



The transformation of religious communication Knowledge among Buddhist religious instructors: A case study on the implementation of Buddhist communication science

Sidarta Adi Gautama*

Buddhist Communication Science Department, Jinarakkhita Buddhist College of Lampung, 35241, Indonesia

*Correspondent email author: sidartaadigautama@stiab-jinarakkhita.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 2025-04-05

Revised 2025-04-28

Accepted 2025-05-28

Keywords

Buddhist instructors
Communication training
Digital mediatization
Ethical communication
Religious communication

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the transformation of religious communication among Buddhist instructors in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, focusing on how their pedagogical practices have adapted to socio-cultural changes and digital technology. Using a qualitative single case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving ten active instructors across various viharas. Findings show a clear shift from monologic, doctrinal transmission to dialogic, participatory, and digitally mediated communication practices. Instructors increasingly employ platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Facebook Live to engage broader audiences while upholding Buddhist ethical principles such as *samma vaca* (right speech), *mettā* (loving-kindness), and *karuṇa* (compassion). The study highlights a strong need for structured training and formal certification, particularly among instructors with non-religious academic backgrounds. Competencies in public speaking, digital media, and interpersonal communication are identified as critical to effective outreach. Motivation among instructors is closely linked to institutional recognition and support. This study is limited in scope, focusing solely on a single city and religious group, and access to private digital outreach sessions was restricted. Future research should incorporate cross-regional and cross-religious comparisons to explore how religious communication evolves across digital cultures in Southeast Asia. This research contributes to the development of religious communication as a subfield within communication studies and calls for integrating ethical, spiritual, and technological dimensions in the training of religious communicators.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



1. Introduction

In the increasingly complex social dynamics of modern society marked by the rapid acceleration of information flow, the role of communication has profoundly expanded in meaning. Communication studies are no longer confined to the mere transmission of messages between communicators and recipients; somewhat, the discipline has evolved to encompass analyses of social, cultural, and even spiritual structures within society (Craig, 1999). Within this framework, the transformation of religious communication knowledge among Buddhist religious instructors in



Bandar Lampung emerges as a highly relevant and significant area of inquiry, both from academic and practical standpoints. This transformation concerns how these instructors adapt traditional communication models into more contextual, humanistic, and digital approaches that align with the demands of contemporary society.

Indonesia's pluralistic society necessitates communication approaches that are not unidirectional or dogmatic. Interactional and transactional communication models emphasize that communication is a reciprocal process involving creating meaning between communicators and communicants (West & Turner, 2019). In religious instruction, communication serves as a medium for conveying religious values and a tool for cultivating emotional and spiritual connections between instructors and the community. It is reinforced by Berger & Luckmann (1966) theory of the social construction of reality, which posits that social reality is formed through communicative processes.

Within religious communication, transformation occurs in the message content and the methods and media employed for delivery. In the digital age, Buddhist instructors must master communication technologies to disseminate information and foster virtual communities. Social media, instant messaging applications, and video platforms have become essential channels in religious outreach. This phenomenon aligns with the theory of mediatization (Hjarvard, 2008), which asserts that the logic of mass and digital media increasingly mediates religion. As religious communicators, instructors are thus expected to possess not only theological competence but also advanced media literacy to engage their audiences effectively.

Empirical data indicate that most Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung have embraced communication technologies such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Zoom to disseminate teachings. As many as 78% of interviewed instructors reported regularly using social media to share religious content, including Dhamma quotations, online meditation sessions, and spiritual discussions (Santoso, 2023). This evidences a significant transformation of knowledge within religious communication, wherein digital competency becomes an inseparable component of the religious instructor's role.

Nevertheless, the utilization of technology in religious communication also presents inherent challenges. Instructors must ensure the authenticity of religious messages within digital spaces saturated with superficial content and misinformation. In this regard, the principle of ethical communication is grounded in Buddhist precepts such as *samma vaca* (right speech) and becomes a foundational pillar. As Liliweri (2016) emphasized, effective communication must account for cultural context, values, and prevailing norms.

A Buddhist perspective on communication provides a philosophical foundation for understanding this transformation, the Buddha's teachings position communication as an ethical and spiritual practice. The Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya Atthangika Magga*) offers a framework for ideal communication, mainly through components such as *samma vaca* (right speech), *samma sankappa* (right intention), and *samma ajiva* (right livelihood) (Skilling, 2024). In the *Subhasita Sutta* and *Sigalovada Sutta*, the Buddha underscores the importance of truthful, gentle, non-divisive, and meaningful speech (Lama, 2005). This principle is further elaborated in the *Ambalattthika Rahulovada Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikaya* 61), which advocates for mindful communication before, during, and after speech (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 1995). Communication devoid of mindfulness can result in distorted meanings and unproductive emotional outcomes. This aligns with contemplative communication theory (O'Beirne et al., 2018), which integrates Eastern spirituality with Western interpersonal communication practices.

The convergence of digital transformation and social heterogeneity increasingly shapes religious communication in contemporary contexts. In Indonesia, studies on Buddhist communication remain limited, particularly within the framework of communication science. This research focuses on Bandar Lampung, a multicultural urban environment where Buddhist communities consist of adherents from diverse ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Using intercultural communication theory [Gunaratne \(2015\)](#) as an analytical lens, this study investigates how Buddhist instructors adjust their communicative strategies to accommodate such diversity. The instructors' capacity to deliver teachings meaningfully is enhanced through empathic, participatory, dialogic, culturally responsive, and audience-sensitive approaches. Furthermore, their effectiveness is closely linked to public speaking, interpersonal communication, and digital literacy training, as highlighted in prior studies ([Iin Avitasari et al., 2023](#); [Selyna et al., 2022](#); [Wibawa et al., 2024](#)). Additional research by [Hamidah & Duncik \(2024\)](#) emphasizes the importance of digital fluency in religious dissemination, while [Medina et al., \(2023\)](#) demonstrate that audience-tailored approaches increase engagement and comprehension in multireligious settings.

