

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW FROM SCOPUS DATABASE

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### ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received** : 20-11-2025

**Revised** : 07-12-2025

**Accepted** : 25-01-2026

### KEYWORDS

*Strtegic*

*Communication;*

*Relegious;*

*Tolerance;*

*Multicultural Societies;*

### ABSTRACT

Religious tolerance is essential for sustaining social cohesion in multicultural societies shaped by globalization and digital communication. Strategic communication contributes to inclusive narratives and interfaith understanding, yet research integrating these domains remains fragmented. The purpose of this study is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of articles on strategic communication and religious tolerance in multicultural societies, sourced from the Scopus database from 1985 to 2025. This research systematically maps the intellectual landscape, identifies emerging trends, and highlights gaps in the scholarship surrounding strategic communication and religious tolerance. A quantitative, descriptive approach was employed to analyze 290 Scopus-indexed publications published during this period. Citation analysis, co-authorship mapping, and keyword co-occurrence were applied to identify dominant themes, influential contributors, and knowledge structures. The findings indicate a highly centralized research landscape dominated by Western countries, particularly the United States and Australia. Public relations emerges as the principal conceptual framework linking organizational, community, and institutional communication, while religious tolerance is often treated implicitly rather than as a core analytical concept. The study reveals limited representation of non-Western contexts, highlighting a significant research gap and opportunities for more inclusive)

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### INTRODUCTION

Religious tolerance is a cornerstone of peace, stability, and social cohesion in increasingly multicultural societies. With the growing trends of global migration, digital connectivity, and the transnational movement of people, cultures, and ideas, religious diversity has been heightened across the globe (Suryadinata, 2015). While this diversity often enriches the social fabric, it also brings about challenges, especially when religious differences fuel tensions

related to identity and cultural conflict. Religious intolerance, which is frequently exacerbated by misinformation, prejudice, and stereotyping, remains one of the most significant barriers to achieving social harmony and cohesion in multicultural societies.

At its essence, religious tolerance is more than merely passive acceptance of differences; it is an active and engaged appreciation for the diversity of belief systems coexisting within shared social spaces. Tolerance involves not only respecting the beliefs of others but also recognizing the legitimacy of different religious practices and respecting the right of individuals to hold beliefs that diverge from one's own (Djupe, 2022). In this regard, religious tolerance is not just the absence of conflict; it is the presence of understanding, empathy, and peaceful coexistence. This conceptualization of tolerance as an active process emphasizes that it is a dynamic and ongoing social practice that requires participation from all members of society to foster an environment where peace can thrive, even amidst profound differences (Rambe, 2024; Wulandari & Azhari D., 2025).

Communication processes, particularly those that facilitate intergroup interaction, play a pivotal role in both promoting and maintaining religious tolerance. Strategic communication, which refers to the purposeful and deliberate management of information flow with the aim of achieving specific social or behavioral outcomes, can be a highly effective tool in mitigating religious conflict and promoting peaceful coexistence among religious communities (Botan, 2021). Through strategic communication, inclusive and non-discriminatory narratives can be constructed and shared, and intergroup dialogue can be facilitated. These actions are essential in correcting misconceptions, dismantling stereotypes, and fostering understanding. In this way, communication can serve as a bridge that links communities, transforming potential conflicts into opportunities for mutual understanding and cooperation.

As Verkuyten (2018) notes, intergroup tolerance requires not just respect for differences but also a willingness to cooperate and engage with others across boundaries. Strategic communication plays an essential role in bridging gaps between religious groups by offering frameworks that allow for the translation of religious beliefs and practices into shared languages of peace, tolerance, and mutual respect. Well-crafted communication strategies can mitigate misunderstandings, reduce tensions, and build trust between religious communities. Through these processes, communication helps to transform potentially divisive issues into opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, ultimately fostering greater social cohesion.

However, it is crucial to understand that communication, if poorly managed, can also exacerbate polarization and deepen divides between religious groups. Grigoropoulou (2020) argues that selective framing by the media, coupled with unclear or misleading narratives, can often amplify conflict and entrench differences rather than promote reconciliation. The media's role in constructing narratives around religious differences, for example, can either exacerbate existing tensions or help to diffuse them. When communication is poorly handled, it can reinforce negative stereotypes and fuel feelings of otherness. On the other hand, when communication is strategically planned and implemented, it can build empathy, challenge entrenched biases, and ultimately strengthen social cohesion among diverse groups. This highlights the dual potential of communication: it can be either a source of conflict or a tool for peace, depending on how it is approached.

