

RECATEGORISATION FRAMEWORK GROUNDED IN SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY FOR PROMOTING RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

TUMIRAN, M. A.¹ – MOHAMMAD, N.¹ – MANSOR, S. K. M.¹ – RAHIM, S. I. A.^{1*} – HALED, M. H. M.² – SALLEH, S.³

¹ *Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor, Malaysia.*

² *Center for Foundation Studies, Management and Science University, Selangor, Malaysia.*

³ *Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

**Corresponding author
e-mail: idha63[at]uitm.edu.my*

(Received 11th June 2026; revised 28th August 2026; accepted 15th September 2026)

Abstract. Religious diversity is an increasing feature of contemporary societies, which requires effective mechanisms to enhance peaceful coexistence and social cohesion. But many attempts at religious tolerance are piecemeal and not firmly grounded in well-established social psychological theory, limiting their capacity to effect sustainable change in intergroup bias and conflict. The present research aims to develop a theory-driven framework to enhance religious tolerance through the recategorisation process within Social Identity Theory. The framework was developed through a content analysis of academic literature and an iterative framework development methodology that integrated identity processes, intergroup contact, and superordinate identity formation. The results show that the framework consistently turns identity-based divisions into shared social identities, makes intergroup interactions more meaningful, reduces bias, and encourages open-mindedness. The framework also provides structured educational guidance, encourages community-based interventions, improves reflective learning, and fosters social cohesion. The study concludes that recategorisation is a viable mechanism for promoting sustainable religious tolerance. Future research should test the framework empirically in different multicultural and multireligious settings.

Keywords: *social identity theory, recategorisation, religious tolerance, intergroup relations, superordinate identity*

Introduction

In contemporary societies, religious diversity has become increasingly important as a characteristic and calls for effective approaches to promote peaceful coexistence among people from different faith traditions. With the spread of globalisation, migration, and digital communication, religious communities meet each other more frequently. This provides opportunities for collaboration but also presents challenges related to identity-based differences (Verkuyten et al., 2023). Religious identity remains a significant source of social belonging and self-definition, shaping how people view members of their group and others (Efremov, 2025). The Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive some of their self-concept from group memberships, usually favouring their in-groups and drawing clearer distinctions between themselves and their out-groups (Khadka, 2024). More recent research also shows that inclusive identity formation, along with positive intergroup contact, helps foster social cohesion and tolerance in multicultural societies (Valsecchi et al., 2024).

Despite the availability of rich bilateral communication and outreach tools, fostering positive intercultural and interreligious attitudes remains challenging due to systemic socio-cultural barriers (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2023). However, traditional approaches to tolerance-building focus primarily on increasing interactions and do not address the underlying mental processes that contribute to social division (Shafi et al., 2024). Some counter-bias actions are adopted temporarily after an intervention, yet remain nominal because people dislike cognitive dissonance (Lestari, 2024). While contemporary egalitarian ideals heavily prioritise inclusivity and denounce intolerance, there remains a distinct lack of actionable models to implement these concepts effectively (Leder et al., 2025). Simplistic solutions, superficial politeness, or mere political correctness cannot always achieve peace. Hence, one needs to be ready for change to achieve real engagement and increase social cohesion, and this is where existing models fall short in promoting or facilitating such change. Addressing these biases requires emotional consideration paired with precise, measurable interventions. Unless socio-cognitive interventions are structurally aligned and supported, efforts to achieve peaceful coexistence will likely reach an impasse.

The objective of this paper is to develop a recategorisation framework, grounded in Social Identity Theory, to promote religious tolerance through structured identity-transformation processes. Recategorisation is proposed as a strategy to reduce intergroup bias by enabling members of different social groups to be seen as sharing a common social identity (Oyler et al., 2022). The proposed model is also relevant to advancing current knowledge by translating social psychological concepts, usually theoretical, into a framework useful for education, community engagement, and even policy interventions. This model can also contribute to presenting a structured approach to relationships with others and, at the same time, promoting the cause of humanity and collective interests (Poluektova et al., 2026). In this sense, the framework's very specific objectives are actions aimed at improving social harmony, addressing disrespect, and promoting the acceptance of different religious beliefs in inclusive ways across different societies (Ahmadi and Tabar, 2025). Systemic barriers to promoting diversity at the ground level are sufficiently addressed by the recursive inclusion of these broad psychosocial themes into everyday practices and are ultimately removed. In this sense, the management of community relations is more of a practical, mutually beneficial operation that prevents the development of destructive cycles in the social order.

Review of literature

Many researchers and educators studying social behaviour in society and interactions between members of different groups prefer Social Identity Theory (SIT). SIT assumes a model in which individuals locate and place themselves and others within social groups consisting of in-groups and out-groups, with specific measures of attitude and behaviour (Williams et al., 2023). Recent research demonstrates that an individual's awareness of their social identity directly influences their perception of social inclusion or exclusion in a multidimensional world (Ng et al., 2025). It is also clear that the impact of positive and negative contacts on mobilising both dominant and stigmatised groups is complex, as it is mediated by the target group (Craig et al., 2020). Specifically, studies in educational and community contexts argue that endorsing in-group values can exacerbate bias in the face of perceived intergroup threats when group members are motivated to protect their group relative to others (Bianco et al., 2021).

However, the use of positive self-presentation or positive social behaviour of oneself and the members of other groups can decrease intergroup tensions (Glasford et al., 2009). This evidence implies that social identity phenomena should be central in the analysis of the rise of wars and peace-making processes in the context of social identities.

