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Greeting Non-Muslims in Hadith: A Contextual Reading for Social Harmony in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract

This article analyzes the hadiths about greetings to non-Muslims and their relevance to social harmony in contemporary Indonesia. The unit of analysis of this research includes hadiths related to salam to non-Muslims, along with their reception and interpretation in classical hadith lectures and in contemporary religious discourse in Indonesia. This study aims to explain the variety of understandings of these hadiths, identify the socio-historical context in which they appear, and demonstrate the significance of contextual readings for Muslim-non-Muslim relations in pluralistic societies. This research uses a thematic approach (*maudhu'i*) to collect and classify relevant hadiths, then analyzes them through contextual hermeneutics by considering the social situation at the time of the Prophet and the dynamics of religious life today. The contextual reading follows a three-stage hermeneutical procedure consisting of textual analysis, socio-historical reconstruction, and ethical contextualization. The study analyzes thirteen narrations collected from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Musnad Aḥmad, and Sunan Ibn Mājah, which were categorized through thematic analysis into restrictive, responsive, and expansive narrations. The study's findings show that hadiths about salam to non-Muslims can be classified into three main categories: hadiths born in the context of tension with non-Muslims, hadiths that show the Prophet's acceptance or response to non-Muslim greetings, and hadiths that encourage the spread of salam in wider social interactions. The novelty of this article lies in the integrative reading of the entire hadith as a corpus that is interrelated, not as a postulate that is understood separately. Thus, this article contributes to strengthening the study of contextual hadith while offering a more inclusive framework of understanding for the development of social harmony between religions in Indonesia.

Keywords: hadith; greetings to non-Muslims; contextual hermeneutics; social harmony; interreligious relations; Contemporary Indonesia.

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Introduction

Indonesia is a highly relevant social space for studying hadith on salam to non-Muslims because its religious life is characterized by high religious pluralism and vulnerability to symbolic tensions in public space (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021; Crouch, 2012). In such a context, greetings are no longer just a linguistic formula but also a marker of social ethics, identity boundaries, and a form of recognition of the other party in daily interactions (Dachlan, 2023; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2024b). The significance of this issue was evident when the Ijtima Ulama of the Fatwa Commission VIII of Indonesia VIII in 2024 stipulated that the pronunciation of greetings with the dimension of special prayers of other religions by Muslims is haram, while the Ministry of Religious Affairs responded by affirming that interfaith greetings have lived as a good practice to maintain harmony and strengthen tolerance in a pluralistic society (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2024a; Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2024). At the same time, social tolerance measurement in Indonesia indicates that inter-religious harmony must still be actively maintained, as inter-urban tolerance is not always stable and depends on inclusive policies, leadership, and open social interaction (SETARA Institute, 2025). Therefore, the debate over salam to non-Muslims cannot be seen as an isolated fiqh issue, but rather as one that touches on the dimensions of religious authority, communication ethics, and social cohesion in a pluralistic Indonesian society (Crouch, 2012; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2024a).

A number of previous studies have provided an important foundation for this theme, but have not addressed it specifically at the level of the hadith corpus on salam to non-Muslims. Ali (2020) shows that NU and Muhammadiyah both develop a more open stance toward social relations with non-Muslims, while still maintaining boundaries of faith and religious identity(Ali, 2020). Kusuma and Susilo (2020) show that interreligious sensitivity among young Indonesian activists can be strengthened through dialogue and interfaith encounters (Hadi Kusuma & Susilo, 2020), while Setiawan et al. (2020) emphasized that an exclusive way of being religious can correlate with support for interfaith conflicts (Setiawan et al., 2020). At the normative-textual level, Fadal (2021) maps the model of Muslim-non-Muslim relations in the Qur'an historically and contextually (Fadal, 2020), and Kuswaya and Ali (2021) show that tolerance, coexistence, and cooperation can emerge from sociothematic readings of peace verses (Kuswaya & Ali, 2021). In the study of hadith, Wasman et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of contextual criticism of prophetic traditions (Wasman et al., 2023), while Yahya and Rifa'i (2025) began to associate interfaith greetings with the hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman's hadith (Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). Nevertheless, these studies generally still move at the level of interreligious relations in general, the Qur'anic approach, or the theory of contextualization of hadiths, and have not specifically compiled, classified, and read integratively the hadiths about greetings to non-Muslims and the reception of their interpretation in the context of contemporary Indonesia (Ali, 2020; Wasman et al., 2023; Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025).

Departing from these conditions, this article aims to address three research gaps simultaneously. First, research on Salam to non-Muslims is still dominated by legal discussions that tend to take one or two hadiths as the final postulate, without treating the entire relevant history as a corpus that explains each other (Andriana, 2018; Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). Second, research on Muslim-non-Muslim relations in Indonesia more often discusses tolerance, fatwas, religious moderation, or the relationship of Islamic organizations in general, rather than specifically how the hadiths of salam are reproduced in contemporary religious discourse (Ali, 2020; Ayu Aryani et al., 2025). Third, although the contextual approach to hadith is gaining academic legitimacy, its application to the issue of interfaith salam in modern Indonesia remains very limited (Wasman et al., 2023). On that basis, this article aims to analyze the hadiths on greetings to non-Muslims,

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identify the socio-historical contexts in which they appear, and assess their relevance to social harmony in contemporary Indonesia. The unit of analysis of this research is hadiths related to salam to non-Muslims, classical hadith lectures that explain the scope of their meaning, and their discursive reception in the latest Indonesian religious discourse (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2024a; Wasman et al., 2023). Thus, this article not only seeks to describe the differences of opinion, but also offers a more systematic and contextual framework for reading the problem that has been debated normatively.