The importance of strategic communication becomes especially evident when it is deployed in efforts to construct inclusive and positive narratives that emphasize shared values rather than focusing on differences. In promoting religious tolerance, it is essential for religious organizations, interfaith councils, and government bodies to communicate consistent messages that highlight the commonalities among different faiths while respecting their distinctiveness (Connaughton & Pukallus, 2024). This approach involves framing religious narratives in ways that emphasize mutual respect, shared ethical principles, and the value of peaceful coexistence. Rather than portraying religion as a source of conflict, these communication strategies highlight the role of religion as a vehicle for peace, mutual understanding, and social harmony. Through the promotion of inclusive narratives, strategic communication helps create spaces for dialogue and understanding that can reduce religious tensions and foster stronger, more resilient communities.

In the context of digital communication, the ability to reach a global audience via social media and other online platforms adds another layer of complexity. Digital communication plays an increasingly significant role in shaping perceptions of religion and religious communities (Tsuria & Lichterman, 2017). While the digital realm offers vast opportunities for dialogue, it also presents challenges, such as the rapid spread of misinformation and extremist views. Here, strategic communication takes on added significance, as it can be used to challenge misleading narratives, correct misinformation, and provide a platform for positive and respectful discourse among diverse religious communities. By leveraging digital platforms in ways that promote empathy, tolerance, and inclusivity, communication strategies can help mitigate the potential for online hate speech and religious intolerance.

Bibliometric analysis, an emerging research methodology, offers an effective way to map the intellectual landscape of the intersection between strategic communication and religious tolerance. By analyzing academic publications, citation networks, and keyword trends, bibliometrics enables researchers to visualize the structure and evolution of this research domain (Öztürk et al., 2024). Through databases like Scopus, bibliometric studies can identify how topics related to strategic communication and religious tolerance intersect, evolve, and influence one another over time. This analytical approach helps to uncover patterns in the scholarly attention paid to religious tolerance and communication, providing valuable insights into the development of this interdisciplinary field.

For instance, research conducted in Indonesia has shown how religious extension workers use persuasive communication strategies to maintain religious tolerance and mutual respect in multi-faith communities (Sembiring, 2024). These findings illustrate the practical application of strategic communication in fostering interfaith harmony. By strategically crafting messages that resonate with local cultural and religious values, these communicators help build trust and cooperation between religious groups, even in communities with deeply entrenched religious differences.

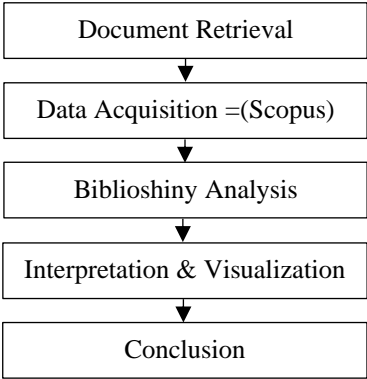
Despite the growing recognition of the importance of strategic communication in promoting religious tolerance, academic attention to the convergence of these fields remains limited. Many studies on religious tolerance have been framed within theological or sociological contexts, while the field of strategic communication is more commonly associated with corporate, political, or crisis management domains (Djupe, 2022). As a result, there is a significant gap in research that specifically explores the role of strategic communication in fostering religious tolerance. Bridging this gap is crucial, as it will provide a more holistic understanding of how communication can be strategically used to promote peace and coexistence among diverse religious communities.

Through bibliometric analysis, this study seeks to map the intellectual structure and identify key contributors, thematic developments, and research trends in the intersection of strategic communication and religious tolerance. The outcomes of this analysis will not only deepen theoretical understanding of the relationship between these fields but also offer practical insights into how strategic communication can be employed to promote religious tolerance and social cohesion in multicultural societies.

