

The Role of Buddhist Preachers in Community Guidance Through Javanese Culture in Batu City

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Article History:

Received: 08 April 2026

Revised: 27 April 2026

Accepted: 10 Mei 2026

Keywords:

Buddhist extension workers, Javanese culture, community development, Dhamma, social cohesion, spiritual resilience.

Abstract: *This study examines the role of Buddhist religious extension workers in fostering Buddhist communities in Batu through a Javanese cultural approach. It aims to analyze how the integration of local cultural values strengthens religious guidance amid challenges such as declining community participation and limited supporting resources. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at selected temples. The data were analyzed using triangulation techniques and SWOT analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges in the community development process. The findings reveal that integrating Javanese cultural values with Buddhist teachings (Dhamma) strengthens social cohesion, enhances emotional connectedness between extension workers and community members, and reinforces a more adaptive cultural-religious identity. These findings suggest that a culture-based approach not only improves the effectiveness of religious extension services but also strengthens the spiritual resilience and sustainability of Buddhist communities amid ongoing social change.*

INTRODUCTION

Religious life in Indonesia reflects a dynamic interaction between religion, culture, and social structure. Religion functions not only as a system of spiritual belief but also as a social and cultural system that shapes individual and communal behavior. In this context, Buddhism in Indonesia, particularly on the island of Java, has developed through a long process of acculturation with local culture, giving rise to distinctive religious practices reflected in rituals, traditions, and community development patterns imbued with moral values and local wisdom (Subarno et al, 2020). The integration of Dhamma teachings with Javanese cultural values—such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), etiquette (unggah-ungguh), and respect for ancestors—has produced a contextualized form of religious expression that is closely connected to the social lives of Buddhist communities.

Javanese culture plays a strategic role in internalizing religious values, as it emphasizes balance, harmony, and life equilibrium (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). These values are closely aligned with Buddhist teachings, particularly Majjhima Patipada (the Middle Way) and the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) (Dittisampanno, 2021; Dayu et al, 2021). Previous studies indicate that

culture-based religious guidance is more effective than formalistic or purely normative approaches, as it addresses emotional and social dimensions and enhances community acceptance of religious messages (Novianty, 2019). Consequently, local culture serves not merely as a complement to religious activities but as a strategic instrument in community religious development.

Within Indonesia's religious service system, religious extension workers constitute strategic human resources who serve as the frontline agents of community guidance. They are responsible for disseminating religious teachings, fostering moral development, and strengthening social cohesion within pluralistic communities (Kemenag RI, 2019). From a human resource management perspective, the performance of religious extension workers is a crucial indicator of the success of public religious services, as it directly affects the effectiveness of value transmission, behavioral change among religious adherents, and the sustainability of guidance programs (Farchan, 2020; Patsan, 2020).

Prior research demonstrates that the performance of religious extension workers is influenced by professional competence, work motivation, communication skills, and socio-cultural understanding of the communities they serve (Sueca, 2018). Extension workers who are able to adapt their guidance approaches to local cultural characteristics tend to be more effective and to establish stronger social bonds with community members (Sari, 2021). These findings suggest that the management of religious extension workers extends beyond administrative concerns and involves contextual human resource development and service management strategies.

In Batu City, monasteries (vihara) and cetya function not only as places of worship but also as centers for social activities, education, and Buddhist community development. Batu City is known for a society that strongly preserves Javanese cultural values, requiring Buddhist extension workers to integrate Dhamma teachings with local wisdom. The incorporation of Javanese culture into religious activities—such as the use of the Javanese language, traditional arts, and local customs in *pujabakti*—reflects an adaptive and contextual approach to community guidance (Mariyono, 2024; Lamirin & Bhadrastudhiyanti, 2021; Wibisono, 2020).

However, various challenges related to the performance of Buddhist extension workers persist in practice. Some extension workers have not fully utilized the potential of local culture as a medium for religious guidance, resulting in activities that remain ceremonial and lack participatory engagement (Hartono, 2022). Additionally, limitations in the number of extension workers, inadequate facilities, and suboptimal institutional coordination undermine the effectiveness of religious services (Karsono, 2015). The lack of cross-cultural communication training further constrains extension workers' ability to contextualize Dhamma teachings (Setyaningsih, 2020). Moreover, performance evaluation mechanisms remain dominated by quantitative administrative indicators, while qualitative outcomes—such as behavioral change and social harmony—receive insufficient attention (Kemenag RI, 2021; Madiyono et al, 2018).