In the Common In-group Identity Model (CIIM), recognition and reclassification are labelled as advancements of social identity theory, especially as developed by Gaertner and Dovidio (2011). Recategorisation is the formation of a superordinate identity for its members, with the expectation that it will encompass the former boundaries of the subordinate group (Dovidio et al., 1997). Research suggests that delaying categorisation is linked to reduced prejudice because it leads people to see others as belonging to the same broad group they are in, which enhances positive attitudes and actions toward current out-group members (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2012). However, current research on in-groups indicates that the feeling of belonging to superordinate groups is negatively associated with reducing prejudice; that is, the higher one's identification with one's individual group, the greater the prejudice towards people of other races or nationalities (Curtis, 2024). Besides, other methods to reduce in-group favouritism and improve intergroup relations have also been found effective at levels that affect not only in-group identities but also out-group identities (Kershaw et al., 2021). Thus, recent academic work seems to support the idea that recategorisation is one of the most effective ways to change perceptions of intergroup relations and to extend standard social boundaries to include different social groups.

The question of religious tolerance today has become a field of social psychology, with a new emphasis on identity, intergroup contact, and mutual understanding. On the positive side, the heterogeneity of people's beliefs and thoughts opens ways to enrichment of the society, but only when mutual conflict exists and when, in the assessment of the group members, there exist more differences that draw alarm regarding the values, mode of life, belief, or practice worth of the whole group (Fierro et al., 2024). Studies on interreligious relations have shown that mitigating these conflicts requires foundational elements: open dialogue, affective empathy, and a practical orientation towards construing relations in the most favourable way (La Mela, 2024). Further research suggests that these interfaith interactions or classroom practices based on common humanity can also serve to mitigate hostile reactions towards different religious groups (Corpuz, 2025). In these societies, religion has the potential to divide groups even as it can unite them; therefore, the call for salutary policies and interfaith activities is heightened to promote peaceful coexistence (Kimani, 2024). Moreover, existing arguments stress that addressing the fear of persecution requires robust, structured dialogue, as well as a deeper commitment to mutual forgiveness and understanding across divides (Adiprasetya, 2025). It is therefore assumed that the use of identity development and efficient intergroup contact paradigms would be beneficial to the processes of building peaceful relationships between religions or ethnic communities.

Research on the Intergroup Contact Theory reports that there continues to be significant experimental evidence in favour of reducing negative attitudes and enhancing social unity among people from different backgrounds. Recent studies have provided evidence of improved positive attitudes towards out-groups and reduced anxiety when interacting with members of different groups (McKeown et al., 2024). Good contact, which is most effective in breaking down prejudices, revolves around

conditions of equal status, the involvement of institutions, the establishment of positive relationships or behaviours with others, and other conditions that foster pleasantness and alleviate prejudice (Moran et al., 2024). Additional studies in the field of education have confirmed that contact interventions enhance empathy, the ability to change one's point of view, and intended positive behaviour toward out-group members, more so, according to Cocco et al. (2022), than other authors report. Adequately, some studies within the communal and societal sciences state that sustained engagement in intergroup contact results in higher levels of trust, inclination to give, and willingness to work together, even across social divides (De Dreu et al., 2022). Most importantly, current processes adhere to the availability of social identity, whereby contact incidents are predicted to have a greater impact when combined with common belonging mechanisms and respect for group uniqueness and diversity (Paolini et al., 2021). Therefore, focused efforts aim to utilise Intergroup Contact Theory to enhance social cohesion in diverse and inclusive societies.

One strategy for promoting harmony amid diversity within complex societies is the concept of superordinate identity formation. Superordinate identity in relation to subgroup affiliations enables individuals to feel comfortable within the new collective entity while acknowledging its historical roots (Eggins et al., 2002). Additionally, studies have shown that internalised values and beliefs which prioritise an inclusive identity over other socially loaded content foster trust, social harmony, and social well-being by encouraging individuals to feel a sense of belonging to others in a given area (Sohlberg and Esaiasson, 2024). Research on overviews of diversity management reveals propositions that foster the view that all the conflicting parties are capable of engaging in interaction and development because of common identities, respect for differences due to effective visualisation of vision, and collegial cultural values that have been won (Uğurlar et al., 2025). In other words, reducing prejudices and increasing integration and positive social attitudes in multi-ethnic societies are only possible if a higher identity is constructed in a way that includes the identities of smaller groups while acknowledging their differences (Nirwana et al., 2025). The current body of knowledge extends to describing the benefits of interreligious dialogue among college students and the necessity of valuing and respecting the differences and similarities inherent in diverse religious environments (Shamoa-Nir, 2024).

The literature review indicates that, overall, Social Identity Theory provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding religious tolerance through identity-based processes. The evidence suggests that social categorisation shapes intergroup perceptions, whereas recategorisation can transform group boundaries into less exclusive identities. The literature also supports the fact that intergroup contact is an important contributor to prejudice reduction when supported by the necessary social conditions and institutional structures. Furthermore, research frequently finds that superordinate identities are common among members of diverse communities and facilitate effective cooperation, concern, and harmony among people from different backgrounds. However, the research demonstrates that it is justified to begin developing a well-tailored system for recategorising religious tolerance, with special consideration for group strategies that include all three aspects: identity change, intergroup interaction, and social integration aimed at achieving cohesive aspirations in multi-ethnic societies.

Materials and Methods

The method employed for this study includes three aspects: (a) research approach; (b) framework development phases; and (c) advantages of the framework development approach.

Research approach

The present research, based on content analysis and an overview of the problem, applied a qualitative framework development approach. This helped to develop a cross-hierarchical rearrangement framework for those who hold different religious beliefs within the boundaries of their socio-cultural context. This was adopted as the paradigm because the research question was more conceptual, in that the very purpose was to re-articulate the socially meaningful constructs posited in Social Identity Theory into a form that can be specifically geared towards teaching, community, and policy goals (Novella and Nevriyarni, 2026; Khadka, 2024; Hogg, 2016). Framework development is particularly relevant if the planned research is connected to the fusion of existing theoretical knowledge, the creation of conceptual links, and the construction of practical models for verification and practical experiments. The process has involved multiple phases, each including literature search, concept extraction, thematic synthesis, design development, and iterative revision. The sources were identified from well-known databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, SpringerLink, ScienceDirect, and Taylor & Francis Online. The sources were found using terms such as “social identity theory”, “recategorisation”, “religious tolerance”, “intergroup relations”, “superordinate identity”, “intergroup contact”, and “prejudice reduction”, sometimes with slightly different wording. The literature review focused only on empirical studies of interest, including the processes of identity, intergroup relations, and ethics, religious, and cultural issues, as well as efforts to build tolerance. Next, all identified publications on the subject were screened and checked for similar or converging theoretical frameworks that run different programs, and so the same sets of programs could be learned within the framework of sequential education or adapted for use in a wider educational or even broader social system in terms of their benefits or outcomes.

