 2023). Additionally, the opposition to the construction of a church in Krian and the rejection of religious studies further underscores the fragile nature of religious tolerance in the region. These events suggest that the efforts of the Sidoarjo community to sustain religious harmony are still inadequate, reflecting a limited understanding and appreciation of the region's ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group diversity.

This research aims to analyse and explain the influence of social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, religious identity, and communication behaviour on religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency.

Based on the findings which indicate that communication behaviour plays a significant role in enhancing religious tolerance, this study also seeks to identify the extent to which communication behaviour can serve as a mediating variable that strengthens or weakens the influence of other variables on religious tolerance.

This research hypothesises that communication behaviour acts as a significant intervening variable in the relationship between social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, and religious identity with religious tolerance. While social prejudice, local wisdom, and religious identity may not directly influence tolerance, the presence of effective communication behaviour can amplify the positive impact of local wisdom and religious identity on tolerance and mitigate the negative effects of social prejudice. Conversely, ineffective communication behaviour may diminish the positive impact of social piety on tolerance. Therefore, this study argues that the development of effective communication behaviour is key to enhancing religious tolerance in a heterogeneous society such as the the reliability of a variable construct is said to be good if Cronbach's Alpha value is  $> 0.60$  (Sugiyono, 2022). Calculation of the reliability test using SPSS version 26. The reliability of the research instrument uses Alpha Cronbach's stability measure, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Reliability Test Results

No	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
1	Social Prejudice	0.950	Very Reliable
2	Local Wisdom (local wisdom)	0.954	Very Reliable
3	Social Piety	0.959	Very Reliable
4	Religious Identity	0.949	Very Reliable
5	Communication Behavior	0.976	Very Reliable

Source: 2022 data processing

The multicollinearity test is to test the existence of a correlation between independent variables. To detect whether or not there is multicollinearity in the regression model, you can look at the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value. If the VIF value is greater than 10, the data has multicollinearity (Nugroho, 2019). Based on SPSS 24 calculations, it is stated that the VIF value of the social prejudice variable is 2.248, the local wisdom variable is 3.316, the social piety variable is 4.165, the religious identity variable is 2.771, and the communication behaviour variable is 3.341. This result means that the variables in this study are free from the classic assumption of multicollinearity because they have a variance inflation factor value of less than 10.

The next classic assumption test is autocorrelation. Based on the results of the autocorrelation test, Durbin Watson's score on the Summary Model is 1.936. If the Durbin-Watson value is greater than 1.65 and smaller than 2.35 ( $1.65 < 1.936 < 2.35$ ), it can be concluded that this research data does not have autocorrelation.

The heteroscedasticity test is used to determine whether model deviations occur or not due to variance interference that differs from one observation to another. The results of the heteroscedasticity test can be seen in the random distribution of points both above and below number 0 on the Y axis on the Scatterplot graph. It can be said that in this research data, there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model.

## 2. Results

Tolerance is the ability and willingness of a person or individual and the general public to respect and be mindful of the rights of small groups (minorities) where they live, within the rules formulated by the minority. Tolerance between religious communities is crucial for Indonesia, especially in Sidoarjo Regency, to create a harmonious life. The characteristics of the respondents in this study, based on age, gender, education, and occupation, were quite varied. As shown in Table 2, the largest age group is 24-37 years (50.6%), the majority of respondents are male (51.2%), the highest level of education is at the high school/vocational school level with 53.3%, and the largest number of jobs were private

employees, accounting for 45.3%. A description of the characteristics of respondents, as detailed in Table 2, is important to explain how respondents actually act as agents in religious life, in implementing religious tolerance, participating in community life, and displaying communication behaviour and religious identity.

Table 2 Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Information	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Respondent's Age</b>	24-37 Years	114	50.6%
	37-50 Years	59	26.2%
	50-63 Years	40	17.8%
	63-76 Years	12	5.4%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	110	48.8%
	Male	115	51.2%
<b>Level of Education</b>	Junior High School	2	1%
	Senior High School/Vocational School	120	53.3%
	Bachelor's Degree	93	41.3%
	Postgraduate	31	4.4%
<b>Occupation</b>	Housewife	57	25.3%
	Private Sector Employee	102	45.3%
	Civil Servant	27	12%
	Military/Police	4	1.8%
	Self-employed	35	15.6%

### Religious tolerance

Tolerance is the ability and willingness of a person or individual and the general public to respect and be careful of the rights of small groups (minorities) where they live within the rules formulated by the minority. Tolerance between religious communities is very necessary for Indonesia, especially in Sidoarjo Regency, this is done to create a harmonious life and reduce the emergence of social conflict in society (Sutton, 2006). Table 3 shows that the average percentage of the tolerance variable is in the very high category, namely 87%. This is what creates harmony and peace in society.