## METHODE RESEARCH

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach, focusing on scientific publications that discuss Strategic Communication and Religious Tolerance within multicultural societies indexed in the Scopus Database. The analysis was conducted using bibliometric methods, a quantitative technique designed to understand the behavior and dynamic development of knowledge within a particular field (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). In this research, bibliometrics was utilized to examine citation patterns and publication trends related to the selected scholarly works (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Biblioshiny, an advanced bibliometric tool, was employed to assist in analyzing the bibliographic data extracted from Scopus. Biblioshiny allowed for the systematic examination of citation data and trends, providing a more intuitive and user-friendly interface for processing the data. Scopus was chosen as the primary data source due to its credibility and extensive coverage, containing peer-reviewed research abstracts and globally recorded citations, making it a widely preferred reference among researchers worldwide. (Falagas et al., 2008). The

bibliometric procedures were carried out systematically and with methodological rigor. The document retrieval stage involved identifying relevant scholarly works using key terms such as “Strategic Communication,” “Religious Tolerance,” and “Multicultural Societies” within article titles.



This search yielded 290 documents that constituted the dataset for analysis. To ensure a holistic understanding of the intellectual development of the field, the retrieval process was conducted without imposing temporal restrictions, resulting in a publication range spanning from 1985 to 2025. The extracted Scopus data were subsequently exported for advanced processing. The study comprises several essential stages, including data acquisition via Scopus, analytical processing using the Bibliometrix package, and the interpretation and visualization of the resulting patterns. Each stage was executed with careful attention to data validity, reliability, and the application of appropriate analytical procedures to generate robust and meaningful insights concerning Strategic Communication and Religious Tolerance in multicultural contexts. The findings of this research are expected to contribute substantively to the advancement of scholarly discourse in this area and to provide a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for future investigations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Country

**Table 1. Scientific Production**
*Figure 1 Scientific Production by Country*
**by Country**



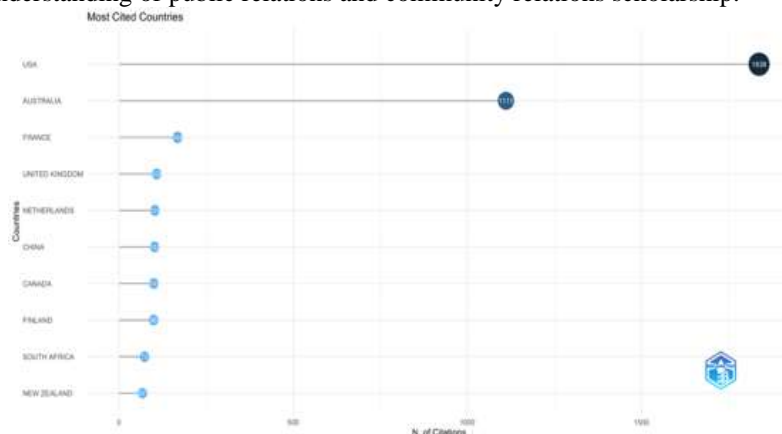
No	Country	Article
1.	USA	199
2.	AUSTRALIA	50
3.	CHINA	32
4.	CANADA	26
5.	INDONESIA	22
6.	UK	19



7.	NEGERIA	11
8.	SOUTH AFRICA	9
9.	BRAZIL	7
10.	FINLAND	7

**Source: Data processed by the Author**

Figure 1 illustrates the global distribution of scientific publications on the examined topic, with darker map shading indicating higher publication volumes. As summarized in Table 1, the United States leads overwhelmingly with 199 articles, demonstrating a strong dominance in knowledge production and indicating that theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical contexts in public relations research remain heavily shaped by U.S.-based perspectives. Australia ranks second with 50 articles, reflecting its well-established tradition in communication and community relations research, particularly within multicultural and institution–public contexts, followed by China with 32 articles, whose growing contribution suggests the rapid expansion of academic capacity and increasing scholarly attention to organizational communication and public relations. Canada (26 articles) and Indonesia (22 articles) occupy intermediate positions, with Indonesia’s fifth-place ranking signaling the emerging visibility of research from developing countries in global discourse. However, the substantial gap between Indonesia and leading countries indicates that the rich contextual potential of developing and multicultural societies—especially in relation to religious pluralism and community relations—remains underrepresented in the international literature. Other countries, including the United Kingdom, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil, and Finland, contribute fewer publications despite possessing social, cultural, and historical contexts highly relevant to strategic communication research. This uneven geographical distribution reveals a clear research gap, underscoring the need for future studies to expand empirical and comparative investigations in underrepresented regions in order to achieve a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of public relations and community relations scholarship.



