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## A PEACE COMMUNICATION AS LEARNING PROCESS: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION MODEL IN LOMBOK

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**ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini menelaah resolusi konflik sosial-keagamaan di Lombok melalui perspektif komunikasi perdamaian sebagai proses pembelajaran kritis yang terikat pada relasi kuasa dan praktik budaya. Meskipun negara merespons konflik secara formal melalui mediasi dan dialog antaragama dalam wacana harmoni, mekanisme perlindungan preventif dan pemulihian sensitif trauma bagi kelompok minoritas masih belum memadai. Konsekuensinya, praktik resolusi konflik lebih menekankan keteraturan sosial dan norma mayoritarian dibandingkan pemenuhan substantif atas kebebasan beragama atau berkeyakinan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan tokoh agama, aktor komunitas, serta kelompok minoritas terdampak konflik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dialog yang dipimpin negara cenderung mereproduksi konsep perdamaian yang terdepolitisasi, di mana harmoni dimaknai sebagai ketiadaan ketegangan yang tampak, bukan sebagai proses keadilan, kesetaraan, dan pengakuan. Sebaliknya, komunitas Mareje mengembangkan model komunikasi perdamaian berbasis kearifan lokal, khususnya *gawe rapah*, yang berfungsi sebagai ruang belajar kontra-hegemonik. Melalui ritual kolektif, memori bersama, dan interaksi keseharian, model ini memungkinkan rekonstruksi kepercayaan, negosiasi perbedaan, serta transmisi nilai koeksistensi secara lintas generasi. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa resolusi konflik sosial-keagamaan di Lombok perlu dipahami sebagai bentuk pendidikan perdamaian kritis, yang tidak hanya memulihkan relasi sosial tetapi juga menantang kerangka harmoni yang dominan.

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<b>Keywords:</b>	<b>ABSTRACTS</b>
Peace Communication; Critical Peace Studies; Learning Process; Socio-Religious Conflict	<p><i>This article explores socio-religious conflict resolution in Lombok through the lens of peace communication as a learning process embedded in power relations and cultural practices. While the state formally addressed conflict through mediation and interfaith dialogue under the discourse of harmony, mechanisms for preventive protection and trauma-sensitive recovery for minority groups remained insufficient. Consequently, conflict resolution practices tended to privilege social order and majoritarian norms over the substantive realization of freedom of religion or belief. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research draws on in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving religious leaders, community actors, and conflict-affected minorities. The findings reveal that state-led dialogue largely reproduces a depoliticized notion of peace, where harmony is defined as the absence of visible tension rather than as a process of justice, recognition, and equality. In contrast, the Mareje community developed a grassroots model of peace communication grounded in local wisdom, particularly gawe rapah, which operates as a counter-hegemonic learning space. Through collective rituals, shared memory, and everyday interaction, this model enables the reconstruction of trust, the negotiation of difference, and the intergenerational transmission of coexistence values. This study argues that socio-religious conflict resolution in Lombok should be understood as a form of critical peace education, where learning functions not only to restore social relations but also to challenge dominant frameworks of harmony. By situating peace communication within local cultural praxis, this research contributes to critical peace studies and debates on inclusive and transformative conflict resolution.</i></p>

## A. INTRODUCTION

Violations of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) continue to occur in Indonesia and display a recurring pattern, particularly affecting religious minority groups. Despite constitutional guarantees that formally protect religious freedom, local-level practices often reveal a persistent gap between legal norms, state policies, and everyday social realities (Bielefeldt, 2016; Forster, 2025; Petri & Klocek, 2025; Toft & Christian Green, 2018). Lombok represents a critical site where these tensions are highly visible, as socio-religious conflicts—both intra-religious and interreligious—have repeatedly emerged without comprehensive and sustainable resolution.