Framework development phases

This study encompasses four stages of framework development (*Figure 1*): (a) Phase 1: Conceptual analysis and theoretical synthesis; (b) Phase 2: Framework design and structural development; (c) Phase 3: Iterative implementation and contextual application; and (d) Phase 4: Refinement, validation, and finalisation.

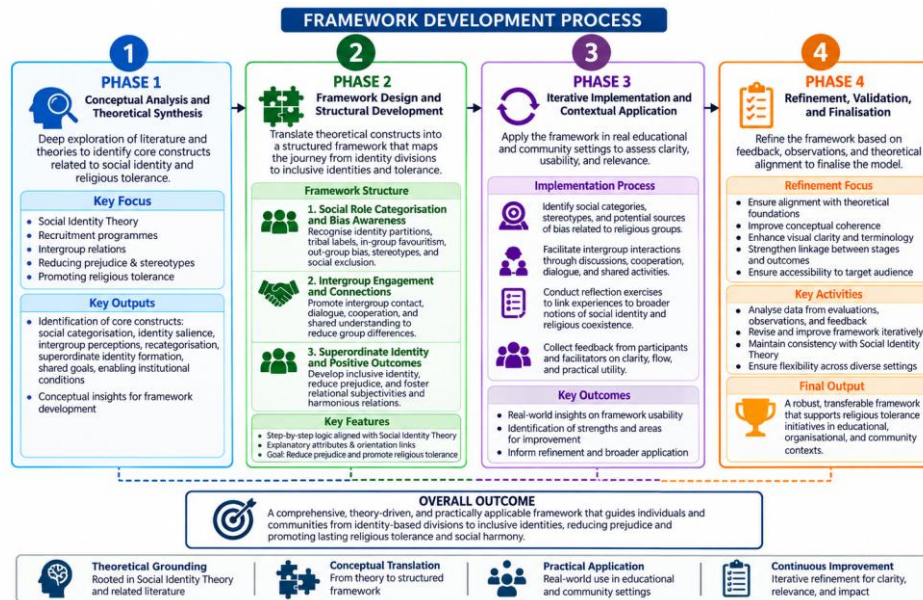


Figure 1. The process of framework development.

Phase 1: Conceptual analysis and theoretical synthesis

The first step in the research design was to think and theorise comprehensively. In this phase, a deep dive was undertaken into seminal and recent works on Social Identity Theory, recruitment programmes, intergroup relations, principles for reducing prejudices and stereotypes, and promoting religious tolerance (Novella and Nevriyarni, 2026; Klik et al., 2025; Khadka, 2024; Verkuyten et al., 2023; Paluck et al., 2021; Hogg, 2016). This phase aims to identify the most important elements of the superstructure, which are the foundational components of scientific frameworks that explain how members of society and religious communities develop their self-awareness and relationships, as well as the social structures themselves. Special attention was paid to the mechanisms by which social categorisation contributes to in-group favouritism, out-group bias, stereotyping, and social exclusion (Novella and Nevriyarni, 2026; Klik et al., 2025; Khadka, 2024; Kershaw et al., 2021). A systematic review of the literature identified several core constructs that appear especially relevant to religious tolerance: social categorisation, identity salience, intergroup perceptions, recategorisation, superordinate identity formation, shared goals, and enabling institutional conditions (Uğurlar et al., 2025; Nirwana et al., 2025; Curtis, 2024; Oyler et al., 2022; Paolini et al., 2021). The analysis also indicated that successful efforts to build tolerance are more than just exposure to diversity; they involve the intentional engagement of cognitive and social processes that influence attitudes toward intergroup relations (Choli, 2026; Corpuz, 2025; Shafi et al., 2024; Verkuyten et al., 2023). The framework was later developed based on these conceptual insights.

Phase 2: Framework design and structural development

Following the conceptual synthesis, the second phase involved translating theoretical constructs into a structured visual framework to map the conceptual relationships. The aim was to construct a coherent model that portrays the evolution from identity-based divisions to inclusive social identities and religious tolerance. The framework was devised with step-by-step logic that reflects the psychological processes outlined under

Social Identity Theory (Novella and Nevriyarni, 2026; Khadka, 2024; Hogg, 2016). In this phase, the conceptual links that emerged from the content analysis were mapped into connected stages that reflect the evolution of people's perceptions of social identity over time. Translating abstract theoretical concepts into a structured, applicable framework presented both analytical challenges and practical clarity. The structure they were designing consisted of three main parts. The first part involves social role categorisation and bias concerns, which help people recognise the identity partitions and tribal labels that exist in their minds. This difficulty renders the desired effect unattainable. Interventions such as interpersonal group dynamics seek to address exit attempts by creating intergroup linkages and facilitating intergroup contact, so that cultural dialogue can be maintained and group differences can be made less substantive (Friehts et al., 2025; McKeown et al., 2024; Paolini et al., 2021). The third and final level highlights the resulting behaviours related to positive changes in superordinate identity and prejudice, encouraging participants to adopt a more inclusive perspective based on the given context (Uğurlar et al., 2025; Nirwana et al., 2025; Curtis, 2024; Sohlberg and Esaiaasson, 2024). Additionally, some explanatory attributes and orientation links were included to illustrate the process of change across all levels of perception within the structure. More importantly, the goals of the stages are to reduce prejudice and promote religious tolerance (Choli, 2026; Corpuz, 2025; Shafi et al., 2024; Paluck et al., 2021).