**Figure 2. Trend Countries with the Most Citations**

Figure 2 reveals a marked imbalance in citation contributions across countries in strategic communication research, with the United States leading by a substantial margin at 1,838 citations, indicating its dominant academic influence and central role in shaping the field. This high citation count suggests that U.S.-based publications are not only highly productive but also exert wide scholarly impact at the global level. Australia ranks second with 1,111 citations, highlighting its position as a key research hub, particularly within the Asia–Pacific region, and reflecting the strong international visibility and relevance of its scholarship. The significant citation gap between these two countries and the rest of the contributors points to a concentration of academic influence among a limited number of developed research systems. European countries such as France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, along with China and Canada, show moderate yet consistent contributions, while other countries including Finland, South Africa, and

New Zealand demonstrate a smaller but meaningful presence in the global research landscape. Overall, these findings indicate that scholarly influence in strategic communication remains largely dominated by countries with well-established research infrastructures and access to high-impact journals. However, the presence of contributions from diverse geographical regions also underscores the global relevance of the field and simultaneously reveals a clear research gap concerning the underrepresentation of developing and non-Western contexts. This gap highlights the need for future research to broaden empirical and bibliometric investigations toward more geographically and culturally diverse settings in order to achieve a more balanced and inclusive understanding of strategic communication scholarship.

### Author's Analysis

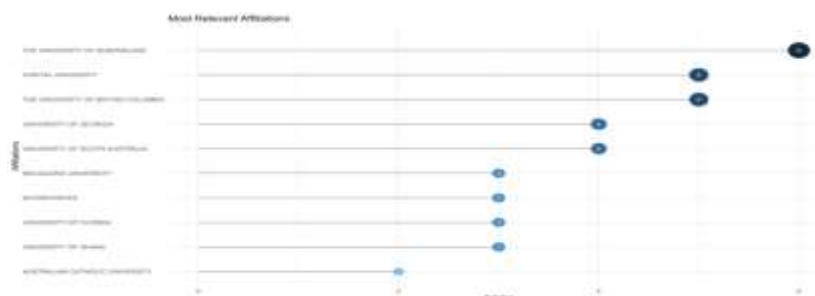
**Table 2. Most Influential Journal**

No	Author	Title	Number of citations	Journal
1.	BRIDGES DR, 2011	Interprofessional collaboration: three best practice models of interprofessional education	690	<i>Medical Education Online</i>
2.	PARSONS R, 2014	Maintaining legitimacy of a contested practice: How the minerals industry understands its 'social licence to operate	207	<i>Resources Policy</i>
3.	KEMP D, 2013	Community relations and mining: Core to business but not "core business"	193	<i>Resources Policy</i>
4.	KANE GC, 2009	Age-Associated Increases in Pulmonary Artery Systolic Preassure in the General Population	187	<i>Aha journals</i>
5.	EWEJE J, 2012	Maximizing strategic value from megaprojects: The influence of information-feed on decision-making by the project manager	168	<i>International Journal of Project Management</i>
6.	NA, 1990,	Human rights in the Muslim world: Socio-political conditions and scriptural imperatives-A preliminary inquiry	164	

7.	CANCEL AE, 1999,	Testing the contingency theory of accommodation in public relations	143	<i>Public Review</i>	<i>Relations</i>
8.	KEMP D, 2010	Community relations in the global mining industry: exploring the internal dimensions of externally orientated work	141	<i>Corporate Responsibility and Enviromental Management</i>	
9.	FRANKS DM, 2013	Social Impact Management Plans: Innovation in corporate and public policy	125	<i>Enviromental Impact Assessment Review</i>	
10.	LEDINGHAM JA, 2001	Government-community relationships: extending the relational theory of public relations	122	<i>Public Review</i>	<i>Relations</i>

