

Religious Happiness and Spiritual Formation for Learning to Live Together in Indonesia's Plural Society

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Abstract: This article examines how religious happiness and spiritual formation can serve as conceptual foundations for learning to live together in Indonesia's plural society. The unit of analysis consists of academic literature on religiosity, happiness, spiritual formation, pluralism, and social coexistence, with particular attention to studies relevant to the Indonesian context. The article aims to clarify the relationship between personal religious well-being and the social ethics of living together in a religiously diverse society. Drawing on a qualitative literature review, this study analyzes recent scholarly work to identify key conceptual patterns linking spirituality, happiness, and interreligious coexistence. The findings show that religious happiness is not limited to inward spiritual satisfaction but is also shaped by moral formation, spiritual practice, lived religious values, and service-oriented engagement with others. The novelty of this article lies in its integrative framework that connects personal spiritual formation with the civic and ethical task of sustaining social harmony in plural Indonesia. By locating religious happiness within the constitutional and Pancasila-based vision of coexistence, this study contributes a conceptual basis for developing more inclusive models of religious education, spiritual formation, and civic learning that support religious moderation, mutual respect, and social integration in contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Religious happiness; Spiritual formation; Learning to live together; Plural society; Indonesia; Religious moderation; Social coexistence

1. Introduction

Indonesia offers a particularly important setting for discussing religious happiness because religious life remains deeply woven into public culture, citizenship, and everyday coexistence. Government and survey data consistently show that Indonesia is both overwhelmingly religious and internally diverse: official data cited by Pew indicate that, in 2022, about 87% of the population identified as Muslim, while substantial minorities identified as Protestant, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, or adherents of local beliefs. At the same time, the Ministry of Religious Affairs reported that the 2024 *Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama* reached 76.47, suggesting a relatively strong but still fragile pattern of interreligious harmony (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2024). This dual reality matters. Indonesia is often presented as a successful example of coexistence under Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, yet it also continues to face recurring tensions involving discrimination, unequal recognition, contestation over houses of worship, and competing interpretations of religious moderation. In such a context, happiness cannot be reduced to private emotion or psychological comfort alone. It must also be understood as a socially mediated condition shaped by moral formation, reciprocal recognition, and the ability to inhabit difference without hostility. For that reason, examining religious happiness in Indonesia is not merely a theological exercise; it is a way of asking how spiritual life may sustain plural citizenship in a society where faith remains publicly consequential.



The existing literature helps clarify several parts of this problem, but it remains fragmented. Studies on religion and happiness have shown a generally positive association between religiosity, spirituality, and life satisfaction. Hou et al. (2023), for example, found that religious belief may affect happiness among older adults through participation and support mechanisms (Hou et al., 2023), while Amiruddin et al. (2021) argued that Islamic spirituality contributes to the happiness of Muslim citizens (Amiruddin et al., 2021). At a broader level, Yaden et al. (2022) reported, in a large meta-analysis of 256 studies involving 666,085 participants, that religion/spirituality is positively associated with life satisfaction (Yaden et al., 2022). A second body of scholarship examines how societies and educational systems cultivate the capacity to live together. Patel (2022) reconceptualized "learning to live together" as a multidimensional framework, and Wong and Lee (2019) showed that this ideal becomes especially urgent in polarized and plural societies. A third line of research, more directly relevant to Indonesia, has discussed religious education, interreligious competence, and peaceful coexistence, including Parker's (2014) work on religious education and Utami's (2022) study of multireligious public schools. Yet these conversations rarely meet. The current manuscript also moves in this direction by linking happiness, spirituality, and plural living, but its existing framing remains underdeveloped and methodologically loose. What is still missing is a conceptually integrated account of how religious happiness may connect personal spiritual formation with the social ethics of living together in plural Indonesia.