Based on this gap, this article argues that the hadiths about salam to non-Muslims do not constitute a single, uniform legal message, but rather consist of several layers of context that must be carefully differentiated before being drawn into a social norm for a pluralistic society. Hypothetically, the narrations that have been understood as absolute prohibitions are more appropriate to be read as hadiths born in the context of certain tensions, while other narrations show the Prophet's polite response to non-Muslim greetings, as well as the encouragement to spread the greetings in wider social interactions (Andriana, 2018; Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). This argument is in line with a contextual approach that rejects textual readings that detach the hadith from its social horizon, and instead places the meaning of the hadith in the relationship between the text, the initial context, and the ethical needs of today's society (Saeed & Akbar, 2021; Wasman et al., 2023). In a society like Indonesia, fragmentary readings of hadiths on interreligious relations risk hardening social boundaries, while integrative and contextual readings have the potential to bring together religious commitments with the need to live together peacefully (Hadi Kusuma & Susilo, 2020; SETARA Institute, 2025). To address these gaps, this study is guided by three main research questions: first, what are the principal hadith narrations concerning greetings to non-Muslims; second, how have these hadiths been interpreted within classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship; and third, how can these narrations be contextualized within contemporary Indonesian plural society? Thus, this article proposes the thesis that the contextual reading of the hadith salam is not a form of weakening the authority of the hadith, but rather a way to maintain fidelity to the ethical goals of the Prophet's teachings in contemporary plural societies (Ali, 2020; Kuswaya & Ali, 2021).

Literature Review

Muslim-Non-Muslim Relations, Tolerance, and Social Harmony in Indonesia

The study of Muslim-non-Muslim relations in Indonesia generally emphasizes social harmony arising from daily interactions, diversity governance, and religious orientations that are not measured solely by the level of formal religiosity, but by the ways religious communities build equal and open social contact. Ali (2020) shows that the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, both develop a normative basis for being just, kind, and cooperative towards non-Muslims, despite using different theological language and argumentative strategies (Ali, 2020). Although Ali (2020) demonstrates the existence of normative foundations for positive Muslim–non-Muslim relations within NU and Muhammadiyah, the study does not specifically examine how hadith concerning salām function as textual foundations for these attitudes. The findings align with Kusuma and Susilo (2020), who show that interfaith sensitivity among Indonesian youth grows through dialogue, civic engagement, and interfaith encounter experiences (Hadi Kusuma & Susilo, 2020). On a broader level, Subchi et al. (2022) emphasized that religious moderation in Indonesia is correlated with a religious orientation that rejects extremism and opens up space for coexistence in a pluralistic society (Subchi et al., 2022). In fact, Prasetyo and Halimatusa'diyah (2024) found that interactions among religious believers in everyday life are positively associated with social, religious, and political tolerance (Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024). Thus, the latest literature clearly shows that the quality of Muslim-non-

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Muslim relations in Indonesia is largely determined by patterns of social interaction and religious framing that encourage openness, rather than by abstract theological claims.

At the same time, the literature also shows that social harmony in Indonesia remains vulnerable because religious practices can move towards inclusiveness or even exclusivity, depending on the form of belief, identity, and social space in which religion is articulated. Setiawan et al. (2020), based on a random survey across various regions of Indonesia with a history of interreligious tensions, showed that certain dimensions of religiosity—such as particularism, religiocentrism, and intratextual fundamentalism—correlated with support for interreligious protests, both lawful and violent (Setiawan et al., 2020). These findings show that the problem of interreligious relations cannot be explained simply by the dichotomy of "obedient" versus "disobedient," but must be understood in terms of how texts, group identities, and religious practices are produced in a given social space. In a more constructive direction, Fadal (2020) maps the model of Muslim–non-Muslim relations in the Qur'an gradually and contextually (Fadal, 2020), while Kuswaya and Ali (2021) show that the concept of peace in the Qur'an can be translated into a concrete culture of coexistence in a pluralistic society (Kuswaya & Ali, 2021). At the level of public discourse, studies on tolerance and interreligious dialogue in Indonesia also show that the sustainability of coexistence depends heavily on tolerance education, interfaith communication, and resistance to religious identity politics that divide citizens. Therefore, the examination of the greeting to non-Muslims needs to be placed within the broader debate about how religious symbols shape or hinder social harmony in the context of contemporary Indonesia.