One of the most prominent examples of unresolved intra-religious conflict in Lombok is the case of the Ahmadiyya community. Members of this community have experienced repeated acts of violence, forced displacement, and the destruction and burning of mosques. Such violence has not only caused material damage but has also produced long-term social trauma (Barsihannor et al., 2023; Gaffar, 2023). Similar patterns can be observed in the experiences of Salafi groups who are perceived as deviating from dominant religious practices, particularly due to their rejection of rituals such as *tahlilan*, the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, and *Nuzul al-Qur'an*. In these cases, differences in religious expression are frequently framed as threats to social harmony, legitimizing exclusionary practices and acts of symbolic and physical violence. In addition to intra-religious tensions, Lombok has also witnessed repeated interreligious conflicts that directly implicate human rights concerns. The rejection and destruction of a Hindu temple construction in Sangkareang, Keru Narmada, West Lombok, exemplify how poorly managed religious pluralism can result in FoRB

violations. Recurring Muslim–Hindu conflicts in Lombok further demonstrate the fragility of interreligious relations when majority dominance shapes public space and religious expression (Muliadi et al., 2024). Reports by human rights organizations consistently note that religiously motivated violence continues to recur, particularly against minority groups, due to the absence of effective preventive protection and post-conflict recovery mechanisms.

Within this broader context, the conflict between Muslim and Buddhist communities in Mareje Village, West Lombok, in May 2022 constitutes a particularly significant case. The incident was initially triggered by a misunderstanding during the *takbiran* night preceding Eid al-Fitr 1443 H, involving the sound of firecrackers. What began as a minor dispute escalated into collective violence, resulting in the destruction and burning of houses, the forced displacement of Buddhist residents, and the erosion of minority groups' sense of security. This violence is especially striking given that Buddhism is a state-recognized religion and one of the oldest religious traditions in Indonesia (Arvianti et al., 2023; Bayuanggoro, 2024; Muchammadun, 2024).

The Mareje case becomes even more significant when examined through its socio-historical context. Mareje Village is inhabited primarily by Muslim and Buddhist communities who, for decades, had lived together relatively peacefully. Historically, Mareje was not considered a conflict-prone area. Social relations were built upon kinship ties, genealogical connections, and everyday practices emphasizing mutual respect. Religious difference was not perceived as a source of division but rather as a normal aspect of shared community life. Minor tensions, when they occurred, were typically resolved quickly through local mechanisms rooted in communal norms.

The emergence of large-scale conflict in such a previously harmonious community indicates that socio-religious conflict cannot be explained solely by theological differences. Instead, it often arises from accumulated misunderstandings, emotional escalation, and structural failures in conflict management. In the Mareje case, the state failed to anticipate escalation and to provide adequate protection for minority groups. As a result, the freedom of religion or belief of Buddhist residents was not merely threatened but concretely violated through acts of violence and forced displacement.

Previous studies on Lombok have extensively explored the relationship between religion, local tradition, and social change, particularly within Sasak society. Research by Nasri, Muliadi, and Rasyidi (2024) demonstrates how Islamic education has played a crucial role in the transformation of the Wetu Telu community, functioning as a space for negotiating tradition and religious normativity. Their study highlights education as a medium of social learning and cultural adaptation. However, it does not address how socio-religious conflicts are managed or how communities learn from experiences of violence and displacement.

Similarly, Nasihin et al. (2024) examine the socio-religious practice of *dulang penamat* and its role in integrating Islamic religious education, multicultural values, and local democracy within Sasak society. Their findings underscore the potential of local wisdom as a medium for social learning and tolerance. Nevertheless, the study remains focused on value integration in everyday cultural practices and does not engage with contexts of open conflict or post-violence recovery processes. Other studies emphasize religious reception and identity formation rather than conflict resolution. Kusumawardana and Tyas (2025), for example, analyze how Wetu Telu adherents in