What distinguishes this study from previous research is its explicit focus on how Buddhist religious communication in Indonesia is being transformed through the interplay of intercultural awareness and digital adaptation. While earlier scholarship, such as that by [Muchtar & Ritchey \(2014\)](#) has addressed Islamic digital preaching strategies, and [Saepullah et al., \(2020\)](#) explored Christian communication ethics in pluralistic contexts, little attention has been given to Buddhist instructors and their communicative responses to diversity and technology. This study fills that gap by situating Buddhist communicators within a framework that accounts for multicultural complexity and technological change. This dual focus addresses a notable void in Indonesian communication studies by revealing how communication strategies are actively reshaped to resonate with diverse audiences and mediated environments. As such, the study contributes original insights by integrating empirical observation with theoretical perspectives from intercultural communication, digital media, and religious studies.

Therefore, this research is urgent and timely given the increasing complexity of religious communication in Indonesia's multicultural society and the current lack of scholarly attention toward Buddhist communication practices. By focusing on the lived experiences of Buddhist instructors in Bandar Lampung, a city marked by diversity and digital connectivity, this study offers a novel contribution to the field. It provides empirical evidence and theoretical insights that bridge digital media, intercultural awareness, and spiritual values. The findings are expected to enrich religious communication studies and inform the design of practical training programs that enhance the communicative competencies of religious educators in the digital age.

It offers a foundation for future comparative and interdisciplinary research, expanding the boundaries of religious communication scholarship in Southeast Asia. From a broader theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in the interpretive paradigm of communication studies, which views communication as a process of shared meaning-making ([Littlejohn et al., 2012](#)). Within this framework, religious communication co-creates spiritual meaning that aligns with the audience's needs and lived realities. Thus, the effectiveness of religious communication is not merely measured by the extent to which a message is delivered but by how deeply the message is understood, internalized, and capable of awakening spiritual awareness.

Based on the abovementioned context, this study aims to explore the transformation process of knowledge of religious communication among Buddhist instructors in Bandar Lampung. The core focus lies in examining how these instructors adapt communicative methods, leverage technology,

and integrate Buddhist values into their religious engagement practices. This research aspires to offer theoretical contributions to religious communication and practical insights for enhancing the capacity of religious instructors to respond to contemporary challenges.

2. Theoretical Framework

In examining the transformation of religious communication knowledge among Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung, a multidisciplinary approach is essential to understand this complex context comprehensively. Literature from communication studies, religious studies, and human resource development forms the theoretical foundation of this study. The primary focus is on religious communication, knowledge transformation, and the roles of education and technology in enhancing the effectiveness of Buddhist religious outreach.

Digital Mediatization and Religion

The digital mediatization of religion has not only altered the modalities through which religious messages are disseminated but also redefined the structure of religious authority and community. Instructors no longer operate solely within temple walls but also as digital facilitators navigating algorithmic spaces. As [Radde-Antweiler & Zeiler \(2018\)](#) suggest, this shift challenges traditional hierarchies and introduces new participatory forms of engagement. Moreover, instructors must negotiate the ethical implications of digital presence, such as privacy, attention economy, and misinformation. [Chuang & Chen \(2003\)](#) and [Gunaratne \(2015\)](#) argue that Buddhist principles can provide an ethical compass for these challenges. Therefore, religious actors must be digitally literate, critically aware, and spiritually grounded. [Lertsuwan et al., \(2023\)](#) stress that the effectiveness of digital instruction hinges not only on technological familiarity but also on the ability to humanize digital interaction, an essential capacity for religious communicators aiming to maintain relational depth in online contexts.

Ethical Communication: in Buddhist Perspective

In Buddhism, ethical communication is foundational to spiritual development and social harmony. It is deeply tied to the Noble Eightfold Path, particularly through the practice of right speech (*samma vaca*), which prohibits lies, divisive talk, and harsh speech. [Thich \(2013\)](#) emphasizes that mindfulness in communication fosters empathy and diminishes conflict, values essential in multiethnic and multireligious societies like Indonesia. [Black \(2005\)](#) and [Chuang \(2002\)](#) further assert that Buddhist ethics are a valuable alternative to utilitarian and deontological frameworks in Western traditions. This ethical grounding manifests within instructional contexts in how teachers frame religious discourse, prioritizing clarity, compassion, and sincerity. Such communication fosters inclusivity and mutual respect in pluralistic settings, where audiences may hold varying interpretations and experiences. This reinforces [Gunaratne \(2007\)](#) call for a systems-oriented, culturally embedded understanding of communication ethics that considers interconnectedness, intention, and consequence, core tenets of Buddhist doctrine ([Jackson & Tamuke, 2021](#); [Khan et al., 2024](#)).

The Role of Instructor Education and Institutional Support

The role of education in shaping competent and ethical religious communicators cannot be overstated. Formal training enables instructors to internalize doctrinal knowledge and develop transferable skills in public speaking, pedagogical strategy, and digital engagement. [Burmansah \(2025\)](#) notes that institutional commitment to holistic training increases instructor motivation and community trust. Furthermore, [Homsombat et al., \(2021\)](#) highlights the necessity of integrating Buddhist values into contemporary teaching methodologies, ensuring spiritual authenticity in

delivery. [Meluch et al., \(2022\)](#) argue that instructors risk losing relevance in increasingly tech-mediated environments without adequate digital literacy. Beyond technical competencies, education must also nurture moral and emotional intelligence qualities that support resilience, empathy, and social sensitivity. The Academic Promotion and Registration Office (2014) recommends adaptive curricula that address evolving social dynamics and learning needs. As Buddhist instructors serve diverse and sometimes underserved populations, their ability to contextualize teachings and embody moral exemplarity is contingent on sustained institutional support and strategic professional development.