These conditions reveal a gap between the ideal role of religious extension workers as agents of community development and the realities of field performance. Therefore, there is a need for research that positions Buddhist extension workers as subjects of human resource management, particularly in the context of culture-based religious service management. In line with the national program on strengthening religious moderation, extension workers are expected to adapt to local wisdom without compromising the core substance of religious teachings (Kemenag RI, 2021).

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to examine the implementation of Buddhist religious extension services in Batu City using a Javanese cultural approach, identify the challenges encountered, and formulate strategies to improve extension workers' performance from a human resource management and religious service management perspective. Accordingly, this

qualitative study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) how are Buddhist religious extension services and community guidance implemented through a Javanese cultural approach in Batu City; (2) what challenges are faced in managing culture-based religious services; and (3) how do Buddhist extension workers develop strategies to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Javanese culture-based community guidance in Batu City.

Contains a description of the background of the problem being solved, issues related to the problem being solved, research reviews that have been carried out previously by other researchers that are relevant to the research being carried out, and supported by relevant literature reviews. References use APA Style 6th edition and this research uses bodynotes. (Times New Roman, size 12, Spacing: before 0 pt; after 0 pt, Line spacing: 1)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious extension workers play a pivotal role in the implementation of public religious services and community development in Indonesia. As frontline agents of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, extension workers are responsible for disseminating religious teachings, strengthening moral values, and fostering social harmony within diverse social and cultural contexts (Kemenag RI, 2019). In the context of Buddhism, extension workers function not only as transmitters of Dhamma teachings but also as facilitators of spiritual growth and community empowerment (Farchan, 2020).

Previous studies highlight that the effectiveness of religious extension services is closely related to the performance of extension workers, which encompasses professional competence, communication skills, adaptability, and socio-cultural sensitivity (Sueca, 2018; Patsan, 2020). Performance is not merely measured by the frequency of activities conducted but also by the quality of interaction, community engagement, and the sustainability of religious guidance programs (Madiyono et al., 2018). This perspective positions religious extension workers as strategic human resources whose management directly influences the success of religious service delivery.

Human resource management (HRM) in religious institutions emphasizes the strategic development of personnel to achieve organizational and service objectives. In the context of public religious services, HRM involves recruitment, training, performance evaluation, motivation, and competency development tailored to the socio-cultural environment of the community (Farchan, 2020). Effective HRM ensures that extension workers possess not only doctrinal knowledge but also interpersonal and cultural competencies required to engage communities meaningfully. Research indicates that performance-based HRM systems in religious services remain largely administrative, focusing on quantitative indicators such as attendance, reporting, and program completion (Kemenag RI, 2021). However, qualitative dimensions—such as behavioral transformation, community cohesion, and value internalization—are often overlooked (Patsan, 2020). This imbalance underscores the need for HRM models that integrate cultural responsiveness and service quality into performance assessment frameworks.

Culture-based religious guidance refers to the integration of local cultural values, symbols, language, and traditions into religious outreach activities to enhance relevance and acceptance within the community (Novianty, 2019). In Indonesia, where cultural diversity is deeply rooted, religious guidance that aligns with local wisdom has been shown to be more effective than rigid, normative approaches (Sari, 2021). Such approaches allow religious messages to resonate with the lived experiences of community members, fostering emotional connection and participatory engagement.

Studies on religious acculturation demonstrate that local culture can function as a medium

for internalizing religious values without compromising doctrinal substance (Subarno et al., 2020). By contextualizing teachings within familiar cultural frameworks, extension workers can facilitate deeper understanding and long-term commitment among adherents. This approach is particularly relevant in pluralistic societies, where cultural sensitivity contributes to social harmony and religious moderation.

Javanese culture emphasizes harmony, balance, mutual respect, and social cohesion—values that align closely with Buddhist teachings such as the Middle Way (*Majjhima Patipada*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*) (Koentjaraningrat, 2009; Dittisampanno, 2021). The incorporation of Javanese cultural elements into Buddhist religious practices, including the use of local language, traditional arts, and communal rituals, represents a form of cultural adaptation that strengthens religious identity while preserving local heritage (Lamirin & Bhadrastudhiyanti, 2021; Wibisono, 2020).