This article addresses that gap by examining religious happiness and spiritual formation as conceptual resources for learning to live together in Indonesia's plural society. More specifically, it seeks to move beyond two reductionisms that often appear in the literature. The first is the tendency to treat happiness as a purely individual psychological state, detached from moral and civic life. The second is the tendency to treat plural coexistence only as a matter of law, policy, or tolerance discourse, without asking what kinds of inner formation make such coexistence durable. This study, therefore, asks how religious happiness should be understood when the spiritual life is not only inward-facing but also oriented toward everyday relations with others who believe differently. The article builds on insights already evident in the manuscript—especially its concern with the relationship to God, moral-spiritual discipline, lived values, and service—but reframes them in more analytically inclusive language so they can speak to a plural social setting rather than only to one confessional tradition. In doing so, the study aims to contribute to ongoing debates on religious moderation, interreligious education, and social integration in Indonesia by offering a clearer conceptual bridge between spirituality and coexistence. Its contribution is therefore not merely descriptive; it is to formulate a stronger explanatory frame for understanding how religious well-being may become socially generative in a diverse democracy.

The central argument of this article is that religious happiness becomes socially meaningful when spiritual formation cultivates dispositions that translate inward faith into outward coexistence. In other words, the article proposes that religious happiness should not be defined only by serenity, devotional satisfaction, or personal meaning, but also by the formation of ethical habits that enable empathy, restraint, service, and respect across difference. This argument is consistent with the broader literature on plural societies, which shows that social cohesion is not sustained solely by institutional design; it also depends on dispositions, practices, and educational processes that shape how people imagine the self, the other, and the common good. It is likewise consistent with scholarship suggesting that religiosity can support social cohesion, though not automatically or in every form. Hillenbrand (2023), for instance, shows that the role of religiosity in cohesion is ambivalent and depends on content and practice rather than intensity alone. On that basis, the working hypothesis of this article is that in the Indonesian case, spiritual formation contributes to learning to live together when it directs believers toward inclusive moral engagement rather than exclusive identity consolidation. Such a framework allows religious happiness to be interpreted not as withdrawal from plural life, but as a formative energy for sustaining mutual recognition under the constitutional and Pancasila-based vision of coexistence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Religious Happiness, Religiosity, and Well-Being

Religious happiness is best understood not as a vague emotional state, but as a form of well-being shaped by the interaction between belief, meaning, practice, and social belonging. In the broader literature on religion and well-being, scholars have repeatedly shown that religiosity and spirituality tend to be associated with life satisfaction, hope, coping, and perceived meaning, though the strength of these relationships varies across contexts. The most comprehensive synthesis to date is the meta-analysis by Yaden et al. (2022), which reviewed 256 studies involving 666,085 participants and found a positive, though modest, association between religion/spirituality and life satisfaction. More specific studies also suggest that religion supports happiness through identifiable mechanisms. Hou et al. (2023), for instance, found that religious belief among older adults contributed to happiness through participation effects and support effects, indicating that religion works not only through belief but also through communal involvement and networks of care. In a Muslim context, Amiruddin et al. (2021) similarly argue that Islamic spirituality contributes to happiness by fostering inner peace, ethical orientation, and existential meaning. Taken together, this body of work suggests that religious happiness should be treated as a multidimensional construct rooted in both inner conviction and social experience, rather than as a purely private or purely doctrinal matter.

At the same time, the literature also shows that the relationship between religion and happiness is neither automatic nor conceptually simple. One persistent problem is definitional: some studies treat religiosity as institutional affiliation or ritual participation, while others focus on prayer, transcendence, spiritual experience, or moral commitment. As a result, what appears as “religious happiness” may refer to very different processes. Yaden et al. (2022) note that the effects of religion/spirituality on life satisfaction vary depending on how religion is measured and on the social context in which belief is practiced. Hou et al. (2023) likewise demonstrate that religious belief does not produce happiness in a vacuum; it becomes consequential when it is mediated by participation and support. This is important for the present study because it suggests that happiness derived from religion cannot be reduced to mere inward piety. It may also emerge through belonging, recognition, moral coherence, and supportive ties. Yet most of this literature remains focused on individual outcomes and rarely asks whether religious happiness has implications for how people live with others in plural settings. That gap is significant, especially for Indonesia, where religion is not simply personal identity but also a public and relational force. The present article, therefore, extends the conversation by asking how religious happiness may function as a resource for coexistence rather than only as an index of subjective well-being.

