

## ***The Role of Spirituality in Shaping Social Interaction in Kendari City: A Study of the Meaning of Worship in Community Life***

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### **ABSTRACT**

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*The spiritual aspect plays an important role in building social interaction in community groups. This paper aims to understand and analyze the social interaction of the people of Kendari city in the context of worship affecting the behavior of individuals and communities in social interaction. The data was collected from interviews, with a qualitative method of phenomenological approach. The mapping of individual or group behavior was confirmed to community groups as participants in this study. The results of the study demonstrate that the role of spirituality by exploring the meaning of worship led to a new concept that worship is able to raise spiritual values such as morality, unity, affection, and awareness that have implications for people's lives. This study offers Kendari City residents a fresh perspective on how these spiritual principles might serve as a guide in daily life. In line with that, this paper suggests the need for institutional involvement and all elements of society to solve the problem of religious understanding using a spiritual value approach rather than a bureaucratic one.*

**Keywords:** Sprituality; Social Interaction; Worship; Community

### **ABSTRAK**

Aspek spiritual memiliki peran penting dalam membangun interaksi sosial pada kelompok masyarakat. Tulisan ini bertujuan memahami dan menganalisis interaksi sosial masyarakat kota Kendari dalam konteks ibadah akan menemukan perilaku individu maupun masyarakat dalam interaksi sosial. Data penelitian ini bersumber dari wawancara, dengan metode kualitatif pendekatan fenomenologi. Pemetaan terhadap perilaku individu ataupun kelompok dikonfirmasi kepada kelompok masyarakat sebagai partisipan penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran spiritual dengan menggali makna ibadah, telah membawa konsep baru bahwa ibadah mampu melahirkan nilai-nilai spiritual seperti moral dan akhlak, persatuan, kasih sayang, dan kesadaran yang telah berimplikasi pada kehidupan masyarakat. Implikasi dari penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman baru terhadap masyarakat Kota Kendari bagaimana nilai-nilai spiritual tersebut mampu menjadi rujukan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Sejalan dengan itu, tulisan ini menyarankan perlunya keterlibatan institusional dan seluruh elemen masyarakat untuk memecahkan persoalan pemahaman agama dengan pendekatan nilai spiritual, bukan pendekatan birokratis.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** Spiritualitas; Interaksi Sosial; Ibadah; Masyarakat

## 1. INTRODUCTION

So far, worship has tended to be individualized and dogmatic. It is because religious knowledge is still centralized, rigid, and conservative (Putri et al., 2024). According to a national survey conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) in 2022 on extreme violence and religious tolerance in West Java, 17.2% of respondents stated that they disliked certain religious groups, especially regarding the construction of houses of worship, leadership, holding religious events, and some other aspects. In addition, 12.4% of participants mentioned that they did not like certain ethnic groups (Lembaga Survei Indonesia, 2022). Every year, the number of intolerance cases rises, but many go unreported in the media, which makes multiculturalism worse. The low level of public awareness to accept diversity and the prevalence of textual religious beliefs are the main causes of this intolerance (Asman & Arqam, 2023). Details about this are shown in Figure 1.