Bayan Village interpret and celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday through the concept of *mahabbah*, highlighting interpretive flexibility in local religious practices. While this study enriches understanding of religious pluralism in Lombok, it does not link religious reception to conflict dynamics or peacebuilding practices. Likewise, Rasyad and Tohri (2022) conceptualize Wetu Telu as a variant of Sasak Islam shaped by ongoing dialectics between tradition, religious authority, and modernization. Although their work provides a strong sociological framework, it does not examine how conflict is experienced, managed, or transformed into collective learning.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that scholarship on Lombok has made significant contributions to understanding the intersections of religion, culture, and education. However, a clear research gap remains in conceptualizing socio-religious conflict—particularly Muslim-Buddhist conflict in Mareje—as a learning process mediated through peace communication. Existing research has not sufficiently addressed how communities reconstruct social relations after violence, nor how local communication practices function as pedagogical spaces for transmitting values of justice, recognition, and coexistence. Moreover, studies on interreligious dialogue in Indonesia tend to focus on formal, state-facilitated forums involving religious elites. Dialogue is often framed as a mechanism for restoring order and stability, with success measured by the absence of visible conflict. This approach overlooks the pedagogical dimension of dialogue—how peace communication shapes moral imagination, reconstructs collective memory, and facilitates intergenerational learning. As a result, conflict resolution efforts frequently remain reactive and short-term, failing to address deeper structural and cultural causes of violence. Against this backdrop, this study positions socio-religious conflict resolution in Mareje within the framework of peace communication as a community-based learning process. The analysis focuses on two interrelated questions: first, how the state has been involved in protecting religious groups in Mareje and the limitations of its approach; and second, how local communities have developed their own strategies for conflict resolution through peace communication grounded in local wisdom. This focus allows the study to move beyond state-centric evaluations and foreground community agency in peacebuilding.

The novelty of this research lies in its reconceptualization of socio-religious conflict resolution as a form of community-based peace education. Rather than treating peace as a static outcome, this study conceptualizes it as an ongoing learning process embedded in everyday communication and cultural practice. Local mechanisms such as *gawe rapah* are analyzed not merely as cultural rituals, but as informal pedagogical spaces where trust is rebuilt, coexistence values are transmitted, and collective memory is renegotiated across generations. Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative case study approach to capture the complexity of conflict and peacebuilding in Mareje. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders, community figures, representatives of religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama, and conflict-affected residents. Participant observation and document analysis were conducted to triangulate findings, while a literature review situates the empirical data within broader debates on FoRB, peace education, and critical peace studies.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches peace education and critical peace studies by providing an empirically grounded analysis of peace communication as a learning process in a non-Western, plural religious context. Practically, it offers insights for policymakers and civil society

actors seeking more inclusive and sustainable approaches to socio-religious conflict resolution by integrating local wisdom into FoRB protection strategies. In conclusion, this study argues that socio-religious conflict resolution in Lombok—particularly in Mareje—cannot be fully understood without recognizing the role of community-based learning processes. Framing peace communication as learning opens pathways toward more just, reflective, and transformative models of conflict resolution, with relevance not only for Indonesia but also for other plural societies facing similar challenges.

## B. METHOD

### Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore socio-religious conflict resolution in Mareje Village, West Lombok. A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because the research aimed to understand social meanings, communication processes, and learning dynamics embedded in community practices of peacebuilding. Rather than measuring variables or testing statistical relationships, this study sought to capture participants' experiences, interpretations, and collective responses to conflict within their socio-cultural context (Creswell & Creswell, 2014; Seixas et al., 2017).

The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of a single, bounded case—namely, the Muslim–Buddhist conflict in Mareje and its subsequent resolution processes. This design allowed the researcher to analyze the interaction between state intervention, local wisdom, and community-based peace communication as a learning process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Zarkasyi, 2020).

### Research Site and Context

The research was conducted in Mareje Village, Lembar District, West Lombok Regency, Indonesia. Mareje was selected as the research site because it represents a unique case of socio-religious conflict occurring in a community that had previously been characterized by long-standing interreligious harmony. The village is inhabited primarily by Muslim and Buddhist communities with strong kinship ties and shared social histories. The conflict that occurred in May 2022 disrupted this harmony and provided a critical context for examining how peace communication and learning processes emerged in response to violence.

### Data Sources

Data in this study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained directly from individuals and groups involved in or affected by the conflict (Soukup et al., 2017; Wu, 2024). These included Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders, community elders, local government representatives, members of religious organizations—particularly Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)—who were involved in conflict mediation, as well as residents who experienced displacement or social disruption due to the conflict (Banerjee (Chatterjee), 2019).

Secondary data consisted of official documents, reports from human rights organizations, government regulations related to freedom of religion or belief, media reports, and previous academic studies relevant to socio-religious conflict, peace education, and local wisdom in Lombok. These sources were used to contextualize

the field findings and to support analytical interpretation (Salmia, 2023; Steležuk & Wolanin, 2023).