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a single case study method to explore the transformation of religious communication knowledge among Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung. A qualitative approach is selected as it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics and religious communication practices within a complex cultural and local context. The single case study design is deemed appropriate, as the research focuses on a specific phenomenon within a particular social environment ([Chisari et al., 2022](#); [Loeys & Rodenburg, 2022](#)).

Within this framework, the paradigm of communication studies serves as the analytical foundation to examine how instructors and their audiences construct, convey, and interpret religious messages. According to [Sugiyono \(2023\)](#), qualitative research is employed to understand social reality through natural interaction processes from the participants' perspectives. Meanwhile, [Chisari et al., \(2022\)](#) asserts that a single case study is especially suitable when researchers seek to answer "how" and "why" questions within real-life contexts.

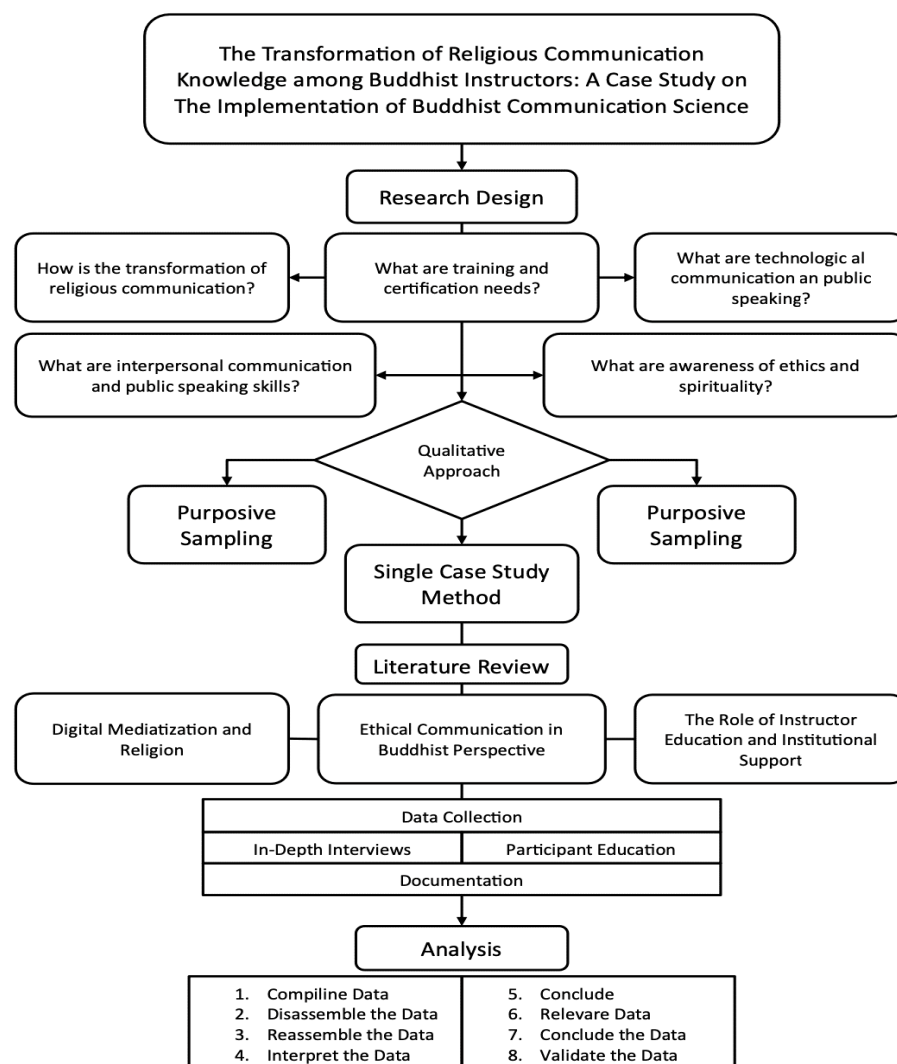
Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively and consisted of five actively engaged Buddhist instructors in the Bandar Lampung area. The data were analyzed using pattern matching by Robert Yin (2018), which is case study planning, case identification, data collection preparation, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of case study reports ([Loeys & Rodenburg, 2022](#)). This study involved ten Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung City under the coordination of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The informants were selected purposively based on their active roles in conducting religious communication and guidance across various temples (viharas) in the city. The selection aimed to capture multiple educational backgrounds and religious communication experiences. The characteristics of the informants are detailed in the table below.

As seen in [Table 1](#) presents the profiles of the ten key informants in this study, comprising Buddhist counsellors and instructors in Bandar Lampung City. The informants were selected purposively based on their active involvement in religious communication activities at various monasteries in the city. Their educational backgrounds are diverse, ranging from junior high school to higher education, encompassing both Buddhist and non-religious fields. Only three of the ten informants (30%) have a formal educational background in Buddhist Religious Education, while the rest come from general disciplines such as economics and law, or have not even completed higher education. This diversity of backgrounds reflects variations in theological capacity and communication skills between individuals, which is one of the main focuses in the analysis of the transformation of religious communication knowledge.

As seen in [Fig. 1](#), presents the research methodology development flowchart in the form of a conceptual diagram depicting the main stages in this single-case study design. The diagram illustrates the relationship between case study planning, case identification, data collection preparation, in-depth interviews and participant observation, and data analysis and reporting. The

entire process follows Robert Yin's six-step analytical procedure, which is used to ensure validity and accuracy in qualitative data interpretation. This flowchart also integrates the foundations of Buddhist communication theory as a conceptual framework in addressing the educational diversity of informants and the dynamics of religious communication in a multicultural urban society like Bandar Lampung. Thus, the diagram serves as a visual guideline that summarizes the methodological logic from problem formulation to thematic analysis.