In Sidoarjo Regency, in particular, the local community still maintains the rich values of traditional traditions from their ancestors, which are implemented as a form of peace and gratitude. This tradition is still carried out today and is often found in various sub-districts in Sidoarjo Regency. Local wisdom that is still well preserved, namely the *nyadran* event, which is held every year at the beginning of the month of Ramadan and the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, holding *tirakatan* every August 17, or *Yasinan* and *tahlilan* activities on Friday nights. This is based on the indicators of local wisdom. Table 3 illustrates that the indicators for local wisdom as a whole have a very high average percentage, namely 87%. It is hoped that the high level of local wisdom of the Sidoarjo community can increase effective communication behaviour and tolerant attitudes.

Social piety in society can be characterised by how much a person has social sensitivity and does good for the people around them as taught by their respective beliefs. The social piety of the people in Sidoarjo Regency is demonstrated by helping each other to neighbours, holding cooperation activities to clean the local living environment, holding gathering activities, visiting someone who is sick, and respecting each other even though they have different religions. In this way, a safe, comfortable, and peaceful social life can be established. Table 3 shows illustrate that social piety has a very high average percentage, namely 88%.

Table 3 Variable and indicators of Research

No	Variable	Indicator	%
1	Social Prejudice (PS)	Antilocution (Stereotype)	78%
		Avoidance (Social Distance)	83%
		Discrimination (Discrimination)	76%
		Violence (Violence)	79%
2	Local Wisdom (LW)	Trust	91%
		Shodaqoh	81%
		Customs	88%
3	Social Piety (KS)	Politeness	89%
		Mutual help	86%
		Value	89%
		Empathise	88%
		Sympathetic	88%
		Focus on People's Problems	77%
4	Religious Identity (IK)	Beliefs (Ideology)	62%
		Practice (Practice)	78%
		Appreciation (Feeling)	75%
		Knowledge (Knowledge)	78%
		Experience (Effect)	80%
5	Communication Behavior (PK)	Openness (Openness)	79%
		Empathy (Empathy)	85%
		Support (Supportiveness)	83%
		Positive Feeling (Positiveness)	86%
		Equality or Equality	83%
6	Religious Tolerance (T)	Awareness	85%
		Respect or Appreciate Differences	87%
		Accept	88%
		Equality	87%
		Cooperation	87%
		Government Attitude	86%
		Expectations of the Government	86%

Source: 2022 data processing

The religious identity of the people of Sidoarjo is an average of 75%. This identity can be seen in knowledge, belief, appreciation, practice of worship and experience in religious life. The higher a person's fanaticism about their religious identity, the better their experience of religious life. Whether a person's religious life experience is good or not can be seen from their communication behaviour. Effective communication behavior in social interactions in society can be observed from an attitude of openness in dialogue or discussion, empathy, supportiveness, positive feelings, and equality, which can increase tolerance between religious communities in Sidoarjo Regency. The communication behaviour of the Sidoarjo people in social life, including categories, is very effective.

#### *Hypothesis testing*

Table 4 of this study shows the results of hypothesis testing for exogenous (independent) variables against endogenous (dependent) variables, namely religious tolerance. The exogenous variables of this research are social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, religious identity, and communication behaviour. The first hypothesis states that social prejudice has a direct positive effect on communication behaviour. The results of the hypothesis test show that prejudice towards communication behaviour has a critical ratio of 4.028 and a calculated P of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. Because the calculated P is smaller than the alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that social prejudice has a direct positive effect on acceptable communication behaviour. This means that the better a person's social prejudice towards other people, the better the communication behaviour displayed. The more negative a person's social prejudice is towards other people, the worse their communication behaviour.