Empirical research suggests that Buddhist communities in Java respond positively to religious activities that reflect their cultural background, as these practices reinforce a sense of belonging and collective identity (Mariyono, 2024). Cultural integration in pujabakti and community rituals not only enhances participation but also serves as a bridge between spiritual teachings and everyday social life.

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of culture-based religious guidance faces several challenges. Limited numbers of extension workers, inadequate facilities, and insufficient institutional coordination often hinder program effectiveness (Karsono, 2015). Furthermore, not all extension workers possess adequate training in cultural communication and participatory methods, resulting in religious activities that are symbolic rather than transformative (Hartono, 2022; Setyaningsih, 2020).

Another challenge lies in performance evaluation systems that prioritize administrative compliance over qualitative outcomes. This approach restricts innovation and discourages extension workers from developing culturally responsive strategies (Kemenag RI, 2021). Consequently, there remains a gap between policy expectations and field-level implementation, particularly in regions with strong local cultural identities such as Batu City.

Contains the theoretical basis used in this study. In this section it is suggested to include many expert opinions and various references to strengthen this research.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using an explanatory case study design. A qualitative approach was selected to enable an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural settings by emphasizing meanings, processes, and contextual interpretations rather than numerical measurement (Moleong, 2000; Mardawani, 2020). The case study design allowed for a comprehensive examination of real-life practices, challenges, and strategic responses related to Buddhist religious extension services within a specific socio-cultural environment (Fitrah, 2017; Herdiansyah, 2010). The research was conducted at the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Batu City, located at Jl. Sultan Agung No. 10, Sisir, Batu, East Java, Indonesia. This institution functions as the administrative and operational center for Buddhist religious extension services in the region, making it a strategic site for investigating the integration of Dharma teachings and Javanese cultural values in community guidance.

The population of this study comprised all stakeholders involved in the implementation and management of Buddhist religious extension services in Batu City. The research sample consisted of selected informants determined through purposive sampling. This sampling technique was

chosen because it allows the selection of participants who possess relevant experience, knowledge, and direct involvement in Buddhist religious extension activities, ensuring data richness and relevance to the research objectives. The informant selection criteria included: (1) Buddhist religious extension workers (civil servants and government contract employees) who had actively conducted community guidance activities for a minimum of two years; (2) institutional leaders responsible for policy formulation and coordination of religious services, including the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Batu City and the Head of Padepokan Dhammadiipa Ārāma Batu; (3) administrators of *vihara* and *cetya* as well as community leaders who were directly involved in organizing Buddhist religious activities; and (4) academics or lecturers from STAB Kertarajasa Batu with expertise in Buddhist studies and community development. These criteria ensured the inclusion of diverse yet relevant perspectives aligned with the research focus.

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to obtain comprehensive and credible information. The primary data collection methods included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to culture-based Buddhist religious extension services. Participant observation was carried out during religious activities, community meetings, and guidance sessions to capture actual practices and interactions between extension workers and community members. Document analysis involved reviewing official reports, program plans, institutional guidelines, and archival records related to Buddhist religious extension services. Although this study adopted a qualitative approach, several key analytical variables were defined to guide data collection and analysis. The use of clearly defined variables in qualitative research serves to focus observation and interpretation while maintaining sensitivity to contextual and social complexity.

The performance of Buddhist religious extension workers was defined as the extent to which extension workers effectively planned, implemented, and evaluated community guidance activities in accordance with Buddhist teachings and community needs. This variable was examined through indicators such as communication effectiveness during guidance activities, the level of community participation, adaptability to local Javanese cultural values, consistency in service delivery, and the ability to foster moral and social development among Buddhist community members. Culture-based religious service management referred to the integration of Javanese cultural values into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of Buddhist religious extension services. This concept was operationalized through indicators including the use of local language in religious guidance, incorporation of traditional arts and local customs in religious activities, culturally sensitive communication strategies, and alignment between Dhamma teachings and local wisdom practiced within the community. Human resource management in religious services was defined as institutional and managerial efforts to develop, support, and evaluate Buddhist religious extension workers in delivering effective community guidance. This variable was examined through indicators such as the availability of training and capacity-building programs, performance evaluation mechanisms, institutional coordination, provision of supporting facilities, and organizational support for innovation in culture-based religious services.