The conceptual flowchart outlines a qualitative single case study exploring the transformation of religious communication knowledge among Buddhist instructors in Bandar Lampung. A preliminary field study identified ten Buddhist instructors registered under the Ministry of Religious Affairs as the study's key informants. These instructors, spread across various viharas in the city, exhibit diverse educational qualifications, only 30% possess a degree in Buddhist Studies, while 70% come from general academic or secondary education backgrounds. This imbalance suggests significant disparities in instructors' religious literacy, doctrinal competence, and communicative capacity.



6D Analysis Procedures According to Robert. K. Yin (2018)

Fig. 1. Research Methods Development Flow Chart
Source: Research Methodology Development

Table 1. Characteristics of the Research Informants

No.	Informant Code	Name	Education Background	Assigned Work Place in Buddhist Temples
1	P1	Ernawati	Bachelor's in Buddhist Religious Education	Vihara Suvanadipa
2	P2	Meifa	Junior High School	ViharaBoddhisatva
3	P3	Krisna Premadasa	Senior High School	Vhara Virya Paramita
4	P4	Paulus Petrus	Bachelor's in Economics	Vhara Amurwa Bhumi Graha
5	P5	Virya Parama Siau Winatha Bodhi	Bachelor's in Economics	Vhara Thay Hin Bio
6	P6	Oh Alfian	Senior High School	Vihara Vimala Kirti
7	P7	Tri Santi	Bachelor's in Buddhist Religious Education	Vihara Nagasena
8	P8	Sjamsul	Vocational High School	Vihara Suci Mulya
9	P9	Lenny Alloey	Bachelor's in Law	Vihāra Dhamma Citra
10	P10	Supriyadi	Bachelor's in Buddhist Religious Education	ASN Penyuluh Kota Bandar Lampung

Source: Field Research Data Management

The research design incorporates purposive and snowball sampling to select participants actively engaged in religious communication. The study investigates multiple dimensions: how instructors transform religious communication, their needs for training and certification, the role of technological frameworks in teaching dissemination, their public speaking and interpersonal communication skills, ethical-spiritual awareness, and levels of motivation influenced by institutional recognition. Data collection employs in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, while data analysis follows Yin's six-step analytic procedures, facilitating structured interpretation. The flowchart links these methodological components to the study's theoretical foundations, emphasizing the role of Buddhist communication science in bridging educational gaps and enhancing the quality of religious instruction across diverse social settings.

4. Result and Discussion

Result

This research used a qualitative single case study approach, focusing on five active Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis and analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding techniques. The objective was to identify and interpret the transformation of religious communication knowledge experienced by the instructors in the context of their outreach practices.

Transformation of Communication

Observations of four outreach activities, two conducted at local viharas and two held online, revealed a shift from traditional monologic sermons to more interactive, dialogical forms of engagement. The instructors employed simple language and visual aids such as PowerPoint slides and Dhamma videos. Digital platforms, including WhatsApp Groups and Zoom, were utilized to expand outreach and maintain consistent engagement with the community. Documentation of sermon materials and training modules indicated a curricular shift from dogmatic approaches to more contextual and reflective ones. Recent training modules incorporate media literacy, empathetic communication, and storytelling techniques rooted in Buddhist values. Observations and document analysis from 10 Buddhist religious instructors across viharas in Bandar Lampung

show a clear transformation in how they communicate religious teachings. Instructors are shifting from traditional, one-way preaching to more interactive, practical, and digitally supported approaches.

Most instructors now combine Dhamma talks with counseling, group discussions, and education sessions tailored to different age groups. The observed activities showed that the informants P1 and P7 organized routine teachings and training for laypeople and children. Besides, the informants P2, P6, and P3 often used personal, one on one approaches to guide individuals and families. Meanwhile, the informants P4 and P9 worked more on structured sessions involving ethical discussions and collective prayer. Across sites, instructors also use PowerPoint, printed materials, and short Dhamma videos to make teachings more transparent and relatable. Their communication style has become more casual, using everyday language to engage audiences more effectively.

Digital platforms are playing a key role. Instructors like informants P3 and P6 use WhatsApp groups to share daily Dhamma quotes. The informants P7 and P10 lead Zoom sessions and live-stream teachings, while the informants P5 and P9 share Dhamma messages on Facebook and Instagram. Documentation from training modules shows a shift in the curriculum, from text-heavy and doctrinal to practical content, including storytelling, digital literacy, and empathetic communication. These are aligned with Buddhist values such as *samma vaca* (right speech), *mettā* (loving-kindness), and *karuṇa* (compassion). This transformation reflects better communication methods and a stronger connection between instructors and communities. It shows how religious communication is evolving to be more responsive, inclusive, and spiritually grounded in personal and collective practices.

The Need for Training and Certification

The findings indicate a consistent demand among Buddhist instructors for structured training and official certification to enhance their competencies and institutional legitimacy. All informants acknowledged the need for ongoing professional development. Open coding generated key sub-themes, including routine training, competency standards, and formal recognition. Axial coding revealed a strong relationship between systematic training and increased public trust, directly affecting religious communication's impact and credibility. Informant P1 emphasized the significance of institutional acknowledgment:

"If there were regular training programs and official certification from the government or Buddhist institutions, we would feel more valued and have a clear standard in our duties."

This response suggests that structured training not only strengthens skills but also affirms the professional status of instructors in the eyes of the public and their peers. Informant P6, added:

"I often feel unsure whether what I teach is right or not. Training would help me feel more confident and ensure I don't mislead people."