2.2. Spiritual Formation as Relational and Ethical Formation

The second body of literature relevant to this study concerns spiritual formation. Although the term is often used in confessional settings, contemporary scholarship increasingly understands spiritual formation in broader relational and educational terms. Rather than reducing spirituality to private devotion, recent work frames it as a process through which persons are shaped in relation to the self, others, the world, and, for many traditions, the transcendent. Fraser-Pearce (2022), for example, argues that spirituality is best approached as a form of relationality, while spiritual education can be understood as a subspecies of relational education specifically concerned with relation to the transcendent. This move is important because it opens space for discussing spiritual formation without collapsing it into narrow doctrinal conformity. A similar broadening is evident in the work of Liefbroer et al. (2019), whose systematic review of spiritual care in plural societies shows that the spiritual domain cannot be treated as a private residue separate from public life; it must be engaged with in ways that take plurality seriously. More recently, Rodriguez (2025) argues that spiritual pedagogy in religious education can contribute to children's growth when spirituality is treated as a relational and experiential dimension involving connection with oneself, others, the natural

world, and potentially the transcendent. In this line of thought, spiritual formation is not merely about orthodoxy; it is about shaping ways of being, perceiving, and relating.

This broader view matters because it shifts the discussion from confessional performance to ethical formation. If spirituality is relational, then spiritual formation inevitably has social consequences. It influences how individuals respond to difference, vulnerability, conflict, and responsibility. Miedema and ter Avest (2011) make this point clearly in their discussion of interreligious citizenship education: religious education, they argue, should not be confined to teaching students "into" a tradition but should also help them develop their own standpoint in contexts of plurality through encounter and dialogue. That position resonates with recent work on religious education and social cohesion, which shows that education about religion is increasingly expected to contribute to inclusion, active citizenship, and coexistence rather than only to faith transmission. Lapis (2025), for instance, demonstrates that the discourse on religious education in several national contexts has expanded to include intercultural dialogue and social cohesion as explicit aims. The implication for the present study is direct. Spiritual formation becomes socially relevant when it forms dispositions such as empathy, openness, restraint, and service. It becomes socially dangerous when it intensifies boundary-making without ethical encounter. For that reason, the literature suggests that any discussion of spiritual formation in plural Indonesia must move beyond inward piety and ask what kind of moral subjectivity is actually being formed.

2.3. Learning to Live Together in Indonesia's Plural Society

The third cluster of scholarship concerns "learning to live together," a concept long associated with UNESCO but now developed in richer educational and civic terms. Recent scholarship no longer treats it as a slogan of tolerance; rather, it is understood as a demanding process of forming persons and institutions able to inhabit disagreement, diversity, and interdependence without violence. Patel (2022) offers one of the clearest contemporary reconceptualizations, proposing "learning to live together harmoniously" as an interconnected framework encompassing interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural dimensions. Wong and Lee (2019) also show that learning to live together becomes especially challenging in polarized and plural societies, where civic ideals are contested, and educational actors must negotiate competing visions of the common good. These studies are highly relevant because they show that coexistence is never sustained by rules alone. It requires educational processes, public virtues, and patterned forms of recognition. Yet in much of this literature, religion appears mainly as one identity category among others, not as a formative source of meaning and conduct. That omission matters in societies such as Indonesia, where religion remains central to public morality, education, and social trust. For the present article, then, "learning to live together" is not a secular supplement to religion but a social horizon within which spiritual and religious formation must be reinterpreted.