Table 4 Factors that influence religious tolerance

Hypothesis	Statement	Hypothesis Testing Criteria
H1	There is a significant positive influence between social prejudice on communication behavior	Accept H1, significance P-value $0.000 < 0.05$ ; CR 4,028
H2	There is a significant positive influence between local wisdom on communication behavior	Reject H2, significance P-value $0.335 > 0.05$ ; CR 0.965
H3	There is a significant positive influence between social piety on communication behavior	Reject H3, significance P-value $0.284 > 0.05$ , CR -1.072
H4	There is a significant positive influence between religious identity on communication behavior	Reject H4, significance P-value $0.148 > 0.05$ , CR 1.447
H5	There is a significant positive influence between communication behavior and tolerance	Accept H5, significance P-value $0.000 < 0.05$ ; CR 3,876
H6	There is a significant positive influence between social prejudice and tolerance	Reject H6, significance P-value $0.171 > 0.05$ ; CR 0.609
H7	There is a significant positive influence between local wisdom and tolerance	Reject H7, significance P-value $0.609 > 0.05$ ; CR 0.512
H8	There is a significant positive influence between social piety and tolerance	Reject H8, significance P-value $0.781 > 0.05$ ; CR 0.278
H9	There is a significant positive influence between religious identity and tolerance	Reject H9, significance P-value $0.882 > 0.05$ ; CR -0.149

Source: 2022 data processing

The second hypothesis states that Local Wisdom has a direct positive effect on communication behaviour. Hypothesis test results show that Local Wisdom influences communication behaviour with a critical ratio of 0.965 and a calculated P of 0.335, which is greater than 0.05. Because the calculated P is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that Local Wisdom has a direct positive effect on communication behaviour and can be rejected. This means that local wisdom does not affect open communication behaviour, empathy, providing support, being positive, maintaining balance, or equality.

The third hypothesis states that social piety has a direct positive effect on communication behaviour. The results of the hypothesis test show that social piety towards communication behaviour has a critical ratio of -1.072 and a calculated P of 0.284, which is greater than 0.05. Because the calculated P is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that social piety has a direct positive effect on communication behaviour and can be rejected. This means that social piety does not affect communication behaviour.

The fourth hypothesis states that religious identity has a direct positive effect on communication behaviour. The results of the hypothesis test show that religious identity on communication behaviour has a critical ratio of 1.447 with a calculated P of 0.148, which is greater than 0.05. Because the calculated P is greater than the Alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that religious identity has a direct positive effect on communication behaviour and can be rejected. This means that religious identity does not have a positive effect on open communication behaviour, empathy, providing support, being positive, maintaining balance, or equality.

The fifth hypothesis states that communication behaviour has a direct and significant positive effect on tolerance. The results of the hypothesis test show that communication behaviour has a critical ratio of 3.876 and a calculated P of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. Because the calculated P is smaller than the alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that communication behaviour has a positive and

direct effect on religious tolerance in the Sidoarjo Regency is acceptable. This means that effective communication actions can increase religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency.

The sixth hypothesis states that social prejudice has a significant positive effect on tolerance. The results of the hypothesis test show that social prejudice towards tolerance has a critical ratio of 0.609 and a calculated P of 0.171, which is greater than the Alpha significance of 0.05. Because the calculated P is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that social prejudice has a direct positive effect on religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency and can be rejected. This means that social prejudice does not affect tolerance.

The seventh hypothesis states that local wisdom has a significant positive effect on tolerance. The results of the hypothesis test show that local wisdom has a critical ratio of 0.512 and a calculated P of 0.609, which is greater than 0.05. Because the calculated P is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that local wisdom has a direct positive effect on tolerance and can be rejected. This means that local wisdom does not affect tolerance.

The eighth hypothesis states that social piety has a significant positive effect on tolerance. The results of the hypothesis test show that social piety has a critical ratio of 0.781 and a calculated P of 0.781, which is greater than 0.05. The statement that social piety has a direct positive effect on tolerance can be rejected. This means that social piety does not affect tolerance.

The ninth hypothesis states that religious identity has a significant positive effect on tolerance. The results of the hypothesis test show that Religious Identity has a critical ratio of -0.149 and a calculated P of 0.882, which is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05. Because the calculated P is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05, it can be stated that religious identity has a direct positive effect on tolerance and can be rejected. This means that religious identity does not affect tolerance.