His reflection highlights how training addresses technical gaps and ethical anxieties, particularly among instructors without a formal theological education. Informant P9 stressed the need for consistency and clarity:

"Right now, everyone teaches in their style. Training and certification would help unify the message and set standards so the public can trust what we say."

This insight underscores the broader institutional benefit of standardization: enhancing message consistency and ensuring doctrinal reliability across varying instructor backgrounds. Together, these testimonies affirm that training is not merely an optional enhancement but a structural necessity. It directly contributes to religious instructors' professionalization and reinforces Buddhist communication's integrity as a spiritual and public service.

The Need for The Role of Technology in Disseminating Teachings

Integrating digital platforms into religious communication has become increasingly vital for Buddhist instructors, especially in urban and multicultural contexts like Bandar Lampung. Four instructors actively engage with WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram platforms to share Dhamma teachings and maintain community connections. Open coding surfaced key sub-themes, including social media adaptation, digital spiritual content, and online interaction. Axial coding further revealed that technological engagement extends the reach of religious messaging and improves interactivity and responsiveness, especially among younger practitioners. Informant P3, who serves at Vihara Virya Paramita, explained:

“I send daily Dhamma quotes through our community WhatsApp group. I also use Facebook Live for light talks since more people can join that way.”

This reflects a strategic shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to hybrid communication, enabling wider accessibility and relevance in the digital age. Informant P6, with a strong presence in community events, noted:

“Technology helps me stay connected with the youth. I often share reflections on Instagram Stories or short videos, and they respond more than in physical classes.”

His approach exemplifies how multimedia content, particularly visual and short-form, is more effective in sustaining the attention of younger demographics and encouraging two-way interaction. Meanwhile, Informant P7 emphasized the role of intention in technological use:

“For me, using social media is not just about presence. It’s about how to maintain mindfulness in what we post. The Dhamma must not be reduced to just slogans.”

Her reflection introduces a spiritual-ethical dimension to technological adaptation, aligning with *samma vayama* (right effort) and *samma sati* (right mindfulness) in digital communication practices. These perspectives reveal that while technology is a powerful tool for Dhamma dissemination, its impact is shaped by the communicator’s ethical awareness, creativity, and audience sensitivity. Instructors who navigate these digital spaces skillfully extend their outreach and preserve the Dhamma’s integrity within contemporary communicative forms..

Public Speaking and Interpersonal Communication Skills

Public speaking and interpersonal communication emerged as crucial competencies among Buddhist religious instructors. All participants acknowledged the importance of delivering messages accurately and engaging audiences in meaningful and relatable ways. Open coding revealed key themes: confidence, message delivery ability, and effective interaction. Axial coding further linked these skills to the instructors’ perceived credibility and the degree of community participation in Dhamma-related activities. Informant P2 stated:

“Good public speaking attracts people and helps them better understand what we teach. If we speak in a monotonous tone, people lose interest.”

Her Perspective illustrates that delivery style is not merely performative but instrumental in sustaining doctrinal attention and receptivity. Informant P4 emphasized the need for accessible and empathetic language:

“When we speak calmly, using accessible language, people feel more comfortable and become more open.”

This suggests that clarity and emotional intelligence are integral to public speaking, aligning with the Buddhist principle of *samma vaca* (right speech), which encourages gentle and timely speech. Informant P7 offered a pedagogical view:

“Public speaking is not just about being heard it’s about building connection. I always start by listening to what people need before I speak.”

Her approach reflects *yoniso manasikara* (wise attention), reinforcing the dialogic nature of Buddhist instruction. Informant P10 connected communicative skill with spiritual embodiment:

“A good speaker is not just someone with a loud voice. It’s someone who speaks from inner calm, with compassion and clarity.”

This illustrates the interdependence of internal cultivation and external delivery, a key aspect of Buddhist communication ethics, where *vaca* (speech) becomes a vehicle for transmitting knowledge and spiritual presence. Together, these testimonies reinforce the view that effective public speaking and interpersonal communication are not simply technical proficiencies but essential spiritual tools. They bridge the Dhamma with the lived experiences of diverse audiences and enhance the relational dimension of religious guidance.

Ethical and Spiritual Awareness in Communication

Ethical awareness emerged as a foundational element in instructor-community interactions, highlighting how Buddhist communication is deeply rooted in spiritual values rather than mere rhetorical strategy. Selective coding identified *samma vaca* (right speech), *mettā* (loving-kindness), and *karuṇā* (compassion) as recurring values that guide communicative conduct. Informant P5, shared:

“For me, communication is not just about technique but about intention and inner disposition. Every word we say must come from a place of compassion.”

This statement affirms that communication is a moral act, inseparable from the speaker’s ethical mindfulness. It reflects the integration of inner spiritual cultivation (*bhavana*) with outward verbal behavior, resonating with the Buddhist notion that speech must be both true and beneficial. Informant P2 offered a humble yet profound reflection:

“Even though I don’t know all the scriptures, I always try to speak kindly and avoid hurting others. That’s what the Dhamma means to me.”

Here, ethical communication is framed not in academic terms but in lived moral consciousness. P2’s practice exemplifies *sīla* (moral conduct) in everyday interaction, emphasizing relational harmony over doctrinal precision. Informant P9, added:

“As someone not trained in religious schools, I see communication as a bridge. If we don’t ground our words in integrity and respect, the message will be lost.”

This view introduces the metaphor of communication as a relational bridge, underscoring *sacca* (truthfulness) and *hiri-ottappa* (moral conscience and fear of wrongdoing) as core components of effective spiritual dialogue. These insights affirm the interpretation that religious communication functions not merely as information delivery but as a form of spiritual embodiment when imbued with ethical awareness. It becomes an intentional practice that reflects and reinforces Buddhist ethical ideals in community engagement.