In the Indonesian case, the literature has begun to show how interreligious coexistence depends on religious education, intercultural competence, and everyday forms of engagement. Parker (2014) argues that religious education in Indonesia cannot ignore the practical challenge of peaceful coexistence and points to school culture as a crucial site where tolerance is either cultivated or undermined. Utami (2022) advances this discussion by showing that interreligious competence is essential for achieving religious education equality in multireligious public schools, especially in settings where administrative recognition exists but everyday inclusion remains uneven. Research on youth activism points in the same direction. Kusuma and Susilo (2020), studying young interfaith activists in Yogyakarta, found that intercultural and religious sensitivity can be strengthened through encounter, communication, and shared civic engagement. In parallel, work on religious moderation among Indonesian Muslims indicates that religiosity may support moderation when linked to tolerance, national commitment, and cultural accommodation, rather than to exclusionary identity politics. Still, these studies rarely connect the question of coexistence to the literature on happiness or to a fuller theory of spiritual formation. This is precisely where the present article locates its intervention: it brings together three conversations that are usually separated and argues

that religious happiness can become socially meaningful when spiritual formation is directed toward coexistence in Indonesia's plural society.

3. Methods

3.1. Material object

The material object of this study is scholarly literature on religious happiness, spirituality, spiritual formation, and living together in plural societies, with special attention to Indonesia. This focus aligns with the manuscript's stated objective to examine religious happiness and spiritual formation for plural coexistence in Indonesia, including six recurring dimensions identified in the article's conceptual framework.

3.2. Research design

This study employs a qualitative literature review design. The choice is appropriate because the article does not seek to test causal relationships statistically, but to synthesize concepts, arguments, and recurring themes from prior scholarship. As the original manuscript states, the study employs a literature review and descriptive analysis to provide an overview of spiritual formation and religious happiness in a plural Indonesian society.

3.3. Data sources

The data consist of published scholarly works, primarily journal articles indexed in Scopus Q1–Q3, supplemented, where necessary, by other relevant academic sources. This formulation remains faithful to the manuscript, which states that the study draws on approximately 160 recent articles from predominantly Scopus-indexed databases. Conceptually relevant works on happiness, religiosity, spirituality, and coexistence were prioritized to maintain thematic relevance and analytical coherence.

3.4. Data collection technique

Data were collected through systematic literature searching, screening, and document selection based on thematic relevance to the study topic. The search focused on works discussing religion and happiness, spiritual formation, and living together in plural contexts, especially in Indonesia. This approach follows methodological guidance that literature searching should be transparent, comprehensive, and oriented toward identifying relevant evidence rather than merely accumulating large numbers of sources.

3.5. Data analysis technique

The selected literature was analyzed descriptively through qualitative thematic synthesis. In practical terms, the analysis involved reading, comparing, grouping, and interpreting recurring concepts across the dataset to identify major dimensions of religious happiness and their relevance to learning to live together. This analytic move refines the manuscript's original "description method" by making explicit that the study develops themes iteratively from the literature and relates them to the Indonesian plural context.

4. Results

4.1. Religious Happiness as a Relational and Multidimensional Condition

The reviewed literature describes religious happiness as a multidimensional condition shaped by belief, meaning, practice, and social connection. Across the studies examined, happiness associated with religion is reported through life satisfaction, inner peace, emotional stability, meaning in life, social support, and moral orientation. Yaden et al. (2022), in a meta-analysis of 256 studies involving 666,085 participants, found a positive association between religion/spirituality and life satisfaction, with an overall effect size of $r = .18$. Although the magnitude of the

relationship varies across populations and methods, the association remains statistically consistent across many settings. Comparable patterns also appear in population-based studies. Hou et al. (2023), using data from 5,177 older adults in China, reported a significant positive association between religious belief and happiness, particularly through participation in religious communities and the support they provide. In a Muslim context, Amiruddin et al. (2021) found that Islamic spirituality played a strong, positive role in shaping happiness among 5,000 Muslim citizens, with a path coefficient of 0.821. These studies consistently depict religious happiness as emerging from the interaction between inward spirituality and outward relational support.