Table 5 Estimation Results of Direct Effect, Indirect Effect, Total Effect between Independent Variables and Dependent Variables and between Independent Variables

<b>Influence Between Variables</b>	<b>Direct Influence</b>	<b>Indirect Influence</b>	<b>Total Influence</b>	<b>Indirect Effects on Total Influence</b>
PK<--- PS	,338	,000	,338	-
PK<--- LW	,114	,000	,114	-
PK<--- K.S	-2,079	,000	-2,079	-
PK<--- IK	2,611	,000	2,611	-
T<---- PK	,656	,000	,656	-
T<---- PS	-,139	,222	,083	Increase
T<---- LW	,057	,075	,132	Increase
T<---- K.S	,562	-1,364	-,802	Decrease
T<---- IK	-,283	1,713	1,430	Increase

Source: 2022 Primary Data Processing with the 2020 Amos Program

Table 5 shows the direct and indirect influence between variables that influence religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency. Variables that have a direct and indirect influence on tolerance are social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, and religious identity. Meanwhile, the variable that directly influences tolerance is communication behaviour. Social prejudice does not have a direct influence on religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency, amounting to -0.139 with a critical ratio of -1.368 and a significance of 0.171. The total influence of social prejudice on communication behaviour is 33.8 per cent.

Local wisdom has a direct influence on communication behaviour at 11.4 per cent. Local wisdom does not have an indirect influence on communication behaviour. The total influence of local wisdom on communication behaviour is 11.4 per cent. Meanwhile, the direct influence of local wisdom on

religious tolerance in the Sidoarjo Regency is 5.7 per cent. Local wisdom has an indirect influence through communication actions on tolerance of 7.5 per cent. The total effect of local wisdom on tolerance is 13.2 per cent. This means that communication behaviour has a role in increasing the influence of local wisdom on tolerance.

Social piety has a direct influence on communication behaviour of  $-2.079$ . Social piety does not have an indirect influence on communication behaviour. The total influence of social piety on communication behaviour is  $-2.079$ . Meanwhile, the direct influence of social piety on religious tolerance in the Sidoarjo Regency is 56.2 per cent. Social piety has an indirect influence through communication actions on tolerance of  $-136.4$  per cent. The total effect of the influence of social piety on tolerance is  $-80.2$  per cent. This means that communication behaviour has a role in reducing the influence of social piety on tolerance.

Religious identity has a direct influence on communication behaviour of 2.611. Religious identity does not have an indirect influence on communication behaviour. The total influence of religious identity on communication behaviour is 2.611. Meanwhile, the direct influence of religious identity on religious tolerance in the Sidoarjo Regency is  $-28.3$  per cent. Religious identity has an indirect influence through communication actions on tolerance of 171.3 per cent. The total effect of religious identity on tolerance is 143 per cent. This means that communication behaviour has a role in increasing the influence of religious identity on religious tolerance in the Sidoarjo Regency.

This study shows that communication behaviour is a variable that can positively increase tolerance in the lives of religious communities in the Sidoarjo Regency. Communication behaviour has a direct influence on religious tolerance in the Sidoarjo Regency by 65.6 per cent, with a critical ratio of 3.876 and a significance of 0.000. The more effective the communication actions, the higher the tolerance between religious communities in Sidoarjo Regency. The relationship between tolerance and communication behaviour has the opportunity to increase religious tolerance. Acts of open communication, empathy, supportiveness, positive feelings, and equality can increase tolerance between religious communities in Sidoarjo Regency.

Table 6 Model Feasibility testing results

No.	Feasibility Measure Standards	Value Standards	Model Index	Note
1.	Chi-Square	Expected to be small ( $q > \alpha$ )	55,238	Good
2.	CMIN/DF	$< 5$	1,347	Good Fit
3.	Significance Probability	$\geq 0.05$	,068	Good
4.	GFI (Good of Fit Index)	0-1	,964	Good Fit
5.	RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.05-0.08	,039	Not good
6.	AGFI (Adjusted Good of Fit Index)	$\geq 0.9$	,919	Good
7.	TLI (Tucker Lewis Index)	$\geq 0.9$	,991	Good

Source: 2022 data processing

The research hypothesis, after testing using Structural Equation Model analysis, can be described below. Figure 1 shows the suitability of the hypothesised model to existing data in the field. Social prejudice as a construct has indicators including stereotypes, social distance, discrimination, and violence. Antilocution (stereotypes) has a contribution to social prejudice of 0.80. Avoidance (social distance) contributes to social prejudice by 0.90. Discrimination (discrimination) contributes to social prejudice by 1.00. Violence (violence) has a contribution to social prejudice of 1.08.