Welfare and Recognition as Instructor Motivation

The data reveal that recognition and welfare play a crucial role in shaping the motivation of Buddhist religious instructors in Bandar Lampung. Several informants expressed concerns over the lack of institutional support, impacting their enthusiasm and sense of professional legitimacy. Open coding produced themes such as institutional acknowledgment, instructor incentives, and personal motivation. Informant P2, who holds only a junior high school education, remarked:

“Sometimes we work hard to reach out to communities, but we are not seen as important. If there were more recognition or incentives, we would be more motivated.”

This sentiment was echoed by P6, who noted, “We work in the field, but sometimes it feels like we are invisible. If there were rewards or allowances, our enthusiasm would be higher.” These statements highlight how formal acknowledgment and material support can significantly enhance the drive and confidence of religious instructors. P8, who lacks a background in religious higher education, emphasized:

“We are not graduates of religious institutions, so sometimes we’re unsure how to respond to questions from the community. I wish there were regular training sessions so we could feel more confident in explaining the Dhamma.”

Meanwhile, informant P10, with formal training in Buddhist education, reflected more critically on the need for communicative renewal, “we can no longer rely on one-way preaching. People now seek dialogue, discussion, and a more humanistic approach. Communication must touch the heart, not just deliver doctrine.” These perspectives indicate that the transformation of religious communication is technical but also motivational and institutional. Their experiences resonate with the Buddhist principle of *samma ajiva* (right livelihood). It emphasizes a vocation rooted in ethical integrity and *anavajja-sukha*, or the happiness derived from a morally sound life. Recognition, therefore, becomes not just a bureaucratic matter but a spiritual and professional affirmation essential to sustaining the instructors’ roles.

Thematic Summary

Overall, findings indicate that the transformation of communication among Buddhist religious instructors occurs on three levels: (1) Technical, through the adoption of digital tools and enhanced speaking skills; (2) Conceptual, via a paradigm shift toward dialogical and contextual outreach methods; (3) Spiritual, through integrating core Buddhist values into communication practices. Selective coding reinforces the positioning of instructors as adaptive spiritual agents, capable of responding to evolving social, cultural, and technological landscapes, while remaining rooted in the ethical teachings of the Dhamma.

Discussion

This study reveals the evolving nature of religious communication among Buddhist instructors in Bandar Lampung. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation across ten vihāras, there is a clear shift from monologic preaching to dialogic, adaptive, and spiritually engaged practices. Instructors are no longer mere transmitters of doctrine but facilitators of reflective dialogue. Their communication methods now incorporate visual media, personal interaction, digital platforms, and narrative strategies rooted in Buddhist values such as *samma vaca*, *metta*, and *karuṇa*.

This transformation aligns with Mezirow’s transformational learning theory. It is supported by findings from [Nurdin et al., \(2024\)](#) and [Gautama et al., \(2024\)](#), which underscore the role of reflection and adaptability in religious instruction. Instructors who apply participatory strategies

build stronger community engagement, especially when communication is tailored to different socio-cultural contexts. Technological adaptation emerged as a key trend, where instructors use WhatsApp, Zoom, and Facebook Live to reach digitally native audiences. These findings support Hjarvard (2008) theory of mediatization and Campbell & Tsuria (2021) observations on digital religion. Compared to instructors in other regions or faiths, those in Bandar Lampung demonstrate higher levels of personalization and ethical adaptation, though often with limited institutional support.

The lack of standardized training and certification remains a critical concern. Homsombat et al., (2021), this study finds that uneven communication competencies reflect the absence of structured professional development. The result is a gap in message consistency, public trust, and instructional confidence, particularly for instructors without religious academic backgrounds. Public speaking and interpersonal communication are foundational skills observed across all field settings. Delivery style, clarity, and emotional resonance significantly influenced audience retention and response, supporting the frameworks presented by (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Edelglass, 2013; Keohane & Lane, 2014). These skills, however, were not uniformly developed, pointing again to the need for formalized communication competency frameworks.

The instructors' ethical and spiritual awareness is at the core of these changes. For many, teaching Dhamma is not just an act of speech but mindfulness and moral responsibility. These lived practices reflect Chuang (2002) framing of Buddhist communication as ethically intentional and reinforce Black (2005) view that communication must be aligned with internal cultivation. The issue of recognition and welfare emerged as a key motivational driver. Several informants expressed a need for institutional acknowledgment and material support. Their experiences affirm the Buddhist principle of *samma ajiva* and the conclusions of (Purnomo & Sukma, 2020; Yan et al., 2024) who found that emotional security and systemic incentives directly impact long-term religious service.

While the research provides deep insight into local communicative transformation, it remains geographically limited. Future studies should include comparative perspectives across religious groups or regions and adopt digital ethnographic methods to explore online religious engagement comprehensively. From these findings, several essential contributions emerge to the field of communication science. First, it is recommended that communication curricula, especially in intercultural and interpersonal communication integrate ethical and spiritual dimensions, reflecting the communicative practices of religious leaders. Second, communication studies should formally develop "religious communication" as a subfield, offering space for research at the intersection of doctrine, dialogue, and digital media. Third, the communication discipline must respond to the growing need for digital media literacy among religious communicators, especially in pluralistic societies like Indonesia. Fourth, interdisciplinary collaboration between communication and religious studies is critical to crafting training programs that combine doctrinal integrity with empathetic, dialogic delivery. Finally, institutions should consider developing a national competency index for religious communication, which can serve as the foundation for certification and continuing education, ultimately improving public trust and professional morale.