Contextual Approach in the Study of Hadith and Religious Texts

In contemporary Islamic studies, a contextual approach develops in response to the limitations of literal reading that tend to disconnect the text from the historical situation in which it emerged and from the ethical horizon of today's reading society. Saeed and Akbar (2021) argue that the contextual approach to interpreting the Qur'an departs from the recognition that the meaning of religious texts lies not only in their linguistic structure but also in the context of revelation, moral goals, and the social changes surrounding the rereading of the text (Saeed & Akbar, 2021). The same logic is increasingly being applied in the study of hadith. Wasman et al. (2023) emphasized that the study of hadith does not stop at the formal verification of sanad and matan, but it is necessary to involve substantive criticism so that the message of the hadith can be tested in relation to its context, rationality, and normative purpose (Wasman et al., 2023). Thus, the contextual approach to hadith is not intended to undermine the authority of hadith, but rather to strengthen a more responsible understanding of the function of hadith in social life. This tendency is important for the theme of interreligious relations, because hadiths born in the context of polemics, conflicts, community protection, or da'wah cannot always be directly transposed into modern plural societies without a strict process of categorization and interpretation. Therefore, the study of greetings to non-Muslims requires an approach that does not stop at the text's sound, but also re-reads the social space and ethical horizons that surround it.

More specialized literature in hadith hermeneutics suggests that contextual readings have been used to reassess hadiths that have been understood restrictively, especially when they come into contact with complex modern social issues. Wasman et al. (2023) stated that the validity of the understanding of hadith is also determined by the interpreter's ability to relate the history to the context in which it appeared and to broader normative purposes (Wasman et al., 2023). In a similar vein, the study by Yahya and Rifa'i (2025) on interfaith greetings through Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics shows that hadiths that seem to prohibit or limit interaction cannot be separated from the socio-political dynamics of the Prophet's time; thus, it is necessary to distinguish between universal principles and situational provisions (Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). Nasrulloh et al.'s (2025) reframing of the Prophet's interaction with non-Muslims in sīrah also strengthens the

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argument that a model of religious moderation based on prophetic tradition should be constructed from the classification of contexts, not from the generalization of a single history (Nasrulloh et al., 2025). Thus, the current literary tendency is moving towards a more historical, layered, and ethical reading of Islamic normative texts. Although the methodological framework has been available, its systematic application to the corpus of hadiths on salam to non-Muslims remains relatively limited. This is what makes this study relevant: it not only uses a contextual approach as a methodological slogan but also seeks to apply it directly to a single hadith theme that has strong resonance in Indonesian religious discourse today.

Interfaith Greetings in Indonesian Fiqh, Hadith, and Contemporary Discourse

The study of interfaith greetings develops at the intersection of fiqh, hadith, interreligious communication, and symbolic politics in the public sphere. On the one hand, Andriana (2018) reads salam as an ethical medium that spreads peace, so that greetings are not only understood as a verbal formula, but also as a social action that can strengthen human relations in a pluralistic society (Andriana, 2018). On the other hand, the contemporary jurisprudence literature on interfaith greetings shows that this debate has never been purely linguistic, but has concerned how scholars distinguish between prayer, religious identity, theological loyalty, and social politeness. Rahman et al. (2025) show that the 2024 MUI fatwa on the prohibition of interfaith greetings sparked serious discussions, especially because of its implications for multicultural families and Indonesia's pluralistic society (Rahman et al., 2025), while Kurniawan et al. (2025) showed that the fatwa was framed within the "tolerance fiqh," which seeks to maintain the normative boundaries of Islam without ignoring the demands of coexistence (Kurniawan et al., 2025). On the academic side, Yahya and Rifa'i (2025) remind us that legal debates around salam often rely too much on atomistic readings of one or two hadiths, even though the related narrations need to be treated as one layered corpus (Yahya & Akhmad Rifa’i, 2025). Therefore, the study of interfaith greetings is essentially a study of how hadith texts are renegotiated when religious symbols enter a plural and political social space. It highlights the processes through which religious actors interpret, contextualize, and mobilize prophetic traditions in response to contemporary realities. The issue serves as a microcosm of wider hermeneutical debates concerning religious authority, minority-majority relations, and the negotiation of communal boundaries in multicultural settings. As such, interfaith greetings become a significant site where theology, social interaction, and politics intersect.

Although the discourse on interfaith greetings has become increasingly crowded, especially since the 2024 fatwa polemic, the existing literature still presents several important limitations. First, some contemporary studies place greater emphasis on responses to fatwas or their sociological implications than on a thorough analysis of the entire hadith that underlies the debate. Second, a number of writings focus on the levels of normative law and maqāṣid, but have not yet developed a clear classification between hadith born in the context of tension, hadith that show the Prophet's response to non-Muslim greetings, and hadith that encourage the general spread of salam. Third, the literature on tolerance and interreligious dialogue in Indonesia—although rich—rarely directly links the quality of social relations to the way certain hadith are read, taught, and used as evidence in the public sphere. In fact, research on Muslim tolerance towards non-Muslims in Indonesia shows that the quality of daily encounters and religious framing has a real impact on social, religious, and political attitudes towards other groups. Thus, there is still an important academic space for a study that connects three layers simultaneously: the corpus of hadith, its history of interpretation, and its relevance to contemporary Indonesian social harmony. This gap is what this research aims to fill through thematic and contextual readings of the hadiths of salam to non-Muslims, so that the polemical debate can be transferred to a more systematic and scientific field of analysis.