**Source: Data processed by the Author**

Based on Table 2, Bridges et al. (2011) published in *Medical Education Online*, emerges as the most highly cited article, with a total of 690 citations. This prominence indicates its substantial academic influence and establishes the study as a foundational reference in strategic communication research, particularly in relation to interprofessional collaboration and communication practices. In contrast, subsequent publications, including those by Parsons (2014) and Kemp (2013) in *Resources Policy*, exhibit considerably lower citation counts, revealing a pronounced disparity in scholarly impact. This pattern underscores the existence of a dominant landmark publication that has significantly shaped the intellectual trajectory of the field. Moreover, the inclusion of articles from journals such as *Public Relations Review*, *Harvard Business Review*, and the *International Journal of Project Management* reflects the interdisciplinary nature of strategic communication research, spanning public relations, management, policy, and environmental contexts. Overall, these findings suggest that the knowledge structure of strategic communication remains concentrated around a limited set of highly influential works, highlighting their role as key theoretical and empirical anchors while simultaneously indicating opportunities for more diversified and context-specific research to advance the field.



**Figure 3. Most Relevant Institutions**

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of the most prominent university affiliations according to the number of articles published in the analyzed corpus. The horizontal axis represents publication counts, while the vertical axis

lists the affiliated institutions. This visualization highlights the academic institutions that play a central role in advancing research on public relations and community relations. The results show that The University of Queensland ranks first with six publications, indicating its strong scholarly presence and sustained contribution to communication, public relations, and community relations research. This prominence also reflects the well-established tradition of communication scholarship in Australia, particularly in studies examining organization–community relationships. Capital University and The University of British Columbia follow, each with five publications, underscoring the continued dominance of North American institutions as key centers of knowledge production in public relations research. This pattern suggests that the conceptual and methodological orientations of the field remain largely shaped by Western academic perspectives. Other institutions, including the University of Georgia and the University of South Australia, contribute four publications each, demonstrating a relatively distributed pattern of institutional participation rather than concentration within a single university. At lower levels of contribution, Macquarie University, the University of Florida, the University of Ghana, and the “Not Reported” category each account for three publications, while Australian Catholic University contributes two. The presence of publications with unreported affiliations represents a limitation in fully capturing institutional research networks within the field.

## Trend Analysis

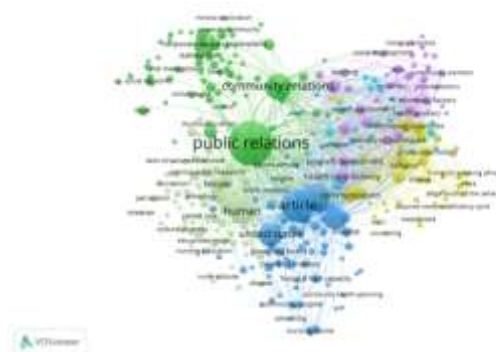


**Figure 4. Wordcloud**

Figure 4 shows that the term “*public relations*” is the most dominant keyword in the analyzed publication corpus, indicating its central position in the literature as a strategic organizational function for building, managing, and sustaining relationships with diverse publics. This prominence reinforces the conceptualization of public relations not merely as a technical communication activity, but as a managerial and decision-oriented function integral to organizational effectiveness. The frequent occurrence of “*community relations*” and “*community–institutional relations*” further highlights a strong scholarly focus on organization–community interactions, reflecting the importance of community engagement for organizational sustainability, institutional legitimacy, and social acceptance. The appearance of terms such as “*organization and management*” and “*communication*” situates public relations firmly within an organizational management framework, suggesting that community relations are approached as planned and systematic strategies rather than ad hoc practices. In addition, the prominence of healthcare-related terms, including “*health care planning*,” “*health care delivery*,” and “*health care quality*,” indicates that much of the existing research is conducted within public service and healthcare contexts, where communication and community relations are perceived as critical to service quality and public trust. However, the emergence of the term “*United States*” points to a geographical concentration of research in developed-country contexts, suggesting a significant research gap regarding the applicability and relevance of dominant public relations and community relations models in developing countries and multicultural societies. This gap underscores the need for future research to expand empirical investigations into more diverse socio-cultural, religious, and institutional settings in order to advance a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of strategic public relations practice.