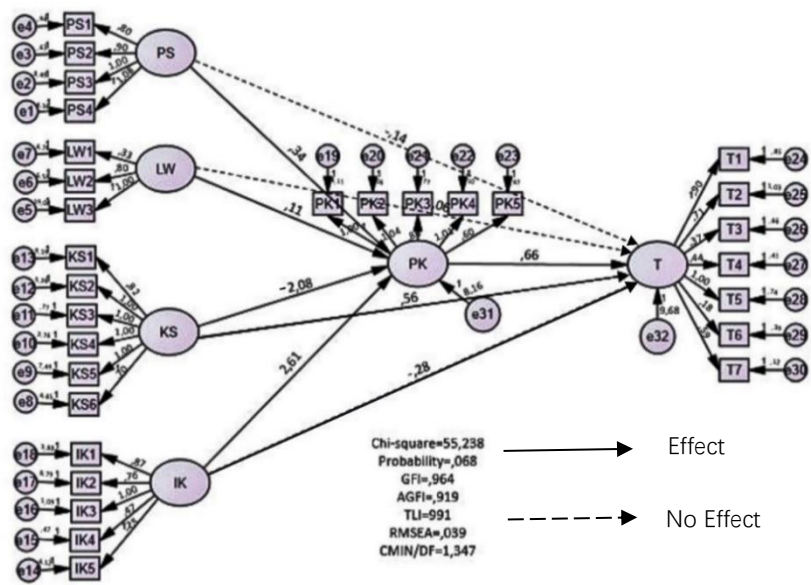


Figure 1 SEM Analysis Diagram

Source: processed by researchers, 2023

Local wisdom (LW) as a construct has indicators including belief, shodaqah, and customs. Trust has a contribution to local wisdom of 0.33. Shodaqoh has a contribution to local wisdom of 0.80. Customs have a contribution to local wisdom of 1.00.

Social piety (KS) as a construct has indicators including courtesy, helping, respect, empathy, and sympathy. Manners have a contribution to social piety of 0.82. Please help make a contribution to the social piety of 1.00. Respect has a contribution to social piety of 1.00. Empathy contributes to social piety by 1.00. Sympathizing has a contribution to social piety of 1.00. Concern about people's problems contributes to social piety by 0.70.

Religious identity (IK) has indicators including belief, practice, appreciation, knowledge, and experience. Belief (belief in God) contributes to religious identity by 0.87. The practice of worship has a contribution to religious identity of 0.76. The appreciation of religion contributes to religious identity by 1.00. Knowledge of religious knowledge contributes to religious identity by 0.47. Religious experience has a contribution to the religious identity of 1.25.

Religious tolerance (T) has indicators including awareness, which contributes to a tolerance of 0.90. Respecting or appreciating differences contributes to a tolerance of 0.71. Accepting has a contribution to a tolerance of 0.37, and Equality has a contribution to a tolerance of 0.44. Cooperation contributes to a tolerance of 1.00. The government's attitude has a contribution to tolerance of 0.18. Expectations of the government contribute to a tolerance of 0.59.

Table 5 and Figure 1 show that social prejudice has no direct effect on tolerance (0.139), depicted as a dotted black line, the higher the prejudice given, the lower the tolerance shown by society (intolerance). Social prejudice has a direct effect on communication behaviour (0.033), depicted as a straight black line, with communication behaviour as a reinforcer and bridge between social prejudice and tolerance.

Local wisdom has no direct effect on tolerance (0.057), which is depicted as a dotted black line. The influence of local wisdom on tolerance is mediated by communication behaviour using straight black lines. The local wisdom path coefficient on communication behaviour is 0.11. The local wisdom path coefficient on tolerance is 0.66. The existence of local wisdom in society has a big influence on communication behaviour and tolerance.

Social piety (KS) affects tolerance (0.562), depicted with a straight black line. The influence of social piety on communication behaviour has a coefficient of -2.079, and that of communication behaviour on

tolerance is 0.66 with a straight black line. Social piety, in its influence on tolerance, is mediated by communication behaviour.