## **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on key research questions (Morse & Field, 1996; Peter et al., 2024). Interview guides included themes such as experiences of conflict, perceptions of state involvement, community responses to violence, local mechanisms of conflict resolution, and the role of communication in rebuilding trust. Interviews were conducted with Buddhist and Muslim religious leaders, community figures, members of NU, and residents of Mareje. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian or the local Sasak language, depending on participants' preferences.

Participant observation was carried out to capture everyday interactions, communal meetings, religious activities, and peacebuilding practices within the community. Particular attention was given to local cultural practices such as *gawe rapah*, which functioned as informal spaces for dialogue and reconciliation (De Sordi, 2024; Khan et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025). Field notes were recorded systematically to document social interactions, symbolic expressions, and communication patterns relevant to peace learning processes. Documentation techniques involved collecting written and visual materials related to the conflict and its resolution, including meeting minutes, community agreements, photographs, and public statements by religious and local authorities (Kara, 2023; Siti Romdona et al., 2025). These documents provided additional insight into formal and informal narratives surrounding the conflict.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative thematic analysis approach. The process began with data organization, including transcription of interviews and compilation of observation notes and documents. The researcher then conducted open coding to identify recurring themes, concepts, and patterns related to conflict dynamics, peace communication, learning processes, and power relations (Calvey, 2004; Mihas, 2023a). Following initial coding, axial coding was applied to examine relationships between themes, such as the interaction between state-led dialogue and community-based practices, or between local wisdom and interreligious trust-building. The final stage involved selective coding, through which core categories were refined to construct an integrated analytical narrative (Hashimov, 2015; Mihas, 2023b).

Throughout the analysis, an interpretive approach was employed to understand how participants made sense of conflict and peace within their cultural and historical context. Rather than relying on statistical analysis or correlation tests, the study emphasized meaning-making, narrative coherence, and contextual depth. Consequently, no scientific formulas or quantitative correlation tests were applied, as the research questions were exploratory and interpretive in nature (Greene, 1989; Rogers, 2018).

## Trustworthiness and Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Data triangulation was achieved by combining interviews, observations, and document analysis. Source triangulation was also applied by involving participants from different religious backgrounds and social roles (Breitmayer et al., 1993; Turner et al., 2017). Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to confirm accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process to minimize researcher bias. The researcher continuously reflected on positionality and its potential influence on data interpretation, particularly given the sensitive nature of socio-religious conflict (Brink, 1993; Porter, 2007; Wiyanda Vera Nurfajriani, 2024).

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses (Dyson et al., 2015; Gold Nmesoma Okorie et al., 2024). Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, especially for those who experienced violence or displacement. The research was conducted with sensitivity to trauma and cultural norms to avoid re-victimization or social tension (Clarke et al., 2001; Theodore & Dupont, 2022).

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Muslim–Buddhist Relations in Lombok: Historical and Social Context

Historically, religious relations in Lombok have been shaped by long processes of cultural encounter and accommodation. Islam was introduced to Lombok in the sixteenth century by Sunan Prapen, son of Sunan Giri, through trade networks originating from Java. Prior to the Islamization process, the indigenous Sasak people practiced animistic and dynamistic beliefs, later influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions during the Majapahit era (Marsono & Rahayu, 2023; Ramesh, 2025). Subsequent waves of Islamic dissemination occurred through Makassarese traders from South Sulawesi in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reinforcing Islamic teachings previously introduced to the island.

These historical dynamics resulted in the emergence of distinct Sasak religious variants, namely Sasak Lima Waktu, Sasak Wetu Telu, and Sasak Bodha. Each reflects different patterns of religious reception, negotiation, and cultural adaptation (Nasri et al., 2024). At the same time, Buddhism also took root in Lombok in the early seventeenth century, associated with Majapahit legacies and the arrival of Balinese religious figures. Buddhist communities are currently concentrated in several areas, particularly in North Lombok and parts of West Lombok, where they continue to preserve religious rituals such as Galungan and Kuningan (Matey, 2023; Temon Astawa et al., 2022; Umiyati et al., 2023).