To ensure data credibility, triangulation was applied by comparing information across different sources and methods, complemented by member checking, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and negative case analysis. These procedures ensured that the findings were rich, contextual, and trustworthy. The study incorporated SWOT analysis to systematically identify internal strengths and weaknesses of the Buddhist extension services, alongside external opportunities and threats in the socio-cultural and institutional environment.

SWOT was selected because it provides a structured framework for identifying strategic priorities, optimizing strengths, addressing weaknesses, leveraging opportunities, and mitigating threats (Moleong, 2000; Wiswasta, 2018). By combining SWOT with qualitative data, the study generates actionable insights for improving human resource management and service quality while preserving the integration of Buddhist teachings with local Javanese cultural values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted across several Buddhist communities in Batu City, focusing on the performance of Buddhist religious preachers in guiding the community, the integration of Javanese culture within Buddhist practices, and the overall effectiveness of religious service strategies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 informants (civil servant and contract preachers, temple managers, monks, lay representatives, and officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs), direct observation of religious activities, and documentation of programs.

Overall, the findings show that Buddhist preachers play multiple roles as spiritual mentors, community mobilizers, cultural mediators, and facilitators of local traditions, especially in strengthening the Javanese-Buddhist identity. Many respondents emphasized that culturally grounded approaches increase comfort and improve comprehension of Buddhist teachings. One respondent noted: *“When preachers use polite Javanese expressions, we feel respected and can understand the teachings more easily.”*

Preachers also lead and facilitate various religious activities such as weekly puja, home visits, meditation classes, youth programs, and Javanese-Buddhist traditions such as *Reboan* and Buddhist-style *slametan*. These activities help reinforce social cohesion and ensure the continuity of local cultural practices. The result same with previous research (Lamirin & Bhadrastudhiyanti, 2021; Hidayati *et al*, 2025; Sari *et al*, 2023; Yatno, 2022).

Internal Factors

Internal factors include strengths and weaknesses. Internal strengths reflect the competencies and advantages that support the effectiveness of Buddhist preachers. The internal strength analysis indicates that Buddhist religious preachers in Batu City possess several interrelated advantages that support their effectiveness in community guidance. These strengths include the ability to contextualize Buddhist teachings through Javanese language, values, and traditions, which makes religious messages more accessible and culturally resonant for the community. Preachers also maintain strong interpersonal relationships with local community members, enabling higher levels of trust, participation, and continuity in religious activities. In addition, their official legitimacy as representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs enhances institutional credibility and facilitates coordination with temples, community organizations, and local authorities. Furthermore, preachers successfully integrate core Buddhist ethical principles—such as loving-kindness and compassion—with Javanese cultural norms emphasizing humility, harmony, and mutual respect, creating a culturally adaptive and socially accepted model of religious guidance.

Table 1. IFAS Strenght

No	Strenght Factor	Weight	Rating	Score
1	Contextual approach to Javanese culture	0,30	4,00	1,20
2	Closeness to the local community	0,25	4,00	1,00
3	Official legitimacy from the ministry of religion	0,20	3,00	0,60

4	Integration of Buddhist ethics with Javanese wisdom	0,25	3,00	0,75
	Total	1,00		3,55

Sources: data processed by researchers (2026)

The internal weakness analysis reveals several structural and operational constraints faced by Buddhist religious preachers in Batu City. The limited number of preachers is not proportional to the geographical scope of service, resulting in uneven outreach and supervision across Buddhist communities. In addition, instructional practices remain largely conventional, with minimal utilization of modern digital media for teaching, communication, and documentation, which restricts broader engagement, particularly among younger generations. Another weakness lies in the uneven mastery of Javanese cultural knowledge among preachers, indicating the need for more systematic cultural training to strengthen context-based religious guidance. Furthermore, limitations in facilities and funding at temples and community centers constrain the scale, frequency, and sustainability of cultural and religious programs.