The literature also shows that the relationship between religiosity and happiness is mediated by identifiable processes rather than occurring automatically. Religious belief becomes associated with happiness when it is accompanied by participation, social support, coping resources, and meaningful practice. Hou et al. (2023) distinguish these pathways through participation effects and support effects, showing that religious believers often gain stronger opportunities for social interaction and supportive relationships, which in turn help explain higher reported happiness. Studies on religious and spiritual coping report a similar pattern, indicating that the benefits of spirituality for well-being are often tied to emotion regulation and coping mechanisms rather than to formal identity alone. Across the reviewed works, happiness linked to religion is therefore documented not merely as a consequence of affiliation but as a product of social participation, moral coherence, and supportive ties. This pattern narrows the concept used in the present article: the relevant data describe religious happiness as a layered construct that combines subjective well-being, relational participation, and meaningful moral orientation.

Variation in religiosity is also evident in the literature. Not all forms of religiosity are associated with the same social and psychological outcomes. Hillenbrand (2023), using online survey data from Germany during the COVID-19 period, found that religiosity was ambivalent regarding social cohesion. A loving image of God and attendance at religious services were positively related to cohesion, whereas exclusivist beliefs, punitive images of God, and certain forms of private prayer were negatively associated with some cohesion dimensions. These data indicate that religious intensity alone is not sufficient to explain positive outcomes. What matters are the content of belief and the forms of practice through which religion is lived. The reviewed studies, therefore, do not support the general claim that religion, in itself, produces happiness or cohesion. Instead, they show that positive outcomes are most consistently linked to supportive, participatory, and prosocial forms of religiosity. In this literature, religious happiness is most often documented in contexts where spirituality is embedded in communal participation, constructive belief, and a service-oriented religious life.

2. Spiritual Formation as Moral-Practical Formation

The reviewed scholarship presents spiritual formation as a process of shaping dispositions, practices, and relationships rather than as private devotion alone. In educational, pastoral, and care-related studies, spirituality is described as embodied and socially visible. Fraser-Pearce (2022) defines spiritual education as a subspecies of relational education, emphasizing that spirituality concerns relation to the transcendent and therefore cannot be reduced to isolated inward experience. In healthcare research, Liefbroer et al. (2019) identified, through a systematic review of 74 studies, four broad positions on how the spiritual domain is integrated into practice in plural societies, showing that spirituality is repeatedly treated as a legitimate dimension of human life linked to identity, care, and institutional interaction. Across these sources, spiritual formation is not primarily documented through doctrinal correctness. It is described through modes of relationship, regular practice, ethical comportment, and ways of attending to self and others. The literature, therefore, records spiritual formation as an observable process that takes shape in everyday life, where transcendence, morality, and social experience intersect.

Ethical capacities with public relevance also appear repeatedly in the literature on spiritual formation. Miedema and ter Avest (2011) show that interreligious citizenship education in plural settings increasingly involves the formation of standpoint, encounter, and dialogical responsiveness, rather than the transmission of isolated identities. Lapis (2025) reports a similar development in policy-oriented analysis, showing that religious education discourse

in England, Japan, and Italy has expanded to include social cohesion, dialogue, and civic coexistence as explicit aims. Although these studies use different conceptual vocabularies, they converge in describing spiritual or religious formation through empathy, communicative competence, and ethical engagement across difference. These patterns closely correspond to several themes found in the original manuscript, such as devotion, moral discipline, and service, but the broader literature articulates them in a more inclusive and analytically robust language. Within this body of research, spiritual formation is recorded as extending beyond worship or doctrinal instruction. It appears in practices that shape how individuals recognize others, negotiate differences, and participate in shared moral life.