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Methods

Material objects

The material object of this research is the hadiths about greetings to non-Muslims and the reception of their interpretation in classical hadith and contemporary religious discourse in Indonesia, because the issue of interfaith greetings is indeed debated at the level of text, law, and social interaction at the same time (Andriana, 2018; Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). This focus was chosen because the study of Muslim-non-Muslim relations in Indonesia generally discusses tolerance and social relations broadly, but has not specifically analyzed the hadith corpus on salām as a complete unit of analysis (Ali, 2020). Thus, the object of research is directed to the hadith text, the context of its appearance, and the context of its acceptance.

Research design

This study uses a qualitative design grounded in literature, with an analytical-interpretive orientation, because the data analyzed are in the form of hadith texts, syarah, fatwas, and academic literature, rather than field data or respondent surveys (Bowen, 2009; Wasman et al., 2023). At the design level, this study combines a thematic approach (*maudhu'i*) to collect relevant hadiths with a contextual hermeneutic approach to examine the relationships among texts, their initial contexts, and the ethical needs of today's plural society (Saeed & Akbar, 2021; Wasman et al., 2023). Therefore, this study is not intended to test empirical causal relationships, but rather to develop normative-analytical arguments.

Data sources

The primary data source of this research is the hadiths about the greetings to non-Muslims in canonical hadith books that are relevant to the theme, especially the narrations related to the prohibition of starting the greeting, the response to the greeting of non-Muslims, and the command to spread greetings in general (Andriana, 2018; Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). The primary sources are read alongside hadith and Islamic legal literature to capture the context of their classical meanings, while secondary data include reputable journal articles on interreligious relations, religious moderation, and the contextual reading of hadith (Ali, 2020; Subchi et al., 2022; Wasman et al., 2023). To understand the contemporary Indonesian context, this study also draws on fatwa documents and cutting-edge academic studies on the polemic surrounding interfaith greetings (Kurniawan et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025).

Data collection techniques

Data were collected through a systematic document search using document analysis techniques, namely selecting, reading, classifying, and recording relevant documents, with the research focus in a gradual, controlled manner (Bowen, 2009). In the first stage, the hadiths related to salam are grouped thematically based on keywords that refer to the salam and non-Muslim parties; in the second stage, the collected narration report is selected according to its thematic relevance and proximity to the research problem; Third, the texts are paired with classical lectures and contemporary studies so that each hadith is not read atomistically(Wasman et al., 2023). This procedure was chosen so that the data corpus is formed in a transparent, focused, and academically accountable manner.

To ensure transparency and replicability, the identification of hadith narrations concerning greetings to non-Muslims followed a systematic thematic search strategy. The search was conducted using major digital hadith databases and indexes, including al-Maktabah al-Shāmilah, Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim, and Sunnah.com, supplemented by manual verification in the canonical hadith collections. The search employed keywords and thematic expressions related to greetings and

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non-Muslim communities, including salām, lā tabdaʾū al-yahūd wa al-naṣārā bi al-salām, radd al-salām, and afshū al-salām baynakum.

The inclusion criteria comprised narrations that explicitly discuss (1) initiating greetings to non-Muslims, (2) responding to greetings from non-Muslims, and (3) the Prophet's instructions concerning the dissemination of greetings in wider social interactions involving non-Muslims. Conversely, the exclusion criteria omitted narrations dealing exclusively with greetings among Muslims, general etiquettes of salām unrelated to interreligious relations, and reports lacking direct thematic relevance to Muslim–non-Muslim interaction. Through this procedure, thirteen narrations from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Musnad Aḥmad, and Sunan Ibn Mājah were identified and selected as the primary corpus of analysis.

Data analysis techniques

Data analysis is carried out through three steps. First, the collected hadiths are thematically categorized into several groups of meanings, for example, hadiths born in the context of tension, hadiths that show the Prophet's response to non-Muslim greetings, and hadiths that encourage the widespread spread of greetings (Mayring, 2019; Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). Second, each category is read hermeneutically, with attention to the socio-historical context of the text's emergence and the ethical horizon of today's society (Saeed & Akbar, 2021; Wasman et al., 2023). Third, the results of the readings are compared with contemporary Indonesian legal receptions and discourses to assess their relevance for social harmony, without turning this study into a causal-empirical claim (Kurniawan et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025).

Results

Distribution of the Corpus of Hadith on Salam to Non-Muslims

The results of thematic search show that the corpus of hadith about salam to non-Muslims in this article is concentrated on three main data patterns, namely hadith that contain restrictions or prohibitions in certain contexts, hadith that record the Prophet's response to non-Muslim greetings, and hadith that contain the command to spread salam in a wider social space (Andriana, 2018; Wasman et al., 2023; Yahya & Akhmad Rifa'i, 2025). Textually, the corpus identified in the manuscript includes thirteen narrations scattered in several major hadith collections, especially Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Musnad Aḥmad, and Sunan Ibn Mājah. These narrations were identified through a systematic thematic search employing keywords related to salām and Muslim–non-Muslim interaction and selected according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria described in the methodological section.

Contemporary hadith literature also shows that the issue of interfaith greetings is almost always discussed through a combination of narrations rather than a single prohibitory text, because variations in matan and narration context yield different meanings (Wasman et al., 2023; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). Thus, empirically, it can be noted that the problem of this research departs from the textual reality that the hadiths of salam to non-Muslims are present in various forms, both at the editorial level and in the communicative situation recorded in each narration (Andriana, 2018; Wasman et al., 2023).