The direct influence of religious identity on tolerance is positive, depicted as a straight black line (-0.283). The negative coefficient indicates that the greater a person's pride in their religious identity, the lower their religious tolerance. The influence of religious identity on communication behaviour is depicted with a straight black line (2.611). Communication behavior variables can indirectly increase the influence of religious identity on tolerance.

The largest direct influence of communication behaviour on tolerance is (0.66), which is depicted as a straight black line, that the existence of effective communication behaviour in society gives rise to tolerance between religious communities.

The research structural model in Figure 1 and Table 6 shows that the results have met the goodness of fit criteria. Overall, the test results are chi-square of 55.238, CMIN/DF of 1.347 (<5), probability of 0.068 (>0.05), GFI of 0.964 (0-1), RMSEA of 0.039 (0.05-0, 08), AGFI of 0.919 (>0.9) and TLI of 0.991 (>0.9).

### 3. Communication behaviour in increasing tolerance

The findings from this research reveal that communication behaviour plays a crucial role in enhancing religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency. Although social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, and religious identity were hypothesised to have direct effects on tolerance, the study shows that these influences are primarily mediated through communication behaviour. Specifically, effective communication behaviour positively influences religious tolerance, whereas the direct effects of the other variables on tolerance were generally not significant.

These results align with previous research by Guthridge et al. (2023) and Velthuis et al. (2021), which emphasises the indirect role of social prejudice intolerance through communication. Similarly, Verkuyten et al. (2020) underline the importance of communication behaviour in mitigating the negative impacts of social prejudice. However, this study diverges from others, such as those by Casram and Dadah (2019), who argue that local wisdom is closely tied to religious beliefs. Instead, this research suggests that local wisdom operates more as a cultural element distinct from religious teachings. The findings also resonate with the work of Muhibbin et al. (2022) and Hayati & Dewi (2023), which highlights the significance of communication in enhancing social piety and its influence on tolerance.

These findings suggest that in a diverse and multicultural society like the Sidoarjo Regency, communication behaviour is the key mechanism that translates social values into practical outcomes such as tolerance. The ability to communicate effectively—through openness, empathy, and support—plays a critical role in maintaining social harmony. This indicates that without strong communication, the potential positive impacts of social prejudice, local wisdom, or religious identity on tolerance may remain unrealised.

The implications of this research are significant for policymakers, educators, and community leaders. The study highlights the need to prioritise communication strategies in promoting religious tolerance. Programmes that enhance open dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect across different religious and cultural groups are likely to be more effective than those focusing solely on promoting specific cultural or religious values. This insight suggests that fostering good communication practices is essential for building a tolerant and cohesive society.

The results can be explained by the complex nature of social interactions in a diverse community. While individuals may hold tolerant views or adhere to inclusive cultural practices, these only automatically result in tolerant behaviour with effective communication. The findings suggest that misunderstandings and conflicts are more likely when communication is lacking or ineffective, even in the presence of positive values like social piety or local wisdom.

Looking ahead, it is crucial to develop and implement interventions that focus on enhancing communication at both individual and community levels. Training in effective communication, conflict resolution, and intercultural dialogue should be integrated into community activities, religious teachings, and educational curricula. Further research should also explore specific communication

strategies that are most effective in different cultural contexts to increase the applicability of these findings. By improving communication behaviour, the community in Sidoarjo Regency can better navigate its diversity and foster a more tolerant society.

#### 4. Conclusion

The most significant finding of this research is the pivotal role of communication behaviour in mediating the influence of social prejudice, local wisdom, social piety, and religious identity on religious tolerance in Sidoarjo Regency. While these variables were initially hypothesised to have direct effects on tolerance, the study reveals that the effectiveness of communication behaviour largely mediates their impact. This underscores the importance of fostering open, empathetic, and supportive communication in promoting religious tolerance within a diverse community.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the critical function of communication behaviour as a mediator in the relationship between social variables and religious tolerance. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the direct effects of social prejudice, local wisdom, and religious identity, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how these factors interact through communication. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders, emphasising the need to prioritise communication strategies to enhance social cohesion and tolerance.

One limitation of this study is its focus on a specific geographical region, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other contexts with different cultural and religious dynamics. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases. Future research should explore the role of communication behaviour in different cultural settings to validate and expand upon these findings. It would also be beneficial to investigate the effectiveness of specific communication interventions in fostering tolerance across diverse communities, thereby providing more targeted strategies for promoting social harmony.

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