Phase 3: Iterative implementation and contextual application

Phase three consisted of using the framework in educational and community settings. Following the principles of design-based research, the framework was employed in some activities, including discussions on religious diversity, intergroup relations, and social harmony. The implementation was not intended to be a formal hypothesis test but a means of judging the conceptual clarity, usability, and relevance of the framework in real-world settings. Participants engaged with elements of the framework before, during, and after structured learning and interaction activities. The first phase involved identifying social categories, stereotypes, and potential sources of bias that could affect participants' perceptions of religious groups (Novella and Nevriyarni, 2026; Klik et al., 2025; Shafi et al., 2024). The following activities were designed to facilitate interactions to promote cooperation, dialogue, and mutual understanding among people from different backgrounds (Choli, 2026; Corpuz, 2025; Uğurlar et al., 2025; McKeown et al., 2024). Reflection exercises were part of the curriculum, aimed at encouraging participants to connect their experiences to broader notions of social identity and religious coexistence. Facilitator and participant feedback provided insight into the framework's understanding, its logical flow, and its practical utility. The observations were of enormous importance for improving the framework and its broader implementation across different educational and community settings.

Phase 4: Refinement, validation, and finalisation

The fourth phase focused on the refinement and eventual finalisation of the framework. A detailed analysis of data collected from conceptual evaluations, participant observations, facilitator feedback, and reflective discussions was conducted to pinpoint areas for improvement. Particular attention was paid to ensuring that each element of the framework was aligned with theoretical concepts and remained

accessible to the target audience. The revisions were focused on increasing conceptual coherence, improving visual legibility, refining terminology, and enhancing the fit between the framework stages and expected outcomes. The iterative nature of this refinement process enabled the research team to resolve ambiguities and enhance the model's practical relevance. Throughout this period, the team strove to remain consistent with the core assumptions of social identity theory while allowing for flexible application across a range of settings (Novella and Nevriyarni, 2026; Khadka, 2024; Hogg, 2016). Thus, the final framework resulted from a cycle of theory testing, conceptual translation, practical rollout, and continuous improvement. Therefore, this work has contributed to the development of a solid and transferable model that supports religious tolerance initiatives in educational environments, organisational contexts, and community settings (Choli, 2026; Corpuz, 2025; Adiprasetya, 2025; Shafi et al., 2024).

Advantages of the framework development approach

While framework development is an unconventional approach for literature reviews, it effectively synthesises diverse theoretical perspectives into a cohesive model, minimising conceptual ambiguity in practical applications. Additionally, completing this research report involved reviewing the existing literature, which facilitated the identification of key concepts and relationships within it, as well as how to review them in an orderly manner. With this approach, it is possible to justify the way the research questions are posed, ensuring that the components of the framework remain thematically consistent and structurally aligned. Fourth, development is carried out incrementally; the prototype will continue to improve through testing, thereby contextualising the model and resulting in a final configuration that is more efficient and useful. Fifth, building visual concepts based on existing theory would be challenging, especially for educators, facilitators, community programmers, and government officials who are not familiar with social psychological theory. In particular, the fourth stage of the framework is a set of tasks for the next implementation. The full development of the framework promotes its validation by clearly defining the concepts and their relationships to specific research questions, whether in quantitative or qualitative research. This method helps build a deep model and identify connections with recategorisation-based interventions to enhance religious tolerance and social integration across diverse multicultural contexts (Choli, 2026; Uğurlar et al., 2025; Nirwana et al., 2025; Curtis, 2024; Oyler et al., 2022).

Results and Discussion

The main novelty of this investigation is the establishment of the Recategorisation in Social Identity Theory for Religious Tolerance Framework, which serves as a conceptual strategy supported by a set of theories aimed at promoting peace in religion by explaining how changes in identity can be organised. This framework recognises the necessary changes to the concept of Social Identity Theory and seeks to implement them through targeted interventions that help polarised individuals integrate into cohesive societies. The framework aims to shift individuals from identity-centric fault-line societies to inclusive, outside-in societies that transcend individual identities. The model operates as a dynamic, non-linear, three-stage interdependent process: (1) social categorisation and bias recognition; (2) recategorisation and intergroup engagement; and (3) superordinate identity formation and tolerance reinforcement. External factors

such as increased intercultural contact, institutional encouragement, mutual goals, and critical thinking facilitate all these stages. In summary, this aim can be guided: when a guide helps a person deliberately examine their identity-based biases, they can constructively discuss common fears about “other” people and thereby engage with individuals of different faiths in ways that may transcend religious boundaries. The final theory can be used as both a guide and an assessment tool. This framework shows how programmes aimed at improving religious harmony could be planned and implemented, and how their consequences could be tested in different environments.

Stage 1: Social categorisation and bias recognition

The first part of the scheme introduces the elements of social classifications and prejudice. Based on the material, we expect that in most cases, religious identities will be a significant factor in how individuals perceive themselves and others daily. This facet of the stage enables participants to understand the significance of in-groups and out-groups in relation to religious affiliations, challenge derogatory stereotypes of religious groups, and unearth the underlying assumptions that contribute to phobias and marginalisation. This stage is assumed to be the foundation for the transformation individuals will undergo, as it is challenging to implement change while in a cognitively unaware state. At this level of the hierarchy, the activities include reflective exercises, self-assessments of personal prejudices, case analyses, and strategic discussions. All these activities help slow down, suspend judgement, and look at what is happening. The model seeks to clarify subconscious cognitive processes, indicating to participants that their social identity influences their views on religious diversity. Thus, this section provides the intellectual foundation of the next phases of recategorisation and intergroup engagement, and ultimately, for superordinate identity formation and tolerance reinforcement.