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Category	Number of Narrations	Main Sources	Dominant Interpretation
Restrictive narrations	4	Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad	Restrictive
Responsive narrations	5	Bukhari, Muslim	Responsive
Expansive narrations	4	Bukhari, Ibn Majah	Contextual-expansive

Table 1. Category and Narrations

The first group in the corpus consists of the narrations that have been most often used as the basis for restricting greetings to non-Muslims, especially hadiths about the prohibition of starting greetings to Jews and Christians and histories about the prohibition of resembling the way of greeting other groups (Andriana, 2018; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). The data collected in this article record the prohibition on initiating salam from the Muslim Ṣaḥīḥ and Musnad Aḥmad, while the prohibition on tasyabbuh in the way of giving salam is recorded in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. Recent studies on the polemic of interfaith salam in Indonesia also show that this group of hadith is the most prominent in contemporary legal and fatwa debates, especially when the theme of salam is framed as a matter of identity boundaries, religious prayer, and relations with adherents of other religions (Armayanto & Wardhani, 2024; Kaunda et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). Descriptively, this data shows that the element of restriction in the hadith corpus does exist and is clearly documented, but the number is only one part of the entire network of histories found, so it materially does not represent the overall theme of greetings to non-Muslims in the hadith tradition (Andriana, 2018; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025).

The second and third groups show that the same corpus of hadith contains more than just prohibitions. In this manuscript, there are several narrations of the Prophet's reply to non-Muslim greetings with the expression *wa 'alaykum*, including the narration involving 'Ā'ishah when the greeting received contained insults, as well as the narration of the Prophet passing through a mixed assembly of Muslims and Jews and greeting them. In addition, this article records hadiths that command spreading greetings to known and unknown people, as well as the history of the Prophet's correspondence with Heraclius, including the formula for greetings at the opening of the letter. Such findings are consistent with the literature, which views salam not only as a symbol of intra-Muslim identity but also as a form of ethical communication in broader social relations (Andriana, 2018; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). Therefore, the results of data mapping show that the corpus of hadith on greetings to non-Muslims is empirically composed of restrictive narrations, responsive narrations, and expansive narrations, so that the data structure itself has shown a variety of prophetic communication patterns related to this issue (Wasman et al., 2023; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025).

Pattern of Reception of Interpretation of the Hadith of Salam

The results of reading classical and contemporary literature show that there are three recurring patterns of reception in explaining the hadiths of salam to non-Muslims, namely restrictive reception, responsive reception, and contextual-expansive reception (Wasman et al., 2023; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). Restrictive receptions generally depart from the hadith prohibiting the initiation of salam and tasyabbuh, then place salam within a religious identity that should not be opened to non-Muslims in certain forms (Rahman et al., 2025; Kaunda et al., 2025). This type of reception seems to stand out in the latest discussion of the 2024 MUI fatwa and several studies that read interfaith greetings, especially as a normative fiqh issue, and the preservation of religious symbolic boundaries (Abdullah, 2025; Armayanto & Wardhani, 2024; Rahman et al., 2025). The literature also shows that restrictive patterns are not only present in fatwas but also in

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various articles that place the recitation of salam within the domain of verbal worship and prayer and limit it within the framework of faith (Kaunda et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Thus, empirically, it can be noted that one dominant path of reception of the hadiths of salam does move towards restriction, especially when the focus of its reading is placed on the prohibitory hadith and symbols of religious identity, rather than on the overall variation of the corpus (Rahman et al., 2025; Abdullah, 2025).

In addition, the study's results show a focus on the narrations of the Prophet's responses to non-Muslim greetings. In this pattern, the narration *of wa 'alaykum* occupies a central position because it is often treated as a guide on how to respond to a greeting from a non-Muslim side, especially when the greeting is suspected of containing plagiarism or ill intentions (Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025; Wasman et al., 2023). The recent literature on interfaith greetings in Indonesia notes that this reception route usually does not affirm the widespread permissibility of greetings, but also does not close the space for interaction at all, as the focus lies on the manners of responding, not solely on the prohibition of starting the greeting (Rahman et al., 2025; Abdullah, 2025). This data also aligns with the text's corpus structure, in which some histories do not speak of total prohibition but rather of the Prophet's linguistic response in certain situations. Descriptively, these results show that the reception of the hadith of salam does not move in a black-and-white manner between permissible and impermissible, but also produces intermediate categories in the form of limited, polite, and situational responses, which in contemporary literature are still maintained as a separate reading pattern (Wasman et al., 2023; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025).

The third pattern that also appears quite strongly is the contextual-expansive reception, which is a reading that places the hadith of salam as part of a broader social ethics and therefore reads the hadith of prohibition in the context of its emergence, rather than as a stand-alone universal social norm (Andriana, 2018; Wasman et al., 2023). In this reception path, attention is not only given to the hadith of prohibition, but also to the hadith about the spread of greetings, the hadith of the Prophet greeting the mixed assembly, and the hadith of the Prophet's letter to Heraclius, so that the whole theme is treated as one complementary corpus (Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025; Andriana, 2018). Some recent studies have even explicitly situated interfaith greetings within the frameworks of interreligious communication, hadith hermeneutics, and the needs of plural societies, thereby shifting the focus from mere legal stipulations to the social meaning of greetings in contemporary interactions (Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025; Abdullah, 2025). These results show that in the current academic landscape, the reception of the hadith of salam is not monolithic, but rather divided into restrictive, responsive, and contextual-expansive paths, each of which departs from a different part of the hadith data and highlights a different dimension (Wasman et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2025).