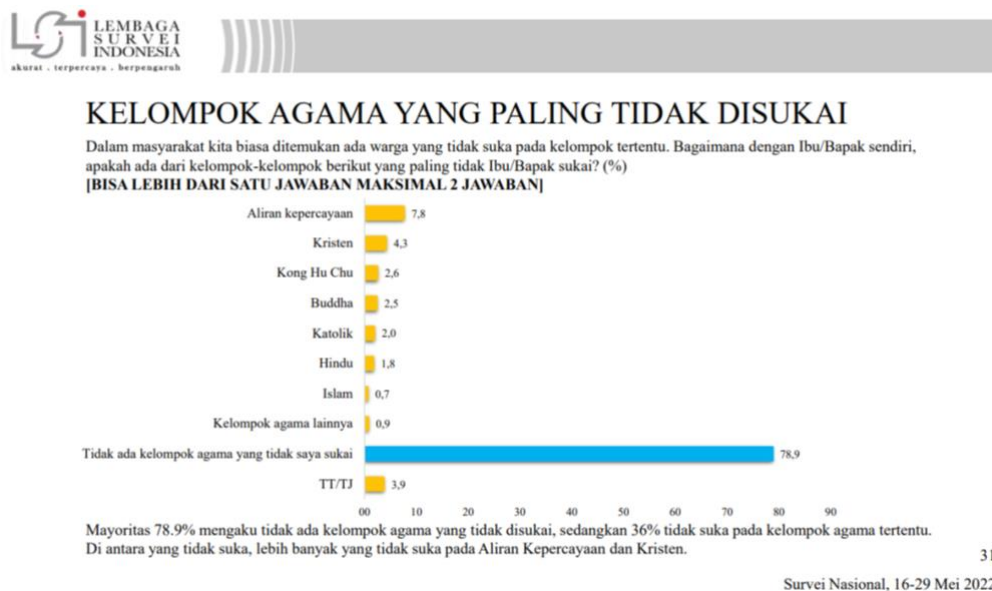


Figure 1. Data on the most disliked religious groups

Figure 1 shows public sentiment towards certain religious groups, which affects religious freedom. The way people treat community groups that practice their religious beliefs is one example. According to Ahmad Muthohar, a conservative view of religion tends to be rigid, old-fashioned, and opposed to new concepts, which impedes development (Muthohar et al, 2023). Worship is a common way for spiritual practices to be conveyed in many cultures and faiths around the world, whether through formal ceremonies or personal practices. Worship is a manifestation of a person's relationship with the supernatural being as well as crucial for fostering social connection in society. Moh. Agung Surianto and Umainah emphasize that social responsibility encompasses

both the duty of society as a whole and the institutional functions that facilitate the implementation of social interaction (Suriyanto & Umaimah, 2024).

Numerous studies have examined how faith influences social interactions. Solehchan, in his paper entitled *Pengajian Sabilussalam dan Perannya dalam Meningkatkan Spiritualitas dan Moderasi Beragama Umat* (Pengajian Sabilussalam and Its Role in Increasing Spirituality and Religious Moderation of the Community), came to the conclusion that raising the spirituality of the people living in Sugiharjo Village entails raising their level of faith, piety, religious awareness, and concern. Religious moderation is reflected in being tolerant of differences in schools of thought, avoiding takfiri (judging other Moslems as infidels) attitudes, and respecting different religious practices (Solechan, 2024).

In line with that, Moch Yufi and Nurmahmudi Ismail, in the article *Penguatan Nilai-Nilai Spiritual pada Masyarakat Temboro dalam Meningkatkan Nilai Spiritualitas* (Strengthening Spiritual Values in Temboro Society in Increasing Spiritual Values), used a descriptive sociological approach. This study shows that understanding religion through a sociological approach provides a more comprehensive insight, including the impact of religious teachings on social activities.

In contrast, Faiz Ibrahim employed a qualitative-descriptive method with a historical approach in his article *Constitution of Medina in Building Civil Society*. According to this study, the Medina Constitution is a kind of peace that brings tribes together within a religious framework. The fundamental principles are values like fraternity, openness, equality of rights, respect for human rights, and law enforcement are the main principles (Ibrahim et al, 2020).

In the paper *Ekspresi Spiritualitas Kelompok Keagamaan di Beberapa Wilayah Provinsi Aceh* (Expression of Spirituality of Religious Groups in Several Regions of Aceh Province), Hanif Saputra employed literature review and netnography methods. The study's findings demonstrate Aceh's varied religious expressions, including those of the Tastafi group, Jamaah Tabligh, and T. Raja Ubiet community. Despite the fact that Aceh follows Islamic law, these groups are still growing and represent a variety of religious manifestations (Saputra, 2023).

These studies illustrate the importance of spirituality in shaping social interactions based on religious values. However, no research has examined worship as a crucial component of spiritual development in a comprehensive manner. Despite the diversity of worship styles, prayers, meditation, and religious rituals all share universal components that improve one's connection to spirituality and society.

This study attempts to fill this gap by examining three aspects: first, understanding the impact of spirituality in worship on the dynamics of social interaction; second, exploring the influence of spiritual values such as compassion, peace, and cooperation in

community life; third, providing a foundation for community development based on spiritual values.