Stage 2: Recategorisation and intergroup engagement

The recategorising process will be implemented in the second stage, with refined group interactions. Results suggest that interaction is an essential factor in reducing the emphasis on religion-dividing lines in society and making it more accepting. Rather than erasing or suppressing their religious identity, the framework posits that participants identify the core attributes, shared memories, and visionary dreams. At this stage of the programme, the methodologies highlighted include problem-solving and conflict resolution, mediation, intergroup learning in culturally diverse settings, civic activities for participants, and interfaith approaches. All these activities aim to increase meaningful contact between groups and denounce adversarial attitudes. These bonds of relationship begin to break as individuals move beyond their initial dispositions toward members of different religious groups and develop relational subjectivities based on shared social and age interests. Thus, the recategorisation procedure results in a radical reduction in immobilisation and, conversely, much greater mutual reconciliation between individuals.

Stage 3: Superordinate identity formation and tolerance reinforcement

The final component of the framework is the formation and reinforcement of superordinate identity and tolerance outcomes, which represent the cognitive internalisation of the intervention. The findings suggest that when people maintain their

religious identities while also adopting broader collective identities grounded in shared humanity, citizenship, community membership, or social responsibility, sustainable religious tolerance is strengthened. Participants learn to hold both identities simultaneously instead of sacrificing one for the other. This phase includes reflective learning activities that encourage people to connect their intergroup experiences to broader societal goals and ethical commitments. Participants are asked to internalise the principles of mutual respect, cooperation, and coexistence and translate these ideas into future behavioural intentions. Therefore, the framework is not only about quick attitudinal change but also about long-term identity transformation and social integration. The results include increased empathy, less prejudice, stronger social cohesion, and more readiness to work constructively with people from other faith communities. In conclusion, the framework suggests that superordinate identity formation is the primary mechanism for preserving religious tolerance even under changing conditions. The Recategorisation Framework Based on Social Identity Theory for Religious Tolerance is illustrated as in *Figure 2*.

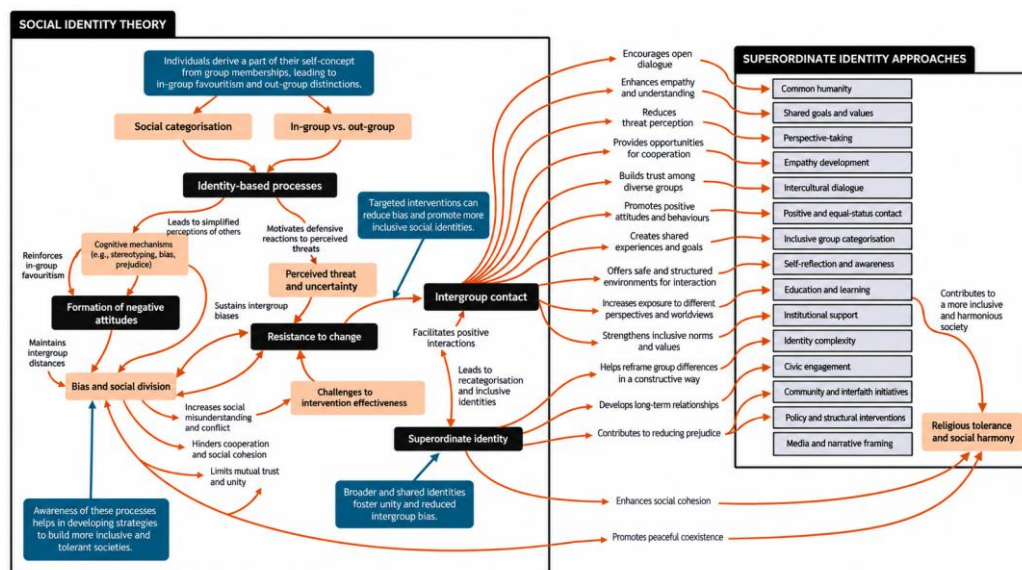


Figure 2. Recategorisation framework based on social identity theory for religious tolerance.

The findings lend support to the notion that social identity theory provides a robust theoretical foundation for developing interventions to promote religious tolerance. The Social Identity Theory explains how people derive a meaningful aspect of their self-concept from group memberships, and this understanding shapes attitudes, behaviours, and intergroup relations (Hogg, 2016). The framework developed in this study shows how social categorisation and bias recognition processes can be shifted towards more inclusive forms of identity-building through recategorisation and the development of shared superordinate identities (Shkurko, 2021). This approach is consistent with more recent evidence that social identity-based interventions are generally more effective when they target mental processes that sustain prejudice, stereotyping and intergroup biases (Novella and Nevriarni, 2026). The framework does not define “tolerance” as mere passivity or acceptance but as an active state that requires awareness, engagement, reflection, and identity change. This view is consistent with research demonstrating that interventions targeting dual and superordinate identities can improve intergroup

harmony while maintaining subgroup distinctiveness (González and Brown, 2003). Thus, the framework builds on earlier theoretical elaborations and offers a systematic model that links principles of Superordinate Identity Formation and Tolerance Reinforcement with practical pathways for promoting religious harmony and long-term coexistence in multireligious societies.

Another important aspect highlighted in this framework is the process of ‘recategorisation’ as a means to mitigate the effects of in-group bias. Recent sociological theories indicate that people are more likely to perceive out-group members positively when they share a common superordinate collective identity (Paluck et al., 2021). In the context of the axiological values held by different religious communities, contemporary sociological models highlight that the traditional definition of religious tolerance, viewed as mere exposure to diverse groups, requires more nuanced cognitive processing, involving the active recategorisation of different cultures and social structures (Shkurko, 2021). However, this framework does not focus solely on recategorisation; it also portrays it as an explicit and purposeful activity in which group structures and the scope of social membership can be revisited and redefined (Sprengholz et al., 2024). The study found that greater complexity of social identity facilitates intergroup cooperation only in particular forms, in which individuals exhibit broad, cooperative leadership styles rather than exclusive or hyper-nationalistic tendencies (Lu et al., 2025). This idea is consistent with the general theoretical framework, which suggests that shared identities and bicultural models can reduce prejudice without eroding the boundaries of beloved subgroups (Ayala and Alcalde, 2022). Finally, by making recategorisation an actionable concept within the model, the framework provides educators who aim to bring about meaningful changes in social perception and behaviour with a theory-friendly tool (Klik et al., 2025).