The Relevance of Hadith Salam Data in the Context of Contemporary Indonesia

The results of a search of contemporary Indonesian discourse show that the issue of greetings to non-Muslims appears as a prominent public theme, especially after religious statements and decrees in 2024 that position interfaith greetings as an issue of normative boundaries of tolerance, while state institutions through the Ministry of Religious Affairs frame it as a social practice that has lived in a pluralistic society (Indonesian Ulema Council, 2024; Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). Academic studies published after the polemic show a similar pattern: making interfaith greetings a meeting point between fiqh, fatwa authorities, multicultural families, and discourse on religious moderation (Rahman et al., 2025; Kaunda et al., 2025; Armayanto & Wardhani, 2025). Empirically, this shows that the hadiths of salam are no longer circulating solely in the realm of books and syarah, but have entered the social sphere as a reference in the discourse of tolerance, symbolic policies, and interreligious communication (Abdullah, 2025; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). In the context of this study, the data answers the research

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problem regarding the contemporary relevance of the hadith salam: the corpus of hadith has proven to be actively received in Indonesian discourse today and used as a basis for arguments by religious and academic actors with different orientations (Rahman et al., 2025; Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

The next findings show that the relevance of the issue of interfaith greetings is directly related to the pattern of social interaction between religious believers in Indonesia. The study by Prasetyo and Halimatusa'diyah (2024), based on a national survey, shows that greater interreligious interactions are positively correlated with Muslim social, religious, and political tolerance towards non-Muslims, whereas the intensity of certain intrareligious interactions can be negatively correlated with some forms of tolerance (Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024). These findings align with a study by Kusuma and Susilo (2020), which found that young interfaith activists in Indonesia exhibit greater interfaith sensitivity when they engage in cross-community encounters, dialogues, and cooperation (Hadi Kusuma & Susilo, 2020). On a broader level, Subchi et al., 2022 and Latifa et al. (2022) also show that religious moderation in Indonesia is related to rejection of violence, national commitment, and the ability to manage differences in a shared space. Descriptively, this data set does not conclude the direct cause-and-effect relationship between salam and harmony, but shows that the issue of salam is in the same social field as the issue of interaction, tolerance, and sensitivity between religions, so the discussion is indeed relevant for the study of contemporary Indonesian social harmony (Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024; Kusuma & Susilo, 2020; Subchi et al., 2022).

The final results show that when the issue of salam is placed in the landscape of Indonesian religious harmony and conflict, its position is better understood as an element in symbolic communication between religions than as the sole factor determining the social situation. Setiawan et al. (2020), through a national randomized survey of Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, showed that support for interfaith protests is influenced by complex configurations of religiosity, such as particularism, religiocentrism, and intratextual fundamentalism, rather than by a single symbol or practice. At the same time, studies on religious moderation show that the common living space in Indonesia is supported by a combination of national commitment, rejection of violence, and openness to local culture, so that the issue of greeting appears as one of the ethical indicators of daily interaction in the larger context (Subchi et al., 2022; Latifa et al., 2022). Thus, the results of this study show three main answers to the formulation of the problem: first, the corpus of hadith of salam to non-Muslims is plural; second, the reception is split into several reading patterns; and third, its relevance in contemporary Indonesia can be seen in its link with the discourse on tolerance, moderation, and interreligious interaction that has been documented in the latest literature (Rahman et al., 2025; Stuart & Stuart Scott, 2024; Setiawan et al., 2020).

Discussion

The results of this study show that the hadiths about salam to non-Muslims do not exist as a single collection of texts, but as a corpus that is layered and spread in several different history patterns, namely restrictive narration, responsive narration, and expansive narration in social interaction, so that the problem of interfaith greeting from the beginning is indeed composed on pluralistic hadith data. not on top of one uniform text (Wasman et al., 2023; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). These findings are consistent with contemporary studies that affirm that understanding hadith requires the reading of the entire network of history, because the variation of matan, the context of narration, and the direction of normative use of a hadith can produce a breadth of meaning that cannot be captured if the hadith is read atomistically (Wasman et al., 2023; Saeed & Akbar, 2021). At the same time, the results of this study also show that the reception of the hadith of salam

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moves in three main patterns, namely a restrictive pattern that emphasizes prohibitions and boundaries of identity, a responsive pattern that emphasizes the manners of answers, and a contextual-expansive pattern that places salam as part of a broader social ethics in a plural society (Rahman et al., 2025; Kaunda et al., 2025; Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). In the context of contemporary Indonesia, this finding is important because the issue of interfaith greetings has indeed changed to be part of the public discourse on tolerance, moderation, and symbolic communication between religious communities, especially after the 2024 fatwa polemic that brought together religious legal arguments with arguments for social harmony in the national public space (Rahman et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025; Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). Thus, the main findings of this study can be summarized as follows: the corpus of hadith is plural, the reception of interpretation is layered, and its social relevance is real in Indonesian religious discourse today (Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024; Subchi et al., 2022).