Within this broader context, Mareje Village in West Lombok represents a unique case of long-standing Muslim–Buddhist coexistence. The village population

is divided mainly between Islam and Buddhism, yet social relations have historically been characterized by kinship ties, interreligious marriages, shared customs, and collective participation in local traditions. Religious differences rarely translated into open conflict, as disputes were usually resolved through family-based and customary mechanisms. This condition illustrates what peace studies describe as “everyday peace,” where harmony is maintained through informal social practices rather than formal institutional arrangements.

### **Escalation of Conflict and the Persecution of the Buddhist Community**

Despite this history of peaceful coexistence, the Mareje case demonstrates how fragile interreligious harmony can be when provoked by external triggers. The conflict initially erupted during a takbiran parade preceding Eid al-Fitr, when firecrackers thrown by a group of youths caused damage to property and livestock belonging to Buddhist residents (Hobart, 1990). What began as a minor social disturbance escalated rapidly due to emotional reactions, the failure of immediate de-escalation, and the circulation of provocative narratives through social media.

Although early mediation by village officials and security forces temporarily defused the situation, subsequent acts of violence—including physical assaults and the spread of jihad rhetoric—intensified tensions. The culmination occurred on May 3, 2022, when a mob attacked and burned the houses of Buddhist residents in Ganjar Hamlet. This incident resulted in the destruction of homes, vehicles, and religious institutional property, as well as the forced displacement of more than one hundred residents.

Field findings indicate that the violence was not rooted in theological hostility between Islam and Buddhism (Makin, 2016). Rather, it was closely linked to local political rivalry surrounding village leadership elections and unresolved family disputes. Religion functioned as a mobilizing symbol, amplified by social media, rather than as the substantive cause of conflict. This finding reinforces the argument in critical peace studies that religious identity is often instrumentalized within broader socio-political struggles.

### **State Response and the Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief**

The Mareje conflict highlights significant challenges in the state’s role in safeguarding freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Normatively, Indonesia has committed to human rights protection through constitutional guarantees, national legislation, and international instruments such as the ICCPR. However, empirical findings reveal a gap between legal commitments and practical implementation.

Law enforcement responses in Mareje tended to prioritize short-term social stability over accountability. The decision to withdraw legal reports and emphasize restorative justice was justified as a strategy to prevent further escalation. While this approach may have reduced immediate tensions, it also risked perpetuating impunity and weakening public trust in legal institutions. The absence of firm legal action against perpetrators suggests structural limitations in enforcing FoRB protections, particularly when authorities face pressure from dominant social groups (Bielefeldt, 2016).

Furthermore, post-conflict recovery efforts focused primarily on physical reconstruction and security stabilization, while less attention was given to

psychological healing, religious needs during displacement, and the long-term trauma experienced by vulnerable groups such as women and children. These gaps underscore the need for a more comprehensive human rights-based approach to conflict management that integrates prevention, protection, accountability, and recovery (Forster, 2025).

### **Interreligious Dialogue and Local Wisdom as Peacebuilding Mechanisms**

One of the most significant findings of this study is the central role of local wisdom and interreligious dialogue in restoring social harmony. In Mareje, traditional practices such as *gawe rapah* and the recitation of *ikar sopoq tundun*—affirming shared ancestry and kinship—served as culturally resonant mechanisms for reconciliation. These practices reframed the conflict not as a religious confrontation but as an internal family dispute, thereby reducing identity polarization (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013).

Interreligious dialogue in Mareje operates at multiple levels: theological dialogue among religious leaders, life dialogue through everyday interactions, action dialogue addressing shared social concerns, and experiential dialogue rooted in spiritual practices. Such multidimensional dialogue aligns with peacebuilding theories that emphasize relational repair and social cohesion rather than purely legalistic solutions (Joseph, 2025).

Additionally, traditions like *ngejot*, involving the exchange of food during religious festivals, function as symbolic acts of mutual recognition and solidarity. These everyday practices contribute to what can be described as a grassroots peace infrastructure, capable of countering divisive narratives propagated through digital media. However, the study also reveals limitations in post-conflict dialogue initiatives, particularly the lack of sustained attention to guarantees of non-recurrence, educational recovery for children, and economic rehabilitation for victims. Without addressing these structural dimensions, peace remains vulnerable to future disruptions.