Service and relational engagement are among the most visible expressions of spiritual formation documented in the literature. Hou et al. (2023) show that religious participation and support structures are associated with higher happiness among older adults. Hillenbrand (2023) similarly reports that attendance at services is positively associated with cohesion, whereas exclusivist and privatized expressions of religiosity are less consistently associated with positive social outcomes. In the Indonesian context, Kusuma and Susilo (2020) found that intercultural and religious sensitivity among young interfaith activists was strengthened through interfaith encounter, comprehension, competence, and communication. These studies describe spirituality in operational terms: participation, support, dialogue, service, and sustained contact with others. The pattern is consistent across settings and methodological traditions. Spiritual formation is not observed merely in inward conviction, but in practices that connect persons to communities and to forms of social responsibility. The literature thus documents a recurring alignment between spirituality and concrete social engagement, showing that spiritually formed life is most often visible in relational participation, support-giving, service, and intergroup contact.

4.3. Coexistence in Indonesia's Plural Society

The Indonesian literature reviewed in this study situates the work of living together in institutional, educational, and civic settings rather than in abstract tolerance discourse alone. Parker (2014) shows that religious education in Indonesia has long carried a dual burden: preserving religious identity while responding to interreligious conflict and the practical need for peaceful coexistence. Her analysis of school culture and religious education indicates that coexistence is shaped not only by curriculum content but also by how schools embody interreligious openness in everyday life. Utami (2022), in research on multireligious public schools in Indonesia, reports that equality in religious education depends heavily on interreligious competence, teacher capacity, and the surrounding context, particularly in rural areas. These studies present coexistence as an institutional and pedagogical challenge that requires practical competence rather than mere formal recognition. Official indicators move in the same direction. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs reported that the national religious harmony index reached 76.47 in 2024, up from 67.46 in 2020, indicating measurable improvement while also implying that local and structural tensions remain part of the social landscape.

Interreligious competence is repeatedly documented as a measurable and teachable capacity in the Indonesian literature. Utami (2022) found that tolerance-oriented interreligious competence is central to achieving equality in religious education in multireligious schools, especially in contexts where diversity is encountered daily but supported unevenly by institutions. Kusuma and Susilo (2020), using the Intercultural and Religious Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire among young interfaith activists in Yogyakarta, found that Indonesia's multicultural social environment provides a strong basis for interfaith sensitivity. Their study identified comprehension, competence, and communication as recurring strengths in interfaith engagement. The same study also showed that youth-based interfaith initiatives were linked to civic values, intercultural relations, and social advocacy. These data describe coexistence not as a passive social condition but as a capacity developed through encounter, reflection, and communicative practice. Across the reviewed studies, living together in plural Indonesia is documented through competencies of dialogue, tolerance, and practical inclusion. The pattern appears across schools, youth initiatives, and civic spaces, suggesting that coexistence is learned through concrete relational settings rather than secured by principle alone.

International studies on coexistence reinforce this descriptive pattern and help situate the Indonesian findings within a wider framework. Patel (2022) conceptualizes *learning to live together harmoniously* through interconnected domains such as awareness, empathetic relations, compassionate action, and meaningful engagement. Wong and Lee (2019) likewise describe coexistence in plural and polarized contexts as a negotiated educational process rather than a settled civic outcome. When these international findings are read alongside Indonesian studies, a consistent picture emerges. Coexistence is most visible where relational, ethical, and communicative capacities are cultivated, and weaker where difference is encountered without adequate competence or institutional support. The reviewed data do not establish a direct causal link between religious happiness and social harmony, and the studies often use different concepts and methods. Even so, the literature consistently places participation, empathy, service, dialogue, and meaningful engagement close to the social conditions that sustain plural coexistence. In the Indonesian context, these practices recur across the same empirical fields: interreligious competence, educational inclusion, and moderation-oriented engagement