This study addresses the shortcomings of earlier research by offering a body of knowledge for inclusive and spiritually-based community development. This is important to encourage policymakers and community leaders to integrate spiritual aspects in strengthening social solidarity, justice, and peace.

Worship is therefore viewed as more than just a ritual; it also enhances the community's social and cultural life. By delving deeper into the meaning of worship, we can uncover the important aspects of interpersonal relationships and social interaction that are impacted by spirituality ([Himawan et al., 2023](#)).

## 2. METHODS

This research was conducted in Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi. The selection of this location is based on the characteristics of Kendari City as one of the multicultural cities in Indonesia, which is characterized by cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. This diversity is considered relevant and supports the focus of the research, enabling a thorough investigation of the phenomena under the investigation.

This research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach ([Williams, 2021](#)). This approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the data collected, through the process of interpreting phenomena and concepts related to the experiences of research subjects. The phenomenological approach aims to explore the meaning behind individuals' subjective experiences in the context of their lives.

The data sources in this study were obtained through in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants. To ensure that the data gathered accurately reflects the complexity and diversity existing in the Kendari City community, participants were chosen based on the diversity of religion, age, gender, and socio-economic background. Interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide designed to explore the experiences, views, and meanings associated with participants' worship practices and spirituality.

The collected data were analyzed thematically using a qualitative approach. This analysis involved identifying common patterns, key themes, and concepts emerging from the data. By exploring the subjects' deepest awareness of their experiences in a particular event, this study sought to understand the meaning of the phenomenon from the perspective of the individuals involved, while also describing the relationship between the phenomenon and the broader socio-cultural context.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Worship is a way for a servant to acknowledge the Creator's greatness and to show their devotion and commitment to Him. According to Nida Shofiyah et al., the purpose of human creation in this universe is to worship. Humans' primary responsibility is to live in conformity with Allah SWT's commandments in addition to continuing to exist (Shofiyah et al., 2023). There are two aspects of worship: the direct relationship between people and Allah SWT, or vertical worship, and the relationship between people and other creatures, or horizontal worship. As an expression of vertical worship, horizontal worship is applicable to daily social interactions. Figure 2 illustrates how worship, spiritual principles, and social life are related.

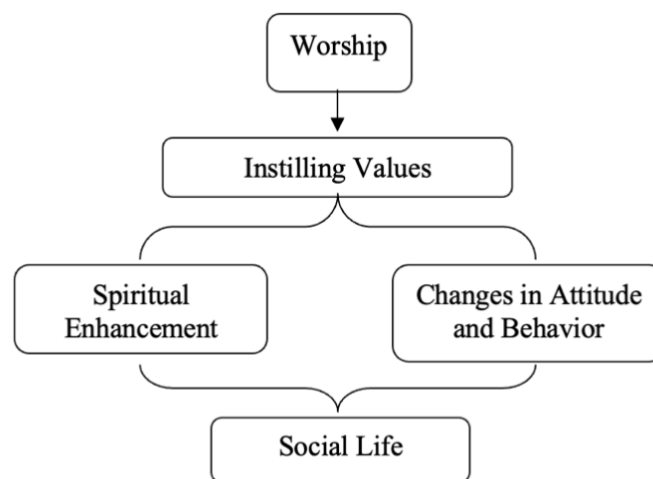


Figure 2. Conceptual chart

In religion, worship encompasses a range of spiritual practices, including prayer, fasting, and other rituals. As seen in Figure 2, these pursuits are the primary way to get closer to God and incorporate religious principles into daily life. Worship serves as a bridge that connects the spiritual dimension with social life. The chart demonstrates that spiritual values, such as compassion, honesty, patience, justice, and humility, originate from vertical worship activities. These values are then manifested in daily life through horizontal worship, which is reflected in the individual's social behavior. Thus, worship not only builds a relationship with the Creator, but also influences social interactions to create a harmonious life.

According to a study, spirituality is crucial in helping the residents of Kendari City have a fresh perspective on the significance of worship. There is a lot of social interaction between people of different religions, according to data gathered from religious groups in Kendari City. In religious life, the impact of movements founded on ethics, morality, and *akhlakul karimah* (noble morals) is crucial (Risfaisal & Muslimin,

2023). This long-practiced spiritual understanding has been proven to strengthen social relations in society.