Table 2. IFAS Weaknesses

No	Weakness Factor	Weight	Rating	Score
1	Limited number of preachers	0,30	2,00	0,60
2	Lack of modern media innovation	0,25	2,00	0,50
3	Uneven mastery of Javanese cultural knowledge	0,20	2,00	0,40
4	Limited facilities and funding	0,25	2,00	0,50
	Total	1,00		2,00

Sources: data processed by researchers (2026)

The internal analysis (IFAS) revealed that their main strengths lie in contextualizing Buddhist teachings with Javanese culture, fostering close relationships with community members, and having official legitimacy from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These strengths, scored at 3.55, enable preachers to effectively guide and mobilize the community. Conversely, weaknesses such as limited personnel, lack of innovative media usage, and insufficient cultural knowledge (scoring 2.00) indicate areas that require improvement. The findings further demonstrate that cultural integration functions as a key independent factor influencing preacher performance as the dependent outcome. The use of Javanese language, symbols, and communal traditions enhances trust, participation, and comprehension, thereby strengthening the overall effectiveness of religious guidance. Conversely, internal weaknesses such as limited human resources and low digital innovation reduce the reach and consistency of services, moderating the impact of these strengths.

External Factors

External factors include the opportunities and threats. The external opportunity analysis indicates a favorable environment for strengthening Buddhist community guidance in Batu City. Growing interest among young people in local culture opens space for introducing Javanese traditions, arts, and rituals as effective media for Buddhist education. In addition, potential synergy with local government and Buddhist organizations enables the integration of religious and cultural programs within broader community initiatives. The availability of digital technology further supports outreach efforts, as social media and online platforms can be utilized to disseminate teachings, promote activities, and document community engagement. Moreover, rising public appreciation for local forms of spirituality creates strong momentum for the development of Javanese-Buddhist models that resonate with contemporary religious and cultural needs.

Table 3. EFAS Opportunities

No	Opportunities Factor	Weight	Rating	Score
1	Youth interest in local culture	0,25	3,00	0,75
2	Potential synergy with local government and buddist communities	0,25	4,00	1,00
3	Digital technology support	0,25	3,00	0,75
4	Rising public interest in local spirituality	0,25	4,00	0,10
Total		1,00		3,50

Sources: data processed by researchers (2026)

The external threat analysis highlights several challenges that may hinder the effectiveness of Buddhist community guidance in Batu City. Globalization and modern lifestyle pressures, particularly among younger generations, tend to promote consumerism and reduce interest in cultural and religious activities. At the same time, increasing secularization and declining spiritual engagement force religious programs to compete with digital entertainment and demanding daily routines. Potential misinterpretations of Javanese traditions also pose a risk of cultural tension within the community if not managed carefully. Additionally, limited participation resulting from work schedules—especially among residents employed in the tourism sector—restricts consistent involvement in religious and cultural activities.

Table 4. EFAS Threats

No	Threats Factor	Weight	Rating	Score
1	Globalization and modern lifestyle	0,25	2,00	0,50
2	Secularization and the decline of spirituality	0,25	2,00	0,50
3	Potential for intercultural friction	0,20	2,00	0,50
4	Time constraints	0,25	2,00	0,50
Total		1,00		2,00

Sources: data processed by researchers (2026)

External analysis (EFAS) identified opportunities and threats that influence the preachers' work. Opportunities, with a total score of 3.50, include strong interest from younger generations in local culture, support from local government, and digital technology that can facilitate community outreach. Threats, scoring 2.00, involve globalization, declining spirituality, potential cultural conflicts, and time limitations among community members. At the same time, external threats such as globalization and declining spiritual engagement weaken community participation when not addressed through adaptive strategies. This interaction illustrates how external variables shape the success of internal management and cultural integration efforts.

SWOT Matrix

The SWOT matrix analysis illustrates that Buddhist preachers (penyuluh agama Buddha) in Kota Batu perform a multifaceted and strategic role in community life, encompassing spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions. As spiritual guides, preachers assist community members in understanding Buddhist teachings and applying them in everyday life. In line with Buddhist pedagogical theory, effective religious instruction emphasizes internalization of values such as mindfulness (*sati*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and patience (*khanti*) through lived experience rather than doctrinal transmission alone. This finding is consistent with respondents' statements that the guidance of preachers fosters inner peace, emotional stability, and more harmonious family and social relationships.