The results also suggest that facilitating social engagement through intergroup contacts is a secondary component of reconceptualisation. It is widely recognised that exposing youth to different forms of categorisation may help reduce negative attitudes toward members of other groups (e.g., prejudice). However, this understanding is not widespread, particularly among youth in marginalised countries; mere exposure to members of other groups limits the effect, highlighting the group’s ability to perpetuate stigma (Tropp et al., 2022). Studies, however, show that this structured form of social encounter can serve as a booster for raising achievement and facilitating attitude changes in individuals being moulded by learning theory (Friebs et al., 2025). The subsequent integration of collaboration, purposeful talk, and reflexive practice is said to help stimulate resistance to negative attitudes and beliefs towards people of other faiths among those who interact with them (Choli, 2026). This conclusion supports the assumption that the types of tolerance campaigns that generate a change of attitude have to involve people not only in social contact but also in cognitive activities (challenging their current thought patterns) (Fuochi et al., 2024). Therefore, this study extends the current understanding by adding arguments for practices that go beyond “contact” to include additional constructs, such as positive expectations, social skills, and behaviour modification (Pettigrew, 2021). In this process, everyone learns to appreciate and be exposed to different points of view. They also go through a process in which they need help with social participation to support cognitive development (Tropp, 2021).

Thus, this framework enables the opening of dialogue and the clarification of disputes regarding social cohesion and social order in multicultural settings. While religious plurality has become a feature of several modern societies, it is evident that

societies have not yet fully grasped the concept of pluralism (Yogeeswaran et al., 2021). What is offered is a work on overcoming these problems by promoting inclusive identities that traverse the religious sphere without neglecting current affiliations (Orazani et al., 2023). However, the framework does not suggest eliminating one's religious identity; rather, it provides a rationale for extending one's boundaries beyond religion, among other things, in ways that promote rootedness and compatibility with both social and religious domains (Raissi and Kappmeier, 2025). This is within the bounds of diversity management knowledge, which connotes engagement and acceptance (Inegbedion et al., 2020). Therefore, the model has extensive and universal applications for integration purposes across the numerous assumed educational facilities, non-profits, government institutions, religious fusions, and post-conflict peace programmes (Liu et al., 2025). It improves cultural awareness, mutual respect, and harmonious relations in respectful places (Jadranović et al., 2025).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study developed the Recategorisation in Social Identity Theory for Religious Tolerance Framework as a theory-based model that helps religious harmony through a structured process of identity transformation. The framework provides a systematic integration of social categorisation, bias recognition, reclassification, intergroup engagement, and superordinate identity formation into a coherent process for fostering religious tolerance, grounded in social identity theory (Novella and Nevriyarni, 2026; Klik et al., 2025; Khadka, 2024; Oyler et al., 2022). The framework contributes to the literature by operationalising abstract social-psychological concepts into a practical, replicable framework that can be applied in educational institutions, community programmes, interfaith initiatives, and policy-driven interventions (Choli, 2026; Corpuz, 2025; Shafi et al., 2024). The framework offers a way to reduce prejudice, develop empathy, and form inclusive social identities while maintaining religious distinctiveness by combining identity awareness, meaningful intergroup contact, shared goals, and reflective learning (Uğurlar et al., 2025; Friehs et al., 2025; McKeown et al., 2024; Tropp et al., 2022). The findings indicate that sustainable religious tolerance is more likely to develop when people are encouraged to see common humanity and collective social responsibilities beyond religious boundaries (Uğurlar et al., 2025; Nirwana et al., 2025; Sohlberg and Esaiasson, 2024; Orazani et al., 2023). Moreover, it provides a systematic framework for educators, policymakers, and community practitioners to plan, implement, and evaluate tolerance-building initiatives in increasingly diverse societies (Choli, 2026; Corpuz, 2025; Shafi et al., 2024). While the framework has sound theoretical and practical potential, future studies should empirically test its effectiveness using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research designs across different cultural, educational, and religious contexts. Future research may also explore the impact of demographic factors, institutional contexts, digital learning environments, and longitudinal participation on the framework's outcomes. More importantly, researchers are invited to explore the applicability of the framework across a broader range of diversity management contexts, such as ethnicity, culture, nationality, and organisational inclusion, thereby enhancing its contributions to social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies (Jadranović et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025; Inegbedion et al., 2020).