In sum, Buddhist instructors in this study embody a new model of religious communicators who are ethically grounded, digitally aware, and dialogically engaged. Their transformation signals an emergent paradigm in religious communication: one where wisdom is preached and co-created in a shared relational space. This study offers a compelling case for expanding religious communication studies and reaffirming communication as a spiritual and civic practice.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the transformation of religious communication among Buddhist instructors in Bandar Lampung, revealing a significant shift from traditional, monologic preaching toward participatory, dialogical, and technologically integrated practices. Instructors no longer act solely as conveyors of doctrine but emerge as facilitators of spiritual dialogue grounded in Buddhist ethics such as *samma vaca*, *metta*, and *karuṇa*. Their evolving roles reflect a more profound epistemological shift in the meaning and method of religious instruction, emphasizing emotional connection, ethical integrity, and adaptive pedagogy in both physical and digital settings. The findings also demonstrate how digital tools, including WhatsApp, Zoom, and social media platforms, sustain spiritual interaction and extend the reach of Buddhist teachings. Yet, many instructors lack access to structured training, formal certification, and institutional recognition, leading to inconsistent communication quality and uncertainty in public engagement.

Despite these strengths, the study's scope was limited to one religious group in a single city, and access to private online practices remained restricted. This research contributes to the growing discourse on communication and religion by highlighting the intersection of digital culture, ethical speech, and community-based engagement. It calls for academic programs in communication to include religious and moral dimensions of discourse and to recognize religious instructors as strategic communicators. On a practical level, institutions and policymakers must support the development of competency-based training and recognition frameworks to enhance the professionalism, credibility, and well-being of religious communicators. Finally, this study opens a path for cross-religious and transregional comparisons of Southeast Asia's digital mediatization of spiritual teachings. As religious communication evolves, so must our scholarly frameworks, rooted in theory and the lived, ethical, and relational realities of faith communities navigating the modern world.

Acknowledgment

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of LPPM STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung and Yayasan Dana Paramita Agama Buddha Indonesia for providing financial assistance and extends appreciation to Buddhist instructors in Lampung area and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Lampung Province.

References

- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Doubleday. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=e7ktAAAAMAAJ>
- Black, J. (2005). Foreword. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 20(1), 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327728jmme2001_1
- Burmansah, B. (2025). Integrating Buddhist values into educational management: The role of self-management in enhancing educational motivation in inland Buddhist communities. *Journal of Educational Management and Instruction (JEMIN)*, 5(1), 14–38. <https://doi.org/10.22515/jemin.v5i1.10160>
- Campbell, H. A., & Tsuria, R. (2021). *Digital Religion*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683>
- Chisari, C., McCracken, L. M., Cruciani, F., Moss-Morris, R., & Scott, W. (2022). Acceptance and commitment therapy for women living with vulvodynia: a single-case experimental design study of a treatment delivered online. In *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*. Elsevier. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212144721001046>

- Chuang, R. (2002). An examination of Taoist and Buddhist perspectives on interpersonal conflicts, emotions, and adversities. In *Intercultural Communication Studies*. Citeseer. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=5188150099c2ce07265f4e86e28917f6e42d9ec2&trk=public_post_comment-text
- Chuang, R., & Chen, G. M. (2003). *Buddhist perspectives and human communication*. digitalcommons.uri.edu. https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/com_facpubs/25/
- Craig, R. T. (1999). Communication Theory as a Field. *Communication Theory*, 9(2), 119–161. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1999.tb00355.x>
- Edelglass, W. (2013). Buddhist Ethics and Western Moral Philosophy. In *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy* (pp. 476–490). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118324004.ch31>
- Gautama, S. A., Dharma, Y., & Rahayu, M. (2024). Membangun Harmoni Dalam Kebhinekaan: Peran Umat Buddha Dalam Mewujudkan Kehidupan Berbangsa Yang Bermartabat. *Community : Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 3(2), 83–89. <https://doi.org/10.51878/community.v3i2.2731>
- Gunaratne, S. A. (2007). A systems view of 'international' communication, its scope and limitations. *Global Media and Communication*, 3(3), 267–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17427665070030030105>
- Gunaratne, S. A. (2015). *Mindful Journalism and News Ethics in the Digital Era*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315723341>
- Hamidah, & Dungcik, M. (2024). The impact of local language on public understanding of religious messages. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 9, 100882. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100882>
- Hjarvard, S. (2008). The mediatization of religion: A theory of the media as agents of religious change. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 6(1), 9–26. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9_1
- Homsombat, P., & Sawaengwong, P. (2021). Buddhist Universities and Learning Management in the 21st Century. In *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)*. search.proquest.com. https://search.proquest.com/openview/d55e8e0109618edf17b7c70fa6a827cb/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2045096&casa_token=YLFQ017MRoEAAAAA:Uap-ai5a_SZZk2dvj6UX7mRex0PpjCCFWXlJBo5XDewpENDLaAvYwAdU4Bueh18XzjCimVFhFXdrQ
- Iin Avitasari, Kusuma, C., Aprilianin Marwintaria Saputri, V., Rapiadi, & Manggalani, R. (2023). Influence of speech skills on social interaction student STIAB JINARAKKHITA. *Journal of Communication, Religious, and Social Sciences (JoCRSS)*, 1(2), 107–114. <https://doi.org/10.60046/jocrss.v1i2.77>
- Jackson, E. A., & Tamuke, E. (2021). The Science and Art of Communicating Fan Chart Uncertainty: The Case of Inflation Outcome in Sierra Leone 1. *Journal of Advanced Studies in Finance*. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=984708>
- Keohane, R. O., & Lane, M. (2014). The ethics of scientific communication under uncertainty. *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470594x14538570>
- Khan, S. U., A-Kindi, S., & Nasir, K. (2024). The art of deciphering and communicating cardiovascular risk: getting it right. *European Heart Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurheartj/ehae103/7628188>
- Lama, D. (2005). *In the buddha's words: An anthology of discourses from the pali canon*.