Beyond their spiritual role, Buddhist preachers function as community mobilizers who

actively organize meditation sessions, Dhamma discussions, and culturally rooted religious activities. Field observations reveal that these activities intentionally integrate Javanese cultural elements—such as local rituals, communal gatherings, and symbolic practices—into Buddhist worship. This pattern reflects the theory of religious acculturation, which posits that religious teachings are more effectively transmitted when they resonate with local cultural frameworks. Previous studies on contextual religious guidance have shown that the incorporation of local wisdom strengthens community participation and reinforces collective identity, particularly in pluralistic societies.

Additionally, the findings confirm the role of Buddhist preachers as mediators in conflict resolution within the community. Drawing on social leadership and community mediation theory, religious leaders often serve as moral authorities whose legitimacy enables them to facilitate dialogue, reduce tensions, and restore harmony. Respondents consistently emphasized that preachers are trusted figures who promote peaceful communication during interpersonal or communal disputes, reinforcing the Buddhist principle of *saṅgaha-vatthu* (social harmony and cohesion).

The SWOT analysis further indicates that the effectiveness of preachers is strongly influenced by personal integrity and communication competence. Preachers who consistently model ethical conduct and mindfulness tend to gain greater respect and obedience from community members, supporting Weber's concept of charismatic legitimacy in leadership. Conversely, limited visibility, weak communication, or inconsistent engagement may reduce their influence, highlighting that spiritual authority in Buddhist communities is closely linked to personal example (*ācāra*) rather than formal position alone.

Overall, the SWOT matrix positions Buddhist preachers in Kota Batu as key agents of spiritual development and social cohesion. Their involvement extends beyond ritual facilitation to encompass cultural preservation, moral education, and community empowerment. Regular activities such as weekly *pujabakti*, *anjangsana*, and *reboan* ceremonies demonstrate how religious guidance grounded in Javanese culture sustains both spiritual continuity and communal solidarity. These findings reinforce earlier research on faith-based community leadership, which emphasizes that culturally contextualized religious guidance contributes significantly to sustainable religious practice and social harmony.

From a strategic perspective, the SWOT matrix provides a structured foundation for strengthening human resource development among Buddhist preachers. By leveraging internal strengths—such as cultural contextualization, community trust, and institutional legitimacy—while addressing weaknesses and anticipating external threats, Buddhist religious guidance in Kota Batu can be further optimized to respond to contemporary social and cultural challenges.

Strategy Analysis Using the SWOT Framework

Despite the positive achievements identified in the field, several challenges remain in the implementation of Buddhist community guidance in Kota Batu. The limited number of Buddhist preachers, constrained facilities and funding, and the insufficient utilization of digital media continue to restrict the reach and effectiveness of community services. In addition, balancing attention across diverse community segments—such as youth, elders, and new adherents—poses practical limitations in daily implementation. Nevertheless, the integration of Buddhist teachings with Javanese cultural values provides a strong foundation for sustainable community engagement and long-term spiritual development.

To systematically examine these conditions, an internal and external strategic analysis was

conducted using the SWOT framework. This analysis identifies strengths and weaknesses as internal factors, as well as opportunities and threats as external factors, forming the basis for the formulation of four strategic orientations: SO, WO, ST, and WT strategies.

Table 5. Opportunities Strategy (SO) (WO)

No	Opportunities	Strategy (SO)	Strategy (WO)
1	Youth interest in local culture	Integrating Javanese culture into youth development	Reducing the lack of innovation in development method
2	Synergy with the local government and the Buddhist community	Integrating Javanese culture into youth development	Reducing the lack of innovation in development method
3	Supporting digital technology	Optimizing digital technology	Addressing the lack of promotion of activities
4	Leveraging the momentum of Buddhist-based Javanese culture	Embracing the momentum of Buddhist-based Javanese culture	Developing the capacity of preachers

Sources: data processed by researchers (2026)

The SO strategy focuses on maximizing internal strengths to capitalize on external opportunities. Findings indicate that Buddhist preachers in Kota Batu possess strong cultural legitimacy and close social ties with the community, which can be strategically utilized to respond to growing youth interest in local culture, increasing support from local government, and the availability of digital technology. By integrating Javanese cultural expressions—such as language, rituals, and traditional arts—into youth-oriented Buddhist guidance programs, preachers can enhance engagement and cultural continuity. This finding is in line with research (Ditthisampanno, 2021; Dayu *et al*, 2021). In addition, optimizing digital platforms allows Buddhist teachings and cultural activities to reach broader audiences beyond physical temple spaces, as research from (Sugiarto, 2022).