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), for its academic support and commitment to advancing research on social harmony and religious tolerance. The authors also gratefully acknowledge the Business Innovation and Technology Commercialization Centre (BITCOM), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), for providing valuable technical support, guidance, and facilitation throughout the development and documentation of this research framework. Special appreciation is extended to the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO) for officially completing the copyright registration process of the Recategorisation in Social Identity Theory for Religious Tolerance Framework, thereby recognizing and protecting the originality and intellectual contribution of this research output. The authors further acknowledge all individuals, educators, facilitators, and participants whose insights and feedback contributed to the framework's refinement and practical development.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare the following personal relationship: Co-authors Siriaupa Salleh and Nasharuddin Mohammad are spouses. The authors report that this relationship did not influence the research method, the theoretical synthesis of the framework, or the objective reporting of the findings in this publication. All authors declare no additional conflicting financial or non-financial interests that could be interpreted to have influenced the work reported here.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adiprasetya, J. (2025): Befriending religious others. – *The Ecumenical Review* 76(5): 488-499.
- [2] Ahmadi, P., Tabar, F.M. (2025): Modeling structural relationships between dimensions of personal, social, and national identity among students at Islamic Azad University, Hamedan. – *Health Nexus* 3(2): 120-131.
- [3] Ayala, R.L., Alcalde, J.W.E. (2022): Better attitudes toward foreigners: Effects of dual-identity, identity fusion with the country and humanity. – *Psyke* 31(SI 1): 1-14.
- [4] Bianco, F., Kasic, A., Pierro, A. (2021): The mediating role of national identification, binding foundations and perceived threat on the relationship between need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants in Malta. – *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 32(2): 172-185.
- [5] Choli, I. (2026): Collaborative learning strategies to increase religious tolerance in students: Building an inclusive and moderate attitude in the campus environment. – *Jurnal At-Tarbiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9(1): 23-31.
- [6] Cocco, V.M., Bisagno, E., Visintin, E.P., Cadamuro, A., Di Bernardo, G.A., Shamloo, S.E., Trifiletti, E., Molinari, L., Vezzali, L. (2022): Once upon a time...: Using fairy tales as a form of vicarious contact to prevent stigma-based bullying among schoolchildren. – *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 33(2): 186-201.
- [7] Corpuz, J. (2025): Using the parable of the blind men and the elephant as a pedagogical tool for teaching religious pluralism. – *Teaching Theology & Religion* 28(2): 130-136.
- [8] Craig, M.A., Badaan, V., Brown, R.M. (2020): Acting for whom, against what? Group membership and multiple paths to engagement in social change. – *Current Opinion in Psychology* 35: 41-48.

- [9] Curtis, K.A. (2024): European identity's effect on immigration attitudes: Testing the predictions of the common in-group identity model versus in-group projection model. – *Political Psychology* 45(5): 803-825.
- [10] De Dreu, C.K., Fariña, A., Gross, J., Romano, A. (2022): Prosociality as a foundation for intergroup conflict. – *Current Opinion in Psychology* 44: 112-116.
- [11] Dovidio, J.F., Gaertner, S.L., Validzic, A., Matoka, K., Johnson, B., Frazier, S. (1997): Extending the benefits of recategorization: Evaluations, self-disclosure, and helping. – *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 33(4): 401-420.
- [12] Efremov, A. (2025): The psychology of faith and religious identity: How theology shapes worldview and self-perception. – *Pharos Journal of Theology* 106(3): 1-15.
- [13] Eggins, R.A., Haslam, S.A., Reynolds, K.J. (2002): Social identity and negotiation: Subgroup representation and superordinate consensus. – *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 28(7): 887-899.
- [14] Fierro, J., Parella, S., Sharifi, M. (2024): Public support for the accommodation of religious diversity: The interplay between religious identification, threat perception, and cross-group friendships. – *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 64(1): 38-55.
- [15] Friehs, M., Plaza Reveco, A., Schäfer, S.J., González, R., Christ, O. (2025): Does intergroup contact affect political attitudes and behaviours? A longitudinal test of tertiary transfer effects using the Chilean Longitudinal Social Survey (ELSOC). – *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 35(3): 18p.
- [16] Fuochi, G., Boin, J., Lucarini, A., Voci, A. (2024): Open your eyes, open your mind: The profile of cognitive liberalization and intergroup contact experiences. – *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 34(5): 16p.
- [17] Gaertner, S.L., Dovidio, J.F. (2012): Reducing intergroup bias: The common in-group identity model. – In: Van Lange, P.A.M., Kruglanski, A.W., Higgins, E.T. (eds.): *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology* Vol. 2, Sage Publications 19p.
- [18] Gaertner, S.L., Dovidio, J.F. (2011): Common in-group identity model. – In: *The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*, Wiley 5p.
- [19] Glasford, D.E., Dovidio, J.F., Pratto, F. (2009): I continue to feel so good about us: In-group identification and the use of social identity-enhancing strategies to reduce intragroup dissonance. – *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 35(4): 415-427.
- [20] González, R., Brown, R. (2003): Generalization of positive attitude as a function of subgroup and superordinate group identifications in intergroup contact. – *European Journal of Social Psychology* 33(2): 195-214.
- [21] Hogg, M.A. (2016): Social identity theory. – In: McKeown, S., Haji, R., Ferguson, N. (eds.): *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory*, Springer, Cham 14p.
- [22] Inegbedion, H., Sunday, E., Asaleye, A., Lawal, A., Adebajji, A. (2020): Managing diversity for organizational efficiency. – *Sage Open* 10(1): 10p.
- [23] Jadranović, K., Ali, N.H., Sadoon, A.S., Schmid, L.A. (2025): Dynamics of social cohesion in post-conflict Mosul: Group perspectives, challenges and facilitators. – *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 35(5): 14p.
- [24] Kershaw, C., Rast, D.E., Hogg, M.A., van Knippenberg, D. (2021): Battling in-group bias with effective intergroup leadership. – *British Journal of Social Psychology* 60(3): 765-785.
- [25] Khadka, C. (2024): Social identity theory and group behavior. – *TUTA Journal* 16p.
- [26] Kimani, S. (2024): The influence of religious beliefs on social behavior and community cohesion. – *International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences* 3(3): 60-73.
- [27] Klik, K.A., Utomo, M.C., Jones, B., Batalha, L., Tropp, L.R., Reynolds, K.J. (2025): Social identity processes in the field: The role of group norms and social identification in prejudice reduction. – *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 55(9): 663-677.
- [28] La Mela, V. (2024): Meeting the religious other. – *The Ecumenical Review* 76(1-2): 38-53.