- books.google.com.
<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=BFiGGao0GWoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&dq=in+the+buddha%27s+words+an+anthology+of+discourses+from+the+pali+canon&ots=IEx4qTDsdd&sig=8FQAd79juVafjv6E1ZLXUKrSg>
- Lertsuwan, B., Ty, R., Khunpatwattana, W., & Mekara, B. (2023). A Case Study of Web-Based Communication for Online Teaching and Learning at a Christian University in Buddhist Thailand. In *Religion And Social Communication*. asianresearchcenter.org.
<https://asianresearchcenter.org/document/download/718/religion-and-social-communication-vol-22-no-2-2024-compressed-1718157848.pdf#page=93>
- Liliweri. (2016). Elemen Komunikasi. *Elemen Komunikasi*, 4.
- Loeys, T., & Rodenburg, R. (2022). Dealing with autocorrelation in the single case AB-design: A study assessing the mediating effect of infant crying on the relation between responsive soothing and Infant Sleep. *Evaluation & the Health Professions*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/01632787211069678>
- Medina, M., Portilla, I., & Pereira, T. (2023). Questioning Media Audience Engagement for Advertising Purposes and Content Creation. *Revista de Comunicación*, 22(2), 339–352.
<https://doi.org/10.26441/RC22.2-2023-3159>
- Meluch, A. L., Starcher, S., Hannah, M., & LeBlanc, S. S. (2022). Talking to instructors about mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Investigating the associations between college students' willingness to communicate about Mental Health, Perceptions of Social Support Availability, and the Risk of Disclosure. *Southern Communication Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2022.2100924>
- Muchtar, N., & Ritchey, J. A. (2014). Preaching, community, and convergence: Use of old and new media by progressive Indonesian Islamic leaders. *International Communication Gazette*, 76(4–5), 360–376. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514524099>
- Nanamoli, B., & Bodhi, B. (1995). *The middle length discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Majjhima Nikaya*. Buddhist Publication Society.
- Nurdin, A., Suhartini, R., & Zainiyati, H. S. (2024). Komunikasi Religius Masyarakat Akar Rumput 'Tak Tersentuh Media Online.' *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 18(2), 937. <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v18i2.2837>
- O'Beirne, M., Freeman, T., Singer, A., & Wiebe, E. (2018). During intimate examinations Does the use of dialectical behaviour therapy improve symptoms of anxiety and depression? Mindfulness-based interventions. in *Canadian Family Physician*. <https://www.cfp.ca/content/64/2/S1.short>
- Purnomo, D. T., & Sukma, A. (2020). Internalisasi Samma Ajiva Bagi Umat Buddha Sebagai Dasar Pertimbangan Mencari Penghidupan. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains Sosial, Dan Agama*, 6(2), 57–64. <https://doi.org/10.53565/pssa.v6i2.225>
- Radde-Antweiler, K., & Zeiler, X. (2018). *Mediatized religion in Asia: Studies on digital media and religion*. books.google.com. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=PgF-DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1969&dq=mediatized+religion+in+asia+studies+on+digital+media+and+religion&ots=YDu3mxrBOe&sig=4auVWc800eKTB9KrOILUp2ZFidc>
- Saepullah, U., Sinaga, O., & Zulkarnain, F. (2020). Multicultural communication in interfaith families in Indonesia. In *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*. ijicc.net.
https://www.ijicc.net/images/vol12/iss11/121142_Saepullah_2020_E_R.pdf
- Santoso, A. (2023). Pemanfaatan Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi dalam Bidang Pendidikan.

- Jurnal Sistem Informasi*. <https://ejournal.antarbangsa.ac.id/jsi/article/view/536>
- Selyna, M., Dewi, M. P., & Tantra, M. W. (2022). Implementasi Teknik Komunikasi Penyuluh Agama Buddha Dalam Meningkatkan Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama Di Kabupaten Banjarnegara. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains Sosial, Dan Agama*, 8(1), 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.53565/pssa.v4i1.423>
- Skilling, P. (2024). *Buddha's Words for Tough Times: An Anthology*. books.google.com. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=n4TgEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=buddha%27s+words&ots=hi_H298H6c&sig=9N5K4u7eGx5Wva6E9BBBvIk08Fw
- Stephen W. Littlejohn, Foss, K. A., & Oetzel, J. G. (2012). Theories Of Human Communication Eleventh Edition. In *Waveland Press, Inc.* (Vol. 53, Issue 95). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Sugiyono. (2023). Metode Penelitian Kualitatif (Untuk penelitian yang bersifat: eksploratif, enterpretif, interaktif dan konstruktif). CV. Alfabeta, 1–274.
- Thich, N. H. (2013). *The Art of Communicating*. New York: HarperOne.
- West, R., & Turner, L. H. (2019). Introducing Communication Theory. In *Making Sense of Messages*.
- Wibawa, R., Yudhawati, I., Paramita, S., Dwiki Gotama, K., & Dharma, Y. (2024). Peningkatan Kompetensi Pandita Agama Buddha Di Kabupaten Mesuji Melalui Pelatihan Public Speaking. *Jurnal Pengabdian Dan Pengembangan Inovasi Kepada Masyarakat (PENAMAS)*, 2(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.60046/penamas.v2i1.86>
- Yan, Y., Zhang, X., Lei, T., Zheng, P., & Jiang, C. (2024). Retracted Article: The interrelationships between Chinese learners' trait emotional intelligence and teachers' emotional support in learners' engagement. *BMC Psychology*, 12(1), 35. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01519-w>