Meanwhile, the WO strategy emphasizes overcoming internal weaknesses by leveraging external opportunities. Limited innovation in guidance methods and uneven cultural mastery among preachers can be addressed through capacity-building programs, digital literacy training, and collaborative initiatives with local cultural and religious institutions. The growing momentum of Javanese-Buddhist cultural identity can also be utilized as a learning medium to strengthen preachers' competencies while simultaneously enriching community participation, as research from (Sarwi, 2022).

Table 6. Strategy (ST) (WT)

No	Threats	Strategy (ST)	Strategy (WT)
1	Globalization and modern lifestyle	Using social media to creative promotion	Improving the digital literacy skills of preachers
2	Secularization and declining spirituality	Integrating Javanese culture into youth development	Creating more interactive development (workshop or meditation)
3	Potential for intercultural friction	Holding intercultural and religious dialogues based on local wisdom to foster tolerance	Equipping congregations and extension workers with multicultural insight and
4	Time constraints	Organizing religious and cultural activities in a short but meaningful format	Forming small team that can share tasks in implementing activities

Sources: data processed by researchers (2026)

The ST strategy aims to use existing strengths to mitigate external threats. In response to globalization, modern lifestyles, and declining spiritual engagement, Buddhist preachers can employ creative digital content and culturally grounded narratives to make religious activities more relevant and accessible. The integration of Buddhist ethics with Javanese values—such as harmony, humility, and mutual respect—also serves as a cultural buffer against potential value erosion and inter-cultural misunderstandings. Furthermore, organizing intercultural and interfaith dialogues rooted in local wisdom can help prevent cultural misinterpretation and strengthen social harmony (Sari *et al*, 2023)

The WT strategy represents a defensive approach to minimize weaknesses while avoiding external threats. To address limited human resources and time constraints, forming small working teams or empowering young community cadres can distribute responsibilities more evenly and reduce dependency on a few individuals. Interactive and flexible program formats, such as short workshops or combined meditation and cultural sessions, can accommodate community members' busy schedules, particularly those working in the tourism sector (Sidharta, 2024). Strengthening digital literacy among both preachers and community members also becomes essential to prevent marginalization in an increasingly digital religious landscape.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that highlight the importance of culturally contextualized religious guidance in enhancing community engagement and sustaining religious identity. However, this study extends earlier research by systematically mapping internal and external factors through the SWOT framework, thereby offering a strategic management perspective on Buddhist religious extension services at the local level. Overall, the SWOT analysis places Buddhist preachers in Kota Batu within a strong and prospective strategic position. Their cultural adaptability, moral authority, and community trust serve as key assets in navigating both opportunities and challenges. By prioritizing SO strategies while simultaneously addressing weaknesses and mitigating threats through WO and WT strategies, Buddhist preachers can enhance the effectiveness of community guidance, preserve Javanese-Buddhist cultural identity, and foster inclusive, sustainable spiritual development across generations.

The results of the research results must present the main data and findings of research without interpretation. Describe the results obtained in a clear and organized way, using tables and images if needed to support the explanation. The results must be presented in a logical order, often in accordance with the order of research questions or hypotheses that have been previously stated. Each table and image must be given a clear number and title, and referred to the text.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that Buddhist religious preachers in Batu City play a strategic and multidimensional role in community development by integrating Buddhist teachings with Javanese cultural values. The findings confirm that culturally contextualized religious guidance enhances community acceptance, comprehension, and participation in religious activities. This supports the theory of religious acculturation, which argues that religious teachings are more effectively internalized when aligned with local cultural frameworks rather than delivered through rigid doctrinal approaches.

The strong internal factors identified—particularly cultural contextualization, close social relationships, and institutional legitimacy—highlight that preacher performance is not solely determined by doctrinal competence but also by socio-cultural adaptability and interpersonal trust. The use of Javanese language, symbols, and communal traditions such as *reboan*, *anjangsana*, and *slametan* strengthens the Javanese-Buddhist identity and reinforces social cohesion. This finding

is consistent with prior studies emphasizing that local wisdom serves as a powerful medium for value transmission and community empowerment (Lamirin & Bhadrasudhiyanti, 2021; Sari et al., 2023).