#### **a. Understanding Social Interaction**

As social beings, humans need the presence of others to build relationships and strengthen relationships. Walgito explains that social interaction is a relationship between individuals that influence each other reciprocally. This interaction can occur between individuals, between individuals and groups, or between groups (Xiao, 2018). In everyday life, dynamic social relationships are inseparable from human survival. It is difficult for people to survive in society without interaction.

According to Erving Goffman, a Canadian sociologist, society is formed through interaction between its members. It would be hard to comprehend the social world without interaction. Direct reciprocal interactions between society's members are necessary for this process. A range of theoretical perspectives are required to fully comprehend human behavior patterns in social contexts (Zanki, 2020). The two main theories that are relevant in understanding social interaction are symbolic interaction theory and symbolic interactionism theory.

##### **1) Symbolic Interaction Theory**

This theory states that humans are creatures rich in symbols. Through the symbols that people encounter in their daily lives, it is possible to uncover hidden meanings in social interactions. This theory emphasizes the importance of communication as the core of human existence as a social being (Shidarta, 2019). In this context, symbols become an important tool in conveying meaning in interactions.

According to Ela Nur Aini (2017), humans are considered creative and social creatures because they are able to alter meaning and symbols in social actions depending on the interpretation of the situation they face. These symbolic exchanges frequently affect how individuals and groups communicate with one another, influencing the course of the relationship. For instance, people's attitudes and behaviors can be influenced by religious symbols like prayers or specific religious acts, depending on how they interpret religion.

##### **2) Symbolic Interactionism Theory**

Symbolic interactionism theory explains that human interaction can only be understood through the exchange of symbols in meaningful communication (Zanki, 2020). This theory views social interaction as a dynamic process that does not look at the individual's social background, but rather at the symbolic meaning used in communicating.

Setyorini (2020), mentions that according to this theory, interpersonal interactions shape the meaning of the social world. Symbols serve as a language that unites people in their understanding and interpretation of social reality. The communication process is key to building shared meaning, and individual identity develops through reflection on the

views of others. In this case, social meaning is dynamic, continually evolving according to changes in interaction and symbolic interpretation.

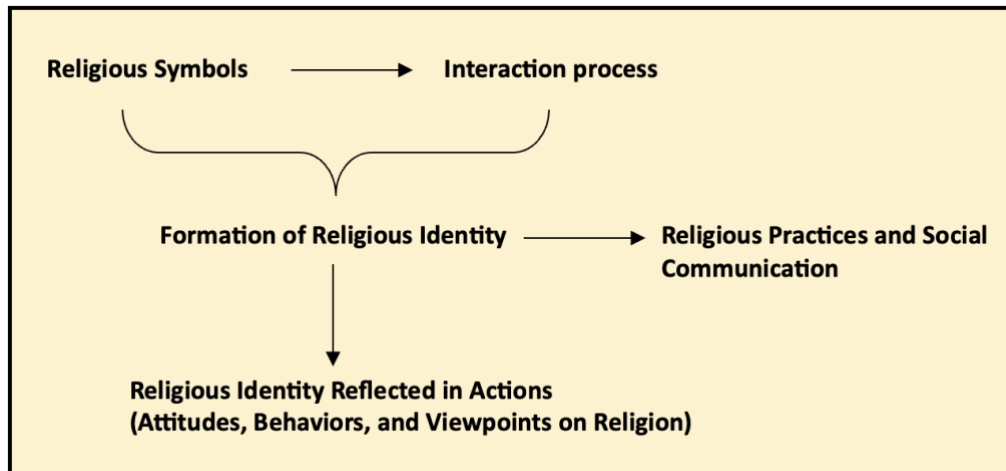


Figure 3. Symbolic interaction diagram

Figure 3 illustrates how interactions in religious life are significantly shaped by religious symbols. In a social setting, symbols like prayer, calligraphy, and fasting not only convey but also reinforce a person's religious identity. These practices reflect how individuals express their beliefs while building relationships with fellow religious people. This diagram demonstrates the importance of symbolic interaction and symbolic interactionism in maintaining religious meaning in society.