### **Implications for Peace Studies and Religious Freedom**

The Mareje case demonstrates that interreligious conflict is rarely caused by doctrinal differences alone. Instead, it emerges from the intersection of political competition, social inequality, weak law enforcement, and the instrumentalization of religious identity. Effective peacebuilding therefore requires an integrated approach that combines state responsibility, legal protection of FoRB, and the revitalization of local wisdom traditions (Arvianti et al., 2023).

From a critical peace studies perspective, Mareje illustrates both the resilience and fragility of communal harmony. While local cultural mechanisms proved effective in restoring peace, their success depends on supportive state policies and proactive human rights protection. Strengthening early detection, countering hate narratives on social media, and empowering inclusive dialogue are essential to preventing similar conflicts in the future. In sum, the Mareje experience underscores the importance of situating interreligious relations within their broader socio-political contexts and recognizing local traditions as vital resources for sustainable peace.

**Table 1.** Reframing the Mareje Conflict through Critical Peace, FoRB, and Religious Education

Dimension	Critical Peace Studies	FoRB Studies	Religious Education
<b>Conflict Character</b>	Structural and cultural violence masked as religious conflict	Systemic violation of minority religious rights	Failure of peace-oriented religious learning
<b>State Response</b>	Negative peace prioritized over justice	Protection subordinated to social stability	Limited integration of FoRB and peace ethics
<b>Local Practices</b>	Grassroots peace infrastructure ( <i>gawe rapah</i> )	Informal reconciliation without legal certainty	Informal pedagogical space for coexistence
<b>Role of Leaders</b>	Moral brokers with limited structural power	Mediators lacking enforcement authority	Key agents of peace education
<b>Media Dynamics</b>	Discursive violence via social media	Hate speech threatening FoRB	Need for digital peace literacy
<b>Peace Outcome</b>	Fragile peace without guarantees	Insecure minority protection	Unsustained intergenerational learning

Table 1 demonstrates that the Mareje conflict cannot be adequately understood through a conventional security or harmony-based lens. From a **critical peace studies perspective**, the violence against the Buddhist community reflects not merely episodic unrest but a manifestation of *structural and cultural violence*, where religious identity was instrumentalized to legitimize deeper political and familial tensions. The state's response largely emphasized restoring order and social stability—what Galtung conceptualizes as *negative peace*—while neglecting accountability, justice, and guarantees of non-recurrence that are essential for *positive peace* (Galtung, 1996). Local mechanisms such as *gawe rapah* functioned effectively as grassroots peace infrastructures, yet their informal nature left underlying power asymmetries and rights violations unresolved.

## Discussion

The research findings indicate that the Mareje conflict cannot be understood merely as an episode of interreligious violence, but rather as a multidimensional process shaped by structural inequalities, fragile rights protection, and limited peace-oriented religious learning. From a **critical peace studies** perspective, the conflict reflects how political, social, and cultural tensions were reframed through religious narratives, enabling the instrumentalization of religious identity. Galtung's (1996) distinction between *negative peace* and *positive peace* is particularly relevant, as state intervention primarily focused

on restoring public order and social stability, thereby achieving negative peace while neglecting justice, accountability, and structural transformation necessary for sustainable peace.

The research findings also support Lederach's (1997) argument that relational peace collapses when communication among social groups breaks down. Despite a long history of harmonious coexistence between Muslims and Buddhists in Mareje, violence escalated rapidly due to provocation and hate narratives disseminated through social media. This dynamic confirms Richmond's (2014) assertion that contemporary conflicts increasingly operate at the level of discourse and symbolic power, where narratives become tools for legitimizing violence. In this context, local practices such as *gawe rapah* function as community-based peace infrastructures that facilitate relational repair through shared memory and cultural affirmation. However, their informal nature limits their capacity to challenge deeper structural injustices without institutional support.