On further reflection, the findings show that the issue of salam to non-Muslims is actually related not only to the legal status of a single utterance, but also to the way in which the Muslim community manages the relationship between theological commitment and the need to live together in a heterogeneous society, so that the reading of hadith on this theme has broader symbolic consequences than it appears on the surface (Ali, 2020; Kusuma & Susilo, 2020). The literature on Muslim–non-Muslim relations in Indonesia shows that healthy social interaction and high interreligious sensitivity usually grow through continuous contact, dialogue, and religious framing that do not close the space of respect for the other party, so the issue of salam is indeed worthy of reading as part of the social grammar of common life, not just as a stand-alone verbal formula (Kusuma & Susilo, 2020; Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024). This reflection is also reinforced by the survey findings that Muslim social, religious, and political tolerance towards non-Muslims is related to the quality of daily social encounters, while the literature on religious moderation shows that openness, rejection of violence, and national commitment are important foundations for social harmony in Indonesia (Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024; Subchi et al., 2022; Latifa et al., 2022). Therefore, the results of this study indicate that the debate on interfaith greetings has become sensitive not only because of the hadith text, but because the greeting serves as a symbolic marker of recognition, social distancing, and the ethics of one's presence in the presence of others in a plural public space (Ali, 2020; Setiawan et al., 2020). In other words, reflection on these results shows that the issue of salam is a small point that opens up a major debate about how religious traditions are negotiated in modern pluralistic societies (Kuswaya & Ali, 2021; Saeed & Akbar, 2021).

Viewed interpretively, the findings of this study lead to the conclusion that the difference in meaning in the hadiths of salam is more accurately understood as a difference in context than as a contradiction that must be resolved by choosing one narration and eliminating another, because each hadith records a different communicative situation, social relations, and normative horizon at the time of the Prophet (Wasman et al., 2023; Saeed & Akbar, 2021). This kind of approach is in line with contextual criticism of hadith that emphasizes that the validity of understanding is not enough to build from the authentication of sanad alone, but also from the ability to connect the text to the social conditions in which it emerged and to the broader moral purpose of Islamic teachings (Wasman et al., 2023; Saeed & Akbar, 2021). In that framework, the restrictive group of hadith can be read as a hadith that arises in the context of a particular tension, protection, or identity boundary, while the group of responsive and expansive hadith shows the social dimension of salam as an act of communication that remains in relation to non-Muslims, so that the entire corpus is more accurately understood as a map of the situation rather than as a single, uniform commandment (Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025; Andriana, 2018).

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This contextual reading also finds support in the classical hadith commentarial tradition. In his commentary on the hadith prohibiting Muslims from initiating greetings to Jews and Christians, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī explains in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* that the narration should be understood within a particular context of political tension and communal boundary formation during the Prophet's time rather than as an unrestricted rule applicable to all circumstances. Similarly, al-Nawawī, in his *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, maintains that while the prohibition reflects specific historical circumstances, Islam simultaneously upholds principles of good conduct, fairness, and proper social interaction with non-Muslims. These classical interpretations suggest that restrictive narrations were often connected to concrete socio-political conditions and therefore require careful contextualization when applied to contemporary plural societies. This interpretation also helps explain why overly textual readings often yield narrow conclusions: not because the text is inadequate, but because the pluralistic text is forced to serve as a single postulate without adequate contextualization (Rahman et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Therefore, the results of this study support the thesis that the contextual reading of the hadith of salam reveals the breadth of the prophetic tradition, as it allows a distinction between situation-bound instruction and social ethics with a broader scope (Wasman et al., 2023; Kuswaya & Ali, 2021).

From the perspective of prophetic ethics, the hadiths concerning greetings to non-Muslims should not be read solely through the lens of legal permissibility or prohibition, but also through the broader moral orientation of the Prophetic mission. Core ethical values repeatedly emphasized in the Sunnah, such as mercy (*raḥmah*), kindness (*birr*), justice (*ʿadl*), and the preservation of human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*), provide an important framework for understanding interreligious interaction in plural societies. Within this perspective, greetings function not merely as ritual expressions but also as forms of social communication that shape recognition, respect, and coexistence among different communities.

This perspective also resonates with the objectives of the Sharīʿah (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*), particularly the promotion of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and social harmony in heterogeneous societies. Contemporary discussions within minority jurisprudence (*fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*) similarly demonstrate that legal reasoning concerning relations with non-Muslims often takes into account changing social contexts, citizenship relations, and the practical necessities of peaceful coexistence. Consequently, contextual readings of the hadith of salām should not be understood as weakening theological commitment or religious identity, but rather as efforts to preserve the higher ethical purposes of Islam while maintaining respectful relations in contemporary plural societies.