Social interaction is the foundation of human survival, involving the exchange of information and interpersonal relationships through verbal and non-verbal communication. Cultural and ideological factors play an important role in shaping the norms and values that govern social behavior. In addition, individual psychology, such as perception, attitude, and motivation, also affect interaction patterns. Therefore, understanding social interaction requires an in-depth analysis of the interrelated dynamics of communication, culture, and psychology in building complex social relationships.

#### **b. The Relationship of Spiritual Values in Community Life**

Spiritual values play an important role in building and strengthening the social order of society. These values include moral principles, ethics, and life guidelines that help individuals and communities find meaningful direction and purpose in life. Theological transformation through spiritual values is expected to create a more harmonious community life. Therefore, in order to evaluate worship rituals in light of the social environment, a comprehensive understanding of spirituality is required.

Spiritual values are tightly intertwined with people's lives. These values have formed a moderate and inclusive community without any religious, cultural, or social barriers. Harun Nasution explained that Islam is here to guide humans to find happiness in both the world and the hereafter (Sahrawi, 2022). This shows that Islamic teachings do



not only focus on the afterlife, but also encourage people to make positive contributions to society.

This study identified four main spiritual values: morals and ethics, awareness, unity, and compassion. These values represent the relationship between people and God in everyday life. Figure 4 illustrates how diverse social life has been impacted by spiritual principles in communal worship. Each of the four spiritual values contributes in a different way: Moral and ethical principles govern social interactions; awareness promotes social awareness; unity promotes intergroup communication; and compassion builds a welcoming community.