From a Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) perspective, the research findings reveal significant weaknesses in the state's obligation to protect religious minorities. The displacement of Buddhist residents, disruption of worship, and prioritization of social "conduciveness" over legal accountability demonstrate a pattern of subordinating minority rights to majority pressure. This pattern aligns with FoRB scholarship emphasizing that reconciliation without justice risks normalizing impunity and perpetuating vulnerability (Evans, 2002; Ghanea, 2013). While dialogue and mediation are important mechanisms, they cannot substitute the state's responsibility to uphold FoRB as guaranteed under international human rights law, particularly the ICCPR (United Nations, 1966).

The research findings further highlight the importance of religious education discourse in both conflict escalation and peace sustainability. Drawing on Freire's (1970) concept of education as a practice of freedom, the absence of critical-reflective religious learning made communities more susceptible to emotional mobilization and hate-based narratives. Conversely, local traditions such as *gawe rapah* and *ngejot* operate as informal learning spaces that transmit values of coexistence, empathy, and collective responsibility across generations. These practices resonate with dialogical approaches to religious education that emphasize interpretive understanding and ethical engagement across religious differences (Jackson, 2014).

However, the research findings also suggest that such informal peace learning remains fragile and highly dependent on local moral authority. Without integration into formal education systems and public policy, these practices lack long-term sustainability. Bajaj (2015) argues that sustainable peace education requires institutionalization through curricula, teacher training, and civic learning frameworks. In the Mareje context, the absence of trauma-sensitive and FoRB-based religious education risks the intergenerational transmission of fear, resentment, and prejudice, particularly among children who experienced displacement and violence.

Overall, the research findings demonstrate that the Mareje conflict sits at the intersection of structural violence, FoRB vulnerability, and educational deficits. By conceptualizing peace communication as a social learning process rooted in local wisdom yet constrained by institutional gaps, this study bridges critical peace studies, FoRB scholarship, and religious education discourse. This integrative perspective moves

beyond harmony-centered narratives toward a transformative model of socio-religious conflict resolution grounded in justice, human rights, and education.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the dynamics of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and peacebuilding in the context of Muslim–Buddhist relations in Mareje Village, West Lombok, with a particular focus on the role of the state and local communities in responding to socio-religious conflict. The findings demonstrate that although Indonesia formally guarantees FoRB through constitutional and legal frameworks, the implementation of these protections at the local level remains fragile, especially when conflicts involve religious minorities. In the Mareje case, state intervention tended to be reactive rather than preventive, revealing structural weaknesses in early warning systems, protection mechanisms, and post-conflict recovery for affected minority groups. At the community level, this research reveals a contrasting dynamic. Local social capital—rooted in kinship ties, shared histories, and everyday interreligious interaction—played a significant role in de-escalating tensions and restoring social relations after the conflict. Informal reconciliation practices, dialogue facilitated by religious leaders, and the involvement of moderate Islamic organizations contributed to rebuilding trust. However, these grassroots peace efforts were not sufficiently institutionalized or integrated into formal governance frameworks, making them vulnerable to future disruption.

From a critical peace studies perspective, the findings indicate that peace in Mareje is better understood as a fragile and negotiated process rather than a stable condition. The conflict exposed forms of structural and cultural violence, particularly through social exclusion, stigmatization of minorities, and uneven access to state protection. In terms of FoRB studies, the case underscores the gap between normative commitments to religious freedom and their lived realities, especially for minority communities during moments of heightened religious sensitivity. Meanwhile, within the discourse of religious education, the findings highlight the absence of systematic peace-oriented and FoRB-sensitive educational interventions that could address misunderstandings before they escalate into violence.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative analytical framework that connects FoRB, critical peace studies, and religious education within a single empirical case. By situating local conflict dynamics within broader theoretical debates, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how peacebuilding and religious freedom can be mutually reinforcing when supported by both state institutions and community-based educational processes. Future research should explore comparative cases across different regions in Indonesia to examine whether similar patterns of state limitation and community resilience emerge in other socio-religious contexts. Further studies could also investigate the long-term impact of integrating FoRB and peace education into formal and informal religious education institutions. Ongoing research is particularly needed to assess how preventive educational strategies can function as early interventions in plural societies prone to recurring religious tensions.

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**Data availability:** The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical considerations and the protection of participants' confidentiality.

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