From a human resource management perspective, the strengths identified in the IFAS analysis indicate that Buddhist preachers possess significant cultural and relational capital. However, these strengths are moderated by internal weaknesses such as limited personnel, uneven cultural mastery, and low utilization of digital media. These constraints suggest that preacher effectiveness depends not only on individual capability but also on organizational support systems, capacity development, and innovation management. Similar conclusions have been drawn in studies of religious extension services, which highlight the importance of continuous training and adaptive communication strategies (Hartono, 2022; Setyaningsih, 2020).

The EFAS analysis further reveals that external opportunities—particularly youth interest in local culture, government support, and digital technology—create a favorable environment for strengthening Buddhist community guidance. These opportunities align with broader societal trends that value local spirituality and cultural authenticity. When leveraged effectively, they can expand outreach, enhance intergenerational engagement, and increase the sustainability of religious programs. Conversely, external threats such as globalization, secularization, and time constraints pose significant challenges by reducing community participation and competing for attention, especially among younger generations.

The SWOT matrix clarifies the interaction between internal and external factors and positions Buddhist preachers as key agents of spiritual resilience and cultural preservation. Their roles as spiritual guides, community mobilizers, and mediators align with Buddhist leadership principles emphasizing compassion (*karuṇā*), mindfulness (*sati*), and social harmony (*saṅgha-vatthu*). The findings also support Weber's concept of charismatic legitimacy, as preacher authority is derived more from ethical conduct and personal example than from formal institutional status alone.

Strategically, the SO, WO, ST, and WT formulations indicate that optimizing preacher performance requires an integrated management approach. SO strategies emphasize leveraging cultural strengths to engage youth and utilize digital platforms, while WO strategies highlight the need for capacity building and innovation to address internal limitations. ST and WT strategies underscore the importance of adaptive communication, teamwork, and flexible program design to mitigate external pressures. This strategic perspective extends previous research by demonstrating how SWOT analysis can be applied as a practical tool for managing religious extension services at the local level. Overall, the discussion confirms that the effectiveness of Buddhist religious guidance in Batu City is strongly influenced by cultural integration, human resource capacity, and adaptive strategy implementation. The findings reinforce the argument that culturally grounded religious services are essential for sustaining spiritual identity and social cohesion in the face of modern challenges. By strengthening internal capacities and strategically responding to external dynamics, Buddhist preachers can enhance the quality, reach, and long-term impact of community guidance across generations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Buddhist religious extension services in Batu City are implemented through a Javanese cultural approach by integrating Buddhist teachings with local traditions such as Reboan, Jumat Legian, Anjangsana, and Puja Bakti, enabling community guidance to be delivered in a contextual, inclusive, and culturally meaningful manner. The findings

demonstrate that this approach strengthens the performance of Buddhist religious extension workers by positioning them not only as spiritual guides but also as community mobilizers and cultural mediators who enhance religious understanding, social cohesion, and Javanese–Buddhist identity. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of culture-based religious service management remains constrained by internal limitations, including the limited number of extension workers, uneven facilities and resources, and time constraints among community members, as well as external pressures such as globalization and declining spiritual engagement. Overall, the study confirms that culturally contextualized management strategies contribute positively to the effectiveness and sustainability of Buddhist religious extension services within the framework of public religious service management in Indonesia.

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered in interpreting the findings. The research was confined to Buddhist communities in Batu City, limiting the generalizability of results to other regions with different socio-cultural characteristics. In addition, the qualitative case study design emphasizes depth of understanding rather than comparative measurement, and the analysis relies on perceptions and experiences of selected informants. Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to employ comparative or mixed-method approaches across different regions to examine variations in culture-based religious service management. Institutional stakeholders are encouraged to strengthen capacity-building programs for Buddhist extension workers, particularly in cultural competence and digital literacy, increase resource support and inter-agency collaboration, and develop more comprehensive performance evaluation systems that balance administrative indicators with qualitative outcomes such as behavioral change and social harmony. (Times New Roman, size 12, Spacing: before 0 pt; after 0 pt, Line spacing: 1)

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