When compared to previous research, the findings of this article expand the discussion that has been more focused on two axes, namely the axis of Muslim-non-Muslim relations in general and the axis of legal debate on interfaith greetings, but it has not always treated the hadiths of greetings as a corpus that must be thoroughly mapped before their relevance is assessed (Ali, 2020; Rahman et al., 2025). Ali's (2020) study shows that major Islamic organizations in Indonesia have normative tools to build good social relations with non-Muslims, but it does not specifically analyze the hadiths on salam as a concrete test case for such relationships (Ali, 2020). The research of Kusuma and Susilo (2020) and Prasetyo and Halimatusa'diyah (2024) also succeeded in showing the importance of social interaction and interreligious sensitivity for tolerance, but the focus is on social behavior and public attitudes, not on the structure of the hadith corpus which is the normative reference for the practice of salam in Muslim communities (Kusuma & Susilo, 2020; Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024).

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Meanwhile, the study of Yahya and Rifa'i (2025) has moved closer to the theme of this research because it connects interfaith greetings with the hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman's hadith, but the research is now going further by mapping hadith data, reception patterns, and their social relevance simultaneously in the context of contemporary Indonesia (Yahya & Rifa'i, 2025). Thus, the position of this article in the middle of the previous literature lies in its attempt to combine textual, historical, and social readings simultaneously, so that the theme of salam is not only read as a matter of verbal law, but also as a field of reception of hadith in a plural society (Wasman et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2025).

As a follow-up, the results of this study show the need to shift from the pattern of debate that only asks "is it permissible or not" to a broader scientific agenda, namely how the hadiths of salam are taught, selected, and disseminated in religious institutions, education, da'wah media, and digital spaces, because it is there that the reception of hadith works socially and shapes the public imagination about relationships with non-Muslims (Setiawan et al., 2020; Abdullah, 2025). The literature on the public response to the fatwa of interfaith salam shows that social media, da'wah platforms, and authoritative institutions play a large role in strengthening certain readings of religious texts, so further research needs to track not only the content of the hadith, but also the circulation, mediation, and authority that frame its use in society (Abdullah, 2025; Rahman et al., 2025).

From the academic side, the next urgent agenda is to further examine the relationship between the reception of the hadith of salam and the practice of interfaith communication at the local level, for example in schools, campuses, interfaith communities, and multireligious families, so that the relationship between normative texts and social life can be understood more empirically and not assumed abstractly (Kusuma & Susilo, 2020; Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024). In terms of hadith science, this research also opens space for the development of a stronger methodology for reading hadiths on interreligious relations through a combination of thematic takhrīj, sharia analysis, and contextual hermeneutics sensitive to modern plural societies (Wasman et al., 2023; Saeed & Akbar, 2021). Therefore, the practical and academic contribution of this research lies not only in the conclusion of the salam to non-Muslims, but also in the encouragement to build a hadith study that is more responsive to the challenges of coexistence, tolerance, and the ethics of coexistence in contemporary Indonesia (Subchi et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Conclusion

This study shows that the hadiths about salam to non-Muslims do not form a single normative message but rather consist of several layers of historical development that appear in different social contexts. Based on the results of data mapping, the corpus of hadith studied can be grouped into three main categories, namely hadith born in the context of tension with non-Muslims, hadith that show the Prophet's response to non-Muslim greetings, and hadith that encourage the spread of salam in wider social interactions. These findings confirm that debates about interfaith greetings often arise not solely because of differences in texts, but also because of differences in selecting, sorting, and emphasizing certain histories as legal bases. Thus, the main problem lies in the way the hadith is read and received, not in the absence of a textual foundation. On that basis, this study concludes that partial recitation of the hadith of salam tends to yield a narrow understanding, whereas a thorough reading reveals a more complex, layered structure of meaning.

Scientifically, this article contributes to the study of contemporary hadith by offering readings that connect the corpus of hadiths, their interpretive history, and their relevance in Indonesia's pluralistic society. The first contribution lies in the attempt to compile the hadiths on the salutation

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to non-Muslims as a single interrelated thematic corpus, rather than as stand-alone postulates. The second contribution lies in the use of contextual hermeneutic approaches to distinguish between a hadith bound to a particular situation and one with a wider ethical reach in social relations. The third contribution is the affirmation that the issue of interfaith greetings should be read as part of social communication between religious communities, not merely as a binary legal debate. Thus, this article not only enriches the discussion of the hadith of Muslim–non-Muslim relations but also offers a more inclusive academic framework for understanding how prophetic traditions work in contemporary social spaces.

This research also opens up several important agendas for further research. First, the next research needs to examine how hadiths about salam to non-Muslims are received, taught, and disseminated in religious institutions, educational spaces, da'wah media, and digital platforms, so that the relationship between normative texts and social practices can be better understood empirically.

Second, field studies of the practice of greeting in multireligious communities, interfaith families, or local public spaces would help illuminate how normative discourses actually operate in everyday life. Third, further research can also extend the approach used in this article to other themes in the hadith related to interreligious relations, such as congratulations, social cooperation, or participation in shared civic space. Thus, the continuation of research in this field is not only important for the development of hadith studies but also relevant for the strengthening of the ethics of coexistence and social harmony in a pluralistic society. This study is limited to textual and documentary analysis and does not include empirical investigation of Muslim practices regarding interfaith greetings in contemporary Indonesia. Future studies may employ ethnographic or survey-based approaches to examine how these interpretations operate within everyday social interactions.

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