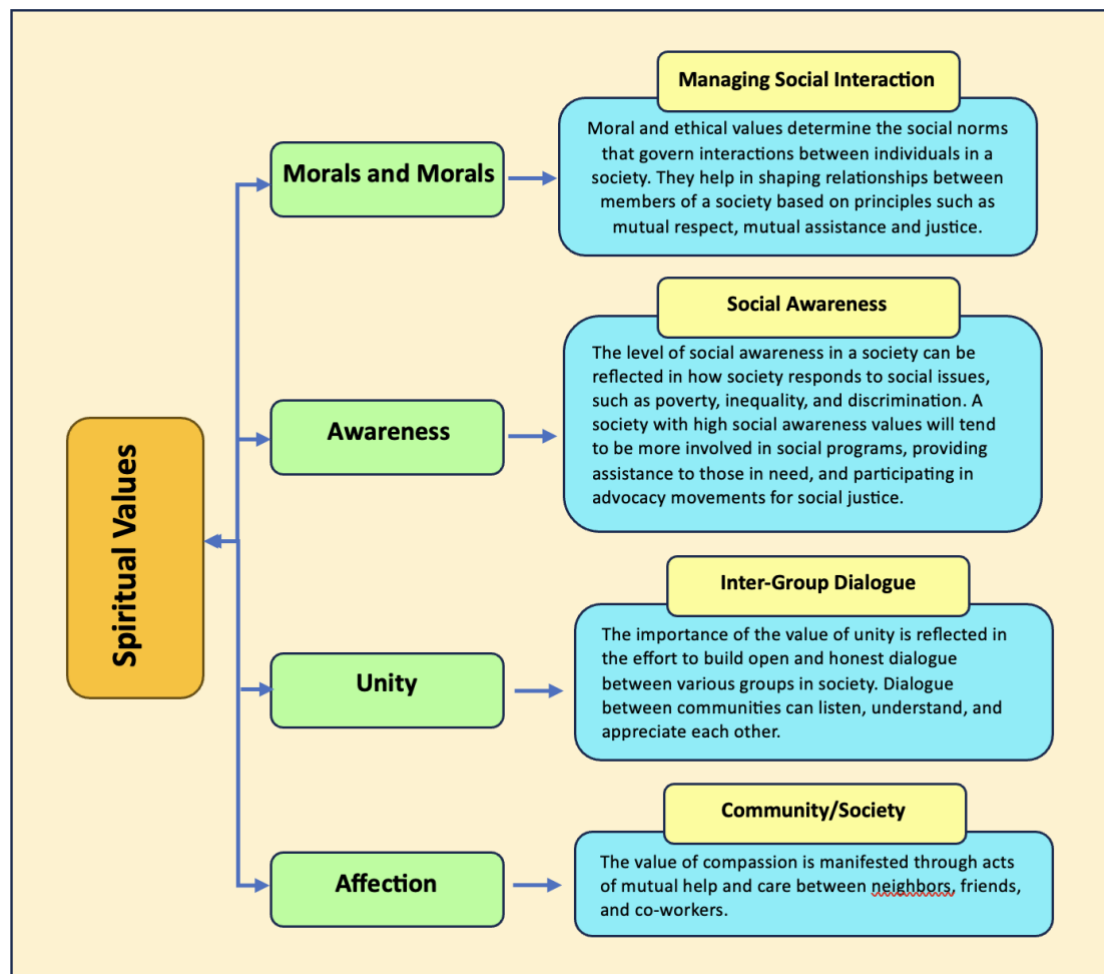


Figure 4. Spiritual values

The way these spiritual principles are used shows a religious worldview that respects human dignity and honor in addition to being ritualistic. Athoillah Islamy highlights that in order to stop moral decay, religion and its adherents must use spiritual principles as a guide in social interactions (Islamy, 2021). Spiritual values not only strengthen the individual spirit, but also build harmonious interactions, encourage empathy, and create a tolerant environment.



In a social context, spiritual values encourage altruistic actions and social justice. A spiritual outlook on life motivates individuals to contribute to the common good. These values foster a more equitable and compassionate society while serving as the cornerstone for significant social action like charitable giving and human rights activism.

### **c. The Foundation for Spiritual Values-Based Community Development**

Society is a valuable legacy that needs to be maintained with wisdom and good morals. Social, cultural, and religious values must serve as the foundation for a moral existence. The key idea that can unite diverse groups in harmony within a religious society is moderation (Rosyid et al, 2022). In resonance, Bening Shabila Utami highlighted that social life and religion are inseparable and complementary, with the primary objective being the preservation of human harmony (Utami et al., 2021).

Spiritual values-based community development considers both the spiritual and economic dimensions of welfare when measuring it. When creating development policies, values like morals, consciousness, compassion, and fairness serve as the primary pillars. A strong foundation of worship, which fosters piety and faith, can stop detrimental behavior that jeopardizes national cohesion (Choli, 2019).

Spiritual values encourage the creation of an inclusive and harmonious social life. Society may create solid social ties between people from diverse backgrounds by putting concepts like tolerance and respect for variety into practice. Mutually supportive interactions and a sense of shared responsibility are the hallmarks of a spirituality-based community.

In addition, spiritual values also provide a strong foundation for building a society focused on the common good. People who live by virtues like compassion and altruism are more sensitive to the needs and suffering of others. This approach makes it possible to create programs for development that enhance the well-being of society overall, guaranteeing that no one is left behind in the pursuit of shared advancement.

The results of the analysis reveal that worship, both in the form of formal rituals and personal spiritual practices, has a significant role. Worship is a vital way to develop peaceful social relationships and deepen the connection with God. This practice creates a space for cooperation, compassion, and mutual understanding in society, making spiritual values an important foundation for building a peaceful and meaningful social life.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

It is not totally accurate to assume that religion is a contributing factor to social conflict. According to this study, fostering harmony in communal life truly starts with the spiritual principles found in worship. These findings reveal a new perspective on the role of spirituality in shaping social interactions. Spirituality, manifested in religious practices, shows a positive influence in building harmonious social relationships. This study highlights the need to have a thorough understanding of spirituality as a component that

enhances social and cultural life, especially in the era of more complex globalization. The study's findings also have significant ramifications, one of which is in the area of education. Education can inculcate spiritual ideals derived from the meaning of worship at an early age, giving society a strong basis for comprehending the importance of spirituality in social interaction. The current strategy for fostering social relationships in diverse societies is considered to be less effective. This is because the significance of worship as a crucial component of fostering social ties has not received enough attention. On the contrary, spiritual values that can be realized in communal life will arise from perceiving worship as a whole. To strengthen these findings, future research is recommended to conduct cross-cultural experiments to identify universal and unique patterns of spirituality across communities. Quantitative approaches supported by longitudinal data can also help uncover causal relationships between religious practices and social interactions in the long term. Furthermore, multidisciplinary collaboration with the fields of psychology, sociology, and education will enrich the insights and applications of these findings, especially in formulating policies that support interfaith harmony.

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