## Network visualization



**Figure 5. VOSviewer Network Visualization Based on Keywords**

Figure 5 depicts a keyword co-occurrence network generated using VOSviewer, illustrating the conceptual structure of public relations and community relations research within the analyzed Scopus-indexed publications. Node size represents keyword frequency, link strength indicates co-occurrence intensity, and color differentiation reflects organically formed thematic clusters. The visualization reveals that “*public relations*” constitutes the largest and most central node, confirming its role as the primary conceptual anchor connecting multiple research domains and indicating a highly centralized knowledge structure. Bibliometrically, this centrality suggests that public relations functions as a unifying framework through which diverse themes—such as community relations, corporate social responsibility, stakeholder engagement, trust, healthcare communication, social development, and cultural diversity—are integrated. Five interrelated clusters emerge, spanning organizational and community relations, healthcare communication, social and developmental factors, social psychology and health behavior, as well as cultural and methodological dimensions, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of the field. However, the network also reveals a concentration of research around organizational and healthcare contexts, alongside a dominance of Western-centric themes and settings, as reflected by limited representation of keywords related to non-Western, religious, and multicultural societies. This pattern indicates a clear research gap in the literature, highlighting the need for future studies to extend bibliometric and empirical analyses toward underrepresented socio-cultural contexts, particularly in developing and multicultural settings, in order to decentralize the knowledge structure and enrich theoretical and methodological perspectives in strategic public relations research.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of scholarly research on strategic communication and religious tolerance in multicultural societies based on Scopus-indexed publications. The findings reveal that the intellectual structure of this field remains highly centralized, with research productivity and citation influence dominated by a limited number of countries—particularly the United States and Australia. This concentration indicates that prevailing theoretical frameworks, methodological orientations, and empirical narratives are largely shaped by Western academic traditions, while perspectives from developing and culturally diverse societies remain underrepresented.

The bibliometric analysis further demonstrates that public relations functions as the primary conceptual anchor linking diverse research themes, including community relations, organizational management, healthcare communication, and social development. However, the intersection between strategic communication and religious tolerance is still fragmented and insufficiently theorized. Religious tolerance is more often embedded implicitly within institutional or policy-oriented studies rather than examined as a central communicative strategy in interfaith and

multicultural contexts. This pattern highlights a significant conceptual gap between communication scholarship and tolerance-oriented religious studies.

Keyword co-occurrence and network visualizations indicate a strong thematic emphasis on organizational and healthcare settings, accompanied by a limited presence of keywords related to religion, multiculturalism, and non-Western socio-cultural environments. This imbalance suggests that dominant models of strategic communication have yet to be adequately tested and adapted within religiously plural and culturally heterogeneous societies, particularly in the Global South. As a result, existing knowledge may lack contextual sensitivity and normative relevance for conflict-prone or diversity-intensive settings. From a methodological perspective, this study confirms the value of bibliometric approaches in uncovering research trends, collaboration patterns, and theoretical foundations within interdisciplinary domains. The results offer a systematic baseline for future empirical and comparative studies that seek to integrate strategic communication theories with interreligious dialogue, peacebuilding, and multicultural governance. Future research is encouraged to expand geographically, incorporate qualitative and mixed-method designs, and examine the role of digital communication and grassroots actors in fostering sustainable religious tolerance.

Contribution this study contributes to the existing literature by systematically mapping the intersection of strategic communication and religious tolerance in multicultural societies. It uncovers the structural gaps in the field, highlighting the dominance of Western academic traditions and underexplored perspectives from developing and multicultural societies. It also offers a foundational framework for future studies on integrating strategic communication with peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue.

Limitations the study's reliance on bibliometric data from Scopus-indexed publications may overlook valuable contributions from non-indexed or regional journals, limiting the comprehensiveness of the research scope. Additionally, the analysis does not address the detailed empirical validation of the identified research trends, and further qualitative research is needed to explore the contextual dynamics of religious tolerance in non-Western settings.

Overall, this study advances the literature by clarifying the intellectual landscape and structural gaps at the intersection of strategic communication and religious tolerance. By highlighting underexplored contexts and theoretical disconnections, it contributes to the development of a more inclusive, context-sensitive, and practice-oriented communication framework capable of supporting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies.

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