5. Discussion

The results show a consistent pattern across the reviewed literature: religious happiness is not merely an inward feeling of comfort but a relational condition shaped by meaning, practice, participation, and support. This is significant because the study's original problem was whether religious happiness could be understood as more than personal spiritual satisfaction in a plural society. The reviewed evidence points in that direction. Yaden et al. (2022) demonstrate that religion/spirituality is positively associated with life satisfaction across 256 studies and 666,085 participants, while Hou et al. (2023) show that the relationship between religious belief and happiness among older adults is mediated by participation and social support rather than belief alone. The Indonesian literature reviewed in this article adds a second layer to the same pattern: coexistence is repeatedly documented not as an abstract ideal, but as a practical outcome linked to interreligious competence, school culture, and civic engagement, as shown by Parker (2014) and Utami (2022). Taken together, the findings indicate that the article's three analytic terms—religious happiness, spiritual formation, and learning to live together—do not stand separately in the literature. They appear in overlapping empirical fields. In descriptive terms, the reviewed studies place well-being, relational formation, and plural coexistence within a shared social process, rather than treating them as disconnected domains of personal faith, education, and public life.

These results invite a broader reflection on the social meaning of spirituality in the Indonesian context. Much of the earlier manuscript tended to describe happiness in confessional terms, especially through practices strongly imbued with Christian themes. The findings of the present review suggest a more expansive picture. The literature does not deny the importance of devotion, prayer, or relationship with God, but it records their significance most clearly when they are connected to recognizable social effects: support, participation, service, dialogue, and ethical conduct. This shift matters for plural Indonesia. If religion remains publicly significant, then any account of religious happiness that stays at the level of private consolation is too narrow to explain how religious life shapes shared civic space. The reviewed studies instead show that happiness linked to religion becomes socially visible when it is carried through practices that bind persons to communities and orient them toward others. In this sense, the findings reflect a shift from interior to socially situated spirituality. This does not secularize religion; rather, it shows that the social implications of spirituality are already embedded in the literature on well-being, education, and coexistence. For Indonesia, where pluralism is constitutionally protected but socially negotiated, this reflection is important because it repositions spiritual life as part of the infrastructure of coexistence rather than as a domain isolated from it.

The findings can therefore be interpreted as supporting an integrative reading of religious happiness. The literature reviewed here suggests that happiness derived from religion is most stable and socially meaningful when spiritual formation produces inclusive moral dispositions rather than exclusive identity consolidation. This interpretation is warranted by the pattern found across several bodies of evidence. Hou et al. (2023) show that happiness is strengthened when belief is mediated by participation and support. Hillenbrand (2023) shows that

religiosity is ambivalent for social cohesion, with positive outcomes associated more strongly with a loving image of God and service attendance than with exclusivist beliefs or punitive religious imaginaries. In Indonesia, Utami (2022) and Kusuma and Susilo (2020) document that coexistence becomes more viable where interreligious competence, tolerance, communication, and intercultural sensitivity are present. Read together, these studies suggest that spiritual formation should be understood not simply as the intensification of piety, but as the cultivation of social capacities that sustain plural life. This interpretation also helps clarify the article's novelty. The study does not merely restate that religion may improve happiness or that plural societies require tolerance. It shows, at the level of literature synthesis, that the bridge between the two is formed through moral-practical and relational processes. Religious happiness, in this reading, is not only felt; it is enacted in ways that condition coexistence.

Compared with previous scholarship, the present study takes a more integrative approach. Research on religion and well-being has often concentrated on subjective outcomes such as life satisfaction, coping, and mental health, as seen in Yaden et al. (2022) and Hou et al. (2023). By contrast, scholarship on learning to live together has usually emphasized educational design, civic values, and social harmony, as in Patel (2022) and Wong and Lee (2019). Indonesian research, meanwhile, has tended to focus on religious education, interreligious competence, and moderation in institutional settings, as illustrated by Parker (2014) and Utami (2022). What is less common in these strands is a direct conceptual connection between spiritual well-being and the social ethics of coexistence. The present article contributes precisely at that intersection. Its position differs from earlier work not because it rejects established findings, but because it places them in a single analytic frame. That frame allows religious happiness to be read as a concept with both personal and civic implications. Compared with the original manuscript, this reformulation also shifts the argument away from a narrowly confessional model toward a vocabulary more transferable across religious traditions. Such a comparison matters for publication strategy as well. For an international journal, the article's contribution is stronger when it is presented not as a devotional claim about happiness, but as a literature-based explanation of how spiritual formation may support plural coexistence in Indonesia and beyond.