- [29] Leder, D., Vaart, W.V.D., Machielse, A. (2025): The impact of religious identity on intergroup encounters. – *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 48(2): 215-235.
- [30] Lestari, P.A. (2024): Educating for tolerance: Multicultural approaches in Islamic religious education. – *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 2(2): 96-108.
- [31] Liu, J.H., Hopner, V., Muldoon, O., Khan, S. (2025): Advancing the interface between research and practice in sustainable development: A view from Political Psychology. – *Political Psychology* 46(6): 1415-1418.
- [32] Lu, F., Yang, J., Yao, X., Song, Y., Chen, D., Zhang, T., Zhang, F. (2025): The impact of social identity complexity on intergroup parochial and universal cooperation under different payoff structures and frames. – *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 116: 11p.
- [33] McKeown, S., Schaefer, C.D., Ali, S., Dupont, P., Manley, D., Rao, S., Taylor, L.K., Meleady, R. (2024): The longitudinal relationship between youth intergroup contact and social cohesion outcomes in two divided societies. – *European Journal of Social Psychology* 55(6): 1016-1031.
- [34] Moran, D., Liu, V., Taylor, L. (2024): Who, how, and when do children help? A systematic review of children's out-group prosocial behavior. – *Political Psychology* 45(S1): 119-155.
- [35] Ng, J.H., Morton, T.A., Kirby, T.A. (2025): Cultural fit in campus spaces: Acculturation orientations shape the perceived restorativeness of minority and majority environments. – *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 55(12): 1004-1018.
- [36] Nirwana, M.D., Kriyantono, R., Mashuri, A., Hakim, M.L. (2025): Strategic communication of superordinate identity in international marketing: Evidence from Malaysia Madani to reduce Indonesian tourism avoidance. – *Asia Pacific Management and Business Application* 14(1): 49-70.
- [37] Novella, A.W.F., Nevriyarni, S. (2026): Teori identitas sosial, stereotipe & prasangka. – *Jurnal Riset Multidisiplin Edukasi* 3(1): 505-515.
- [38] Orazani, S.N., Reynolds, K.J., Osborne, H. (2023): What works and why in interventions to strengthen social cohesion: A systematic review. – *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 53(10): 938-995.
- [39] Oyler, D.L., Price-Blackshear, M.A., Pratscher, S.D., Bettencourt, B.A. (2022): Mindfulness and intergroup bias: A systematic review. – *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 25(4): 1107-1138.
- [40] Paluck, E.L., Porat, R., Clark, C.S., Green, D.P. (2021): Prejudice reduction: Progress and challenges. – *Annual Review of Psychology* 72: 533-560.
- [41] Paolini, S., White, F.A., Tropp, L.R., Turner, R.N., Page-Gould, E., Barlow, F.K., Gómez, Á. (2021): Intergroup contact research in the 21st century: Lessons learned and forward progress if we remain open. – *Journal of Social Issues* 77(1): 11-37.
- [42] Pettigrew, T.F. (2021): Advancing intergroup contact theory: Comments on the issue's articles. – *Journal of Social Issues* 77(1): 258-273.
- [43] Poluektova, O., Spaccatini, F., Giovannelli, I., Pagliaro, S., Pacilli, M.G. (2026): Bridging the gap in public trust in science: An intergroup relations perspective. – *British Journal of Social Psychology* 65(1): 8p.
- [44] Raissi, H., Kappmeier, M. (2025): Implications of religious salience and religious practices on the senses of belonging to the larger Aotearoa/New Zealand society and the Muslim community. – *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* 20(4): 959-978.
- [45] Shafi, S., Akbar, W., Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2024): A study of reducing prejudice and improving intergroup relations of the students at school level through different teaching approaches. – *Global Social Sciences Review* 9(4): 124-134.
- [46] Shamo-Nir, L. (2024): Exploring contact theory in intergroup dialogue: An examination of attitudes and experiences in secular-religious discourse across diverse socio-religious subgroups. – *Cogent Social Sciences* 10(1): 17p.

- [47] Shkurko, A.V. (2021): Strategies of universalism: Ten routes toward unbiased solutions to social problems. – *International Social Science Journal* 72(243): 9-27.
- [48] Skinner-Dorkenoo, A.L., George, M., Wages III, J.E., Sánchez, S., Perry, S.P. (2023): A systemic approach to the psychology of racial bias within individuals and society. – *Nature Reviews Psychology* 2(7): 392-406.
- [49] Sohlberg, J., Esaiasson, P. (2024): Dual superordinate identities in Sweden's vulnerable neighborhoods: Stronger local and national identities associated with increases in institutional and interpersonal trust. – *Political Psychology* 46(2): 435-454.
- [50] Sprengholz, P., Betsch, C., Böhm, R. (2024): Experimental testing of three categorization-based interventions to reduce prejudice and discrimination against the unvaccinated in the aftermath of COVID-19. – *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 24(2): 552-566.
- [51] Tropp, L.R. (2021): Crossing to safety: Attachment processes in intergroup contact. – *Journal of Social Issues* 77(1): 86-104.
- [52] Tropp, L.R., White, F., Rucinski, C.L., Tredoux, C. (2022): Intergroup contact and prejudice reduction: Prospects and challenges in changing youth attitudes. – *Review of General Psychology* 26(3): 342-360.
- [53] Uğurlar, P., Dorrough, A.R., Isler, O., Yilmaz, O. (2025): Shared group memberships mitigate intergroup bias in cooperation. – *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 16(2): 214-223.
- [54] Valsecchi, G., Berent, J., Borinca, I., Green, E.G., Falomir-Pichastor, J.M. (2024): Inclusive social norms and nationals' positive intergroup orientations toward refugees: The moderating role of initial prejudice and intergroup contact. – *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 27(2): 322-347.
- [55] Verkuyten, M., Yogeeswaran, K., Adelman, L. (2023): The social psychology of intergroup tolerance and intolerance. – *European Review of Social Psychology* 34(1): 1-43.
- [56] Williams, S.A., Eden, S., Megdal, S.B., Joe-Gaddy, V. (2023): Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in water dialogues: A review and conceptualization. – *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education* 177(1): 113-139.
- [57] Yogeeswaran, K., Gale, J., Verkuyten, M. (2021): Interculturalism as a strategy to manage diversity: Moving psychological research beyond colorblindness and multiculturalism. – *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 15(10): 16p.