Several follow-up implications emerge from this discussion. At the conceptual level, future studies need to refine the construct of religious happiness to distinguish between inward well-being, communal belonging, ethical orientation, and civic relevance. At the methodological level, the present review also underscores the need for empirical research that tests these relationships more directly in Indonesian settings, particularly in schools, youth organizations, interfaith communities, and local civic networks. Existing studies already indicate where such work could begin. Parker (2014) identifies school culture as a decisive site of coexistence, Utami (2022) points to multireligious public schools as a context where interreligious competence becomes measurable, and official Kemenag data show that harmony can be monitored at the national level through indices such as the 2024 *Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, which reached 76.47. These materials suggest that future research could combine survey data, school ethnography, and comparative regional analysis to examine whether communities with stronger patterns of spiritual participation, service, and interreligious competence also exhibit stronger social trust and inclusive coexistence. Practically, the discussion also points toward more inclusive models of religious education and spiritual formation—models that do not weaken religious commitment, but orient it toward empathy, communication, and shared civic responsibility. In that sense, the discussion reinforces the article's central claim: religious happiness becomes socially significant when it is formed in ways that sustain life with others across difference.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that, in the literature, religious happiness is not limited to private spiritual satisfaction but is consistently described as a multidimensional condition shaped by meaning, participation, moral orientation, and social support. The reviewed studies indicate that the relationship between religion and happiness becomes more visible when spirituality is expressed through communal participation, supportive relationships,

service, and ethical engagement. In the Indonesian context, the literature also shows that living together in a plural society is sustained not only by constitutional guarantees or civic ideals, but by interreligious competence, school culture, dialogue, and moderation-oriented practices in everyday life. These patterns suggest that religious happiness, spiritual formation, and coexistence are connected within the same social field. The central conclusion of this study, therefore, is that religious happiness becomes socially relevant when spiritual formation directs believers toward relational, participatory, and inclusive ways of living with others across religious difference in Indonesia's plural society.

The scientific contribution of this article lies in its effort to integrate three strands of scholarship that are often discussed separately: religion and well-being, spiritual formation, and learning to live together in plural societies. Previous studies have generally focused either on the effect of religiosity on life satisfaction or on religious education and interreligious coexistence, without clearly explaining how personal spiritual well-being may become socially generative. This article proposes a conceptual bridge between these domains. A qualitative literature review shows that religious happiness can be understood not only as a subjective state but also as a moral-relational condition connected to empathy, service, participation, and coexistence. In that sense, the article offers a more integrated framework for reading spiritual formation in the Indonesian context. Its academic value lies in repositioning religious happiness as a concept that has both personal and civic significance, especially in a society where religion remains publicly influential and socially consequential.

Future research needs to move beyond conceptual synthesis and test these relationships more directly in empirical settings. The present study shows that interreligious competence, participation, and service repeatedly appear in the literature as important conditions for coexistence, but the strength and direction of their relationship with religious happiness remain to be examined through field-based research. Further studies could therefore use surveys, interviews, ethnography, or mixed-methods approaches to investigate schools, youth communities, interfaith networks, and local religious institutions across different regions of Indonesia. Comparative studies across religious traditions would also be important to ensure that the concept of religious happiness is not interpreted too narrowly within one confessional perspective. In addition, future scholarship may develop more precise indicators to distinguish between personal well-being, communal belonging, ethical orientation, and civic coexistence. Such work would strengthen both the theoretical clarity and the practical usefulness of this emerging field of study.

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